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SHOULD TEACHERS LEARN HOW TO FORMALLY ASSESS BEHAVIOR? THREE EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVES

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Teachers are taught a variety of assessment techniques to help students succeed in school. They learn to assess their students' math and reading skills, their knowledge of social studies and science content and their ability to write. When teachers are faced with a student who is challenged by the subject matter and is struggling, teachers have a variety of assessment methods in their skill set that helps them identify the student's problem and provide instruction to address the problem. Unfortunately, the same is not true when it comes to addressing challenging behavior.

Introduction

For purposes of this paper, challenging behavior is defined as the behavior teachers may be faced with daily in their classrooms such as chronic talking out, off task, verbal aggression and noncompliance. This does not include behavior that may be deemed harmful to self, others or the immediate environment such as any type of physical aggression. The aforementioned challenging behaviors are the types of behaviors that if not dealt with effectively, tend to interfere with instructional time and create a negative classroom climate for all involved.

Although teachers are taught how to assess academic challenges, teachers are not equipped to systematically assess challenging behavior in their students. Instead they may intervene by reacting to the behavior without knowing the cause or reasons for the behavior (Stoiber & Gettinger, 2011). One method that has been shown to be an effective way to assess behavior is the functional behavior assessment (Gable, Park & Scott, 2014). Functional behavior assessment (FBA) is a method that if used proactively, can help teachers avoid escalating behavior in the classroom and intervene efficiently while behavior is challenging but mild in form (Moreno and Bullock, 2011).

Functional behavior assessment has its roots in applied behavior analysis and consists of a series of methods to analyze the function or causes of challenging behavior in order to create an effective intervention. The premise behind FBA is that all behavior serves some purpose or function related to access to reinforcement. There are two main functions of behavior, these include access to positive reinforcement in the form of an activity, sensory stimulation, a tangible item or attention; and, access to negative reinforcement in the form

of escaping or avoiding an activity, attention or sensory stimulation (O'Neill et al, 1997).

Functional behavior assessment may include indirect and direct assessment procedures. For indirect methods the challenging behavior is not observed directly but instead evaluated through the use of behavior rating scales, checklists and interviews with those familiar with the challenging behavior. Direct assessment procedures involve directly observing challenging behavior. A direct assessment may include recording the antecedents, behaviors and consequences of a behavior over time and in a variety of contexts. This method is commonly referred to as the ABC method and allows the assessor to record what happens right before(antecedent) the challenging behavior occurs and what happens right after (consequence) the challenging behavior occurs. The practitioner then can analyze the data and detect patterns in antecedents and consequences and formulate a hypothesis about the function or reason for the behavior, and the events that trigger the behavior. Functional analysis allows the practitioner to test the hypothesis by manipulating various conditions to see if the hypothesis holds true(Cooper, Heron and Heward, 2007; Umbreit, Ferro, Liaupsin and Lane, 2007). Once an FBA is complete the practitioner can develop a function based intervention. A function based intervention, based on the functional behavior assessment will consist of reinforcement for a replacement behavior that serves the same purpose as the challenging behavior but is more socially acceptable. For example hand raising would be reinforced instead of shouting out. The function based intervention may also include changes to the events that typically occur right before the behavior and adjustments to the consequences of the challenging behavior (Umbreit, et al., 2007).

Research on Educators and Functional Behavior Assessment

Research has shown that functional behavior assessment is an effective means to assess challenging behavior and provide information about the behavior to develop function based interventions (Gable et al., 2014, O'Neill, Bundock, Kladis & Hawken, 2015). While widely used by behavior analysts and researchers in clinics, private practice and research settings, the use of FBA by teachers in the schools is limited. Within schools the guidelines are not clear regarding which methods of FBA to use (Scott, Anderson and Spaulding, 2008). Gable et al. (2014) note that school personnel tend to rely on indirect methods of functional behavior assessment out of the need for efficiency. Indirect assessments are the quickest assessment to complete and can be done outside the classroom setting however they do not necessarily yield valid results. Research indicates that there is little correspondence between results of indirect assessments and direct systematic FBA processes. Consequently, for teachers to use FBA procedures that are effective and valid they would need to be using a variety of FBA methods, not just an indirect assessment method (O'Neill et al., 2015). Thorough functional behavior assessments incorporating both indirect and systematic direct methods are time consuming. The amount of time needed for an FBA is considered to be problematic for teachers who may not have extra time in their classrooms to conduct valid functional behavior assessments as they attend to their students and classroom responsibilities (Scott et al., 2008).

In order to investigate if teachers are using FBA in the schools, Scott et al. (2004) reviewed 12 research studies conducted with students in the schools regarding the implementation of FBA and function based interventions. They found some form of direct or indirect FBA was used and positive results

were reported, but the majority of the studies were researcher directed and the teachers in the schools played a limited role implementing the procedures. Scott et al. (2004) suggest that the rigorous requirements of a traditional FBA are not conducive to the general education classroom, making it difficult for teachers to conduct valid FBAs while attending to their teaching duties. Similarly, Allday, Nelson and Russel (2011) conducted a review of 45 research studies regarding teacher involvement in the FBA process. They found that overall, various forms of FBA as well as hypothesis testing and function based intervention were used. However, they found that teachers were not typically involved with collecting data and did not have knowledge of various data collection methods. In addition, they found that teachers were not involved with testing hypotheses developed from direct observations. They concluded these factors may result in FBA processes that may not yield valid results.

When teachers do not have comprehensive training on the methods associated with FBA it makes sense that they would not use functional behavior assessment processes that produce valid results. Research has shown that many teachers are unaware of FBA and do not have the training to implement the various forms of FBA that require experience and expertise. Meyers and Holland (2000) surveyed general and special educators and found that 75% of special educators had heard of FBA but only 42% were trained to conduct FBA. Additionally, they found that 17% of general educators had heard of FBA and of those, only 12% had some training on how to conduct FBA. Similarly, Young and Martinez (2016) surveyed over 700 educators and found that only 20% were familiar with functional behavior assessment.

McCahill, Healy, Lydon and Ramey (2014) reviewed 25 research studies that focused on training instructional aids, teachers and administrators to conduct FBA using some form of indirect and direct assessment methods. Of those studies reviewed four relied on a combination of indirect and direct methods and in 21 of the studies researchers trained educators to use some form of functional analysis where they systematically manipulated variables which were representative of those variables occurring in the classroom. After training, they found that the participants were able to conduct functional behavior assessments and develop hypotheses about the function and in those studies that included interventions, the school personnel were able to implement interventions and reduce challenging behavior. They also found a high degree of treatment integrity. In those studies where the participants were asked about their perceptions of the process the majority reacted positively to the process. McCahill et al. (2014) acknowledge that the types of FBA processes taught and implemented in their review varied and they suggested that there continues to be a lack of agreement about what types of FBA are the most effective for use in the classroom on a daily basis.

The social validity of the FBA processes is another reason suggested that teachers may not be using FBA in their classroom. Social validity has its origin in behavior analysis and refers to determining the acceptability of treatment goals to the client and others affected, the acceptability of the procedures by the client and those implementing the procedures and the validity or social importance of the results (O'Neill et al, 2014). They examined the social validity of the FBA process from the point of view of school personnel who use FBA to assess behavior and develop function based behavior plans. O'Neill et al.(2014) argued that although there is contradictory research about whether educators, after training, can implement FBA procedures effectively and with validity in their busy classroom, there is very little research regarding the

acceptability of these procedures to teachers and other educational providers. O'Neill et al. (2014) were interested in determining how acceptable the FBA procedures were to special educators as well as school psychologist and if there would be a difference between these two groups. The FBA procedures included indirect assessment such as interviews, rating scales, questionnaires as well as systematic direct observation and functional analysis. They found that both the special educators and the school psychologists in general had an overall positive perception regarding the usefulness and practicality of a variety of FBA procedures. School psychologists were more concerned than special educators about the time it takes to complete direct FBA procedures. The authors indicate the results may reflect the special educator's ability to spend more time daily with students in the classroom, whereas the school psychologists have to carve out time to observe students in contexts in which challenging behavior occurs.

Three Educators' Perspectives

Within the research on teachers use of FBA in the schools there is little consensus regarding whether teachers can effectively conduct FBAs and develop function based interventions. Consequently it is important to continue to examine this issue in order to determine if there is a need for pre-service and in-service teachers to learn how to formally assess behavior using functional behavior assessment techniques. One way to do that is to gather information directly from teachers, and other personnel in the schools who do use FBA, about how they perceive various FBA processes; which FBA processes they use the most; and, whether they believe they can effectively use FBA procedures to address challenging behavior in their classrooms.

The purpose of this paper is to further explore the attitudes of educators toward FBA through first hand written accounts from three educators who have taken two graduate classes on FBA and function based intervention. The three educators chosen to discuss their experiences for this paper were selected by the first author based on their current position in the school in which they work. One is a special education teacher, one is a general education teacher and the third is a behavior specialist. Each of the educators took and completed two graduate classes with the first author. The first class covered the various forms of functional behavior assessment and data collection procedures and the second class covered single subject research designs, data analysis and intervention based on FBA.

The educators were asked to write about their experiences with functional behavior assessment in their professional lives and were specifically asked to think about how they approached behavior prior to learning about FBA, and how they use their knowledge of FBA after completing the course work. They were also asked to discuss their thoughts on the benefits and disadvantages of educators using FBA to address behavior.

General Education Teacher

For the past 10 years I have been a general education teacher of students in kindergarten and 1st grade. At no time had I ever heard of functional behavior assessment (FBA) in any form, shape or fashion. I had never even heard of any sort of assessment which could be used to assist with students who routinely struggled with behavior in the classroom, such as chronic talking out, being off task, verbal aggression and noncompliance. When I began taking classes, it was eye opening to learn of such a method to analyze the reason why a student's behavior occurs and how to address it in a proactive manner.

For my first nine years of teaching, I used my instincts when it came to addressing behavior. Basically, depending on the student and what the behavior was, I simply did the

best I could with addressing and correcting problem behavior. On some occasions, I would separate the student from others in the classroom usually in a single desk where there was no interaction with others. At other times I sat the student near me for additional support with staying on task. There were also times where I would ask a student to go next door to my partner teacher's classroom for a time out from our classroom. Finally, on rare occasions, I would call down to the office for assistance. Never, had I thought about the function of behavior when intervening in this way. Looking back, I suspect I reinforced the challenging behavior at times since I was not aware of the function.

Now that I have training in completing FBAs, I have begun an FBA on two students in my classroom. One student, who is new, has struggled with being off task for most of her day since Pre-K, preventing success in the learning objectives presented on a daily basis. The other student has difficulty keeping his hands to himself, which has led to several incidents where he is removed from areas such as PE, lunch, library or recess after hitting others. For both students, the challenging behaviors are providing difficulties for them in all areas of the school day and may possibly be increasing. My goal is to address these issues now, before they magnify and become full-blown issues in the near future.

In both cases, I began with using direct assessment procedures in my own classroom. I used the ABC method in which I recorded the antecedents, behavior and the consequences observed during times where the challenging behaviors had tended to present themselves. This was done with the assistance of an instructional aide in the classroom. It was simply too difficult to gather the information while conducting class with 22 students in the room. I also observed one of the students in physical education and also during lunch. This was somewhat helpful, but I felt the behavior changed due to my presence in the environment.

Next, I used indirect assessments completing structured interviews with others on staff who have also observed the students challenging behaviors during their class time. I also gave one individual a questionnaire to compete on their own. For each student I also met with their parents and interviewed each of them for further information, as well as, to gain their perspective. In both cases, I then analyzed the data to formulate my hypothesis as to the function of the behavior and the events which bring about the behaviors. My next step is the functional analysis. Although this is still new to me, I feel it is becoming an invaluable tool that will help in numerous ways. By combining the direct observation with the indirect assessment and making use of a functional analysis, I feel I am getting the most information possible to conduct an effective FBA.

As a teacher studying to be a behavior analyst, I am doing my best to complete this in my classroom, but find it quite difficult to do it all. Without the assistance of an additional person in my room, such as the instructional aide, I have struggled to fully focus accurately on collecting data without distractions. I do not want any of these distractions to interfere with the careful and objective observations I need for my data collection process. Getting indirect information from others is easier, when I find the time to interview individuals who interact regularly with the students. The functional analysis has been another challenge. Manipulating what happens before and/or after the challenging behavior is not the difficult part of the functional analysis, I find it almost impossible to continuously record data with a full class of students and activities going on.

In my opinion, conducting an FBA and developing a function based intervention should become the norm for teachers to address

challenging behaviors that interfere with not only that student, but also create issues for the entire class and in some cases other classes nearby. All teachers should be trained on FBA to have a useful tool for assessing challenging behaviors and to be able to develop productive interventions for the good of their students. The disadvantages for teachers conducting functional behavior assessments I foresee are time and effort. Many teachers simply feel they just don't have time for one more responsibility pushed upon them and others may not see the benefit for putting forth the effort. However, with proper training and additional support, I believe a behavior specialist and the teacher can make a difference in the lives of the students who have behavior challenges interfering with their success.

Special Education Teacher

I am an elementary In Class Support Teacher who primarily works with students in 3rd-5th grade. Before being trained to do an FBA, I did not fully appreciate how function drives behavior. I ended up addressing the student's behavior instead of the function driving it. Consequently, I often contributed to the perpetuation of the very behavior I was trying to deal with. For example, if a student was continually blurting out or interrupting, I would address that behavior. I might have done a social lesson on the appropriate ways to get the teacher's attention, or had a discussion with the student about expected behaviors in the classroom. Either way, the student got my attention. If the function of that student's behavior was attention, I fed right into it, and the behavior would intensify.

As a special education teacher, I was familiar with Functional Behavior Assessments, at least from the perspective of the forms completed by the school psychologist during the process of developing a student's behavior intervention plan. The template used was scripted, and did not reflect the kind of conclusions I experienced in my FBA classes. Prior to my training, I did not realize how information for an FBA was gathered and how useful that information could be. Upon completing the classes, I now do my own FBAs. The school psychologist is more than glad to help, proof, and offer suggestions, but doing FBA's for my students has helped me have a better understanding of my students and allows me to best meet their needs. I stopped grouping my student by behaviors and started doing more grouping by behavior plus function. For example, in math class I had five students demonstrating work refusal by not completing a math worksheet the class was given. After a quick informal assessment, I determined that four of the students could verbally explain the process of dividing whole numbers by a fraction. Three of the four students have very slow processing speed, and, from experience, I knew they get anxious about keeping up with their peers if the assignment is lengthy. They can doddle or completely shut down in avoidance. I told them to choose odds or evens and they only had to complete those problems. All three started working and completed their assignment. The fourth student, who also understood the math concept, was clowning around. I knew, from experience with this student, that he desperately wanted attention. I negotiated time with him doing a preferred activity after the assignment was completed in exchange for completing the assignment. He started and finished. The fifth student was not able to explain the math concept to me. He hates to admit that he does not know something and was trying to avoid the assignment. I worked a couple problems with him and, in the process, created some mentor solutions that he could reference as he worked through the rest of the problems. He started and finished. In summary, all five students were refusing to work on their assignment. Of those five, one student was

seeking attention, three students were trying to avoid the assignment because of the number of problems that had to be completed and one was trying to avoid because he didn't understand the concept he was supposed to be practicing. If I had not attempted to understand the function behind why these students were not doing their assignment I would have probably ended up doing what a lot of teachers do: prompt, prompt, threaten, prompt, prompt, threaten… and still have not helped my students make progress.

Taking ownership of the FBA processes allows me more input developing a functional behavior intervention plan that has the best chance of being successful. Not only do I work in partnership with the general education teachers to collect data for the FBA, creating the behavior plan is equally collaborative. It is imperative to consider the parent's or teacher's skill level, resources, schedule and even her vision for her classroom when developing a behavior intervention plan. I could independently come up with the most elaborate, inventive plan, but if it is not contextually sound for those responsible for implementing it, that plan is going to fail.

Conducting an FBA takes time. It takes time to gather information for informal assessments, do direct observations, and develop a plan. In the past, our school psychologist would always produce the FBA and behavior intervention plan and simply present them to us. The time spent is worth it because the interventions are much more likely to be effective. First, through the process I develop a deeper understanding of what is driving my student's behaviors. Secondly, by working collaboratively with the other teachers this information is shared and the student starts with a team of adults that are willing to work together to provide the consistent and predictable environment needed for success. Finally, behavior is fluid, not fixed. Conducting the FBA and putting a behavior intervention plan in place is just the start of the process. I still have to be able to be flexible and responsive to how different social and environmental settings affect my students' behaviors. Authoring my own FBA's is conducive for follow through including any future adjustments.

I do think a possible barrier to widespread use of FBA is the format some schools use. This can promote more of a 'form letter' type approach, which is not conducive to the in-depth investigation that should be done. I worked with these forms for several years and never gleaned from them the type of information that the direction observation narrative format yields.

In summary, FBA has been a wonderful tool to add to my skill set. Using it effectively, can help guide teachers in dealing with the most difficult behaviors. However, thinking functionally is also a mindset. I am on a team of seven other special education teachers and 14 special education paraprofessionals. In this past year, our conversations about behavior have shifted. We talk more, both among ourselves and with the general education teachers, about the functions of those behaviors; how to avoid inadvertently reinforcing them; and what a suitable replacement behavior would be. We do this without a formal FBA, because some behaviors, if not most behaviors are not persistent and do not require a formal FBA. The more we understand the function of behaviors the more we are able to intervene early on before behaviors become persistent. Thinking functionally should be foundational to every teacher's behavior management plan. Looking beyond the behavior allows teachers to stay empathetic; it keeps the focus on the student as a person; and, most importantly, it allows teachers to avoid attributions while gaining useful insights that will best help students.

Behavior Specialist

Prior to working as a Behavior Specialist, I worked as a school psychologist. As a school psychologist I had training and experience completing FBAs that included observations, parent interviews, and teacher interviews. Since I have completed graduate level coursework in functional behavior assessment and functional behavior interventions, I complete FBAs with a more in depth understanding of behavior and functions of behavior. While I follow the same format of observations and interviews, I have greater awareness of how the environment, consequences and antecedents affect behavior. Therefore my observations are more precise and my interviews are more focused. I can more accurately identify the function of the behavior and consider how the environment or people in the environment act on the behavior. This allows me to design more effective and focused interventions. Previously, I introduced multiple interventions without consideration of the function, now I have knowledge about how to plan and implement function based interventions. Additionally, I use data collection throughout the intervention to evaluate effectiveness, and to make changes in the behavior plan as needed.

When I am assigned a case, the first thing I do is observe the student in the classroom. Then I meet with the teacher to complete a functional interview. I get an understanding of the target behavior and when the behavior most often occurs. I follow up with ABC observations at the times the teacher identified the behavior to occur most often. Then, I meet with the parent to get information about how the student behaves at home and I complete a functional interview with the parent.

If the student is able to answer questions and has some understanding of his own behavior I include a student interview in the FBA. For example, recently, I worked with a 10 year old student with good insight into his own behavior. He was motivated to change his behavior, so I was able to include him in the intervention planning by allowing him to choose the type of behavior monitoring tool he wanted to use. As his behavior improved, I discussed self-monitoring with him and he helped design the self- monitoring form that was used. When a student is able to participate at this level in the FBA and intervention plan, it helps create buy in and accountability.

Since availability of time interferes with the ability to complete a thorough FBA, I have worked to include teachers in the process. I have taught a few teachers how to take ABC data by using a simple form and modeling. This has been helpful with completing FBAs when time is limited. I am able to corroborate the teacher's data with my own observations and interviews, and then plan effective function based interventions. However, it is difficult for teachers to take data and run their classrooms at the same time, therefore, I have been successful in getting only a few teachers to participate in the FBA process. Also, in my position as a behavior specialist in my district, I work with a paraprofessional who has been trained in data collection and implementing function based interventions. She often works with me to collect baseline data and to complete ABC observations. Additionally, with my guidance, she implements the plan in the classroom and models the intervention for the teacher. This has been most helpful in allowing me to work around the barrier of limited time.

The benefit of conducting FBA and developing function based intervention is that more effective interventions can be implemented and there will be better outcomes for students. When behavior can be managed before it becomes problematic and disruptive, teachers can better focus on instruction for all of their students. The classroom environment is more conducive to learning. The amount of time it takes to complete a thorough FBA is the only disadvantage of the use of FBAs in the public

schools. Generally, behavior specialists have a high caseload so it is difficult to devote the time needed to conduct FBAs for every case. The demands of the classroom interfere with the ability of teachers to focus the time and attention needed to conduct an FBA. Additionally, teachers usually do not have the needed training to complete FBAs. While time is a constraint, taking the time to complete an FBA and develop a strong behavior plan saves time in the long run. Interventions are more successful when the function of the behavior has been considered.

Based on my experiences working as a behavior specialist, I believe that it would be beneficial for general education and special education teachers to learn to conduct FBAs. Although teachers may have too many demands in the classroom to conduct an FBA independently, with proper training, they could collaborate with behavior specialists to do the job. A foundational knowledge of how antecedents impact behavior, and how consequences maintain behavior, will help teachers to identify appropriate and effective interventions before behaviors escalate. When there is limited understanding of the function of behavior, teachers tend to try any strategy that they may have learned from colleagues, a workshop, or the internet (Teachers Pay Teachers and Pinterest are popular resources for many teachers). While these may all be good strategies, if it is not an intervention based on the function of the behavior, it can do more harm than good. Many times teachers inadvertently reinforce the behavior by using an intervention that is not function based and they do not recognize when they are reinforcing the behavior. When teachers have a better understanding of behavior and function they are more successful at managing behavior before it becomes significant and a disruption to the classroom environment.

Conclusion

While this paper does not resolve the question about whether educators should learn how to formally assess behavior, it does shed light on the issues surrounding the question. The educators agreed with the research that time is an issue when it comes to conducting valid FBAs, for teachers running a classroom or behavior specialists having large caseloads (Scott et al.,2004). The time intensive process of conducting thorough FBAs requires support from colleagues and para-professionals. While the educators agreed with previous research about the time intensive nature of the FBA process, they also supported previous findings about the social validity of the process (O'Neill et al., 2015). Each educator expressed an appreciation for learning how to assess behavior and learning to think functionally about behavior. Each indicated that the FBA process resulted in better outcomes when it came to behavior intervention as opposed to when they would intervene without knowing the function of behavior. Each was supportive of all educators learning how to conduct an FBA to learn how to address the function of behavior.

Whether teachers have the time or desire to conduct their own FBAs or leave it up to consultants or school based behavior specialists, it is important for them to know how to assess behavior. As indicated by the educators, when teachers have an understanding of functions of behavior and how to assess behavior they are better equipped to participate in the behavior assessment and planning if consultants are required. Teachers' participation in the process assists consultants or school based behavior specialists design interventions that meet the needs of the student as well as the teacher in the context of the classroom. Additionally, teachers who understand the foundations behind functional behavior assessment will observe behavior in terms of function during their normal classroom activities. Subsequently,

they will be able to address minor classroom nuisance behavior effectively and efficiently before the behavior escalates to the point it interferes with learning in the classroom and requires a complete functional behavior assessment. Educating pre-service and in service teachers and other educational staff about functional behavior assessment should be undertaken by schools as well as teacher preparation programs. It would be of benefit for all educators to have another tool at their disposal to not only address their students' academic needs but behavior needs as well.

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GRADUATION 101: CRITICAL STRATEGIES FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN COLLEGE COMPLETION

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African American men have not historically participated in higher education at the same levels or with the same success as others. And, as colleges and universities have sought to diversify their student populations, the rapidly increasing enrollment of Asian American and Hispanic students has illustrated the difficulty in trying to increase the enrollment of Black men in college. Once enrolled, these men similarly have difficulties completing their undergraduate degrees, and without the completion of a college education, they are more apt to participate or succumb to a wide range of social difficulties. Drawing upon a sample of highly educated African American men, the current study sought to identify and describe the variables or factors that they believed were critical to their completion of an initial college degree.

Introduction

There are multiple accountability issues facing higher education, including the recruitment, retention, and graduation of all students, but particularly students of color. These issues have been most prevalent among African Americans, where graduation rates of these admitted students hovers near 40% (Camera, 2016). Additionally, only 28% of African Americans graduate within six years from the institution in which they initially enroll (Shapiro, Dundar, Huie, Wakungu, Yuan, Nathan, & Hwang, 2017). The Shapiro report also indicated that only 25% of African American men graduate from the institution in which they initially enroll, and that 33% of these men actually graduate in total within six years. Many reasons have been identified for the low graduation rates of African American men, including mentoring, student support services, academic preparation, and even sociological reasons that suggest that a community's expectation is low or non-existent for these students' success.

Student persistence problems are not isolated to any particular student population, and are common throughout higher education. Students who are admitted to an institution are often provided a wide array of resources to help them stay focused and graduate in a timely manner, yet there are students who are not well situated for the institutions where they have enrolled, and many of these students also lack the appropriate skills to be successful in college. Other personal issues ranging from relationships to part-time employment also impact a student's ability to graduate from college, and enrollment management professionals struggle to find the best ways to reach out to students to assure them every opportunity for success.

Many enrollment management efforts focus on early-intervention programs that target individual students who may be at-risk for dropping or stopping out of their enrollment. These programs are often highly personal and rely on individuals contacting and communicating with the at-risk student, and attempting

to provide resources or access to information or money to continue their studies. Most of these programs are broadly designed to assist as many students as possible, and fewer programs have been designed to specifically respond to minority student populations.

Therefore, the purpose for conducting the study was to identify, through the voices of highly successful African American men, critical strategies and resources that colleges and universities can use to improve the graduation opportunities of African American male undergraduates.

Background of the Study

Colleges and universities have been consistently interested in strategies and techniques to enroll diverse populations, and once enrolled, to help them graduate. These have been targeted at specific minority groups and across many skill levels, and have been organized by offices as varied as student affairs, academic affairs, outreach, and even left to the individual academic units. In responding to African American men in particular, strategies and resources have been directed to address student financial shortfalls, academic deficiencies, and the social adjustment and integration to the college environment.

One of the first barriers that have been identified for college access for nearly all populations has been the cost of attendance. The cost of a college education can be a problem for initial enrollment as well as continuing enrollment, and this is particularly true for many African American men who are the first in their families to enroll in college (Elliott & Nam, 2012). As a result, many campuses have responded with on-campus financial assistance programs, such as work-study opportunities, and have given students a means of not only gaining professional skills, but to earning money while attending college (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013)

Other financial programs targeting need-based student enrollment include federal loan programs (Gross, Torres, & Zerquera, 2013). Though federal loans can assist students in attaining a college degree, they must be paid back with interest, leaving students with a higher risk of graduating with significant debt (Houle, 2014) or dropping out of college due to feelings about financial insecurity (Dwyer, Hodson, & McCloud, 2013). Research has shown that students who are awarded aid that is not required to be paid back are more likely to graduate from college (Chen, 2012). Thus, state governments, private foundations, and institutions have sought ways, including fundraising to endow scholarship programs and other "free" money programs to increase need-based funding to students.

Academic program leaders have noticed that financial aid alone does not increase successful undergraduate attrition, and some institutional programs have emphasized pairing scholarships with mentoring and training programs (Wilson, Iyengar, Pang, Warner, & Luces, 2012). Additionally, experimental programs have been designed to include undergraduate research to help engage and support students (Jones, Barlow, & Villarejo, 2010).

A student's need for academic support in higher education may be determined partially by the quality of education and emotional encouragement received from high school teachers and counselors. Pre-enrollment academic factors, such as college preparation, high aspirations, and established goals have been attributed to helping students navigate the demands that come in the college experience (Simmons, 2013; Chen, 2012; Palmer, Maramba, & Dancy, 2011). The result for students once they are enrolled are a patchwork of academic and non-academic support programs that are designed to identify students who are at-risk and to provide the resources necessary to help keep the student in school and academically successful (Wilson et al, 2012).

The other element of pre-college enrollment impacting retention, particularly among African American men, is that of remediation. Some studies shown that students were more likely to graduate by completing remedial courses while pursuing undergraduate studies (Bettinger & Long, 2009). Research has also focused on why students need remediation, such as the experience, credential status, educational attainment, and cultural competence of students' high school teachers; ultimately, how well a secondary school prepared a student for college (Howell, 2011; Scott, Taylor, & Palmer, 2013). Parker (2007) argued that the need for remediation courses should address the academic preparation gap found between high schools and colleges (Davis & Palmer, 2010). Further, student success courses that engage students with learning about college, such as study and organizational skills, as well as learning how to use resources on campus, were beneficial for student success in college (O'Gara, Karp, & Hughes, 2009).

Academic advising and tutoring have also been discussed as beneficial academic supports provided by colleges for students (Bettinger, Boatman, & Long, 2013; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Peer tutoring programs have offered academic and learning support for students who have required extra assistance (Munley, Garvey, McConnell, 2010), and in turn has increased student engagement in academic activities (Kim, 2015). Tutoring services and techniques, such as Reciprocal Peer Tutoring (RPT), have also shown to improve the academic performance of students (Dioso-Henson, 2012). Research has shown that peer-group support served as an academic support for students of color while attending college and, in addition, provided social support by offering students a positive social network (Palmer, Maramba, & Dancy, 2011). Though academic support has been a critical component of developing Black male resiliency (Kim & Hargrove, 2013), research has shown that academic support is not the sole component that promises success on college campuses. High achieving African American college men are more apt to have higher levels of self-efficacy and social integration (Reid, 2013). Social integration can be achieved through multiple agencies, including fraternities and academic organizations (Simmons, 2013). Creating social networks with faculty and administrators (Reid, 2013) has also been identified as a way for students to connect with role models and other African American men, thus building important social support networks.

Literature has suggested that college students persist through post-secondary education by recognizing the value of support offered by family and community members (Scott, Taylor, & Palmer, 2013). Equally important is the concept of community expectancy, which argues that the behavior, beliefs, principles, and actions of community agents, such as family, neighbors, teachers, religious bodies, informal associations, and other elements that students interact with inside of their immediate environment, impacts an individual's values and behaviors (Miller & Deggs, 2012).

The unique role of spiritual or religious institutions within African American communities has traditionally been a center of social life where community members find those with similar characteristics and opportunities for both informal and formal communication. These bodies allow for the building of friendships, and that coupled with the spiritual aspects of faith demonstration have been found to impact positive self-identity among students (Dancy, 2010) and greater success in college (Jett, 2010). Resources that can elevate a student's chance to graduate from college are critical to narrowing the gap between African American men earning a high school diploma and a college degree.

So with a multiple number of variables impacting all student success, and particularly the success of a small minority within the larger institution, there is tremendous need to try and identify best practices and phenomena or experiences that are contributing to student success. The current study used the vast existing body of literature on student success and the African American man on campus in particular, to frame a descriptive study that can lead to the creation of hypotheses and models that ultimately can result in the creation of mitigating variables to influence student persistence.

Research Methods

The purpose for conducting the study was to identify, through the voices of African American men, critical strategies and resources that colleges and universities can use to improve the graduation opportunities of African American male undergraduates. A qualitative, phenomenological research method was identified for use to identify and describe common phenomenon among lived experiences of participants' college attendance (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990; 2014). Qualitative research approaches inform research problems that address the meaning that individuals and groups assign to social problems, such as the experience of enrolling in college by African American men (Creswell, 2013).

A phenomenological research approach was used to examine the issue that has been identified in previous research-based literature. Subsequently, procedural steps were completed to ensure rigor during the identification of themes that emerged during data collection and analysis (Pereira, 2012). Participants' prior experiences with pre-enrollment factors, academic assistance, and social experiences while enrolling in and attending postsecondary education was sought by a purposeful sampling method to recruit participants, construction of a structured interview protocol, and interview questions developed from prior research studies.

A structured interview protocol, including three open-ended interview questions, and probes, was created to collect data from interview participants (Moustakas, 1994). Non-verbal responses by participants were also noted as critical for obtaining accurate feedback during interviews. According to Polkinghornek (1989), 5-25 individuals who share similar phenomenon, or experiences, should suffice as a suitable number of participants to interview. The current study included 11 participants who identified as African American men, advanced-degree holding, and were 25 years or older at the time of the interview. Each individual was contacted by email and voluntarily gave his consent to schedule and participate in a 60-90 minute interview. Eight participants agreed to face-to-face interviews, and three participants, because of geographic location, agreed to interview by telephone. To ensure trustworthiness, standards of validation and reliability, such as structural corroboration were sought to strengthen the credibility of the study (Eisner, 1991).

Initially, interview transcripts of audio recordings were typed to provide a coherent and comprehensive view of participant responses. Validation standards, including bracketing, were used to minimize researcher bias and view phenomenon from a fresh and neutral perspective to allow emerging information to guide data analysis (Moustakas, 1994; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Triangulation of multiple data sources was applied by note-taking in an interviewer's journal, member-checking (Hays & Singh, 2012; Glesne, 2016), collaborating with participants (Patton, 2015), and generating descriptions to provide detail and promote transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 2010). Procedures to ensure reliability included establishing a code list (Creswell

& Poth, 2018) and applying the code list to typed transcriptions to compare with each researcher's interpretation of emergent themes found through analysis of data gathered from participant feedback. All interviews were conducted in the spring and summer of 2017.

Findings

Four dominant themes were identified that were associated with African American men graduating from college, including mentorship, socialization, on-campus supports, and family and community expectations. Each theme contributed to a supportive role that guided these men toward earning an undergraduate degree. We found, according to our participants' responses, components that led to college graduation that have been established in prior research studies focused on successful college retention and graduation strategies of African American undergraduate men.

Mentorship: Nearly all of our study's participants described particular individuals who supported them, whether academically, socially, or emotionally, while they attended college and advanced toward graduation. Mentorships were critical components that promoted students' development and self-actualization during transitions, that would have otherwise, been more difficult to progress through while enrolled in college. Mentoring relationships, for each participant, developed through interpersonal associations within a social network, whether in formal or informal settings, on-campus or within their own neighborhoods and communities.

Several of our participants recalled how mentorships began, some on-campus, but many from students' communities. One participant who played NCAA sports explained how his coaches reinforced positive values and principles, and gave him support while he advanced toward his degree. A number of participants discussed how leaders in formal organizations, including fraternities or other on-campus organizations, gave them opportunities to meet individuals with similar characteristics or circumstances, and leaders from those organizations served as models for students. Several participants described how their family, high school teachers, and community members, were support systems for them and were vital to their persistence during college, even when a school was geographically distant from home.

Mentorships can offer students several benefits during their years of attendance. For example, one respondent said "I was just kind of lost when it [college] started. I mean I fumbled around campus and didn't get it. Then I had a professor who talked to me after class, and then we kept talking after class. He took me under his wing, and it helped me get grounded on campus." Another student had a similar comment: "I had this RA who looked like me. I mean he was Black. And he didn't just talk to me about classes and keeping out of trouble, he studied with me. He ate lunch with me. He just hung out with me. That wasn't a formal 'be my mentor' kind of relationship, but that is really what it became. He watched out for me, and it made a difference."

Socialization: Some students, at times, may feel a sense of conflict between their cultural background and the cultural norms that exists on a college campus. Students, generally from a minority population, may be susceptible to feelings of displacement and may have a peculiar outlook among those students that represent dominant populations on campus. Without sufficient support, some of these students may not engage with their collegiate experience as well as those that have assimilated to a campus by progressing through developmental stages and achieving a strong self-efficacy. Most of our participants discussed how they advanced through college during feelings of social isolation on campus.

Nearly all of our participants described feelings of seclusion and awkwardness while living on or attending courses on campus. Each of our participants felt underrepresented within the student population which accounted for many emotional feelings, including loneliness. Most found comfort by seeking out associations with individuals or groups that had similar circumstances or had previously overcome such feelings and successfully progressed through post-secondary education. Some participants also took advantage of student support services offered through their schools.

On-campus Supports: Many colleges and universities offer opportunities for students to engage with the college experience. Some of the men in our study discussed the importance of on-campus divisions that promote engagement with other ethnically diverse students. One participant described how his school's multi-cultural center was a space that allowed him to meet other students and faculty that shared his worldview and sense of underrepresentation on campus.

Family and Community Expectations: Each of our participants stated how family and community members supported and motivated them to remain in and graduate from college. Some family and community members previously earned degrees and offered encouragement and advice that had given them the resolve that they need to succeed while attending college. Other men described how some of their family members were able to help them financially with attendance costs. The most common response, however, was that family members helped understand that going to college would make a long-term, positive impact on the student. One student said "My Mom really opened my eyes. I don't think, with the crowd I was running with, that I would go to college or anything else. Then my Mom dragged me to this meeting in our church basement about a college recruiter. If Mom hadn't had taken me to that, I wouldn't have gone to college."

Discussion and Conclusions

Findings reinforced much of what the scholarly literature indicates regarding student success generally. The African American men interviewed offered no silver-bullet to grow enrollment, retention, or matriculation, but rather, reinforced the ingredients that have been identified for decades in studying student success. African American men, and all college students, must be positioned to find support groups and networks that will reinforce positive behavior leading to graduation, and that institutional supports for academic work must also be made available. What may be unique about the findings in the current study are that for these men who were interviewed, the social support networks were very personal and individualized. As a small minority population on campus, this notion of individualization might be particularly relevant for African American men, as issues of trust, respect, and expectation all can figure into how students see themselves.

The findings of the study also support the general tenets of community expectancy theory, suggesting that individuals must surround themselves with individuals who have an expectation for them. These expectations might be for academic performance, for peer support, or even simply providing the belief in their fellow students that they can in fact graduate from college. Further, the community expectancy theory identifies multiple formal and informal agencies that can exert expectations on an individual, and these are similarly expressed in the interview data from the study subjects.

The particular challenge for higher education administrators is how to create a community that has expectations for its members. In some instances, institutional faith is put into

Greek-letter organizations, as members find ways to support and encourage each other. The Greek-letter organization structure, in recent years and historically, however, has been inconsistent in promoting positive role modeling. Institutions, working through divisions of student affairs attempt to build community in residence halls, through activities, and even in academic departments and organizations. The success or failure of these attempts to "make the campus small," as one participant said, is entirely relegated on the personalities, behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes of the students who make up the smaller groups.

In the future, colleges and universities must be intentional in their actions to help all students succeed, and this extends beyond just African American men and women. Institutions must identify which practices can help students study, learn, grow, and ultimately graduate, and which activities are lodged in an institution's tradition and do not help create an expectation for certain types of behaviors. Intentional institutions that can align activities with learning and growth outcomes will ultimately be the ones that attract, enroll, retain, and graduate African American men as well as other students.

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WHAT MATTERS IN COLLEGE STUDENT SUCCESS? DETERMINANTS OF COLLEGE RETENTION AND GRADUATION RATES

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Increasingly, student success in college is gauged by retention and graduation rates. Understanding the factors that influence student success can assist practitioners in terms of programming and institutional investments. This study evaluated factors such as residential living, attendance programs, demographic attributes, average class size, and student academic preparation by employing longitudinal, student-level data at one midsized university in the southeastern United States from 1998 to 2004. Individual student information was analyzed, including average class size and student performance in general education courses. Probit regression models indicated that retention and graduation rates were higher for students who were academically prepared, received grants or scholarships, and were in smaller classes. These rates were not influenced by sex, race, absenteeism, or living in residence halls. This work suggests that universities could improve graduation and retention rates by investing in scholarships, smaller class sizes, and financial aid infrastructure.

Keywords: Economics of higher education, retention rates, graduation rates, class size, student success

Colleges and universities are subject to increasing scrutiny regarding rising costs, student access, and the production of measurable outcomes. Retention and graduation rates have become key metrics for assessing progress and success for colleges and universities, often using first-time freshmen as a subject of study. Students who leave before they complete their degrees can cost universities thousands of dollars in unrealized tuition revenue and replacement recruiting costs. For students, dropping out can mean unrealized potential and lower earnings over their working careers. The success of the university and the success of its students are intertwined. Some factors can be influenced by institutional programming or incentives, but other factors are external or based on student-specific attributes. In this study, we used data of individual students' first-year performance and experiences at a midsized public university in the southeastern United States to identify contributors to student success. By including factors that can be influenced by the university and by policy, while controlling for student demographics and academic preparation, this study has practical implications for administrators and universities.

Background

Many studies have identified factors of college student retention and graduation rates. This review categorizes the research into three broad categories: institutional factors, student attributes, and financial considerations.

Institutional factors include student/faculty ratios, student-life programs and services, and specific academic programs such as college-prep, honors courses, or first-year experience classes. Tinto (2006) suggested that such institutional factors encourage students' persistence. University administrators need to know which aspects of these internal investments and institutional management strategies impact student success rates.

Institutional distributions of funding and resources across functional categories indicate a university's priorities and can have significant impact on student outcomes. Hamrick, Schuh, and Shelley (2004) found that instructional and library spending positively impacts student graduation rates. Likewise, Ryan (2004) confirmed that academic and instructional spending improved graduation rates. Webber and Ehrenberg (2010) extended their analyses to include student support services and instruction expenditures, and found that both increase graduation and retention rates. A university's specific purchases matter as well as the categories of expenditures. For instance, spending on tenured and tenure-track faculty instead of nontenure-track instructors positively impacts graduation rates (Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2005).

Instead of looking at broad expenditure categories, other researchers have investigated the effectiveness of specific programs targeting student populations. For example, programs can create a shared university experience for students, such as first-year students (Colton, Connor, Shultz, & Easter, 1999; Harrington et al., 2016; Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, & Leonard, 2007; Noble, Flynn, Lee, & Hilton, 2007) or students within a common major (Dagley, Georgiopoulos, Reece, & Young, 2015; Watterson & Carnegie, 2011). Other programs target students with specific demographic attributes such as students of color (Aragon & Rios Perez, 2006), nontraditional students (Wyatt, 2011) and first-generation students (Inkelas et al., 2007).

Consistent with Tinto's (1987) seminal paper, studies have shown that common courses or shared experiences can improve student success by integrating students into the university community. In particular, learning communities or first-year experience courses have had positive impacts on retention rates and grade point averages (GPAs; Burgette & Magun-Jackson, 2008; Clark & Cundiff, 2011; Jamelske, 2009; Miller, Janz, & Chen, 2007; Yockey & George, 1998) and graduation rates (Lang, 2007; Noble et al., 2007). Some universities have additionally integrated students into the university community through mandatory on-campus residence. Studies comparing student success measures such as GPA and retention across living arrangements have shown that students who lived at home and students who lived in residence halls had success rates that were consistently higher than those of students who lived in fraternity or sorority housing and were, in some cases, higher than those of students who lived in off-campus apartments (Blimling, 1989; Bowman & Partin, 1993; Pascarella, 1984, 1985).

Involvement and engagement have been identified as keys to student success in college. Students who feel connected to their academic endeavors are more likely to succeed (Allen, Robbins, Casillas, & Oh, 2008; Baker & Robnett, 2012; Hunt, Boyd, Gast, Mitchell, & Wilson, 2012; Morrow & Ackermann, 2012; Svanum & Bigatti, 2009). Attention to the quality of the classroom experience for students is one academic condition that promotes student engagement.

An obvious prerequisite to reaping the benefit of classroom interactions, especially in

the first year of college, is to ensure that students participate in class (Knaggs, Sondergeld, & Schardt, 2015). Some universities track class attendance among first-year students to increase student accountability (Lotkowski, Robbins, & Noeth, 2004; Hassel & Lourey, 2005) and academic success (Credé, Roch, & Kieszczynka, 2010). Cartney and Rouse (2006) recommended facilitating small-group learning opportunities to improve student first-year success. Some universities limit class size to encourage participation and accountability. Studies have found that a large class size can adversely impact student satisfaction and student evaluations of instructors (DeShields, Kara, & Kaynak, 2005; Miles & House, 2015). Other studies have tracked an inverse relationship between class size and student performance in a specific class (De Paola et al., 2013; Morris & Scott, 2014). Chapman and Ludlow (2010) confirmed that a large class size adversely impacts graduate and undergraduate *perceptions* of learning. Diette and Raghav (2015) found that students' grades were adversely affected by class size at a private, highly selective liberal arts college, and that this effect was greater for first-year students and students with lower SAT scores. The average class size in the Diette and Raghav study was 20.2, which may not be generalizable to larger public institutions.

Another category of factors that impact students' success in college includes individual attributes, such as behaviors, motivation, academic preparation, demographic factors, and family characteristics, such as parents' and siblings' degree attainment. Students who are more academically prepared, not surprisingly, have more success in college (Braunstein & McGrath, 1997; Johnson, 2008; Kirby & Sharpe, 2001). However, regardless of preparation, behaviors and decisions while in school impact students' achievement. Modfidi, Amani, and Brown (2014) found that trait gratitude and grateful coping strategies improved student success along several dimensions, including GPA and college persistence. Their survey included only 54 students; similar results were found by Slanger, Berg, Fisk, and Hanson (2015) using ten years of College Student Inventory data. They identified motivational factors impacting students' success, including GPA and retention. DeBerard, Spielmans, and Julka (2004) documented that better coping strategies, healthy choices regarding smoking and drinking, and social/parental support positively affect students' academic performance.

Financial constraints can also inhibit student performance. In some cases, universities and policy makers distribute financial aid, typically in the form of scholarships, grants, and/or loans. Institutional aid or scholarships are usually distributed to students based on academic merit, and in some cases for athletics. Government-supported aid, grants, and loans are typically need-based. In an extensive review of higher education literature, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) reported that financial aid was beneficial for student persistence and degree completion, particularly for those in need. In distinguishing between the different types of aid, mixed patterns emerge. Generally, grant and scholarship aid had positive effects on retention and graduation rates, while loans had either a positive impact or no effect (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Glocker (2011) found that student aid increased the probability of graduation and decreased the duration of studies for students in Germany. In a U.S. study, Wohlgemuth et al. (2007) and Whalen, Sanders, and Shelley (2009) found that financial aid increased retention and graduation rates among incoming freshmen. In Singell's (2004) study of students at the University of Oregon, need- and merit-based aid increased retention overall; however, need-based aid actually decreased graduation rates. He also surveyed unretained students who indicated their decisions to leave were largely financial.

When using research to identify practical strategies for institutional investments, case studies may be too narrow in scope to be generalizable to other contexts, and macro-level analyses may not provide sufficient specificity to create institution-specific strategies. Moreover, some of the contributing factors to student success may not be under the control of college and university administrators (Habley et al., 2012). This study attempts to address these dilemmas by simultaneously evaluating *institutional factors* (such as programs specifically designed to improve student retention, class size, and on-campus/residential living), *student attributes* (such as academic preparation, first-year performance, and demographic characteristics), and *financial considerations* (such as grant aid, scholarships, and subsidized and unsubsidized student loans).

One contribution of this paper is to provide an example of using institutional data across multiple dimensions to quantify contributing factors to institutional metrics of concern. Excluding relevant factors, such as financial aid or academic experiences, can yield misspecified models and potentially translate into universities engaging in inefficient or even ineffective investment strategies. Another contribution of this study is the inclusion of class size, using individual student transcript records, matched with financial aid and admission data to track the retention and graduation rates for entire incoming freshmen classes. Our data includes nearly 13,000 incoming freshmen over a seven-year period at one midsized public university in the southeastern United States.

Data

Detailed student records were collected for first-time, full-time freshmen whose first enrollment occurred during the period 1998–2004. The initial observation year, 1998, was the first year the university adopted its online data management software system. To better isolate the effects of living on-campus, we used an end date of 2004 because it preceded the on-campus residence requirement for all incoming freshmen. The primary student records came from the university's database and contained the students' admission records, including demographics, ACT scores, financial aid, and first-year experiences such as classes and grades. The university also implemented an attendance program in 1998 that centrally collected absenteeism records for freshmen. If students missed classes, program staff would contact the students directly and offer interventions and support. Absenteeism and on- or off-campus residential status records collected by this program were matched with the official university records to create our data set.

Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. There were nearly 13,000 first-time freshmen in this sample. About half were male, and three-quarters were White. Most of the students were in-state residents (72%). In terms of their preparation for college, the average high school GPA for core classes was 3.13, and the average ACT composite score was 23.4. In the first year, 16% of the students had chronic absenteeism in at least one class (more than five absences reported). The average GPA in general education courses in the first year was 2.56, and the average class size was 82.2 students. During this period, although living on campus was optional, 87% of freshmen chose to live in residence halls on campus.

Students' success can depend on their own preparation and effort, class experiences, living arrangements, and financial status. Thus, we also included metrics about students' financial support in our models: 64% of the freshmen received grant aid, 34% received merit-based scholarships, 3% received athletic scholarships, and 27% utilized subsidized loans. This study focused on student success as measured by retention and graduation rates. Of the 12,812 incoming students, 80% were retained, meaning they were enrolled in the following fall semester. Fifty-seven percent of the freshmen graduated within 6 years.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Incoming Freshmen 1998–2004

		Mean (*SD*)
6-Year Graduation Rate	= 1 if the student received degree by the 6th year; = 0 otherwise[a]	0.573 (0.495)
HS GPA	GPA from high school core classes based on a 4-point scale	3.132 (0.597)
ACT	Composite ACT score	23.42 (4.540)
MALE	= 1 if the student is male = 0 otherwise	0.449 (0.497)
WHITE	= 1 if the student identified ethnicity as Caucasian = 0 otherwise	0.752 (0.432)
AGE	Age calculated as of August 15 of admission year using birth-date recorded in admission file.	18.056 (0.909)
In-State Resident (RES)	= 1 if the student identified as in-state resident = 0 otherwise	0.720 (0.449)
Chronic Absenteeism (ABSENT)	= 1 if the student had more than 5 absences in 1 class = 0 otherwise	0.164 (0.370)
Freshman General Education GPA (FR_ GPA)	GPA average for general education courses taken in the first year	2.56 (0.992)
CLASS_SIZE	Average class size in general education courses taken the first year *maximum value = 312, minimum value = 13*	82.187 (29.665)
Residence Hall (DORM)	= 1 if the student lived in a residence hall on campus = 0 otherwise	0.865 (0.342)
Received Grant (GRANT)	= 1 if the student received financial aid grant = 0 otherwise	0.640 (0.480)
Subsidized Loan (SUB_LOAN)	= 1 if the student received and took out a subsidized loan = 0 otherwise	0.267 (0.442)
Unsubsidized Loan (UNSUB_LOAN)	= 1 if the student received and took out an unsubsidized loan = 0 otherwise	0.171 (0.376)
Merit Scholarship (SCHOLARSHIP)	= 1 if the student received a merit-based institutional scholar-ship = 0 otherwise	0.342 (0.474)
Athletic Scholarship (SPORT)	= 1 if the student received an athletic scholarship = 0 otherwise	0.026 (0.161)

***N* = 12,812**

[a] The 0 value for the 6-year graduate rate includes students who were not retained into the 6th year and students who had not completed their degrees but were still enrolled in their undergraduate program in the 6th year.

Analyses and Results

Retention Rates

The first hurdle in academic achievement is remaining in school. Thus, our initial measure of student success for incoming freshmen was retention. Several factors can impact freshman-to-sophomore retention rates, including institutional conditions, demographics, socioeconomic status, student behaviors, and academic ability and performance. We estimated a limited dependent model using Probit analysis to estimate the probability that a first-time, full-time freshman was retained into the fall semester following his or her initial fall enrollment. We included the marginal effects to identify the explanatory power of each independent variable.

We included demographic controls for sex, race, and age. There were no consistent *a priori* theoretical expectations about the effects of these attributes. However, we included a geographic variable that we expected to be positive. We posited that students who were in-state residents may be more likely to persist in enrollment compared to nonresident students, in part due to their proximity to home and the lower price of resident tuition. We expected that students who lived in residence halls would be more integrated in the university and thus more likely to be retained.

To control for academic ability, the model includes high school core GPAs and ACT scores. Although both are measures of academic attributes, they measure different characteristics. GPA is a measure of academic performance, the degree to which the individual can apply knowledge and perform tasks assessed for grades. ACT is a measure of college readiness. Both measures were expected to positively impact retention rates.

In 1998, this university embarked on a program that actively tracked freshmen class attendance and had faculty report absences to program administrators. Due to the reliance on voluntary faculty reporting, there may be systematic errors in the data if individual faculty members consistently failed to report or did not report absences accurately. Thus, we included a measure of chronic absenteeism that measured whether a student had more than five absences reported for any one class. Persistently missing class would presumably undermine a student's probability of being retained.

The other academic metrics of first-year experiences are consistently based on general education course work because those classes are the most homogeneous across the student population. For example, introductory engineering courses may have different class sizes, content, and rigor compared to introductory classes for majors in business, social sciences, or the humanities. At this university, general education requirements are the same across all majors and include the same core course options. This common course work structure provided a basis for comparison.

Reviewing individual student transcripts for general education courses was not a straightforward endeavor. Several class options fulfilled the general education requirements in each category: English, math, natural science, social science, humanities, and fine arts. The matches between category and courses were not complicated. However, identifying which classes on each student's transcript counted toward the fulfillment of the general education requirements was more complicated. For example, a social science major may take more than the minimum 6 hours of social science courses within the first year. We had to identify which social science courses to include in the general education GPA and class size calculations. Thus, we developed a series of limiting decision criteria. We decided to first count courses by when the course was taken, excluding any Advanced Placement (AP) courses or College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) credits. Courses

were included sequentially up the point of general education category fulfillment (i.e., 6 hours of social sciences). If a student exceeded the general education hours required within one of the broad categories by taking multiple courses within the same semester, we had to select which course grade and class size to count. Thus, the next limiter was the level of the course, with freshman-level courses included before sophomore-level courses. If multiple freshman-level social science courses were taken during one semester, the next limiter was to include the course in which the student earned the highest grade. When semester, course level, and grade earned were equivalent, the final limiter was enrollment; the lowest-sized class was included. For example, a student might take one social science course in his or her first semester, which would be counted in the general education metrics (class size and GPA) for this study. If the student then took two more social science courses in the second term, a freshman-level course would be included before a sophomore-level course. If both courses were sophomore-level social science classes, then the grade earned would matter. If the student earned A's in both courses, the class with the lower enrollment would count as the student's final social science general education course when we calculated the GPA variable and average class size. This process was repeated for each of the 12,812 students for all six categories of general education requirements. Based on these specifications, GPA may be upwardly biased, and the class size may be downwardly biased.

Our *a priori* expectations were that students in smaller classes would receive more individualized attention and feel more connected to their academic experience, and were therefore more likely to be retained. We expected the class size coefficient to be negative. Students' performances in those courses could also influence the students' probability of persisting into the following fall semester; therefore, higher average GPA should increase the probability of retention. The freshman GPA coefficient should be positive.

Students' financial statuses may impact their ability to persist in enrollment. Students who were the most financially needy were eligible to receive federal grants. Because grants reduce financial burdens and do not require payback, we assumed they increased the probability of being retained. Students may also borrow money. Students who were eligible would first opt to take subsidized loans, which defer interest accumulation. Unsubsidized loans go either to low-income students who have borrowed their maximum subsidized loans or to higher-income students who were eligible for loans but not for the interest subsidy. Because loans only defer the cost of education, they may not influence the probability of retention. Students may also have received scholarships. Institutional scholarships at this university are based on academic merit or athletics; we posited that both would increase the probability of being retained into sophomore year.

The model for these analyses included demographics, academic preparation, financial aid, absenteeism across all classes, and first-year academic experiences (such as average class size and GPAs in general education courses). In the first model, the probability of retention from the first fall term to the following fall term was estimated as a binary dependent variable:

$$Retention = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 HS\ GPA + \alpha_2 ACT + \alpha_3 MALE + \alpha_4 WHITE + \alpha_5 AGE + \alpha_6 RES + \alpha_7 ABSENT + \alpha_8 FR\_GPA + \alpha_9 CLASS\_SIZE + \alpha_{10} DORM + \alpha_{11} GRANT + \alpha_{12} SUB\_LOAN + \alpha_{13} UNSUB\_LOAN + \alpha_{14} SPORT + \varepsilon_1. \quad (1)$$

During the period of our study, merit-based scholarships at this university

depended almost exclusively on the student's ACT score; therefore, the scholarship variable was excluded from this model specification. Including the ACT score is the preferred specification because this score has ordinal values, whereas the merit scholarship variable is binary.

If high school GPA and ACT are both measures of a student's academic preparedness, then the model may be misspecified. Thus, Equation 2 was estimated excluding the ACT score. This exclusion allowed us to include merit-based scholarships.

$$Retention = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 HS\ GPA + \alpha_2 MALE + \alpha_3 WHITE + \alpha_4 AGE + \alpha_5 RES + \alpha_6 ABSENT + \alpha_7 FR\_GPA + \alpha_8 CLASS\_SIZE + \alpha_9 DORM + \alpha_{10} GRANT + \alpha_{11} SUB\_LOAN + \alpha_{12} UNSUB\_LOAN + \alpha_{13} SCHOLARSHIP + \alpha_{14} SPORT + \varepsilon_2. \quad (2)$$

The results of these estimations are presented in Table 2. The first column of each model specification indicates the sign and significance of the independent variable. The second column indicates the magnitude or marginal impact of each variable. In both equations, high school GPA positively influenced the probability of being retained. Each additional GPA point increased the probability of retention by 0.01%. From Equation 1, each additional point earned on the ACT increased the retention probability by 0.1%. There were no differences between White and non-White students or between male or female students in terms of retention from freshman fall semester to the following fall term. However, in Equation 2, the age variable is positive and significant; each additional year of age of the incoming freshman increased the probability of retention by 0.6%. Higher grades in general education courses during freshman year increased the probability of returning the following fall by 0.07% for each additional point on the 4-point scale. Somewhat unexpectedly, in-state residency, absenteeism, and living on campus did not impact the probability of being retained. However, larger classes adversely impacted the probability of returning. As the average class size increased by 10 students, the probability of retention fell by 0.3% (equation 1) and by 0.2% (equation 2). As expected, grants increased the probability of retention. This was a binary variable, so receipt of a grant of any amount increased the probability of retention by 7.7% in the first specification and 6.9% in the second specification.

Scholarships also increased the probability of retention. Receiving a merit-based scholarship increased the probability of success by 12.5%. Scholarship athletes were approximately 10% more likely to be retained *ceteris paribus* (9.4% in Equation 1 and 11.3% in Equation 2).

In summary, retention rates were higher for academically prepared students, those who performed well in classes, and those who received merit-based and athletic scholarships and grant aid. These results are consistent with other research findings and *a priori* expectations. In addition, we found that smaller class sizes improved retention rates. Retention is the first step toward achieving academic success, considered here as graduating within 6 years. In the following section, similar equations are estimated using 6-year graduation rates as the dependent variable.

Graduation Rates

Similar factors impacted graduation rates as those impacting retention: demographics, academic experiences, and financial factors. To control for academic ability, the model included high school core GPAs and ACT scores. Both were expected to positively impact graduation rates. Race, sex, and age were included as demographic controls. In-state students were expected to be more likely to persist until graduation. Data on chronic absenteeism were reported only in

Table 2: Probit Results for Retention (Freshman Fall to Following Fall) Estimation (1998–2004)

	Equation 1		Equation 2	
	Coefficient (*t* statistic)	**Marginal effects**	**Coefficient (*t* statistic)**	**Marginal effects**
Constant	0.372 (1.425)	0.103	0.274 (1.078)	0.075
HS GPA	0.0003* (2.452)	0.0001*	0.0003* (2.268)	0.0001*
ACT	0.004* (4.434)	0.001*	–	–
MALE	–0.005 (–0.196)	–0.001	0.027 (0.337)	0.007
WHITE	–0.0001 (–0.497)	–0.0000	–0.0001 (–0.550)	–0.0000
AGE	0.022 (1.582)	0.006	0.024** (1.756)	0.006**
In-State Resident (RES)	0.0000 (0.630)	0.0000	0.0000 (0.753)	0.0000
Chronic Absenteeism (ABSENT)	–0.0000 (–0.209)	–0.0000	–0.0000 (0.096)	–0.0000
Freshman General Education GPA (FR_GPA)	0.003* (14.979)	0.0007*	0.0026* (14.764)	0.0007*
CLASS_SIZE	–0.001* (–4.940)	–0.0003*	–0.001* (–4.955)	–0.0002*
Residence Hall (DORM)	–0.0000 (–0.082)	–0.0000	–0.0000 (–0.766)	–0.0000
Received Grant (GRANT)	0.269* (9.571)	0.077*	0.247* (8.692)	0.069*
Subsidized Loan (SUB_LOAN)	–0.288* (–9.664)	–0.085*	–0.193* (–6.292)	–0.055*
Unsubsidized Loan (UNSUB_LOAN)	–0.002 (–0.065)	–0.001	–0.0103 (–0.299)	–0.003
Merit Scholarship (SCHOLARSHIP)	–	–	0.494* (16.188)	0.125*
Athletic Scholarship (SPORT)	0.407* (4.356)	0.094*	0.532* (5.677)	0.113*
Number of observations	12,812			

*$p < 0.05$ **$p < 0.10$

the freshman year; however, absenteeism can still serve as a behavioral proxy that may impact graduation rates. We also included on-campus residence in the freshman year as a potential indicator of campus engagement, as this experience may impact graduation rates. We included institutional factors such as class size, academic performance while at the university, and financial status in the forms of grants, scholarships, and loans.

Using Probit, a linear dependent regression analysis that assumes a normal distribution of the error terms, the following equation was estimated:

$$\textit{6-Year Graduate Rate} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 HS\ GPA + \alpha_2 ACT + \alpha_3 MALE + \alpha_4 WHITE + \alpha_5 AGE + \alpha_6 RES + \alpha_7 ABSENT + \alpha_8 FR\_GPA + \alpha_9 CLASS\_SIZE + \alpha_{10} DORM + \alpha_{11} GRANT + \alpha_{12} SUB\_LOAN + \alpha_{13} UNSUB\_LOAN + \alpha_{14} SPORT + \varepsilon_3. \quad (3)$$

We modified Equation 3 to substitute a binary merit-based scholarship variable in place of the ACT composite variable as we did in Equation 2, yielding the specification in Equation 4:

$$\textit{6-YearGraduateRate} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 HSGPA + \alpha_2 MALE + \alpha_3 WHITE + \alpha_4 AGE + \alpha_5 RES + \alpha_6 ABSENT + \alpha_7 FR\_GPA + \alpha_8 CLASS\_SIZE + \alpha_9 DORM + \alpha_{10} GRANT + \alpha_{11} SUB\_LOAN + \alpha_{12} UNSUB\_LOAN + \alpha_{13} SCHOLARSHIP + \alpha_{14} SPORT + \varepsilon_4. \quad (4)$$

The results of these estimations are presented in Table 3. High school GPA did not contribute significantly to college graduation rates, although each point higher on the ACT increased the probability of graduating by 0.5%. There were no differences by sex or race. Older students were less likely to complete their degrees within 6 years. Each additional year of age reduced the probability of graduation by 1.9%. It may be that older students did not complete their degrees or did not complete their degrees within 6 years of initial enrollment. Several factors that researchers have indicated as important in explaining student success were not statistically different from zero in our model, including in-state residency, chronic absenteeism in freshman year, and living in a residence hall. Things that persistently mattered were either academic or financial. Higher freshman GPAs increased the probability of graduating; each additional grade point in general education courses in the first year on the 4-point scale led to a 0.3% higher likelihood of graduating. Smaller class sizes helped, too; when freshmen had classes that were, on average, 10 students smaller, the students were 0.4% more likely to graduate. However, the largest impact on graduation was financial.

Merit-based scholarships increased the probability of graduating by 18.4%. There was likely a selection bias. The students who were meritorious were inherently more likely to graduate, in large part due to the same abilities and motivation that earned them the merit-based scholarships. We do not claim that the scholarship itself increased graduation rates, but that the meritorious attributes rewarded by the scholarship contributed to higher graduation rates. In addition, the scholarship reduced financial burden, which contributed to academic persistence through graduation. However, athletic scholarships did not impact graduation rates. There was no significant difference in the graduation rates of students with athletic scholarships and their peers. Although athletic scholarships positively impacted retention rates (Table 2), the impact on student success did not persist through to graduation.

Grant aid increased the probability of graduating by about 9% (9.9% in the first specification and 8.9% in the second specification). Receiving student loans decreased the probability of graduation. Receiving a subsidized loan decreased the probability of

Table 3: Probit Results for 6-Year Graduation Estimation (1998–2004)

	Equation 3		Equation 4	
	Coefficient (*t* statistic)	**Marginal effects**	**Coefficient (*t* statistic)**	**Marginal effects**
Constant	1.055* (3.473)	0.4155*	0.9734* (3.299)	0.3826*
HS GPA	0.0002 (1.823)	0.0001	0.0002 (1.704)	0.0010
ACT	0.005* (5.335)	0.0020*	–	–
MALE	0.005 (0.217)	0.0020	0.0079 (0.338)	0.0031
WHITE	–0.0001 (–0.447)	–0.0003	–0.0009 (–0.451)	–0.0003
AGE	–0.049* (–3.029)	–0.0191*	–0.048* (–3.018)	–0.0188*
In-State Resident (RES)	–0.0001 (–0.418)	–0.0000	–0.0000 (–0.256)	–0.000
Chronic Absenteeism (ABSENT)	0.0000 (0.036)	0.0000	0.0000 (0.163)	0.0000
Freshman General Education GPA (FR_GPA)	0.003* (8.427)	0.0012*	0.0029* (8.518)	0.0011*
CLASS_SIZE	–0.001* (–3.757)	–0.0004*	–0.0010* (–3.310)	–0.0004*
Residence Hall (DORM)	–0.0000 (–0.082)	–0.0000	–0.0001 (–0.308)	–0.0000
Received Grant (GRANT)	0.251* (10.095)	0.0989*	0.2267* (9.037)	0.0894*
Subsidized Loan (SUB_LOAN)	–0.480* (–17.971)	–0.1895*	–0.3821* (–13.963)	–0.1510*
Unsubsidized Loan (UNSUB_LOAN)	–0.061* (–2.044)	–0.0243*	–0.0677* (–2.227)	–0.0267*
Merit Scholarship (SCHOLARSHIP)	–	–	0.4793* (18.868)	0.1838*
Athletic Scholarship (SPORT)	–0.087 (–1.232)	–0.0345	0.0485 (0.681)	0.0190
Number of observations	12,812			

*$p < 0.05$ **$p < 0.10$

graduating by 19% in the first specification and 15.1% in the second specification. In addition, unsubsidized loans decreased the probability of graduating by 2.5%. Clearly, financial aid was a large and significant factor in graduation rates, but it is important to note that the types of aid had very different effects—grants were positive and loans were negative.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the literature on college retention and graduation by demonstrating an application of institutional analysis that combines data from several different sources across a single university. This study systematically tracked individual student transcripts to capture the marginal impacts of freshman general education academic experiences on retention and graduation rates.

The practical implications of this work suggest that universities should invest in smaller class sizes and focus on students' financial constraints to improve student success. Surprisingly, two factors typically considered important for freshmen retention and eventual graduation, absenteeism and on-campus residence, were not found to be significant in our models.

Although the nature of the individual-level analysis justifies use of a single institution, the tradeoff is that the results may not be sufficiently generalizable. This study provides an example of combining information across institutional datasets to inform strategic decision making. Future work could apply a similar methodology to other universities' student populations using more current data and additional factors, such as access to online education. Researchers can also modify the metrics of student success to align with specific institutional goals, funding models, or administrators' focus areas.

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GOOD AND BAD REASONS FOR CHANGING A COLLEGE MAJOR: A COMPARISON OF STUDENT AND FACULTY VIEWS

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Very little research examines how students and faculty members view the appropriateness of a variety of reasons for changing majors. In this study, we surveyed 260 students and faculty members from a large, public US university about their perceptions and beliefs about the appropriateness of changing an academic major for a wide range of reasons. Results showed that prior major-changing experience among both students and faculty was unrelated to perceptions of the appropriateness of changing majors. Students reported having changed academic majors at both a higher rate and with greater frequency than faculty when they were students. In addition, faculty and students differed in their perceptions about grades-related factors as appropriate reasons when changing academic majors. Compared to faculty, students reported that changing majors for a variety of reasons was more likely to lead to later regrets. Finally, contrary to expectations, students were similar to faculty in disagreeing that work or effort-related factors within a major are good reasons for changing an academic major. We discuss several implications of the results for the phenomenon of changing majors and for future research on this topic.

Since the 1960s, numerous attempts have been made to refine higher education and improve college student learning and retention (Menand, 2011). Extensive research literature exists pertaining to these goals, including supplemental instruction (Drake, 2011), academic support (Thompson, 2008), freshman interest groups (Tinto & Goodsell, 1994), academic advising (Shriner, 2010; Tinto 1999), student expectations (Zafar, 2011), and learning communities (Zhao & Kuh, 2004). Nonetheless, researchers agree that many questions remain unanswered pertaining to students' retention and successful completion of their chosen major programs of study.

Ronan (2005) reported that 40% of undergraduates enrolled in four-year college programs are still enrolled after year six. More recently, the U.S. Department of Education (2015) reported that only 59% of undergraduates completed their degree in six years. Finally, the most recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2016) revealed that 58% of undergraduates completed their degree in six years – which suggests that there has been little change in completion rates over a 12-year period, despite the broad range of student retention and success initiatives.

In fact, research shows that more than 50% of undergraduate students change their major at least once during the course of their education (Brooks, 2012), with some students changing their majors two to three times (Ronan, 2005). Even students considered to be academically gifted have experienced challenges with selection and completion of their majors (Grant, 2000). Thus far, these decisional challenges have been widely accepted and understood. In fact, as Wallace and Heffernan (2016) pointed out, part of the college experience is finding where one belongs and learning to manage big decisions in order to get there. Along those lines, a faculty view is that many 18 year-olds are not yet certain what they want to do or who they want to be (Selingo, 2014).

There is abundant literature devoted to examining college students' decisions to change academic majors (e.g., DeMarie & Aloise-Young, 2003; Galotti, 1999; Grant, 2000; Nauta, 2007). However, there is very little research examining how students perceive the appropriateness of various reasons for changing one's major. Furthermore, there is very little research examining how faculty members' view the appropriateness of various reasons for changing one's major. The goal of this study was to compare student and faculty views regarding the changing of academic majors. To begin, we briefly examine the task of deciding on an academic major. Next we summarize the literature on changing an academic major. Then, we identify some of the main advantages and disadvantages of changing a major. Finally, based on the relevant literature, we describe our predictions for the current study.

Deciding on an Academic Major

In reviews of the research literature on choice of major (Adams, Pryor, & Adams, 1994; Beggs, Bantham, & Taylor, 2008), at least four major categories of factors have been identified: sources of information and influence (e.g., parents, friends, relatives, school counselors, and university information), job characteristics (e.g., earning potential, quality of life, type of work, and social and psychological benefits), fit and interest in the subject area (e.g., aptitude, interest in the field, and match with personality), and characteristics of the major/degree (e.g., course variety, characteristics of the faculty, and exposure to the introductory course). Beggs et al. found that college students rated matches of major with personal interests as the most important category when choosing their major.

Given the large number of factors affecting major choice, deciding on an academic major can be a complicated as well as potentially threatening and difficult activity. The research literature on choosing a major has also identified several reasons why students might experience difficulty with their choice of academic major, including being unprepared, having unrefined goals, and showing vocational indecision (Daley, 2010; Mbuva, 2011; Slaney, 1980; Tinto, 1999). Chambliss and Takacs (2014) found that faculty members play an important role in determining students' initial choices of major, frequently via an introductory course in the discipline as well as positive or negative experiences with individual faculty members.

According to Galotti (1999), another problem for some students who are new to the college environment may be the sense of finality that accompanies the task of deciding on a college major. Thompson and Orr (2007) suggested that the transition for first-year students can be so stressful in itself, that the thoughts of academics during that stage become secondary. Hence, a lack of guidance and experience with choosing a major, as well as competing concerns, might help to explain new students' caution. On the other hand, too much guidance, or pressure from parents, can be detrimental in the long run (e.g., Wallace & Heffernan, 2016).

Researchers have noted that taking one's time in selecting a major is not a bad thing. For example, Lee (2007) suggested that some students are better off taking their time and exploring their options. Delaying one's choice of major might actually be advantageous for students (Beggs et al., 2008). On the other hand, taking too much time to declare a major can decrease the odds of a successful outcome. Researchers (e.g., Berret, 2012a; Hecklinger, 1972; Muskat, 1979) have found that extensive indecisiveness can lead to academic failure. In summary, research suggests that deciding upon or changing a major prior to the end of the sophomore year of college can be beneficial.

Why do Students Change Academic Majors?

As with the case of choosing a major, there are many reasons why students might decide to change their major. Conklin, Dahling, and Garcia (2013) suggested that two criteria be met when considering remaining committed to an academic major: students must perceive that they belong in an academic major via emotional identification (they must feel that they belong in a chosen program) and cognitive evaluation (they must feel that they are achieving positive results). If the two criteria remain positive, the likelihood of eventually changing majors can be minimized and success can be more likely.

Regarding the first criterion, some students feel that they just do not belong in their chosen discipline or major and cannot cope with the situation they have gotten themselves into without changing that major. A lack of a sense of achievement or a lack of a sense of belonging in an academic program can play a significant role in students' choice to change academic majors (Chang, Cerna, Han, & Saenz, 2008; Conklin et al., 2013). With respect to the second criterion, researchers (e.g., Dunwoody & Frank, 1995; Zafar, 2011) have shown that negative grades are a factor that increases the likelihood of changing academic majors.

Some students make quick or uninformed decisions when initially selecting a major. In interviews with undergraduate students who have changed majors, one of the common factors found by Firmin and MacKillop (2008) was students originally choosing a major with a lack of knowledge about the specific field and the careers it offered. For example, some students base their choice of major on assumed job characteristics. Students might also base their choice on the experiences of friends, family members, and parents (Hoover, 2011) and later decide to change their major.

Many college students experience intellectual change and growth as they progress with their education and as a result, begin to take courses that they have become truly interested in (Ayotte & Sevier, 2010; DeMarie & Aloise-Young, 2003; Dunwoody & Frank, 1995), and eventually decide to change majors based on courses they have taken. In summary, there are several factors related to initially choosing and later changing one's academic major, and some of these factors are likely to be related to each other. From the student' and the institution's perspective, there are likely to be both disadvantages and advantages when changing an academic major.

Disadvantages and Advantages of Changing Academic Majors

One of the greatest disadvantages of changing academic majors during the course of study is the possibility of regretting the decision at a later date. In studies of regrets, matters pertaining to education rate high. In fact, Roese and Summerville (2005) found that making wrong educational choices was the leading reported life-regret. Another disadvantage of changing academic majors is the additional time needed to fulfill graduation requirements. Depending on when the change

is made, an additional two years of study could be required to complete the courses associated with a new major (Clark, 2013; Ronan, 2005). Cost is also a disadvantage of changing academic majors. Dependent upon a student's academic level of completion at the time of the change, the costs of a typical 4-year college education could increase up to 50%, according to figures provided by the College Board (Clark, 2013).

Although there are several possible disadvantages to changing one's major, there are also some potential advantages to doing so. The college years are a time for reflection, enlightenment, and discovery (Tinto, 1999). It is understandable that during this time many students may still be weighing their options about their goals and be unsure about their future. In these instances, it would be an advantage for students to change majors to one that they have acquired personal knowledge about and fits their own personal interests.

Of course, if failing grades are threatening students' academic standing, and they do not choose to exert the effort to meet the demands required to improve academically, it would be to the student's advantage to change majors to something in which they are more likely to succeed (Stinebrickner & Stinebrickner, 2011). In regards to low academic standing and GPAs, some students change academic majors in order to keep their financial aid or scholarships and rescue what they can of their education (Kuh, 2007; Parry, 2012). Once students realize that they may not be able to complete college at all because they are not meeting the requirements of their financial aid or scholarships, it may be an advantage to change majors.

Finally, changing from a major that was selected as a result of family or parental influence—or a major chosen too quickly as a result of an uninformed decision—can also be an advantage. Acting on impulse can have a negative impact on educational goals, especially when choosing an academic major. Impulse control is a predictor of academic success (Sparkman, Maulding, & Roberts, 2012) and lower levels of impulsivity are related to educational achievement and successful planning (Spinella & Miley, 2003).

Student and Faculty Views on Changing Majors

Although we were unable to find any research on how faculty members view the appropriateness of a variety of reasons for changing majors, there is other research suggesting how faculty might perceive whether a reason for changing is a good or bad one. For example, STEM faculty believe that a lack of mathematical knowledge is a major barrier to success within a STEM major (Gandhi-Lee, Skaza, Marti, Schrader, & Orgill, 2015), suggesting that failure within the core coursework will be seen as an appropriate reason to change one's major. Chamblis and Takacs (2014) note that faculty can serve as gatekeepers for their discipline, by either encouraging or creating barriers for students who are interested in majoring in that field. Many faculty members perceive entering college students as being unprepared for college academics (e.g., Kuh, 2007; Sanoff, 2006). Faculty members might view lack of effort as an inappropriate reason for changing an academic major. If students and faculty members differ in their perceptions of the importance of effort for academic success, then those differences should be reflected in the perceptions about the appropriateness of effort-related reasons for changing a major.

First, we expected that both students and faculty members who had changed their majors in the past will be more understanding or accepting of the appropriateness of various reasons for changing one's major (Hypothesis 1). This prediction is based on the idea that previous experience with changing majors will provide students and faculty

with a greater sensitivity to the occurrence of changed majors compared to those who have not changed majors in the past.

Given that many faculty serve or have served as academic advisors to students, and spend numerous hours in the midst of college students, they are presumably privy to many student concerns and the dilemmas that students may face including the possibility of newly discovered alternative choices of academic majors (Tinto, 1999). Thus, according to Hypothesis 2, students and faculty will hold similar views about the appropriateness of changing academic majors due to changes in a student's interests and career goals. We expected that both students and faculty would rate interest- and career-related reasons for changing a major as similarly appropriate.

Research points out that many faculty members embrace the view that college students are often under-prepared and not totally engaged academically (Berret, 2012b; Kuh, 2007; Sanoff, 2006; Wasley, 2006). Based on this research, a student may view it as an advantage to change an academic major because of poor grades, and may have the best of intentions of improving academically as a result of that change. In addition, low grades may reflect low interest or low ability within the major, which most faculty would think of as a "good" reason to change majors. Therefore, we expected that both students and faculty would rate poor academic performance within the major as similarly appropriate for changing a major (Hypothesis 3).

Poor academic performance can also result from a student's lack of effort or the work required to complete a major. It is logical to assume that faculty members may see lack of effort or an unwillingness to put in the work (e.g., there is "too much" reading, writing, or research involved with the major) as inappropriate reasons for a student to change majors. Students should be more willing to see these factors as good reasons to change their major. According to this reasoning, we expected that faculty members would be less favorable toward changing majors for effort- or work-related reasons than students (Hypothesis 4).

Method

Participants

Participants came from a large public university in the southeastern U.S. Students (n = 125) from several academic majors and class standings participated in this study. The age of the student participants (94 female, 29 male, and 3 missing) ranged from 18 to 49, with an average of 22.50 years (SD = 4.18). With respect to credit hours earned, most of the students were upper-division (M = 90.97, SD = 34.52, range = 12-167). In addition, faculty members (n = 135) from all colleges and most departments of the university participated. The age of the faculty member participants (67 female, 55 male) ranged from 24 to 75, with an average of 51.68 years (SD = 11.15). Faculty reported a large number of current undergraduate advisees (M = 27.80, SD = 33.07, range = 0-150). Approval was obtained by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to conducting the study.

Measures

Each participant completed an online survey comprised of several sections. Students and faculty completed their own versions of the survey, which was developed by the researchers. The surveys were identical except for demographic items.

In the first section, participants rated three items pertaining to general aspects of changing a major. These items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*), included that students should always feel free to change their major, "even if it means that they will incur additional financial costs" and "even if it means that they will have to spend significantly more time to

complete a new major." The third item stated that "Because they might experience regrets at a later time, it is better if students keep rather than change their major."

In the next section, participants received a list of 16 items related to possible reasons why students might decide to change their academic majors. Participants considered the extent to which each item was "a good reason to change one's academic major." They rated each item and scenario using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Examples of personal interest and goals items included: a change in career goals, discovering one's true academic passion, and opting out of a major recommended by peers. Items related to curricular issues included: the hope of improving one's GPA, student is earning low grades in all courses in the major, and student believes that the existing major requires too much writing, math, research, or reading.

The third section of the survey included six specific circumstances under which students might change their major: changing from a major recommended by others to a major selected via personal growth and knowledge, changing majors to avoid failing grades, changing majors to avoid the possible loss of scholarships and financial aid, the additional time required to complete a new academic program, the additional cost to complete a new academic program, and choosing a new academic major impulsively. For each of these circumstances, participants rated, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*), whether it was a good reason to change one's major, was likely to lead to later regrets, and depended on how far students were in their education.

Finally, participants answered several demographic items. Common demographic items for students and faculty members included age, gender, whether respondents had changed academic majors and, if so, how many times they had done so. The student survey differed by asking open-ended questions about academic major and number of credits completed. The faculty survey differed by asking open-ended questions about academic discipline/field and years spent advising undergraduate students.

Procedure

Faculty members were recruited through a university-wide email invitation providing a link to the Informed Consent Form and the appropriate survey. Students were recruited from classes from a variety of disciplines including: Human Sciences, Health and Human Performance, Organizational Communication, Foreign Languages, and Management and Marketing. They received a link to the Informed Consent Form and the appropriate survey. Some students received research participation credit for their participation in the study, at the discretion of their teacher. The consent page explained that the purpose of the study was to gain a better understanding of student and faculty views and opinions of changing academic majors.

All participants completed the survey using a commercial online survey program. The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete. At the end of the survey, they received a thank-you note explaining that we hoped that the results would be useful as institutions continue to address issues related to improving student success, retention, and graduation.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The number of students who reported that they had changed their major at least once as an undergraduate (n = 98, 79%) was significantly higher than the number who never changed their major (n = 26, 21%, 1 missing), $X^2(1) = 41.81$, $p < .001$. Comparison of the

student major changers with the non-changers on the survey ratings revealed only one significant difference between the two groups. Students who had not changed their major rated the "because they might experience regrets at a later time, it is better if students keep rather than change their major" item higher (M = 2.85, SD = 1.12) than students who had changed their major (M = 2.39, SD = 0.92), $t(122) = 2.16$, $p = .03$.

The number of faculty who reported that they had changed their major at least once as an undergraduate (n = 67, 52%) was slightly higher than the number who never changed their major (n = 62, 48%, 6 missing), $X^2(1) = 0.19$, $p = .66$. Comparison of the faculty major changers with the non-changers on the survey ratings revealed no significant differences between the two groups. Thus, there was no support for Hypothesis 1 that previous major-changing experience would be associated with different perceptions of the appropriateness of changing majors.

A Chi-square test of independence indicated that faculty and students differed significantly in their frequency of having changed their academic major, with students reporting having changed academic majors at a higher rate than faculty, $X^2(1) = 20.46$, $p < .001$. Moreover, among only those participants who changed majors, students (M = 2.42, SD = 1.34) reported changing more frequently than faculty (M = 1.64, SD = 1.11), $t(161) = 2.01$, $p = .05$.

With respect to general aspects of changing an academic major, students (M = 2.49, SD = .97) were less likely to disagree than faculty (M = 2.07, SD = .77) on the "Because they might experience regrets at a later time, it is better if students keep rather than change their major" item, $t(258) = 3.90$, $p < .001$. In addition, with respect to the role that teachers of a given major might play in a student's decision to change majors, faculty rated it significantly more appropriate (M = 2.70, SD = .99) than students (M = 2.45, SD = 1.04) for a student to change academic majors if the student does not like the teachers in a chosen major $t(258) = 1.97$, $p = .05$.

Analysis of gender differences for the entire sample revealed very few significant differences. Female respondents agreed more strongly than male respondents that a change in career goals, an existing major was recommended by parents, and changing majors to avoid the possible loss of scholarships and financial are good reasons to change an academic major, and choosing an academic major impulsively depends on how far along the student is in their education; male respondents agreed more strongly than female respondents that a poor current job market for the existing major is a good reason to change an academic major (all ps < .05).

Tests of Other Hypotheses

Hypothesis 2 stated that student and faculty views would be similar regarding the appropriateness of changing academic majors due to changes in a student's interests and career goals. As predicted, faculty and student opinions were similar concerning the appropriateness of changing academic majors based on a change in career goals and discovering one's true academic passion (see Table 1). Both faculty and students rated these reasons as appropriate (i.e., above the scale midpoint). Interestingly, faculty agreed more strongly than students with the appropriateness of changing from a major recommended by others to one selected via personal growth and knowledge. Alternatively, students disagreed less strongly than faculty that changing from a major recommended by others to one selected via personal growth and knowledge would lead to later regrets. Thus, we found partial support for hypothesis 2.

Next, we examined grades as a factor that a student may consider as an appropriate

Table 1. Appropriateness Ratings for Changing a Major due to Changes in Interests or Career Goals

Measures	Students (n = 125)		Faculty (n = 135)			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
A change in career goals is a good reason to change one's major	4.38	.75	4.53	52	1.79	08
Discovering one's true academic passion is a good reason to change one's major	4.61	.62	4.57	.61	.50	.62
Changing from a major recommended by others to a major selected via personal growth and knowledge is a good reason to change one's major	4.22	.92	4.49	.71	2.62	.01
Changing from a major recommended by others to a major selected via personal growth and knowledge is likely to lead to later regrets	2.45	1.07	2.14	86	2.56	.01
Changing from a major recommended by others to a major selected via personal growth and knowledge depends on how far along the student is in their education	3.06	.93	2.88	.90	1.61	11

Note. Each item was based on a 5-point Likert scale (1= *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*)

reason when changing academic majors. Hypothesis 3 predicted that faculty and student views would be similar on issues pertaining to grades as a reason for changing academic majors. However, as Table 2 indicates, students and faculty differed significantly on several of the grades-related items. In particular, students were more likely than faculty to agree that trying to improve one's GPA was a good reason to change majors. Students also were more likely than faculty to agree that changing majors to avoid failing grades will lead to later regrets and would depend on how far along the student is. On the other hand, faculty were more likely than students to agree that having low grades in all major courses was a good reason to change majors. Thus, the results indicated *differences* rather than *similarities* between faculty and students in their perceptions related to grades.

Finally, student and faculty views regarding the appropriateness of changing academic majors due to effort-related factors (e.g., too much writing, math, or research) appear in Table 3. As the table shows, faculty and student responses for each measure showed no significant differences with both groups rating each measure as more inappropriate than appropriate (i.e., below the scale midpoint) for a student to change an academic major. Thus, hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Additional Analyses

Several other items revealed significant differences in the perceptions of faculty and students within the specific domains of scholarships/financial aid, time, costs, and impulsiveness (see Table 4). First, students agreed more strongly (or disagreed less strongly) than faculty that avoiding loss of financial aid, added costs, and choosing a major impulsively were good reasons for changing one's major. Second, students were more likely than faculty to agree that avoiding loss of

Table 2. Appropriateness Ratings for Changing a Major due to Grades Earned within the Major

Measures	Students (n = 125)		Faculty (n = 135)			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
The hope of improving one's GPA is a good reason to change majors.	2.95	1.10	2.58	.93	2.98	.00
Student is earning low grades in about half the courses in the major is a good reason to change one's major	3.25	.89	3.29	.89	.37	.71
Student is earning low grades in all the courses of the major is a good reason to change one's major	3.55	.95	3.86	.82	2 .79	.01
Changing majors to avoid failing grades is a good reason to change majors	3.09	.99	3.16	1.06	.53	.60
Changing majors to avoid failing grades is likely to lead to later regrets	3.24	.95	2.98	.83	2.38	.02
Changing majors to avoid failing grades depends on how far along the student is in their education	3.34	.89	3.05	.88	2.60	.01

Note. Ratings were based on a 5-point Likert scale (1= *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*)

Table 3. Appropriateness Ratings for Changing a Major due to Work or Effort Required within the Major

Measures	Students (n = 125)		Faculty (n = 135)			
	M	**SD**	**M**	*SD*	**t**	**p**
Too much writing in current major is a good reason to change majors	2.37	1.05	2.38	.99	.08	.93
Too much math in current major is a good reason to change majors	2.60	1.14	2.50	1.02	.77	.47
Too much research in current major is a good reason to change majors	2.37	1.05	2.39	1.00	.19	.85
Too much reading in current is a good reason to change majors	2.33	1.05	2.26	1.00	.54	.59
Too much lab–work in current major is a good reason to change majors	2.47	1.07	2.53	.99	.48	.63

Note. Ratings were based on a 5-point Likert scale (1= *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*)

scholarships or financial aid, additional time, and additional costs would be likely to lead to later regrets. Finally, students were more likely than faculty to agree that changing majors to avoid loss of scholarships or financial aid and choosing a new major impulsively would depend on how far along the student was in their education.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to compare student and faculty views regarding college students changing their academic majors. Results showed that contemporary college students are changing academic majors at a higher rate and with greater frequency than their faculty members. In addition, students and faculty showed both similarities and differences in their ratings of the appropriateness of a variety of potential reasons for changing a major.

We found no support for our expectation that students and faculty who had changed their majors would show more acceptance of various reasons for changing majors than students and faculty who had never changed their major. Apparently, changing one's major, in and of itself, does not differentially relate to perceptions of what are good and bad reasons for changing a major. It is conceivable that asking participants whether they agreed, all things considered, that changing a major is a good or bad thing, might have led to differences between the major changers and non-changers.

Table 4. Appropriateness Ratings for Changing a Major due to Financial Aid, Time, Cost, and Impulsiveness Factors

Measures	Students (n = 125)		Faculty (n = 135)			
	M	SD	M	SD	t	p
Changing majors to avoid the possible loss of scholarships and financial aid…						
is a good reason to change one's major	3.32	.98	3.04	.94	2.32	.02
is likely to lead to later regrets	3.34	.93	3.04	.81	2.83	.005
depends on how far along the student is in their education	3.38	.88	3.05	.72	3.35	.001
The additional time required to complete a new academic program…						
is a good reason to change one's major	2.85	.92	2.65	.84	1.65	.10
is likely to lead to later regrets	3.12	.92	2.72	.77	3.83	.000
depends on how far along the student is in their education	3.38	.88	3.18	.86	1.91	.06
The additional cost to complete a new academic program…						
is a good reason to change one's major	2.91	.99	2.63	.82	2.49	.01
is likely to lead to later regrets	3.21	.81	2.84	.77	3.74	.000
depends on how far along the student is in their education	3.38	.86	3.23	.80	1.47	.14
Choosing a new academic major impulsively…						
is a good reason to change one's major	2.06	1.07	1.59	.83	3.90	.000
is likely to lead to later regrets	4.04	.90	3.96	.99	.66	.51
depends on how far along the student is in their education	3.07	.99	2.64	1.01	3.43	.001

Note. Ratings were based on a 5-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

Hypothesis 2 stated that changing an academic major due to changes in a student's interests and career goals would garner similar views of faculty and students. As predicted, the results showed that both groups agreed that changing majors based on newly acquired knowledge, interests, and career goals was appropriate. These results support the findings of research on both reasons for choosing a major (Adams et al., 1994; Beggs et al., 2008) and changing majors (Conklin et al., 2013; Parry, 2012; Sparkman et al., 2012). These data also provide some insight into the "best" and "worst" reasons to change a major according to students and faculty. Both groups agreed that changes in career goals or personal growth and development were very good reasons for changing a major, whereas choosing a new major impulsively was rated as the least appropriate reason to change.

We expected that faculty and students would report similar appropriateness ratings regarding grades (Hypothesis 3). However, we found differences between the two groups. Whereas students were more likely than faculty to agree that trying to improve one's GPA was a good reason to change majors, faculty were more likely than students to agree that having low grades in all major courses was a good reason to change majors. Stinebrickner and Stinebrickner (2011) explained that some students who perform poorly are too optimistic when considering their cumulative GPA and beliefs about their future GPA. This optimism might help explain the existence of a perception of probable success in changing an academic major to improve a GPA. Research suggests that active involvement in academics (Tinto, 1999), exerting effort and maintaining a determination to be involved with academics (Kuh, 2007), and thinking of class material and monitoring individual learning (Chapman, 2005) are the effective methods to become academically successful. There is little evidence, to our knowledge, that changing one's major will result in a higher GPA. This stronger faculty agreement on the failing all courses in the major is consistent with research implying that this situation is more likely a problem within the student and not the academic major. There are many reasons that a student can be failing in all of the courses in a given major. A lack of academic engagement (Kuh, 2007), a lack of effort (Wasley, 2006), and being unprepared (Sanoff, 2006) are all possible contributing factors.

For our fourth hypothesis, we expected that faculty would see work- or effort-related factors as less appropriate reasons for changing a major than would students. However, there was no evidence to support this prediction. The ostensible reason for the lack of differences here is that both students and faculty tended to disagree that these were good reasons (i.e., too much writing, too much research) for changing one's major.

Finally, the data indicated that students more strongly agreed than faculty that changing majors for a variety of reasons was likely to lead to later regrets. These data support research on life regrets (Roese & Summerville, 2005) and likely reflect a continuing search for vocational and overall identity among the students (Fouad, Ghosh, Chang, Figueiredo, & Bachhuber, 2016). Keyes (2010) pointed out that a typical reaction of some students when deciding on or changing a major is the deliberation of their true interest versus their fear of making the wrong decision.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

It is conceivable that the student results were affected by the courses from which we drew the sample. Although we did not obtain students' actual or likely majors, it is conceivable that students majoring in different disciplines (e.g., STEM and liberal arts) might report different perceptions of

the appropriateness of reasons for changing a major. Future research might explore this possibility more directly.

There are other ways to measure the effort factor, such as by noting that students might be unwilling to put in the work required to succeed in the major. It is possible that both faculty and students would rate behavior such as this as being a more appropriate reason to change a major, although respondents might make attributions about the student (e.g., "unwilling to put in the work") that generalize across any major. Effort could also be examined by class standing to determine if students differ in their appropriateness ratings for students in their upper division compared to lower division years.

Although we found very few gender differences, there were more female (75%) than male (25%) student participants in the study. Recent research shows that the graduation rates for females (62%) are higher than for males (56%) (U.S. Department of Education, May, 2015). Consequently, future research on this topic might aim for a more balanced ratio of male and female students.

We also did not ask why participants had changed their majors. Perhaps appropriateness ratings align will more strongly with those reasons that reflected the participants' experiences. However, given the high percentage of students in the current sample who had changed their majors at least once (nearly 80%), future research might focus on the experiences and motivations of these students and how their experiences relate to what they consider appropriate and inappropriate reasons for changing a major.

In conclusion, to our knowledge, this is the first study that examines student and faculty perceptions of the appropriateness of a variety of reasons for changing an academic major. We believe that the kinds of questions we addressed are a fruitful way for researchers to explore the factors that might affect decisions about and perceptions of changing one's academic major.

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EXPLORING CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN EMERGING ADULT COLLEGIANS

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Emerging adulthood is defined as age-based (18-29 years of age). This age range is central to traditional age collegians who are a very diverse group (i.e., relative to race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, relationship status, and educational attainment). In an effort to explore the career development process of college students this article endeavors to discuss student development theories and their correlation to career development. This understanding helps career counselors understand how closely identity development and career are correlated.

Keywords: Career and Student Development, Emerging Adulthood, Career Counselors

Overview

Characteristics of Emerging Adults

Since 1950s, characteristics of emerging adults have defined a collective of individuals primarily because of an extended period of development for youths in industrialized nations. Because the traditional period denoting adolescence to adulthood takes longer, a new phenomenon has emerged. A new paradigm was needed because neither the terms *adolescence* nor *adulthood* were a great fit to brand 18-24 year olds. As this age group transitioned into roles associated with adulthood, the term *youth* was found to be antiquated. Through much discourse, time, and a series of quantitative methods, the concept of *emerging adulthood* was delineated. Jeffrey Arnett (2000) defined the characteristics of a new social and developmental group that includes late teens through age 20 with a focus of age 18 to 29. Arnett reported that by 2007, the emerging adulthood phase and its characteristics would become pandemic.

The characteristics for the new phase would become more clear, as Arnett explained the "who and when" of the emerging adults, and the data quantified the "why and what". Thus, by December, 2007 the beginning of the recession, various environmental factors shaped by the economic downturn provided knowledge that rapidly added to the definition of this group.

Arnett reported that one of the main characteristics of emerging adulthood is that it is a period marked with lots of transitions and life decisions. While this is a very broad characteristic, dissecting transition and life decisions for emerging adulthood provides insight about the multiplicity of other characteristics

defining this phase. To make sense of the many characteristics of emerging adulthood, this paper categorizes them into three groups: roles, responsibilities, and environmental influences as shown in Table 1.

The table summarizes the characteristics or emerging adults and suggests that there is a level of influence among and between each category. For example, environment influences appear to help set the tone for the level of participation among emerging adults' options regarding responsibilities and roles. Further, because emerging adults' overall participation is delayed, as defined in historically defined markers, into adulthood, the question arises whether this affect contributes to their ability and desire to transition out of previous roles?

Although there appears to be an intriguing cause and effect relationship between roles, responsibilities, and environmental influences that have shaped global characteristics of this phase, Arnett (2000) also defined over-arching characteristics, which matter most from emerging adults' points of view. Emerging adults report that accepting responsibility for one's self, making independent decisions, becoming financially independent, and becoming a self-sufficient person are important milestones of their existence (cite).

Early scholars of student development such as Erikson and Chickering (Chickering, 1969) (Erikson, 1985) had already isolated the 18-25 year-old cohort, noting the period when a collective enrolled into institutions of higher learning. The complexities of identity development at that time (1920-1950) were shaped by different environmental factors. Exploration has always been a distinctive feature of different development stages; however the outcomes within a set time frame are what truly determine how emerging adults view themselves. Often, because of what is termed the *new normal* and acceptance of today's economic climate, emerging adulthood is a period of self-focus, possibilities, feeling in-between, and instability. For the collective of emerging adults enrolled in post-secondary education, the emerging adulthood identity, characteristics, outcomes, and transition into adulthood mandates that the university student services program respond with a newer paradigm for its practice.

Student Development

At one time, the concept of student development was influenced by change in the environment. The changes resulted when new liberal arts disciplines departed from the previous theological lens that shaped earlier campus community practices. In addition to these catalysts, the field of human development expanded to include student development personnel whose role was to provide vocational guidance. Numerous shifts, as shown in Figure 1, would occur before student development practiced today would emerge.

Table 1. Characteristics of Emerging Adulthood

Roles	Responsibilities	Environmental Influences
• Extended period of development • Social tendency to delay Processes of individuation and autonomy • Stay home longer or likely to return temporarily • Many remain permanently childless • Individual variability (by socio economic status, race, gender	• Starting a career • Initiating an intimate relationship • Starting a family • Much delayed marriages compared with earlier generations	• Economic fluctuations • Transition from education to work • More likely to have extended and part-time educational careers • Delayed family formation

(J. J. Arnett, 2000)

Figure 1. Evolution of student development.

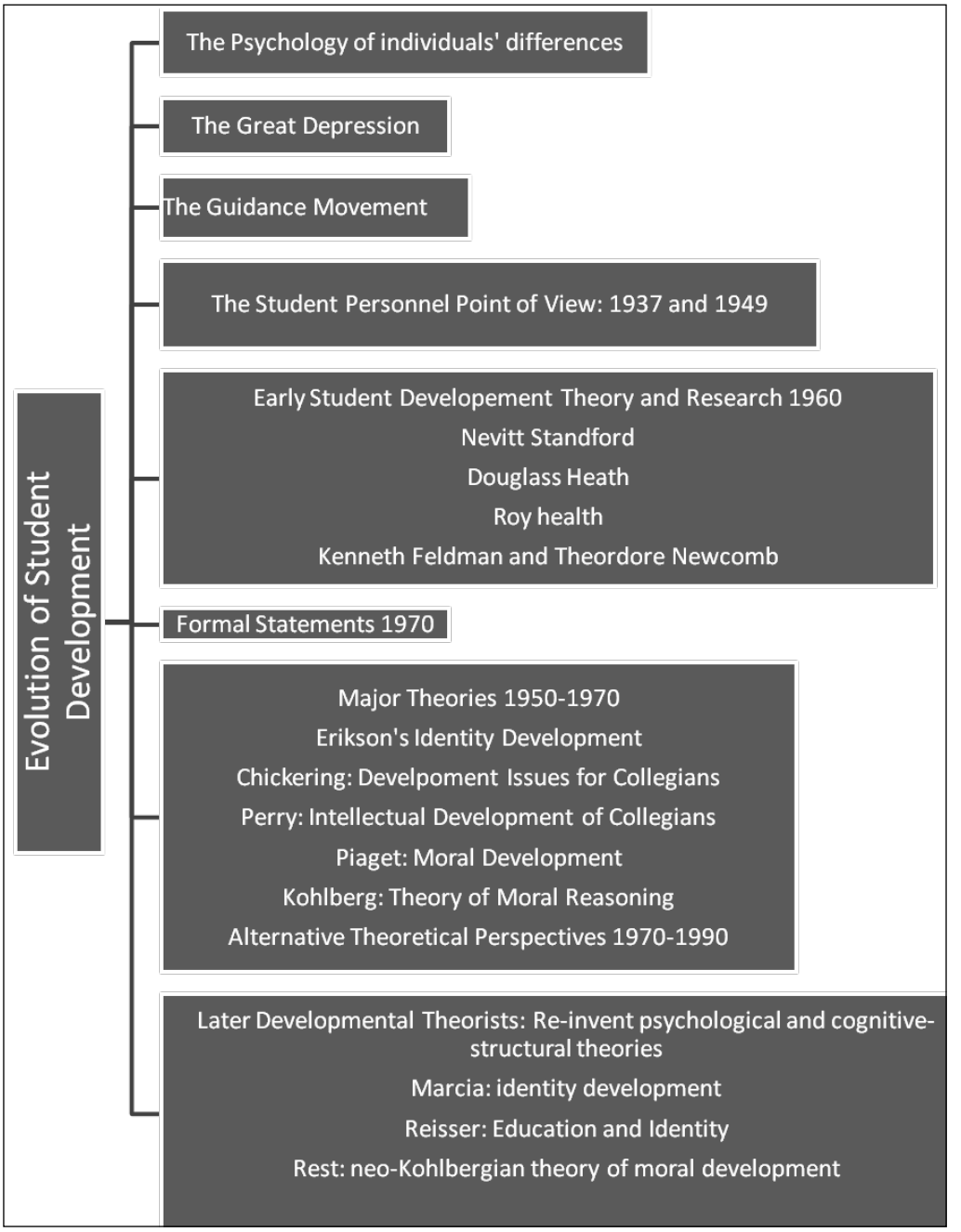
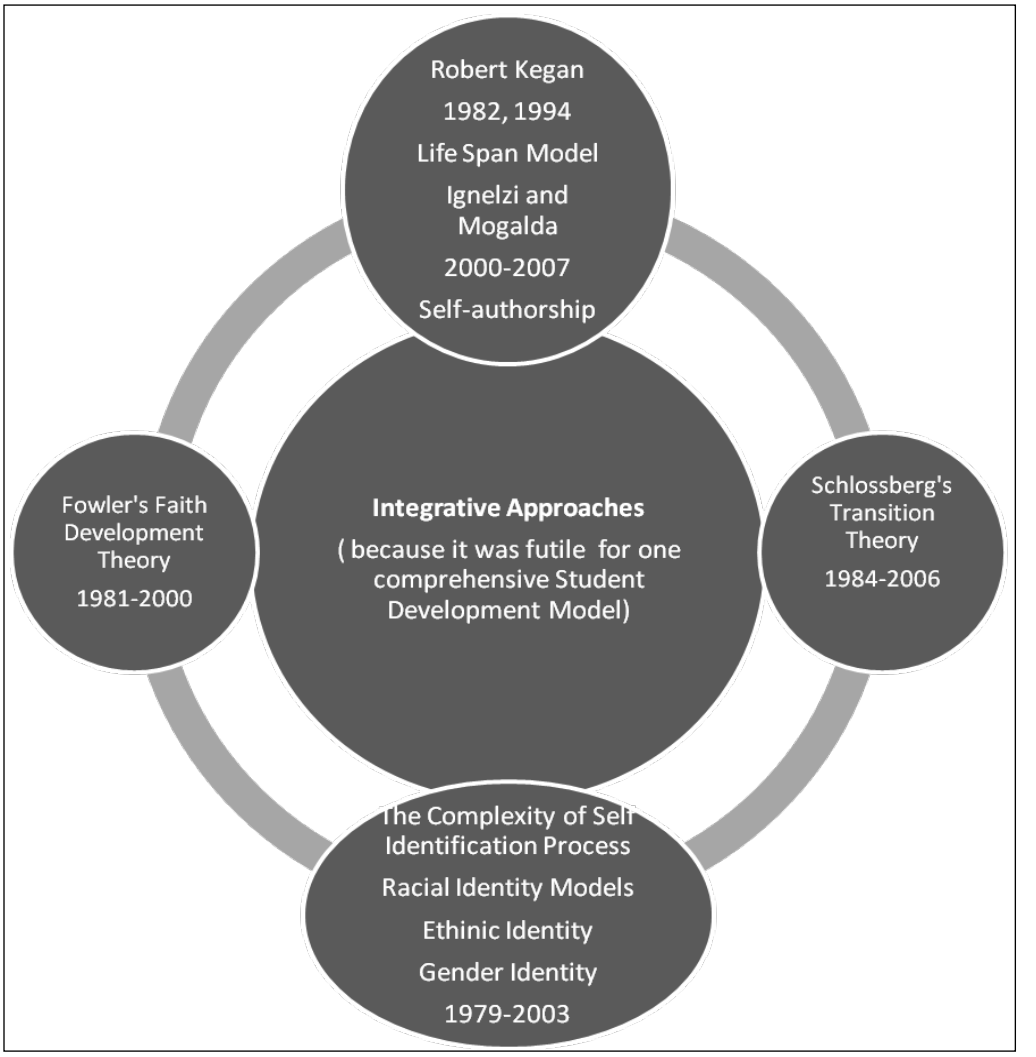


Figure 2 shows the integrative approaches related to a student development model.

Figure 2. Integrative approaches leading to a comprehensive student development model



((Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998)

Modern Student Development

Rodgers (1989) defined student development as the ways that a student grows, progresses, or increases his or her developmental capabilities as a result of enrollment in an institution of higher education. By combining this fundamental knowledge with characteristics of emerging adulthood, university administration along with government agencies should be able to update policies and adjustments needed to effectively lead emerging adults.

Modern student development encompasses initial development theories considering development and factors that influence its

occurrence (Evans et al., 1998). Developmental theory responds to four questions (Knefelkamp, Parker, & Widick, 1978):

1. What interpersonal and intrapersonal changes occur while the student is in college?
2. What factors lead to this development?
3. What aspects of the college environment encourage or retard growth?
4. What developmental outcomes should we strive to achieve in college?

As each question is asked, this reliable conceptual framework provides the freedom to explore shifts within cohorts, consider the role of the broader environment and its influences on the college environment, and identify which student development theories provide the ability to better understand the depth of changes that intersect with the lives of emerging adults enrolled in today's higher education system. Although the times are changing, the answers to the fundamental questions can inform student affairs professionals and faculty to encourage learning and student growth. Once the link between development theory and student development theory is understood, professionals can identify and address needs, programs, policies, and create healthy college environments that encourage positive growth (Evans et al., 1998) among emerging adults.

Student Development Theories

Hopefully, the concept of emerging adulthood will remain viable beyond the present age group cohort. (Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, 2004) noted that emerging adulthood cannot be considered a universal phase in human development but a stage that exists under certain conditions. Though in the future environmental factors may shift, "age" appears to anchor this group.

Another common denominator, other than age, among youths of yesterday and emerging adults of today is the goal of self-sufficiency. As young people fight to find autonomous paths (Moreno Hernández & Fierro Arias, 2007), human development theory suggests that the post-secondary level needs to be strategic; that strategy lies within the multiple student development theories meshing with emerging adulthood theory informing practice in the university environment.

Student development theories germane to the transition of emerging adults include development Issues for collegians (Chickering, 1969) identity development (Erikson, 1985), expanded theory of self-authorship (Evans et al., 1998), and transition theory (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). Figures 3 and 4 are models of concepts involved in the theories of Chickering and Erikson.

These pertinent theories provide the key to understanding emerging adulthood within a student development framework. Emerging adults face a formidable array of new experiences and tasks requiring the development of new knowledge and skills in order to experience a successful transition in adulthood (Cohen, Blatt, Feldman, Shulman, & Mahler, 2005). However, these skills are not formally taught at the university level. New Student Orientation prepares students for campus life in which pre-requisites are clear for majors, curriculums are standard for knowledge across the disciplines, and developmental trends are observed from first-year through the senior years. Todays' economic conditions introduce a new normal on today's campuses. To maximize development for emerging adults who are not fully aware of shifting tasks, roles, and disconnect between school and work, a top priority for student development practitioners is to determine whether the university environment has done enough to prepare emerging adults for the transition of school to work.

Figure 3. Seven vectors of development that affect the lives students aged 17-25.
(Evans et al., 1998)

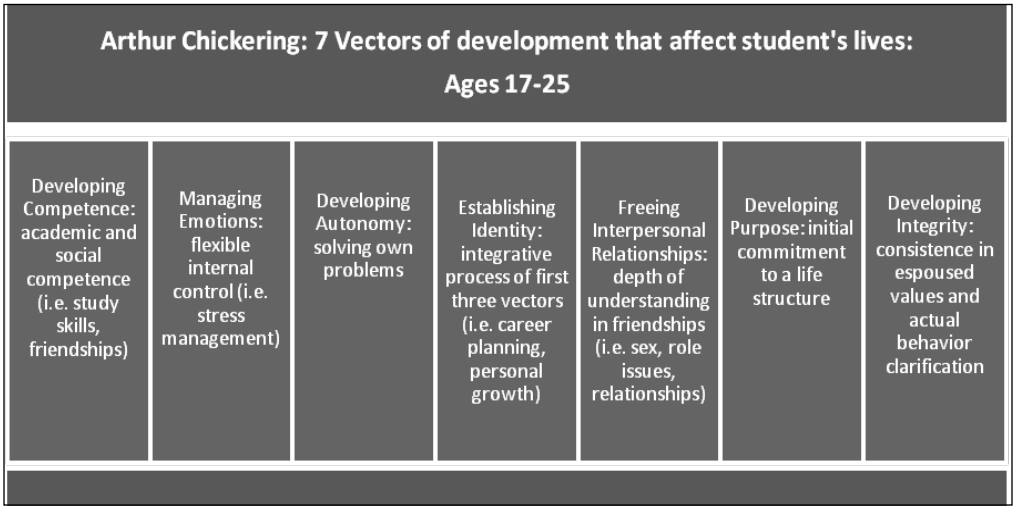
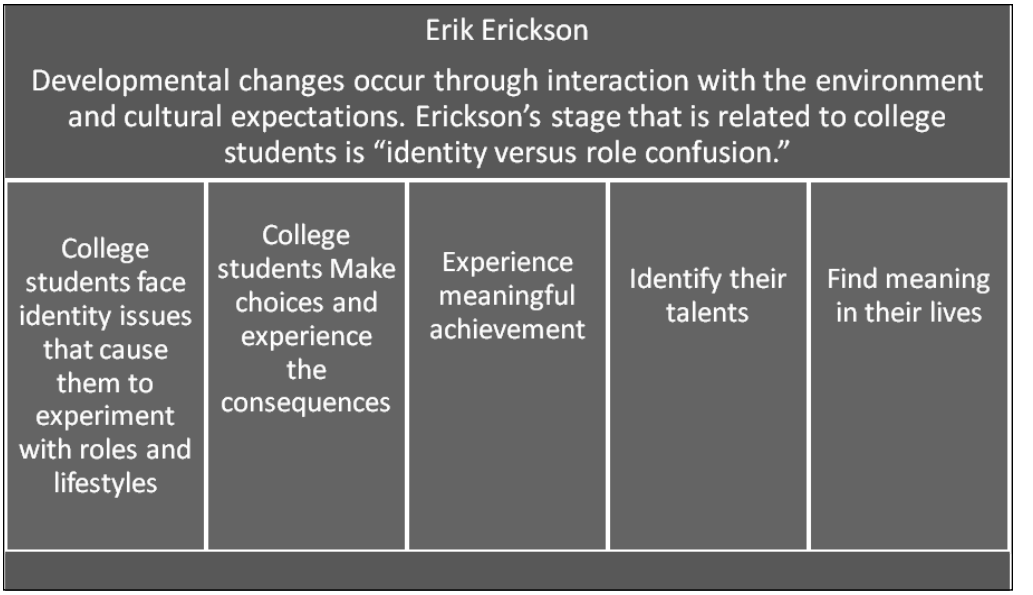


Figure 4. Erickson's model of students' identity versus role confusion
(Evans et al., 1998)



Bridging the Gap between Tasks and Practice

Developmental changes occur through interaction with the environment and cultural expectations (Evans et al., 1998). Historically, this notion helps define Erickson's stage that is related to college students' identity versus role confusion. Consequently, if all roles are influenced by the environment, is identity confusion experienced by all? An unstable economic climate and its effects are experienced across university environments resulting in shifts in fundamental tasks which redefine existing roles. Pairing emerging adulthood theory with student development theory and practice may bridge the gap between tasks and practice for student development practitioners and students transitioning out of university into work environments.

On a day to day basis, college departments operate in silos, today's economic climate mandates comprehensive effective use of resources to minimize the disconnect between roles and tasks. Unexamined, antiquated practices will not help emerging adults to develop effectively or prepare them for the complex tasks required for career socialization and development.

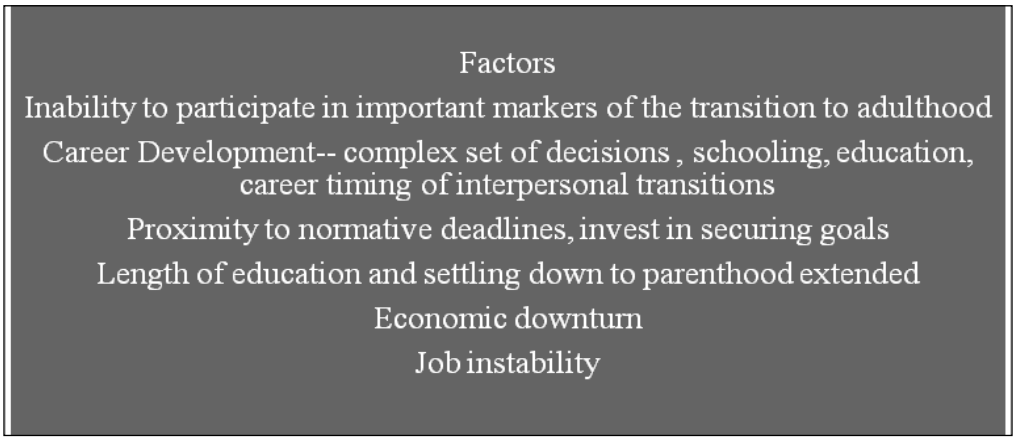
Factors: From the Past to the Present

Many factors have generated a growing population of emerging adults. Since 1950, the supply of skilled labor has outpaced the demand. Consequently, in twenty years, changes in the labor market have made it difficult for young adults to achieve financial independence (Danziger & Ratner, 2010). In approximately two decades, the effects affected the transition ability in adult roles. Time and the economic decline persisted through the 80s, 90, and new millennium. Transition experienced by previous generations resulted in a seamless transition into adult roles which would be contrary for those who are presently attempting to transition into adult roles. Consequently, the inability to participate in markers of adulthood yielded cumulative effects. The delay in marriage means that more young adults are living with parents, roommates, on their own, or with a partner; fewer are living with a spouse (Danziger & Ratner, 2010). Figure 5 shows a list of current factors relevant to transitions of emerging adults.

Perhaps the biggest drawback of a declining economy and a growing gap between various levels of educational attainment is the much needed concept of emerging adulthood. Highly correlated with the need for defining the concept is how the cumulative effects of a declining economy later helps to define part of emerging adult's identity, an identity that tends be explained as exploratory, recreational, and self-focused.

Are emerging adults aimlessly participating in life, or are the realities shaping today's economy affecting their ability to fully participate in a meritocracy. Lifespan theory on motivation assumes that the demands, challenges, and opportunities that people experience at a particular stage of their lives channel the kinds of personal goals they construct (Bynner, 1997). It is important that student development theorists examine the effects of a labor market saturated by decline, instability, seasoned workers, and emerging adults educated at colleges across the country. Through a comprehensive lens of student development, human development, and lifespan theories, university environments can garner how emerging adults transition from post-secondary education. Today, more than ever, this transition should be managed more strategically.

Figure 5. Important markers of transition for emerging adults.
(Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, 2004)



Theories

Social Identities Theories

The university environment is one that specializes in creating a space for emerging adults to explore and make sense of various identities. Identities are organized by race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and career. Although the university community is organized to foster growth and development, it not free from negative influences and students sometimes participate in activities that may harmfully impact identity development. Many student services are available to help navigate identity development. Offices such as Multi-Cultural affairs, LGBT, Greek Life, Career Service, Residence Life, and so on exist to lend support for the development of the diverse student identities. Among these identities, emerging adults have an acquired work identity termed the *millennials*; however, this is an identity where the verdict is still out to determine how millennials are orientated into career socialization.

Identity development is complex. When the factors which contribute to the growing population of emerging adults, such as self-exploration and a propensity for at-risk behaviors, are combined with a declining economy, is the complexity of identity development augmented? If yes, to what extent do added layers of social identities such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation affect the process of identity development? The various potential combinations of identities may become a convoluted process. A process that further sustains the exploration of different lifestyles, choices, and consequences, and does not necessarily culminate with allowing the self, allows time for tasks associated with the transition from school to work.

Erickson and Chickering (1950-1969) provide understanding of the various stages of identity development. They argued that it is a process for college students to discover their talents and a meaningful life. Arnett (2000) said that identity exploration and individuality are prominent characteristics of emerging adults, which delay the development of important adulthood identities. Thus, the two schools of thoughts are in opposition. The first alludes that students of the early twentieth century were able to explore but move on to a successful life. However, in Arnett's school of

thought, students appear stuck in an era with an extensive opportunity for development. The consequences are that typical normative markers of adulthood are being replaced by personal ones—defining the transition in more individualistic terms (Moreno Hernández & Fierro Arias, 2007). If transitions are more individualistic, are certain social identities more vulnerable? If certain identities are found to be more vulnerable, how can the university environment foster development that leads to achievement as emerging adults' transition from school to work life during this economic climate? It becomes apparent that the differing schools of thoughts need examination to discover outcomes among the various social identities within the context of social identity theories.

Social identity theories include racial identity, ethnic identity and acculturation, multiracial identity development, sexual identity development, and gender identity development.

Social identity theory provides the framework to make sense of identity development through various populations. Environmental influences on development include challenge and support, involvement, marginality and mattering, and validation (Evans et al., 1998).

Because student development has grown in knowledge, and there are plenty of theories, university faculty and staff have access and opportunity to link theory and practice to make a difference as students juggle tasks and reconcile their identity development. The understanding of the different experiences, which have shaped the lives of each student and the complement of knowledge in the multiplicity of social identity theory, provides students with a working paradigm which may lead to interventions and growth for a student who chooses a particular social identity.

Often, students from certain social identities do not fully participate in the greater university community. For example, in a study examining the experiences of student in college, non-traditional students (those from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds) often doubted their academic ability. Thus, active interventions in the form of validation were needed to enhance the self-esteem of these students (Danziger & Ratner, 2010). Faculty and staff who understand the various theories under the social identity umbrella can confidently handle the diversity among individual and collective emerging adults across social identities.

Work Identity

Some students hit the ground running while others become depressed as they search for their identity (Murphy, Blustein, Bohlig, & Platt, 2010). As a result, today's emerging adults may not be reconciling their various identities. The extended period of development, delayed roles into adult markers, and the current economic climate posits an urgency from the self or environment to accept new roles and tasks affiliated with the transition into the world of work (Bynner, 1997). Is this combination responsible for the intent behind the millennial work identity? Millennials are described as entitled, lazy, selfish, tech savvy, and incompetent (Greenfield, 2009). Other descriptors include a group closely associated with helicopter parenting, most safeguarded, the *Me generation*, and the group least accessed with opportunity to stretch and grow. However, are those labels a direct result of the extensive period of self-exploration and the plethora of other emerging adulthood characteristics and factors defining this group? Does delayed adulthood delay emerging adults' urgency to understand the system of career development and socialization? Missing at this time is how emerging adults reconcile these self-imposed or environmental identities, and how they make sense of their experiences.

Millennials work brand maybe a result of the incongruence between behaviors creating

the emerging adulthood characteristics and factors actually contributing to how emerging adults are orientated to career development. The cumulative effect of the economic climate has eroded many of the maps to work, marriage, family, and other identities (Robbins & Wilner, 2001). Nevertheless, student affairs professionals appear to be the strongest and most consistent voice in the academy articulating concern for growth and human development of students (Evans et al., 1998). Practitioners who link theory and practice create an opportunity for emerging adults across social identities as individuals with multifarious personas to determine the sense-making process of career development and, most important, to minimize unintended consequences when millennials transition from school to work.

Career Development

Adult Education Theories

A career is selected and maintained based on an individual's value system, knowledge and skills (Sharf, 2010). As such, career development and selection must incorporate identity development. In order for effective career counselors to understand why adolescents choose the careers that they choose they must have a working knowledge of student identity development. Choosing a career is a major milestone in the identity development process for adolescents (Berk, 2006; Erikson, 1959; Josselson, 1994).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs, cognitivism constructivist learning theory, and life-long learning theories are ideologies underpinning adult education. Adult education serves different populations by offering learning options conducive to the adult learner. Historically adult education provided the post-secondary learning. Adult education provides an essential role; however, the shifts in today's society necessitate clarity about naming the different populations. By today's cultural standards, most undergraduates are now called emerging adults. While they participate in adult education, they are traditional age collegians. Thus, Maslow's hierarchy of needs and cognitivist constructivist learning theory are most applicable to explore emerging adults' environmental needs orientation to career development.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a pyramid that proclaims that basic needs must be met in order to have advanced needs to be met. The basic needs of many emerging adults are met. However, attainment of advanced needs may frustrate a collective of emerging adults. The transition from the academic world to the work world creates a set of needs. Other unmet needs may occur as emerging adults relocate after college into a new city, move away from college friends, move back home with parents, or take work that is not glamorous but pays the bills. If individualism is one of the primary characteristics defining emerging adulthood, are emerging adults really able to figure it out on their own?

Because the job market is very different today than in past generations, are today's institutions doing enough to guide emerging adults in the transition from school to work. Arnett (J. J. Arnett, 2000) mentioned that the transition from college to career may likely constitute a risky environment which, according to the literature, can promote both adaptive and maladaptive outcomes (Jeffrey Jensen Arnett & Tanner, 2005).

The changing labor market is a factor changing the transition to adulthood (Danziger & Ratner, 2010). In addition to facing an emaciated job market and life patterns that differ than in previous generations, the needs of emerging adults are challenged by the lack of recognition of the shifts needed within tasks and an awareness of career socialization and development. The transformation of a new identity would require a level of maturity

Table 2. Four Categories of Career Development Theories in the past 75 years

Trait Factor: Matching Personal Traits to Occupations Frank Person's (1920)	Super's Self Concept over Life Span- 1950 Developmental	Bandura Self Efficacy-1970s • Decision • Situational or Sociological	Psychological: Personality types matching work environment- Holland (1980

(United, 1986)

to anticipate roles and tasks leading to transition from school to work. (Bynner, 1997) stated that the changes in young adults' personal goals reflect changing developmental tasks, role transitions, and life situations; they disengage from goals related to education, friends, and traveling and engaged in goals related to work, family, and health.

The factors that define emerging adults such as delayed roles into adulthood and taking longer to settle in occupational tracks make the ability to become financially and/or self-sufficiently independent tougher. Do these factors affect motivation? Motivation is at the root of Maslow's theory that establishes that once basic needs are met, people are motivated to embrace new challenges. If the need and challenge results in unreasonable amounts of overwhelmed feelings, what impact will this have on emerging adults?

While Arnett (2000) has captured the theme of individualism to define a trend in emerging adulthood, most scholars would argue that meritocracy is a myth. Perhaps, this is where student development theory and institutions of higher learning provide knowledge in their environments to educate emerging adults with the transition to life after college.

Cognitivism Constructivist Learning Theory. Academic environments have clear-cut goals. The ways to achieve them were mapped out from first-year through the senior year and across disciplines. While each individual enrolled must decide the best strategy to complete their education, at least different blue prints exist. Since career socialization is new terrain for most emerging adults to navigate, this is where student and career development can make another contribution in the development and growth of students.

The cognitivism constructivist approach assumes that leaders, stakeholders, and practitioners will assess the past, use prior knowledge to construct new knowledge, and make informed decisions about what is needed to transition emerging adults from school to work. When cognitivism constructivist is applied to historical student development philosophies, theories, and adult education, the examination of the past will require newer philosophies to meet the new challenges emerging adults face today. At the conclusion of this assessment, hopefully the current delivery of services in higher education environments may recognize the need to change rapidly to minimize discrepancies to parallel labor market trends. Further, a model can be generated to help emerging adults understand this shift and anticipate the transition for their impending change into the workplace while they are still enrolled in school. The design of a curriculum or experiences fostering this socialization process should allow emerging adults to construct the possible self by demonstrating the self-directed nature of development while supporting individuals to create their own pathways towards the future (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994).

In order to have more needs satisfied, emerging adults will have to strategically plan their exit from school to work. However,

even with strategy, a common assumption of guidance and counseling workers is that vocational choice is the result of a rational decision-making process (Hart, Rayner, & Christensen, 1971). As a precaution, educational environments can make the necessary changes to diminish catastrophic events, but some occupational theorists suggested that individuals move through a series of career development stages, each with characteristic experiences and tasks. During these stages, interests, abilities, personality patterns, and occupational information are carefully explored and evaluated (Hart et al., 1971). The process finally culminates in a systematic career plan leading to occupational entry (Ginzberg, 1951).

Because this information may be new to emerging adults, perhaps before exiting the university, common language can be provided in some organized way as emerging adults are socialized about career development norms. Socializing emerging adults with an orientation to the common three career development theories would help with a transition model. However, this would require practitioners to identify resources and determine ways to deliver this information while emerging adults are still immersed in the present academic tasks, responsibilities, and a graduating senior identity. Table 2 provides a historical look at career development theories in four categories.

Emerging adults' identity development. The university environment is one that specializes in creating a space for emerging adults to explore and make sense of various identities (Rosemond, 2015). Race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and career are dimensions of identity to reference identities. Although participants in this study offered a measure of diversity, the small sample and qualitative nature of the data gathered did not offer a valid opportunity to consider demographic characteristics in the findings. A recommendation for future research is to determine to what degree social identities impact the transition out of college? Given that differences emerge when sorted by education levels, differences may also be observed by various social identities during a difficult economic environment. When the factors, which contribute to the growing population of emerging adults, such as self-exploration and a propensity for at-risk behaviors, combine with a declining economy, the complexity of a career identity development is augmented. To what extent, then, do added layers of diverse social identities such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation affect the process of career identity development? The various potential combinations of identities may become a convoluted process that further sustains the exploration of different lifestyles, choices, and consequences, and does not necessarily culminate with allowing the self, time for tasks associated with the change from school to work.

Postmodern Career Approaches

We introduce two postmodern career theories that could aid in the career development of college students and in which student identity can directly be tied. These theories were chosen because of the diversification of the United States. Post modernism believes that there is no absolute truth (Sharf, 2012). Career counselors must take into consideration that individuals construct their own reality. Those realities are often shaped by their lived experiences in the larger world. For example, an African American male may have a very different world view than an Asian male. These two approaches allow career counselors to understand how individuals are processing the world and the career exploration and development process.

Chaos Theory of Careers

CTC acknowledges that humans are often complex systems intertwined equally embedded social systems. A number of variables must be examined when exploring career development with college aged students. On both and individual and systemic levels education, family support, political views, religion/spirituality, career beliefs, access to resources, access to the labor market, occupational attainment, microaggressions, parent's education level and geographic location all will be incorporated into students career exploration and choice (Bright & Pryor, 2011). Due to the complexity of human lives it can be difficult to base career development decisions on traditional career development models.

Chaos theory asserts that both the individual and the larger systems can change suddenly and without notice (Bright & Pryor, 2005; Gleick, 1988; Stewart, 1989). Systems have an element of instability and unpredictability that must be acknowledge during the career exploration and development process. An approach such as chaos theory incorporates both multiculturalism and social justice into the career development process.

Nonlinearity is a major concept of the CTC approach (Bright & Pryor, 2005; Pryor; 2010). Nonlinearity addresses the concept that people and circumstances can be unpredictable and both will influence the career development process (Kromboltz & Levin, 2004). Unpredictability involves the unknown. Complexity involves exploring connectedness among systems, emergence (Patton & McMahon, 2006; Prior & Bright, 2004). Career counselors seeking to use to CTC should consider the following interventions; career counselors can examine the importance that students place on their career and explore a broad range of career influences over their lifetime (McKay, Bright, & Pryor, 2005). Counseling outcomes for the CTC include creativity and open mindedness, spiritual development, career pattern identification, luck readiness, meaning making and dealing with uncertainty on unpredictability (Pryor, 2010). These aspects are all tied to an individual's individual and career development. More specifically, meaning making or contribution to the individual's ability to define identity, motivation, thoughts and actions is warranted (Zander & Zander, 2000). CTC approach explores the unpredictability in people and systems. Career counselors can discuss chaotic behavior and order/disorder and how all will affect a student's career exploration and development (Bright & Pryor, 2010).

CTC is dynamic and very complex. The authors present a snap shot of the theory's approaches. However, CTC acknowledges the complexity of human lives coupled with complex systems. Combined, this makes the career development process more circular than linear as much traditional theories assume

Narrative Career Theory

During the narrative counseling process students are able to tell their past and present current narratives. One goal is to help students construct a future narrative. During this process students discuss various aspects of their lives and how they are interwoven with their careers exploration process (Young, Marshall & Valach, 2007). Career counselors are able to witness the interconnection between identity development and career development. Narrative career counseling allows students to interact with their worlds and connect those interactions to the career development process. During this process the student's career is seen as the centerpiece of the *story* (Brott, 2001; 2005). During the storytelling process students are highlighting important aspect of the story. This allows career counselors to understand both the important and unimportant dimensions of the story. The student acts as the *narrator* of the story. The setting is the

background of the student's story, the *action* is designed to reach a designated goal. Instruments such as family, friends, and employers are also used to reach a goal.

One major goal of narrative theory is to understand or identify patterns in the student's story. The counselors are also getting a sense of the student's identity by paying attention to both their story and the student. Again, the counselor is attempting to understand the client (or their identity). Career counselors are assisting clients with both identifying and narrowing choices (Sharf, 2012). Additional techniques include explore or writing down *success experiences.* During this process students list academic accomplishments or times in which they felt successful. Another activity is the *life chapter*. Students are asked to imagine they were writing a book on the lives. They must come up with the titles for the various chapters. The career counselor then explores each chapter for significant influences and interests.

Implications for Practice

Student identity and career development at the university are related to how students gain knowledge in post-secondary education environments (Collins, Shattell, & Thomas, 2005). **S**tudent and career development intersects with the emerging adult's individual career goals and choices made for charting their own path to secure gainful employment (Rosemond, 2015).

The road to adulthood is longer for emerging adults (Arnett, 2000). The intersection of this phenomenon with a depressed labor market was described in the two theoretical frameworks for this study that revealed emerging adult college graduates' encounters on their path to employment. Recent emerging college graduates in the study clarified the mental orientation of a collective of emerging adults who were unemployed or underemployed and their experiences, as explained by Denzin and Lincoln (2008), manifested the reality of the time. The results of this study increased the understanding of the process to facilitate the successful transition of emerging adult college graduates from the university environment into the work place and offered implications for education leaders, emerging adults' support networks, curriculum planners, and student development and career guidance practitioners.

Socializing emerging adults with an orientation to traditional and postmodern career development theories would help to provide a transition model. However, to accomplish this, practitioners would be required to identify resources and determine ways to deliver this information while emerging adults are still immersed in academic tasks, responsibilities, and an evolving identity.

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THE CASE FOR HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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Students have much to benefit from courses pertaining to the history of the teaching profession.

History of education, as a course to be taken in teacher education, has been greatly minimized in the ensuing years. Approximately six per cent of colleges/universities require a course in this area for prospective teachers. When being a student in the undergraduate, Master's degree, as well as the Doctorate in Education levels, one or two history of education courses were required within each degree. A part of my teaching load in 1962-1964 was to teach History of Education for two school years in teacher preparation classes. When retiring in 1992 after thirty years of University teaching, history of education was taught, only, as a part of the course Foundations of Education. How salient is History of Education in teacher education preparation programs? In my graduate Elementary School Curriculum class, a history of education was taught, very briefly, as a small part of the course content.

Teaching Educational History As A Course

There are a plethora of reasons for its advocacy as a course in teacher preparation programs. Teachers should have knowledge of the ensuing historical events which lead to teaching as a profession. Very frequently, the author asks questions, among others, of different professions when securing their services, such as the following:

- when were pain killers first used prior to filling a tooth decay? This question was asked a dentist while sitting in the dental chair and recalling the pain encountered while having teeth filled in the early 1940s
- without the use of pain killers. One time, upon experiencing much pain while the dentist was drilling out the cavity part, I started grabbing the dentist's arm, unintentionally. He warned me against doing this, and to see a different dentist if this happens again. Culturally, this was in a small primary community whereby the dentist and I were both Mennonites. That is quite different as compared to being unknown in an urban setting.
- when visiting a medical doctor, I asked when stethoscopes were first used, since they change in sophistication every few years, wondering if medical doctors found it extremely difficult to keep up with the latest in technology?
- automobile mechanics, too, find it challenging to keep abreast of available new technology with all the innovations that are experienced in computerized technology.
- automation has taken over much of the drudgery in farming during the writer's lifetime. For example, from

> the highly laboriously task of shoveling grain by hand to using a grain elevator, electrically powered, on the farm has eliminated the need for wheat shoveling and muscular power. With the turn of a switch, the grain might be augured a distance of forty feet to its bin destination.

And so it goes on, each area of work and specialization offering its many opportunities for raising questions pertaining to its history. Teachers, also, need to be able to answering questions dealing with its past historical events.

A second reason for stressing the history of education in the university teacher education curriculum is for the student to notice the evolving events and how they arrived sequentially as well as in spurts. Selected events come in spurts and remain, but in modified ways. Friedrich Froebel's (1782-1852) kindergarten and its movement was quite revolutionary with its creative methods of teaching and with extending the educational ladder downward to include kindergarten in time. Others are more sequential in being directly related to past events. Thus, the dame school in Colonial America emphasized a housewife with very minimal learning when teaching a few children in her spare time, interspersed with household duties. The teaching occurred in the home and this grew into having schoolmasters teach children in a special building.

Third, presently for example, the use of computers and other technology has truly revolutionized instruction in a very short time. When the writer retired from university teaching in 1992, he supervised student teachers whereby having a computer for each single room was truly a marvel. This has changed to the point whereby there are students in a classroom in which each has a laptop or an I pad. The rapid expansion of computers has truly changed the instructional arena and will, no doubt, continue to do so. Electronic readers, among other innovations, assist the learner to make for increased achievement in decoding content. Fourth in history of education classes, university students have a plethora of opportunities to speculate and/or take careful notice of what might transpire as the next innovation in guiding learners achievement and progress. History asks questions, such as what might be necessary to improve the curriculum for each child. Reading, as one curriculum area, appears to slow down in achievement after pupils leave the middle school, according to the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) test results. Thus, pupils do better in reading progress in the elementary as well as the middle school years as compared to the high school level. Technological inventions might well help to take care of the deficiency. This is not to say that the teacher would be unable to make and implement needed scaffolds. However, it might be also be that the teacher needs a helper when twenty five other pupils are taught in a classroom. Historians, as should classroom teachers, look for causes for an event or happening. Pupils come from diverse socio-economic level backgrounds and poverty hinders pupil achievement. One has only to look at test results of children who come from poverty home settings as compared to those from suburbia when viewing its effects. Children from poverty homes lack many opportunities which others have such as

- having computers in the home setting to do homework
- securing information as needed from a variety of motivational sources
- learning and keeping updated on computer skills in an ensuing technologically oriented society.

That said, notice the many poor/homeless people in the public library utilizing computers, especially on cold days. People tend not to be left behind in the field of innovations.

History of education emphasizes trends in society and their meanings for education and the public schools.

Fifth, history of education stresses past relevant ideas on growth of public and also private schools. It becomes problematic to keep up with all the kinds of choices available in public school education, including charter schools. In a few states, there is open enrollment whereby students and parents can make selections for a free public education within state. Then too, students and parents may choose which school the offspring is to attend within a large city such as Denver, Colorado with the following options, among others:

- Montessori School
- Waldorf School
- A solid subject matter school.

Our fourth grade twin grandson, living in Denver with his parents, has spinal bifida and needs special care which his teachers have adequately provided for in the past school years. Parents of the child have very religiously navigated the school system for a school and teacher who will meet his personal needs. A history of education course should aid in university students receiving ample knowledge of the historical development of selected schools. In the above asterisked items, the Montessori school traces its roots in 1872 to Marie Montessori who was the first woman in Italian history to receive a medical degree. Her focus was upon developing eye/hand coordination within pupils. Learning opportunities then emphasized manual dexterity. For instance, early primary grade pupils placed wooden dowels of different colors and diameters in their properly sized holes in a wooden block. Each dowel fits snuggly into the wooden block with circular holes. The last asterisked item above stresses the philosophy of William Chandler Bagley (1872-1946) with his advocacy upon pupils learning solid subject matter in each separate academic discipline. He opposed activity centered procedures of instruction as well as correlation and integration of subject matter.

Sixth, history of education is a branch of American and World History. Thus, the history of education should be taught as a part of the total history of civilization. It needs to be integrated with other academic disciplines to show mitigating factors and yet not lose its identity. There were extrinsic forces which influenced the direction of curriculum development. Happenings do not occur in a vacuum, but interrelationships become an integral part of the history of education.

Seventh, there is much happening each week in the educational arena. Current events pertaining to education must play an important part of the history of education. Somewhat rapid changes might transpire as well as those which happen incrementally. Hot button issues such as school funding and teacher evaluation based in whole or part on pupil's standardized test scores stand out as being highly salient. Motivation is indeed high when discussing involved issues! A knowledge of history plays an important role.

Summary and Conclusions

Teachers should have relevant knowledge pertaining to their profession of teaching. Events leading up to and including of what has transpired in each innovation are highly salient. History is holistic and includes how happenings in society impinge upon the educational setting. This brings us up to the present school and classroom with its innovative curriculum.

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: ASSESSING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT ON AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE STUDENT-ATHLETES AT NCAA DIVISIONAL AND NAIA INSTITUTIONS

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The purpose of this study was to analyze whether a significant difference exists in the three levels of student engagement, (a) academic challenge, (b) active and collaborative learning, and (c) student–faculty interaction among male African-American student-athletes at NCAA Divisional (Division I, II, and III) and NAIA Institutions. The study utilized the 2013-2014 secondary data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The 2013 and 2014 data were the most recent data provided by NSSE because of unidentifiable factors at the student or institutional level that have not been currently measured. The results supported the conclusion that there was a significant difference in academic challenges between African-American male student-athletes at NCAA Division I, II, III and NAIA institutions. The results illustrated that NCAA Division III institutions provided support systems that focused to help African-American male student-athletes to be more engaging in educational activities, while assisting them with psychological coping mechanisms that may contribute to completing college more efficiently than their counterparts at NCAA Division I, II, and NAIA institutions. This discovery of the findings speaks volume to the academic culture of NCAA Division III institutions and the roles that are played in each student athlete's life.

Keywords: Student engagement, National Collegiate Athletic Association, National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, Student-athlete, Academic performance, and Academic excellence

Introduction

The topic of student engagement has become widely researched over the past 15-20 years, namely because of the high correlation between student engagement and the increased levels of learning and personal development (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Student engagement is commonly known to be among the best predictors of learning and personal development (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006). Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, and Gonyea (2008) asserted that student engagement could improve retention, academic success, and persistence toward graduation. Student engagement has become an increasingly vital benchmark for colleges and universities to measure institutional quality and assess student learning (Kuh et al., 2008). It has been linked to various student outcomes such as communication, critical thinking, higher order reasoning, leadership development, identity development, and persistence (Indiana University Bloomington, 2012; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Student engagement has long been viewed as an important element to comprehending a college student's experience (Kuh et al., 2008). Kuh (2001) mentioned that the College Student Report, a nationally validated instrument to measure levels of student engagement administered through the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), separates engagement into five benchmarks of effective educational practice (academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, supportive campus environment, student–faculty interaction, and enriching educational experiences). In this study, three out of the five benchmarks were examined. The three benchmarks are: (a) level of academic challenge, (b) level of active and collaborative learning, and (c) student–faculty interaction. The collection of these three benchmarks makes up the educationally purposeful activities that will be used to define the academic success of African-American male student-athletes at NCAA Divisional (Division I, II, and III) and NAIA institutions.

Student Engagement Among Student-Athletes

Recognizing the increasing concerns about the educational experience of student-athletes, Gayles and Hu (2009) conducted a study entitled "The Influence of Student Engagement and Sport Participation on College Outcomes Among Division-I Student-athletes." The study utilized the Basic Academic Skills Study (BASS), which was developed to assess student-athletes' interests, attitudes, and academic skills (Gayles & Hu, 2009). Subscales utilized by the study included the Progress in College subscale and the Social and Group Experiences subscale (Gayles & Hu, 2009b). These subscales measure student experiences in the following areas: (a) participation in various in-and out-of-class activities; (b) perceptions of the campus environment, such as quality of relationships with students other than teammates and faculty; (c) political and cultural attitudes and values; and (d) athletic, personal, and social goals (Gayles & Hu, 2009b).

Gayles and Hu's (2009a) sample for the study included 410 freshmen student-athletes from 21 NCAA Division I colleges and universities. The study resulted in three major findings (Gayles & Hu, 2009b). First, student background characteristics did not have a significant influence on engagement in educationally purposeful activities (Gayles & Hu, 2009a). Second, engagement had significant positive impacts on educational outcomes for student-athletes (Gayles & Hu, 2009a). Finally, the influence of student engagement on cognitive outcomes was contingent on sport type (Gayles & Hu, 2009a). This finding suggests that there are different effects for student-athletes participating in different sports (Gayles & Hu, 2009b).

Twale and Korn's (2009) article entitled "College Student-athletes: Tracing Historical Research Trends in Higher Education" sought to map out the research on college student-athletes throughout the last half-century. The study began by citing the original intent of college athletics, which was to have physical activity to complement the mental stimulation (Twale & Korn, 2009). This physical activity, specifically intercollegiate athletics, dates back to 1852 when Harvard and Yale competed in a crew match (Twale & Korn, 2009). The study utilized a quantitative content analysis to assess the published scholarly research on college student-athletes (Twale & Korn, 2009). Twale and Korn (2009) catalogued the research and limited their study to research articles pertaining only to American college student-athletes (Twale & Korn, 2009). Implications of the study included the recognition that college athletes represent a unique subset of at-risk college students (Twale & Korn, 2009). Twale and Korn's (2009) study failed to identify solutions to the recurring trends; however, the authors clearly issued a call for future research. Interestingly, Twale and Korn (2009) noted that there was a larger quantity of research on female athletes compared to their male counterparts over the last several decades following their entrance into collegiate athletics.

Seeking to better understand the levels of student engagement at Azusa Pacific University, Helms and McCormick (2009) conducted a qualitative analysis of student-athletes representing football, women's soccer, men's basketball, and baseball at the university. Helms and McCormick's (2009) research questions specifically addressed athletic culture and stereotypes, time management, and campus engagement. The findings of the study indicated that student-athletes' core friend groups were primarily composed of other team members; time management was an impediment to campus engagement and academic preparation; a perceived lack of academic support existed on behalf of the university; and, finally, perceived stereotypes existed that labeled athletes as lacking intelligence and having lower expectations from professors (Helms & McCormick, 2009). The byproduct of these findings and perceptions was a decreased level of student-athlete engagement in the broader campus culture. The findings of the Helms and McCormick's (2009) study reaffirmed Astin's (1999) findings in a longitudinal study that indicated that athletes experienced isolation from their peer group due to long practice hours and extensive travel associated with athletic participation. Helms and McCormick (2009) study produced four major recommendations for best practice. The first suggestion was the development of a specialized cross-departmental mentoring program for student-athletes (Helms & McCormick, 2009). The second recommendation was to provide specialized campus programming that catered to student-athletes' time commitments (Helms & McCormick, 2009). The third suggestion was to provide student-athletes with priority registration in order to accommodate practice and game schedules (Helms & McCormick, 2009). The final recommendation was to provide a seminar each semester that focuses on student-athlete academic support (Helms & McCormick, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

In the world of higher education, student engagement experiences have a positive impact on retention and graduation (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008). Kuh (2001) determined that student engagement represents the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities. Kuh also asserted that students gain more from their

academic experiences when they devote time and energy to their non-academic pursuits. As a result, Kuh (2001) mentioned that engagement research could be linked to institutional policies and practices to assist in bolstering student retention and persistence to graduation. Engagement, therefore, can be viewed as an important factor in determining institutional accountability (Kuh, 2001).

The topic of retention is of primary importance to the world of higher education. Reason (2009) argued that student retention "has been the primary goal for higher education institutions for several decades" (p. 659). Almost half of the students entering community colleges and almost a quarter of students entering four-year institutions leave at the end of their first-year (Tinto, 1993). Additionally, 57% of full-time undergraduate students who began study in 2003 at higher educational institutions completed a bachelor's degree at the institution where they began their studies within 6 years (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2011). This statement is further corroborated by figures from the American College Testing Program, which found that only 55.9% of first-year students at two-year colleges persist to the second year, while 73.9% of first-year students at public four-year institutions persist to the second year (American College Testing, 2010).

Le Crom, Warren, Clark, Marolla, and Gerber (2009) asserted that the disparity of retention and graduation rates for student-athletes is a rising concern for colleges and universities, as well as the NCAA. Le Crom et al. (2009) mentioned that in a 2004 study, the average graduation rate for student-athletes was 64.8% in football and 40.1% in basketball, while the overall campus graduation rate was 76.8%. Caucasian male student-athletes graduate at a rate of 60% versus 48% for African-American male student-athletes (Le Crom et al., 2009). While female student-athletes are more likely to graduate than male student-athletes, little difference exists between the graduation rates of Caucasian female student-athletes and African-American female student-athletes (Le Crom et al., 2009).

According to Eckard (2010), when assessing student-athlete graduation rates, it is important to assess the graduation rates in comparison to the general student body graduation rate of full-time students. Student-athletes must be full-time; therefore, the comparison of graduation rates to the general student body should be full-time (Eckard, 2010). Part-time students take longer to graduate; therefore, the graduation rate for part-time students is lower, distorting the comparisons rates of student-athlete to non-athlete graduation rates (Eckard, 2010). To assess graduation rates in comparison to non-athletes within a NCAA Division-I school, Eckard (2010) included a sample of two revenue-generating sports during the school year 2006–2007: football and men's basketball. In a sample of 106 football schools, football players' graduation rates were 17.7% less than the general all-male student body's graduation rates (Eckard, 2010). The results are similar for a sample of 102 men's basketball programs (Eckard, 2010). Basketball players' graduation rates were 34.3% lower than the all-male general student body's graduation rates (Eckard, 2010). However, Eckard (2010) did not assess female student-athletes or non-revenue-generating sports graduation rates in comparison to the general student body graduation rates (Eckard, 2010). According to NCAA (2011), many NCAA Divisional and NAIA institutions rank amongst the lowest in academic graduation rates for student-athletes.

Chickering and Gamson's Seven Principles of Good Practice

Sponsored by the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) and the Johnson Foundation, the Chickering and Gamson (1987) Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education resulted from a culmination of discussions between those who were experts on the research of the college experience (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Based on over 50 years of research pertaining to teaching practices, learning styles, and the interaction between faculty and students (Chickering & Gamson, 1987), the Seven Principles were created as a way to provide recommendations on improving higher education that were accessible, understandable and practical (Chickering & Gamson, 1999). The seven principles that the group developed for good practices in undergraduate education were (a) encourage student–faculty interaction, (b) encourage cooperation among students, (c) encourage active learning, (d) provide prompt feedback, (e) emphasize time on task, (f) communicate high expectations, and (g) respect diverse talent and ways of learning (Chickering & Gamson, 1999).

From the establishment of Chickering and Gamson's (1999) seven principles for good practices came the creation of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The purpose of the NSSE was to provide information to colleges and universities about purposeful engagement to increase student satisfaction and persistence (Chickering & Gamson, 1999; Indiana University Bloomington, 2012). The goal of the NSSE is to query undergraduates directly about their educational experiences related to particular classroom activities and specific faculty, as well as peer practices that are related to high-quality undergraduate student outcomes (Chickering & Gamson, 1999; Indiana University Bloomington, 2012).

Kuh's Theory of Student Engagement

The origin of student engagement theory begins with the work of Astin (1984, 1985), Pace (1984), and Kuh and associates (Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 1991). Although these theorists used different terminology to describe their definition of student engagement, their views were based on the same premise that students learn from what they do in college. Kuh's (2001) Theory of Student Engagement addresses two concepts. First, engagement is student driven, meaning students who invest time and energy into studying and taking part in other purposeful activities (e.g., student organizations, group study, conversations with faculty) will achieve higher levels of engagement (Upcraft, Gardner, & Barefoot, 2005). Second, engagement is institution driven, meaning that colleges and universities also need to be purposeful in what they do in order to maximize students' opportunities for engagement (Upcraft et al., 2005).The following are several areas where colleges and universities can be purposeful in what they do for freshmen: (a) recruiting and retaining students (enrollment management); (b) assessing freshmen student outcomes; (c) challenging and supporting freshmen both inside and outside the classroom; (d) encouraging expectations and performance requirements for faculty and staff; (e) creating a campus culture that fosters student success; (f) creating services for underrepresented minorities; (g) integrating diversity into the campus climate; (h) building a foundation for student success; (i) advocating for freshmen; (j) developing collaborative partnerships between academic and student affairs; (k) using and understanding technology; (l) facilitating faculty and staff professional development opportunities and in designing freshmen services such as first-year seminar courses, academic advising, service-learning projects, learning communities, orientation programs, living environments, and other support services (Upcraft et al., 2005).

In other words, it is important for administrators and faculty of colleges and universities to be organized and thoughtful in how time and resources are allocated, in order to maximize opportunities for student engagement and learning (Upcraft et al., 2005).

Kuh's theory (1991) was developed while conducting the College Experiences Study. The study selected 14 colleges based on their high quality of out of class experiences (Kuh et al., 1991). The study later developed into the DEEP project (Documenting Effective Educational Practices) consisting of 20 colleges and universities ranging from highly selective public to private institutions (Kuh et al., 2005). These colleges received higher than expected scores on the National Study of Student Engagement (NSSE) and higher than predicted graduation rates, which are factors that contribute to student engagement and related desired outcomes of college (Kuh et al., 2005). Many scholars support the importance of institutional engagement (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Kuh et al., 2005; Manning, Kinzie, & Schuh, 2006). In order for student engagement to exist, students must be involved in quality learning opportunities both inside and outside the classroom (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006; Coates, 2005; Pike, 2006; Porter, 2006). Students must make a concerted effort with their institution by taking advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided for them (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to deliver whether there is a difference in the level of student engagement among African-American male student-athletes at NCAA Division I, II, III, and NAIA Institutions. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) assessed the levels of student engagement. The levels of student engagement were assessed in two areas adopted by NSSE: (1) level of academic challenge and (2) level of active and collaborative learning, student–faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences, and a supportive campus environment.

Research Questions

Three research questions guided this study.

1. Is there a significant difference in the level of academic challenges between African-American male student-athletes at NCAA Divisional and NAIA Institutions?
2. Is there a significant difference in the level of active and collaborative learning between African-American male student-athletes at NCAA Divisional and NAIA Institutions?
3. Is there a significant difference in the level of student-faculty interaction between African-American male student-athletes at NCAA Divisional and NAIA Institutions?

Methods

The study was conducted utilizing secondary data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The 2013-2014 survey instruments were utilized within this study. NSSE's data was used because of its research initiative that assesses student learning by measuring the level of student engagement (Pascarella et al., 2010). The selection of participants for this study was first-year freshman and senior African-American male student-athletes participating in revenue-generating sports at NCAA Division I, II, III, and NAIA institutions. African-American males highlight the revenue-generated sports in this study. By having African-American male student-athletes to highlight this study, the study allowed the researchers to understand the balancing act of sport participation, academic programs, and other college experiences regarding the quality of educational experiences for these athletes.

Participant Demographics

The research group was comprised of first-year freshmen and senior student-athletes, age ranging from 18- 24 years, who participated in the 2013 and 2014 College Student Report as administered through the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). NSSE collected data from 504 institutions and approximately 490,000 students-athletes during the 2013 and 2014 administration cycle; of the student-athlete population, 1,339 were first-year freshmen and senior African-American male student-athletes from NCAA Divisional and NAIA institutions (NSSE, 2014). African-American status was determined by the student's self-identified race/ethnicity. Additionally, there were 527 first-year freshmen and 243 seniors in the 2013 NSSE College Student Report Survey sample, and 381 first-year freshmen and 212 seniors in the 2014 NSSE College Student Report Survey sample. Furthermore, African-American male student-athletes participating in each athletic division were represented in the study: NCAA Division-I *(n=509)*, NCAA Division-II *(n=312)*, NCAA Division-III *(n=381)*, and NAIA *(n=137)*. Table 1 illustrates additional details of the participant's information.

Table 1. Participant Information

Variable	Description	N
Athletic division affiliation	NCAA Division I	509
	NCAA Division II	312
	NCAA Division III	381
	NAIA	137
African-American Male Student-Athletes (2011)	First-year freshman	527
	Seniors	243
African-American Male student-athletes (2012)	First-year freshman	381
	Seniors	212

Note. N=1339

Data Collection

Data were requested from the Center for Postsecondary Research, which administers the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), that include responses to all survey items from the 2013 and 2014 versions of NSSE. Moreover, NCAA Division I, II, III, and NAIA institutions were included. All student-athletes and institutions identifying information were removed. The National Center for Educational Statistics reports that the majority of full-time students, 58%, in the United States complete a bachelor's degree within six years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). The Information from NSSE respondents included the following demographic information: (1) age; (2) sex; (3) ethnicity; (4) student classification in college; (5) transfer student status; (6) types of other institutions attended; (7) participation in a fraternity; (8) cumulative grade point average, (9) current living location; (10) highest level of education completed by the mother and father, and (11) major. This dataset is unidentifiable at the institutional or student level because all institutional and/or student identifying information were removed from the data according to the NSSE agreement before the researchers received it. The United States Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act regulate the NSSE's use of student data. The NSSE administration protocol also adheres to the federal regulations pertaining to the protection of human subjects and is approved by the Indiana University Internal Review Board (Indiana University Bloomington, 2012).

Data Analysis Procedures

The data were analyzed using quantitative analysis methods. SPSS statistical software was used to perform the quantitative statistical functions. Descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations were computed

for each variable and correlations obtained to determine if any relationships existed between variables. Inferential statistics was used to assist in answering the research questions mentioned previously. Prior research determined that relationships exist between the variables listed in the questions, so a one-way MANOVA was utilized to determine the significance and strength of the relationships. The MANOVA was utilized to determine the significance of the difference on a collection of dependent variables, which are the three NSSE benchmarks. The alpha level conveyed whether athletic division affiliation differed on the collection of dependent variables. If significant differences existed, a univariate test determined whether any dependent variables caused significance in the MANOVA. The MANOVA method was chosen to reduce Type I error. MANOVA assumptions included normality, independence, and homogeneity of variance (Shavelson, 1996).

Findings

A one-way MANOVA for each athletic division was run to determine if there was a significant difference in the levels of student engagement among African-American male student-athletes at NCAA Division I, NCAA Division II, NCAA Division, III, and NAIA institutions. An alpha level of .05 was utilized for all statistical tests. The independent variables are the four athletic affiliated divisions (NCAA Division I, NCAA Division II, NCAA Division, III, and NAIA institutions). The dependent variables are the NSSE three benchmarks: a) academic challenge, b) active and collaborative learning, and c) student-faculty interaction. The mean for African-American male student-athletes results by athletic division affiliation for the NSSE's three benchmarks are detailed in Table 2.

In Table 3, The Wilks' Lambda test (p=.000) revealed that a significant difference does exist among the NCAA Division I,

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Athletic Division

Benchmarks	Athletic Division	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Academic challenge	NCAA Division I	55.3968	13.17285	509
	NCAA Division II	53.6148	12.73692	312
	NCAA Division III	58.1978	13.19481	381
	NAIA	54.0599	14.52959	137
	Total	55.6418	13.32636	1339
Active and collaborative learning	NCAA Division I	51.4117	17.91190	509
	NCAA Division II	53.0484	18.02650	312
	NCAA Division III	52.8538	18.23279	381
	NAIA	54.0783	18.25401	137
	Total	52.4763	18.06755	1339
Student-faculty interaction	NCAA Division I	43.9828	21.41759	509
	NCAA Division II	46.1681	21.21093	312
	NCAA Division III	46.4742	22.36526	381
	NAIA	45.4420	20.81984	137
	Total	45.3502	21.58895	1339

Note. N=1339

NCAA Division II, NCAA Division III, and NAIA institutions based on the collections of the NSSE's three benchmarks. Wilks' Lambda had values less than the alpha level=.05.

Table 3. Multivariate Test for Athletic Division

Test	Value	Sig.
Wilks' Lambda	.967	0.000

Note. N=1339; **P<.05*

To examine the homogeneity of the NSSE's three benchmarks among the four athletic division affiliations, Levene's Test of Equality was used at the p>.05. Levene's Test of Equality test the variances of the NSSE's three benchmarks are equal among the NCAA Division I, NCAA Division II, NCAA Division III, and NAIA institutions. (Table 4)

Table 4. Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

Benchmarks	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Academic challenge	1.429	3	1335	.233
Active and collaborative learning	.089	3	1335	.966
Student-faculty interaction	.829	3	1335	.478

Note. N=1339; **P<.05;*

As identified in Table 4, the dependent variables of Active and Collaborative Learning (p=.966), Academic Challenge (p=.233), and Student-Faculty Interaction (p=.478) all have values p > .05. Levene's Test of Equality tests that the error variance of the dependent variables is equal across groups.

Similar to the one-way MANOVA for institutional type, a one-way MANOVA for athletic division was conducted to determine where the differences were coming from among the NSSE's three benchmarks as well. Table 5 details the one-way MANOVA for athletic division results for each benchmark.

As depicted in Table 5, significant differences among the athletic divisions, NCAA Division I, NCAA Division II, NCAA Division III, and NAIA, are within the Academic Challenge benchmark (p=.000). For the Academic Challenge benchmark, post hoc analysis revealed significant differences for athletic division. The post hoc had values less than the alpha level=.05. (see Table 6).

As depicted in Table 6, the post hoc analysis revealed significant differences, for the academic challenge benchmark, in mean scores between African-American student-athletes participating in the NCAA or NAIA athletic divisions. More specifically, African-American male student-athletes apart of the NCAA Division III (i) reported significantly different than the other athletic divisions.

Table 5. Test Between-Subjects, Effects for Athletic Division

Source	Benchmarks	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Athletic Division (NCAA Division-I, Division-II, Division-III, and NAIA)	Active and collaborative learning	1084.886	3	361.629	1.108	.345
	Student-faculty interaction	1642.987	3	547.662	1.175	.318
	Academic challenge	4144.372	3	1381.457	7.899	.000***

Note. N=1339;**P<.05; ***p < .001.*

Table 6. Post Hoc Results for Academic Challenge

Dependent Variable		(I) Athletic affiliation	(J) Athletic affiliation	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Academic challenge	Tukey HSD	NCAA Division I	NCAA Division II	1.7821	0.95085	0.24
			NCAA Division III	-2.8009*	0.89588	0.01*
			NAIA	1.3369	1.27284	0.72
		NCAA Division II	NCAA Division I	-1.7821	0.95085	0.24
			NCAA Division III	-4.5830*	1.00973	0.008***
			NAIA	-0.4451	1.35539	0.988
		NCAA Division III	NCAA Division I	2.8009*	0.89588	0.01*
			NCAA Division II	4.5830*	1.00973	0.000***
			NAIA	4.1378*	1.31741	0.009*
		NAIA	NCAA Division I	-1.3369	1.27284	0.72
			NCAA Division II	0.4451	1.35539	0.988
			NCAA Division III	-4.1378*	1.31741	0.009*

Note. N=1339.; *P<.05; ***p < .001.

Summary of Findings

Results from this study indicated that academic challenge was a predictor of student engagement for African-American male student-athletes among athletic divisions. Preparing for class, spending time working on homework assignments, and having a higher institutional expectation for their academic performance were found to be engaging for African-American male student-athletes at NCAA Division III institutions. As a result, it is recommended that NCAA Division I, NCAA Division II, and NAIA institutions provide focused support systems to help African-American male student-athletes engage more in the educational activities and assist them with psychological coping mechanisms that may contribute to completing college.

Limitations

Several limitations within this study were revealed. The first limitation of the study involves African-American male student-athletes grouped together within a particular division. This study did not separate African-American male student-athletes who participate in revenue and non-revenue generating sports (e.g., football, basketball, baseball, track, golf, tennis, soccer, etc.). Previous research suggested that a significant difference might occur between student-athletes participating in revenue versus non-revenue generating sports (Gayles & Hu, 2009b; Maloney & McCormick, 1993). The second limitation of the study is the self-identified nature of the 2013 and 2014 NSSE College Student Report. Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt (2010) asserted that a significant amount of research indicates that self-reports are likely to be accurate given the respondent knows the information that is being requested, the questions refer to activities that have occurred recently,

the respondent feels that the questions are worth answering, and the questions do not violate the privacy of and/or harm the respondent. The third limitation is compared to the second limitation in the way that the NSSE surveys require African-American male student-athletes to identify themselves. The question that is being asked is "Are you a participant on a team that is sponsored by your institution?" After reviewing that question, it is believable that students who participate in intramural sports could misinterpret the question and answer the question with a yes. In the Umbach, Palmer, Kuh, and Hannah (2006) study, NSSE's data was utilized to compare student-athletes with non-athletes. The study found incorrect coding of student-athletes to be minimal (Umbach, Palmer, Kuh, & Hannah, 2006).

Conclusion

When analyzing the significant benchmarks, the results showed that African-American male student-athletes participate as often as or more often than the African-American male student-athletes at other NCAA Divisional and NAIA institutions in effective educational practice. Harper, Carini, Bridges, and Hayek (2004) indicated that NCAA Division III institutions offer a wide array of cultural venues for student engagement that lend to better learning environments through actively involving students in both academic and out-of-class activities that allow students to gain more from college than those who are not so involved. Although African-American male student-athletes have lower graduation rates than student-athletes in other ethnic groups, African-American male student-athletes' responses showed a generally positive picture of college life.

From the results that the student-athletes surveyed, this study validates that NCAA Division III schools provide African-American male student-athletes with a broad sampling of educational activities, while assisting them with psychological coping mechanisms that may contribute to completing college more efficiently, which speaks to the culture of NCAA Division III institutions. Furthermore, this study also validates that by examining differences between African-American male student-athletes at NCAA Divisional and NAIA athletic institutions, additional student engagement could possibly differ between those groups.

Comeaux (2008) stated that several college professors are concerned about the time being spent on intercollegiate athletics that prohibits student-athletes from achieving a well-rounded college experience. However, as it relates to these African-American male student-athletes, this is not the case. In relation to participation in campus and community educational opportunities, college athletics frequently set up service projects that required student-athlete's participation. This could explain why African-American male student-athletes reported in the 2013 and 2014 College Student Report that they worked collaboratively with other students inside and outside of the classroom, were more involved with community projects, and spent more time talking to their professors and advisors than their counterparts at the NCAA Division I, NCAA Division II, and NAIA institutions.

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ECOLOGICAL FACTORS AND INTERVENTIONS FOR FOSTERING COLLEGE-AGE MULTIRACIAL IDENTITY

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With the exponential growth of the multiracial and multiethnic college-age population, it is important to address the role that family and peers play in multiracial individuals' identity formation. This is particularly important as ethnic identity is strongly associated with adolescent and young adult self-esteem. Practice interventions are discussed as well as future directions.

Keywords: multiracial identity, ethnic identity, self-esteem

In the wake of what Root (1992; 1996) deems the "multiracial baby boom," the multiracial child population is the fastest growing population in America. A 'multiracial' individual is defined as one with socially and phenotypically distinct racial heritages. The term multiracial includes individuals who are biracial (those of two races in their heritage), as well as more individuals with more than two distinct racial heritages.

Multiracial Individuals

Ever since the 2000 Census, which marked the first time individuals were able to mark off more than one race, individuals identifying as multiracial has steadily increased to a total of 9 million people, approximately 3 percent of the population. In fact, the percentage of people identifying as multiracial grew three times faster during the last decade than the number of Americans reporting a single race (U.S. Census, 2012), and estimations state that by the year 2050, approximately 1 in 5 individuals will identify as multiracial (Smith & Edmonston, 1997); however, even this may be a gross underestimation given the tendency of individuals to report only one race, even when aware of multiple racial heritages (Perez & Hirschmann, 2009).

Of course, it is crucial to begin any discussion of race and identity of multiracial or multiethnic individuals with the acknowledgement that race is an artifice that can be viewed from a sociopolitical historical paradigm rather than a biological one (Milan & Keiley, 2000; Root, 1990; Spickard, 1992). Consequently, it is the social and cultural implications of race and how they impact the multiracial adolescent that is of particular interest here, specifically the developmental processes of identity formation.

The majority of research on ethnic identity focuses on monoracial adolescents. When studying ethnic identity in multiracial individuals, historically, the small number of studies have only Black/White individuals are represented (Brown, 1995; Field, 1996; Gibbs, 1987; Gibbs & Hines, 1992; Gillem, Cohn, & Throne, 2001; Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson, & Harris, 1993; Poston, 1990). As a

result of historical factors, such as repealing of anti-miscegenation laws in 1967 and the corresponding increase in interracial dating and marriages, research with the multiracial population is an increasingly growing field (Bracey, Bamaca, & Umana-Taylor, 2004; Gibbs, 1998). Simply having parents of multiple racial groups does not automatically mean an individual will identify as multiracial. Psychologically interpreting multiracial status is related to how individuals *relate* to their multiracial heritage (Binning et al., 2009). Given the change in the racial composition of the United States and the complexities of multiracial identity, it is important to extend the discussion on ethnic identity formation to multiracial individuals and families.

The Relationship Between Ethnic Identity and Psychological Well-Being

The concept of ethnic identity measures how much an individual identifies with his or her own ascribed ethnic group and the extent to which that identification is salient and significant to them (Phinney, 1996). Building off of the ego identity literature, ethnic identity formation focuses on the developmental phase of adolescence and young adulthood (Phinney, 1996). The importance of this construct and its relationship to various mental health related outcomes has been recognized; these outcomes include self-esteem (Binning, Unzueta, Huo, & Molina, 2009; Greig, 2003; Phinney & Chavira, 1992; Roberts, Phinney, Masse, Chen, Roberts, & Romero, 1999), self-efficacy Smith, Walker, Fields, Brookins, , & Seay, 1999), depression (Lee, 2005; Roberts et al., 1999), and (lack of) effective psychological coping skills (McMahon & Watts, 2002; Mossakowski, 2003).

Earlier studies of multiracial children were based on the premise that this population was particularly susceptible to social stigma and marginality by family and peers (Gibbs, 1998; Stonequist, 1937). It was largely hypothesized that difficulties with this marginal status was what led to significantly lower self-esteem in multiracial individuals (Brown, 1990; Stonequist, 1937). More recently, however, studies have incorporated the "bicultural competence theory", in which multiracial individuals may develop unique cognitive strengths due to negotiations between two cultures (Bracey et al., 2004; de Anda, 1984). In Grove's (1991) comparative study of Asian, White and multiracial Asian/White students, for example, the latter group took pride in their racial ambiguity as it allowed them flexibility in their self-identification and behaviors. Regardless of theoretical framework, the majority of studies on multiracial and ethnic identity formation and development recognize that the presence of a dual heritage places multiracial individuals in a unique and oftentimes complex situation.

Multiracial Adolescents' Racial Identification

The normative stressors to forming a stable identity prevalent during adolescence may be heightened for the multiracial adolescent (Collins, 2000; Gibbs, 1987; Gibbs, 1998; Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995; Phillips, 2004). Gillem & Thompson (2004) argue that multiracial individuals continue to be pathologized and defined as "genetically inferior and socially marginal" (pg. 2). The developmental process by which individuals come to understand their identity is filtered through cumulative racial experiences and embedded in a system of inter-group relationships. Throughout middle childhood, many multiracial individuals may not face difficulties with their mixed race heritage. It is during adolescence and early adulthood when many problems of identity and exclusion based on racial heritage come to the forefront (Grove, 1991; Kerwin et al., 1993). It is a dialectical process between internal and external processes and individual and social definition (Brown, 1990; Nagel, 1994). Factors, such as the often tense race

relations in different regions of the country and the ratio of racial and ethnic groups in the community, will affect society's perception of the multiracial individual and as a result, the individual's self-identification (Harris & Sim, 2004; Nagel, 1994; Root, 1996). Some argue that as individuals get older –particularly if they lack encouragement, resources, education, or comfort level with their multiracial identity, they may be more likely to identify with a monoracial, and commonly minority, heritage due to appearance and/or social expectations (Harris & Sim, 2002; Nagel, 1994).

Many believe that one of the most important tasks for multiracial adolescents is to integrate the dual racial identifications into a healthy multiracial identity (Gibbs & Moskowitz-Sweet, 1991; Phinney, 1996; Poston, 1990; Wardle, 1992). However, Sue & Sue (2016) caution that being multiracial simply offers the individual the opportunity to be bicultural, and *does not necessarily require it.* Ethnic identification in multiracial adolescents and young adults is complex and adolescents may identify with one, both, or neither of their biological parents' heritages (Gibbs & Hines, 1992). Moreover, this identification is not static, but rather dynamic and is related to an individual's self-esteem, cultural upbringing, and community (Phinney & Chavira, 1992; Phinney, Lochner, & Murphy, 1990). Suzuki-Crumly & Hyers (2004) found that multiracial adolescents were more likely to identify with their minority heritage than their majority one. They suggest that identification with the minority group may be personally advantageous as individuals can attribute negative feedback to prejudice, which may be less painful than attributing it to personal weaknesses. Moreover, research suggests that multiracial individuals who identify with either their minority heritage or both heritages have better self-concepts and higher satisfaction of life than those who only identified with the majority group (Field, 1996; Suzuki-Crumly & Hyers, 2004) .

Fluidity of Racial Identity

Racial identity is fluid; it may change over time and according to situation (Harris & Sim, 2004; Nagel, 1994) and racial identity for multiracial adolescents may be even more mutable as their community (e.g. home of residence to the new dorm life and experiences of a college setting) changes (Harris & Sim, 2004). Harris & Sim (2002) studied patterns of racial classification and found strong support for the fluidity of race; measures of race were taken from adolescents who were interviewed both at home and at school and from their parents' racial background. Only 20% of multiracial adolescents identified themselves as multiracial in both contexts; and of those, 30% selected different racial combinations at home and school. White/Blacks were the most consistent, with 60% having consistent identification at home and school. White/Asians were next with 46%, and White/American Indian at 25%.

It is important to note –and to educate parents and professionals working with this age group – that difficulty in forming this stable identity can be expressed through a range of psychological symptoms, such as low self esteem (Bracey et al., 2003; Kerwin et al., 1993; Suzuki-Crumly & Hyers, 2004), depression, behavioral problems, and delinquency (Choi, He, Herrenkohl, Catalano, Toumbourou, 2012). At the milder end of the spectrum, some individuals may suffer from identity confusion, with mild symptoms of sadness, while those with more severe symptoms, such as anti-social and depressive behaviors, may suffer from a negative identity and self-evaluation (Gibbs, 1998; Milan & Keiley, 2000).

However, as noted by research in the realm of bicultural competency theory, multiracial adolescents and young college-age adults benefit from exposure to distinctly different racial groups and often learn to function in multiple cultural environments (de Anda, 1984), particularly as they become

exposed to varying groups and communities in college settings and acquire a new level of social understanding and acceptance for their multiracial identity. Specifically, multiracial adolescents who acquire this flexibility often exhibit a cognitive style that *gives them stronger problem-solving skills*; they become adept at interpreting and responding to the demands of varying social situations and various cultural orientations (de Anda, 1984; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Stephan, 1992). Stephan (1992) proposed multiracial individuals have the opportunity to learn the values and behaviors of two or more ethnic groups, and thus, learn to effectively interact with individuals from diverse ethnic groups. In other words, multiracial adolescents are often well versed in understanding and following the rules and norms of numerous cultural contexts.

Competent multiracial adolescents and young adults thus often come away with a broader base of social support and a strong sense of personal identity and efficacy (LaFromboise et al., 1993). In one study, for example, Bracey et al. (2003) found multiracial Asian adolescents benefit from this bicultural competency by having significantly higher self-esteem than their monoracial counterparts.

Ecological Factors

Two well-known correlates of ethnic identity formation are the family, specifically parents (Kerwin et al., 1993; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2004; Wardle, 1987) and peers (Phinney, Romero, Nava, and Huang, 2001). In her study of ecological factors on ethnic identity in multiracial youth, peers and family showed the most consistent effects (Herman, 2004). Support from parents and peers has two purposes as it serves as a mechanism in forming an ethnic identity and developing a greater self-esteem (Blash & Unger, 1995; Diggs, 1999; Laible, Gustavo, & Roesch, 2004), both of which are also interrelated.

Parents

Multiracial families also face unique challenges compared to monoracial families. For example, there may be disapproval and rejection from extended family, neighbors, and the community (Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995). Multiracial children may face additional conflict within the mixed race families due to differences in language, religion and child rearing practices (Salgado de Snyder, Lopez, & Padilla, 1982) as well prepartion for discrimination and racial labeling within the community (Kerwin et al, 1993).

Parents have numerous mechanisms of affecting how their children racially identify, both directly and indirectly. Directly, parents choose which culture(s) they will teach their children and ethnic socialization is a direct predictor of ethnic identity. This socialization includes learning about culture as well as messages that parents choose to tell (or not tell) their children about race (Salgado de Snyder et al., 1982). Nishimura (1998) found that some multiracial families did not discuss race with their children; however, that this could be harmful and unrealistic as it did not properly prepare their children for questioning from others.

Indirectly, parents choose the neighborhood and school that their child will attend, thus, impacting the exposure their child will have with various racial and ethnic groups. With respect to neighborhood racial composition, as the percentage of minorities increases, the more likely the multiracial individual will identify with the minority group (Hwang, Saenz & Aguirre, 1997; Qian, 2004; Xie & Goyette, 1997). Educational composition has a similar effect (Qian, 2004); multiracial children are more likely to identify with the minority group as the level of education within the neighborhood increases (Hwang et al., 1997; Xie & Goyette, 1997). On a related note, highly educated couples are more likely to identify their children as minorities than

less-educated couples. Surname also has an impact and because a child will often carry the surname of the father, the children may often identify with the racial group of the father (Qian, 2004).

Peers

Conformity to peer norms is often not only valued, but also expected during adolescence. The process of forming a healthy identity can be disturbed by peer rejection. Adolescents and young adults are at risk for rejection by both the majority and minority groups due to differences in physical appearance and family background (Gibbs, 1998). The normative stressors to forming a stable identity prevalent during adolescence may be heightened for the multiracial adolescent. Multiracial teens must integrate identifications with parents from two or more different racial backgrounds while also negotiating their individual social status with their peers, and achieving a sense of belonging is often a source of conflict for multiracial adolescents (Gibbs & Moskowitz-Sweet, 1991). Exclusion can become especially salient for multiracial adolescents because adolescence is a period when racially homogenous friendships are typically formed (Collins, 2000; Kerwin et al., 1993; Porter, 1991). Faced with peer pressure, many multiracial adolescents must choose one racial group to associate with (Kerwin et al., 1993). Many times multiracial children may find it difficult to get support from peers (Collins, 2000). For example, Smith & Moore (2000) found that multiracial Black students were more likely to experience less cohesive friendship groups and to have more negative experiences with their Black peers than their monoracial counterparts. Grove (1991) found similar results with his study of Asian/White college students, who reported feelings of marginality when with monoracial Asian peers, who did not consider them to be "real Asians."

This potential lack of connection and inclusion with friendship groups has important implications for the multiracial adolescent as friends serve as an indication of social ability and help influence social, emotional, and intellectual competencies (Hartup, 1978). These complications may place multiracial adolescents at greater risk for delinquency and peer conflicts (Gibbs, 1987; Gibbs & Moskowitz-Sweet, 1991; Herring, 1992; Milan & Keiley, 2000); multiracial adolescents may withdraw socially and become more vulnerable to peer pressure from delinquent groups (Choi et al., 2012 Coie, Terry, Zakriski, & Lochman, 1995; Gibbs, 1987, 1989).

Conversely, since friendship groups tend to be racially homogenous, multiracial adolescnts may have access to both groups and thus, have a wider circle of friends. In her study of multiracial college students, Renn (1999) found that many reported feeling welcomed by different groups and felt able to move fluidly between groups. Similarly, Corrin & Cook (1999) found multiracial individuals are more likely to have racially diverse friends and continue doing so as they get older, while monoracial individuals are more likely to move into even more segregated relationships.

Tailoring Interventions

Armed with knowledge of the unique strengths, vulnerabilities, and developmental identity formation trajectories of multiracial adolescents and young adults, what interventions should be tailored to meet their unique needs? First, education and mental health professionals need to be prepared to meet the unique needs of multiracial adolescents and their families at a time in which their identify formation is at the forefront. Professionals that encounter and work to support this population, particularly as they enter the college realm – including college counselors, those who work in student affairs or residential

housing, and those faculty and staff who advise college student groups that focus on inclusion and diversity— should be trained in understanding the identity development process for multiracial youth and the problems that may occur that are distinct from monoracial adolescents and families. Moreover, these professionals should be familiar with the very common and hurtful microaggressions those within this population often experience daily (and will continue to experience) based on their appearance or perceived racial identity from those around them. For example, a common questions asked of multiracial individuals is, "So, what are you anyway?" This can be viewed as benign or it may be seen as an uncomfortable and harassing question commonly known as a form of racial "microagression", specificially a "microinvalidation" (Sue & Sue, 2016). This is a good opportunity for education and mental health professionals to help multiracial adolescents develop coping skills to address questions and respond to bias; provide a forum to discuss their own mixed race heritages in a safe forum; to normalize and validate the feelings of marginalization that this population often experiences; and to gently encourage multiracial adolescents and young adults to use college groups and clubs as a forum to further explore their ethnic identity.

Moreover, recognizing issues that may be unique to multiracial individuals and their families— and incorporating resourceful intervention techniques when working with these families –is also important. Such interventions may include identifying resources and curriculum around multiracial individuals and families; offering parents education about the unique challenges for their adolescent (and those that may arise as they enter the college arena); and a safe forum to allow parents to be able to discuss these challenges with their adolescent or young adult. It is important to recognize that parents may feel helpless and ineffective in supporting and teaching their adolescent about multiracial experience; one way to enable parents to feel more comfortable addressing issues of race may begin by having them reach out to learn more about college cultural groups that their adolescent may gain exposure to on their campus, particularly groups that may resonate with the adolescent's identity formation as they enter college.

Future Directions

The process of ethnic identification is an important aspect of identity formation for adolescents and young adults, particularly for those that identify as multiracial in a country increasingly divided on issues of race and gender. In addition to understanding the formation of ethnic identity, future considerations include highlighting for adolescents and young adults the incredible within-group diversity that exists and the encouragement of finding a place within that diverse group. Gonzalez-Backen (2013) encourages studying different ecological contexts, such as communities of varying levels of ethnic composition and varying levels of ethnic socialization within families and peers in order to better understand and normalize these within-group differences for young people. Recognizing and educating young adults and their families about the intersectionality of additional factors that intersect with identity development (such as gender identity and formation; sexual orientation; and age) is also crucial in order to highlight the unique path of the multiracial adolescents' identity development across these variables.

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SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE OF OUTDOOR LEARNING: A SWEDISH CASE STUDY

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The aim of this study was to explore lower secondary school students' experiences of using the school grounds as a learning environment. School grounds were used on a regular basis during two to three years, mainly in mathematics and German as a third language. Fourteen students were interviewed about their experiences. The way outdoor learning was implemented facilitated student-centred and cooperative learning, which was considered positive in terms of academic as well as emotional dimensions. Perceptions regarding on-task orientation were more varied, and included experiences of increased as well as decreased on-task orientation. Teachers' control could be poorer outdoors, resulting in a negative influence on on-task orientation. This study contributes to previous research on outdoor learning by focusing on regular school-based outdoor learning in a secondary school context.

Introduction

There is a continued interest in outdoor learning internationally (e.g. Atencio, Tan, Ho, & Ching, 2014; O' Brien & Murray, 2007) but the research field is diverse and there is a need for more studies focusing on outdoor learning that takes place on the school grounds (Rickinson et al., 2004). This study explores students' experiences of long-term outdoor learning on the school grounds, and discusses their experiences of outdoor learning in relation to support, structure and autonomy. Previous research suggests that teachers' academic and emotional support, teachers' monitoring of the classroom such as ability to provide structure and clarity, and teachers' support of student autonomy are distinct and important aspects of the learning environment (e.g. Barber & Olsen, 1997; Bru, Stephens, & Torsheim, 2002; Cosmovici, Idsoe, Bru, & Munthe, 2009). Academic support refers to teachers' ability to teach well and help students' perform academically (Bru et al., 2002; Cosmovici et al., 2009). Emotional support refers to teacher behaviour that aims to foster connections between teacher and students and towards school in general. Autonomy refers to matters such as involving students in decision-making about their learning process, and encouraging them to think independently. A task supporting autonomy can involve problem-solving in authentic contexts and autonomy is closely related to intrinsic motivation and on-task orientation (Cosmovici et al., 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

A number of studies explore students´ experiences and perceptions of outdoor learning (e.g. Amos & Reiss, 2012; Fägerstam & Blom, 2013; Humberstone & Stan, 2011) but to the best of our knowledge there is no study investigating students' experiences from long-term regular outdoor learning on the school grounds. Research on outdoor learning often explore teaching and learning at outdoor

education centres or in natural environments away from school. Results reveal that students' motivation, interpersonal relationships and collaborative skills often improve from such experiences (e.g. Amos & Reiss, 2012). However, field trips and other out-of-school experiences differ from outdoor learning on the school grounds. An out-of-school journey involves aspects of novelty and adventure which a lesson on the school grounds lacks. Safety issues and time and money constraints are barriers that prevent teachers from bringing children away from school (Dyment, 2005). Outdoor learning on the school grounds is probably more easily incorporated in the everyday activities at the school and thus a promising way to vary traditional class room education but without the barriers associated with out-of-school journeys. Consequently more research on outdoor learning conducted on the school grounds is needed to better understand its' potential and pitfalls.

Students' perceptions of the role of learning environments in a broad sense have been explored in various ways, for example in relation to how student-centred versus teacher-centred learning affects psychological need and motivation (Smit, de Brabander, & Martens, 2014), positive experiences in school in general (Backman et al., 2012), and on-task orientation among different achieving levels of students (Cosmovici et al., 2009). Backman et al. (2012) found that a positive learning environment extended beyond the classroom and that outdoor activities were important for developing a good climate in class as well for individual learning processes. However, the outdoor activities in their study mainly referred to occasional field trips and other single days out-of-school.

The aim of this study is to explore lower secondary school students' experiences and perceptions of regular outdoor learning on the school grounds.

Outdoor learning: definition and theoretical background

The following section aims to briefly define 'outdoor learning' as it is implemented in this study. A short description of the theoretical framework informing outdoor learning will also be presented to situate this research. There is growing interest in teaching and learning outside the classroom but there are cultural differences in conceptualization and implementation (Atencio et al., 2014; O' Brien & Murray, 2007). Outdoor learning is neither a well-defined term nor practice (Dyment & Potter, 2014). A term used to describe regular outdoor learning that mainly uses the surrounding environments for learning, is 'school-based outdoor learning' (Thorburn & Allison, 2010). The Scandinavian outdoor learning tradition embraces regular school-based outdoor learning in the nearby natural and cultural environment and is not restricted to subjects such as biology or geography but includes other disciplines such as mathematics and language. When the term outdoor learning is used in this study it refers to school-based regular outdoor learning. The term literally meaning outdoor school (*uteskola* in Swedish) is often used in Scandinavian languages referring to a regular curriculum-based approach.

Outdoor learning is informed by theories of constructivism and by sociocultural theories of learning (Jordet, 2010). By using the nearby natural and cultural surroundings, students have improved opportunities of first-hand experiences and multimodal learning. From a constructivist perspective those embodied and multisensory experiences are believed to enhance robust long-term knowledge and understanding. Learning is perceived as the interplay between bodily and mental activity. The sociocultural theory of learning emphasizes that learning involves participation with others in social interaction. This can be achieved in a traditional classroom but the

extended outdoor environment enables rich opportunities for cooperative learning in concrete situations. Since the social dimension of learning is often emphasized in outdoor learning research (e.g. Amos & Reiss, 2012; Jordet, 2010), student-centred and cooperative learning will be discussed briefly.

Student-centred and cooperative learning

Student-centred and cooperative learning are defined slightly differently but share significant elements. Both approaches emphasize learning as a sociocultural activity where students learn together and from each other. Problem-solving in real-life activities, where students can take responsibility and make choices is emphasized in student-centred learning (Smit et al., 2014) whereas student's interpersonal skills and understanding of expectations are emphasized in cooperative learning (Gillies, 2004; Springer, Stanne, & Donovan, 1999). According to Smit et al. (2014), autonomy is also characteristic of student-centred learning, and they conclude that autonomy could be considered as being automatically embedded in student-centred learning.

Cooperative learning in small groups has much potential as well as many pitfalls. Gillies (2004) argued that just placing students in groups and expecting them to work together will not promote successful cooperative learning. In her research on cooperative learning, she concluded that small-group learning needs to be structured to ensure effective learning. This structure should ensure that students clearly understand what they are expected to do and how they are expected to work together. They must realize that they are required to contribute but also to assist others in solving tasks. Furthermore, students need training in social skills such as how to adopt a respectful attitude toward each other, but also need a willingness to challenge each other's perspectives.

Method

Research design

This study applied a case study design (Bryman, 2012) and the unit of study was one lower secondary school. The aim of this research was to generate understanding of how secondary school students experience long-term regular outdoor learning. To the best of our knowledge, this is has not been the focus for previous research and the present case provided an opportunity to study this phenomenon. We want to emphasize that this was a small-scale study, from only one school, and hence with limited generalizability. However, the findings from this study may be used as a basis for further hypothesizing and theory-building in the field of regular outdoor learning.

Context for the Study

This study was conducted at a lower secondary school situated in the outskirts of a medium-sized (approximately 90 000 inhabitants) city in Sweden. The school had prior to this study participated in a two-year long outdoor teaching intervention project. The outdoor teaching project included a professional development course in outdoor education (7,5 European credit transfer system credit points) for all teachers at the school, conducted over one year. During the one-year long intervention, the teachers at the school were requested to organize their teaching to enable all students to participate in outdoor teaching, preferably on a weekly basis. The present study was carried out in June 2011, one year after the completion of the intervention.

Some teachers began using the outdoor environment for teaching purposes already at the start of the professional development course and some continued to do so, more or less regularly, after the intervention. The students who enrolled in grade 7 year 2008, and were taught by the teachers who started to

teach outdoors at the beginning of the course and continued to do so after the intervention, consequently had practiced outdoor learning for three years (i.e. their entire lower secondary school period). A number of grade 7 students', taught by teachers that began to practice outdoor teaching early, participated in a study at the beginning of the intervention when outdoor learning was a new experience to them (XX). Those students who were enrolled in grade 9 at the time for the present study, where consequently of particular interest as participants in a follow-up study to investigate students' experiences of outdoor learning when it had become a regular practice and part of every day school work.

Participants

The participants were selected by a mix of strategic and convenience sample (Bryman, 2012). As discussed above, the students from the pilot study were of particular interest. Consequently, students from a class who had participated in the previous study were asked to volunteer. This request resulted in a list of seven students. They had all practiced outdoor learning on a more or less weekly basis in mathematics for three years. They had also experienced outdoor learning in other subject and with other teachers for at least one year. A possible bias in this sample is that the volunteers might have been the students most positive towards outdoor learning. To obtain a larger and more diverse sample, additional grade 9 and grade 8 students were asked to volunteer. They were recruited through a convenience sample. A teacher familiar with the amount of outdoor learning practiced in different classes, approached students who were known to practice or have practiced regular outdoor learning (i.e. weekly or fortnightly) and asked if they wanted to participate. All of them agreed and this resulted in another seven participants. Two were grade 9 students who had experienced outdoor learning in mathematics on a regular basis from grade 7 to grade 8. In grade 9 they had changed teacher and practiced outdoor mathematics more sporadically. They had also experience of learning German outdoors on a more or less regular basis (approximately once a fortnight in grade 8 and at least monthly in grade 9). Five were grade 8 students and they had learnt German outdoors in grade 7 and 8 (approximately once a fortnight in grade 7 and at least monthly in grade 8). They had also practiced mathematics outdoors, regularly in grade 7 but more sporadically in grade 8. All students had experiences of outdoor learning in other subjects and with other teachers during the intervention year. Of the total 14 students, nine were grade 9 students representing two classes, and five were grade 8 students from the same class. Eight of the students were boys and six were girls. When students discussed outdoor learning they mainly referred to lessons in mathematics or German taught by two teachers.

The implementation of outdoor teaching

The focus in this study is students' experiences of the outdoor learning environment. We want to emphasize that when teaching was moved outdoors it had implications on teaching methods as well.

The students did not just bring text book out but small group learning increased. In mathematics, usually one of four weekly mathematics lessons was taught outdoors. The outdoor mathematics lessons were most often organized as cooperative learning sessions where students in small groups were presented with a problem to solve and discuss together, followed by a presentation of the results and discussions in class. In about one third of the lessons, problem-solving and calculations involved outdoor material such as trees or snowballs, but generally tasks formerly presented indoors were developed by the teachers to suit outdoor small-group problem-solving.

In learning German as a third language, outdoor learning was usually conducted every fortnight. An example of an activity was that the teacher gave the students small cards with the beginning of a conversation or a few terms, and the students were expected to walk around in pairs and communicate with each other and the teacher using the cards and the environment as sources of inspiration. Thus, the outdoor lessons usually involved aspects of student-centred learning where the students needed to take responsibility for their learning process and cooperate to solve a problem. A common practice was that the teacher introduced a topic during a lesson indoors, which was followed by an outdoor lesson where students were able to work more practically and hands-on. Summing up was part of the outdoor lesson or occurred in the next indoor lesson. The cooperative group learning in this study could be characterized as structured (Gillies, 2004), which means that the students were required to communicate and collaborate to solve the problems, and they were generally engaged in outdoor cooperative small-group learning regularly.

Data collection

As this study sought to gain insight into students' experiences and perceptions of outdoor learning, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the method of data collection. The interview was structured according to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) and included an initial open-ended question, then follow-up questions. Later during the interview, specifying questions, direct as well as indirect questions were asked. By following this structure we wished to obtain rich answers capturing several dimensions of the students' experiences and limiting socially desirable responses. The interviews took place in a conference room at the school. They were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The duration of the interviews was around 15-20 minutes.

Data analysis

The interviews were analysed thematically to identify and analyse patterns in the material (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis can be data driven or theory driven and this study used a combination of both approaches. The analysis followed the six phases suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) but also included quantification of data in a matrix (see phase two). In phase one, the transcripts were read through several times for *familiarisation* purposes. The second phase was to generate *initial codes*. The generated codes were further organized in a matrix, displaying for each participant if, and from which question(s) the code appeared. This procedure guided the analysis by visualizing the weight of a respective code, e.g. how many times it appeared, and in which questions. The codes generated in step two were inductively generated. In the third phase, *searching for themes*, the codes were further elaborated upon and linked to emerging themes. During phase four, *reviewing themes*, the codes and themes, were reviewed and related to important aspects of learning environments previously identified in the literature. The aspects were academic and emotional support, monitoring and students autonomy. This process resulted in a thematic map comprising five main themes. In the fifth phase, *defining and naming themes*, the essence of each theme was refined and identified. Step four and five were mainly theory driven. The sixth step in thematic analysis is the producing phase, to begin writing a coherent account illustrated by relevant extracts. This work of writing the text is considered the final step of the thematic analysis. The analysis was mainly conducted by the first author but the themes were discussed and reviewed by the two authors together.

Ethical considerations

The research followed the Swedish ethical guidelines for research in the social sciences (Gustafsson, Hermerén, & Petersson, 2006). The students were informed about the purpose and the dissemination of the research. They were further informed that only the researchers would have access to the interview transcripts and that pseudonym would be used to attain confidentiality. They were informed about the voluntary nature of their participation and their option to withdraw at any time. Parents had been informed about the research project through information letters and meetings with the researchers prior to the initial intervention project involving the entire school.

Results

The thematic analysis revealed five themes which are presented below. They could all be related to important aspects of learning environments such as emotional and academic support, monitoring and student autonomy. Drawing upon previous research, (Cosmovici et al., 2009; Smit et al., 2014) autonomy is discussed in terms of on-task orientation, student-centred and cooperative learning.

A joyful learning environment

All participants expressed that they enjoyed outdoor learning. Almost all explicitly said that the outdoor lessons were fun, good or pleasant and that they appreciated the fresh air outdoors. Several students emphasized positive emotions such as enjoyment as a prerequisite for learning, as the following quotes illustrate.

> I am not so good at maths, I don't know why; I must be born that way. But, sometimes it is fun. To be able to learn you need to think that something is fun, otherwise it doesn't work. With outdoor lessons you don't get bored and you learn easier and don't think it is quite as boring anymore. /…/ They [teachers] should do it [have outdoor lessons] because you can sense how students enjoy it and they pay more attention.
>
> Nelly, grade 9

When questioned about why they enjoyed outdoor mathematics, the answers mostly covered the aspect of bodily and practical learning.

> It is fun to be able to do different stuff, because you can't do the things we do out there in the classroom /…/. If you do it indoors you have to think all the time but when you are outdoors you can actually do those things and really try them out practically. It is easier to learn then.
>
> Elaine, grade 9

Another positive aspect was the fact that the student-centred approach included more open answers and opportunities to think in different ways.

> It is not like; calculate this and there is only one, abstract answer; you can solve the problem in different ways and there are, you know, several ways to do it.
>
> Carl, grade 9

Outdoor learning seemed to contribute to emotional support by enhancing positive relationships between the students. George expressed it this way.

> Interviewer: Do the outdoor lessons add something that is not possible to learn indoors?
>
> George, grade 9: Well, it is mostly the feeling that we as a class get a better feeling of community. The class kind of cooperates better outdoors than indoors. Because indoors, we are more separated,

> those who are good at math–and the rest us are kind of left behind, we who are not as good. But there is more cooperation outdoors because everybody knows that everyone has to work to the best of their ability, help the group you know. You cannot be a "diva" because then you destroy for the entire group.

Negative emotions were also discussed. For several participants, bad weather had a negative effect on the mood. However, negative emotions were only reported in relation to weather conditions.

Monitoring

A challenge with the outdoor learning environment was teachers' ability to supervise the class. According to Rosanna, the teacher needed to monitor the class adequately in order to accomplish a good learning environment outdoors. However, it was mainly the students in grade 8 that reflected upon disciplinary issues.

> Z is anyhow a good teacher/…/she is pretty disciplined and strict. If it had been a completely different teacher that was not that strict, we would have been fooling around and not taking it seriously.
>
> Rosanna, grade 8

The outdoor lessons during the intervention year were not always successful as the quote from Eva illustrates. Her conclusion was that the structure of different subjects was more or less suitable for outdoor learning.

> In year seven we occasionally had it [outdoor lessons] in social science, but it turned out to be chaotic so we had to go inside instead/…/social science is a huge subject and perhaps is difficult to teach outdoors. It may be difficult to explain certain things. So, there were some misunderstandings.
>
> Eva, grade 8

Monitoring and on-task orientation were often discussed in relation to each other as the quote from Rosanna reflects but on-task orientation was also discussed in broader terms than just a question of monitoring.

On-task orientation

When discussing on-task orientation, which was described mainly in terms of attention and focus, the picture was multifaceted. The majority of students said that one of the advantages of outdoor learning was that it allowed them to concentrate and focus better. The quote below illustrates that many participants found that outdoor learning supported on-task orientation.

> You need fresh air for thinking. You need to be able to focus on what you are doing and not just "let your mind fly away". It is easier to become more tired indoors and then you quit thinking and just kind of feel, "Uhh why are they forcing us to do this"? Outdoor makes you, kind of happier, if it doesn't rain of course. But outdoors often makes you a bit more alert and focused.
>
> Eva, grade 8

The variation of learning environment was appreciated and facilitated on-task orientation for some students. On the other hand, when questioned about the disadvantages of outdoor learning, one fairly common answer was that outdoor lessons generally decreased on-task orientation. The quote below illustrates the multifaceted picture.

> Interviewer: Do the outdoor lessons add something that you couldn't do in the classroom?
>
> Robert, grade 8: Well, you could probably do it indoors as well but I think it is good to go outdoors sometimes, to vary the lessons. So they aren't the

same all the time, because that makes it more boring and then you don't concentrate as much.

Interviewer: Mm, do you think it is equally easy to concentrate outdoors as indoors?

Robert, grade 8: Hm, maybe a little bit more difficult outdoors, if something happens nearby or something.

Apparently, the student above is discussing different aspects of on-task orientation. On one hand, on-task orientation involves aspects such as being alert and focused. On the other hand, there is an increased possibility of a disturbance from the unpredictable environment outdoors, which may direct attention to other things and decrease on-task orientation. The major perception around on-task orientation was mainly expressed by the ninth graders, namely that the outdoor environment improved focus due to increased activity, variation and enjoyment. On the other hand, a decrease in on-task orientation was also expressed, mainly by the eighth graders, caused by disturbance and the more unbounded outdoor environment.

Cooperative and student-centred learning

If there were different opinions concerning on-task orientation outdoors, the perceptions concerning the social dimension of learning were more uniform. All agreed that the way outdoor learning was organized in this study improved cooperative and student-centred learning, and this was considered positive. The students discussed different aspect of cooperative learning such as participation, engagement and peer-learning. The main point was that outdoor learning favoured cooperative learning, which increased discussions and subsequently improved their learning, and this perception was distributed among high as well as low achieving students. Robert, who was one of the high achievers stated:

Small-group learning is good. You learn yourself as well as learning from others /…/ If any person is talented in maths and you have collaborative work he/she can add a lot; that teaches others how to solve given tasks in a clever way and so on. /…/ There may be some that have more clever ways [of solving problems] that are faster; these are ways you learn from each other.

Robert, grade 8

Another potential was enhanced participation. Small-group learning in the extended spatial area of the outdoor environment gave extensive possibilities for the individuals to explore their proficiency in mathematics.

Interviewer: You told me before about increased collaboration and discussions, is there any difference between indoors and outdoors?

Elaine, grade 9: Well, surely you can discuss indoors too but I believe that there are many that sit quietly then and do not dare to speak. Outdoors, if you are in small groups you are forced to speak. It is more difficult to be in so many small groups in the classroom. One prefers slightly larger groups in the classroom. Here, outdoors you can spread out more and if you are two persons in each group you have to talk, which I believe is a good thing.

The quote below illustrates how outdoor learning facilitates discussions and peer-learning, which in turn has the potential to facilitate engagement and understanding.

We do it indoors too [discuss different solutions] but you are more alert [outdoors]. Maybe many just sit and watch indoors, messing around. You are more on your own outdoors, everyone is at different places, and you don't hear them so close. So, it is nicer, to be

> undisturbed. And then you just present in the group and so you can see, "aha, we solved it this way and they solved it that way". So we always come up with different solutions. And this increases your understanding.
>
> Elaine, grade 9

Academic support

Even though all of the students enjoyed outdoor learning, many also raised a concern about challenges for academic support. Several students found it more difficult to understand instructions and objectives outdoors.

> Well, the whole-class instructions can be fuzzier outdoors. I think they are more distinct indoors. I understand her better and I don't have to ask "what should we do? What should we write" all the time. It can be more unclear outdoors and you have to ask, constantly, "What are we going to do?"
>
> Rosanna, grade 8

The absence of a whiteboard and other materials that would normally be provided indoors was considered negative at times by some students. The classroom was considered the most appropriate place to be for the most efficient learning by many of the students.

> You maybe learn more indoors if you think of the four rules of arithmetic because it is not possible to do everything outdoors. Indoors, you have the whiteboard if the teacher has to explain something. It is anyhow easier to draw than just talk. So, if there is something important to go through you don't want to do it outdoors.
>
> Elena, grade 9

Because mathematics was the subject most regularly taught outdoors to the students in this study, it was mainly mathematics they referred to when reflecting on academic support. The students pictured a view of classroom mathematics as predominantly textbook-based. Good results on tests were considered important and this was achieved by focusing on textbook work. Although textbook work was considered important and as implying "real" mathematics, it was also considered boring by several of the participants. Outdoor learning provided an opportunity for variation of the context and way of learning which was appreciated and which supported content learning. Mathematics learning outdoors was oriented towards being a tool for problem-solving, something useful in everyday life. The students described the outdoor lessons as concrete, hands-on and enhancing other ways of thinking, which they found beneficial for their understanding.

> /…/ as I said before, that you learn in new ways. You maybe work more practically and maybe more in groups exchanging experiences. And also you might be able to think clearer and feel "oh, this was so difficult in the classroom, but suddenly when you come outdoors, then you understand at once, kind of. Because you can use new ways, which makes you think in other directions.
>
> Vincent, grade 9
>
> /…/ if it is only a picture in the book you might not understand at once but if you do it in real life you remember, oh yeah, exactly, that's the meaning of it. So, you mostly understand better if you experience it yourself than if someone explains to you.
>
> Elena, grade 9

However, some students found the outdoor lessons less challenging, focusing too much on playfulness and competition, and that they were difficult to vary.

> You maybe do not learn as much in mathematics; it is more like funny games and so on.
>
> Matthew, grade eight

The sequence of introducing new concepts in the classroom, and later on practicing them outdoors, could explain the finding that many participants said that it was during outdoor lessons they finally understood different mathematical concepts and calculations. A majority also considered it best practice to introduce new topics in the classroom. One girl related the enjoyment of the outdoor lessons to this sequence: when they worked with a subject outdoors, it was familiar to them, which then gave them a feeling of power and mastery. This in turn led to a feeling of joy and pleasure.

Discussion

The findings from this case study reveal fourteen grade 8 and 9 students' experiences and perceptions of regular outdoor learning. Previous research on outdoor learning has tended to focus on younger children, and this study's focus on 14-16 year old students adds new knowledge concerning older students' perceptions of outdoor learning. The students in this study had been practicing outdoor learning regularly for two to three years which means they had substantial experience of this learning environment.

Emotional support

The findings from this study reveal that students enjoyed and appreciated outdoor learning on a regular basis. Without exception, they all expressed positive emotions in relation to the outdoor lessons. Positive emotions, according to Fredrickson (2013), include joy, interest, amusement and inspiration. Words used by the students in this study to describe the outdoor lessons were fun, good, pleasant and playful. The students mainly reflected on emotional support as a result from student-centred learning and not so much on emotional support from their teacher. In this study, the teachers organised outdoor learning in a way that supported a positive learning environment for their students. Enjoyment, engagement and good relations between teachers and students characterize a good climate in class, which was an indicator of academic success in second language learning (Damber, 2010).

In what way different aspects such as the outdoor environment per se, tasks such as problem-solving and games, collaboration in small groups or physical activity interplayed is difficult to conclude. Anyhow, the reported outcome of increased positive emotions in the outdoor learning environment is an interesting finding as a growing body of literature suggests that emotions and cognitive learning are interlinked (e.g. Mega, Ronconi, & De Beni, 2014). The broaden-and-build theory suggests that positive emotions broaden a person's thought-action repertoire by for example increasing creativity, problem-solving skills and openness to new experiences and information. Positive emotions have been found to improve our working memory and ability to focus attention although more research is needed to better understand the contribution to cognition from emotions and motivation (e.g. Algoe, Fredrickson & Chow, 2011; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002). Negative emotions were also reported but only in relation to weather conditions. A balanced use of the outdoors is possibly most favourable for the students. Being too dedicated to outdoor learning or without a back-up plan if it rains heavily is probably not a constructive approach.

Academic support and monitoring

Students' difficulties in integrating school mathematics with out-of-school mathematics have received considerable attention from scholars in the field of mathematics education (Boaler, 1998; D'Ambrosio, 2010). One

main result of outdoor learning was student's experience of its potential in helping them to understand how to apply textbook knowledge to another context. Several students recalled how the practical implementations during the outdoor lessons helped them see the relevance of the mathematics they had learnt in the classroom. Since one of the challenges with mathematics education is students' difficulty in transferring textbook knowledge to a real world context, shifting some of the lessons from the classroom to the outdoor environment might be a relatively easy way to help the students to develop such skills. Despite the perception of outdoor mathematics learning as a useful tool in aiding understanding primarily by being practical, visual and embodied, the students view was that classroom practice was anyhow most important for their learning.

Challenges to academic support and monitoring outdoors discussed by the students, were aspects of discipline, structure and clarity. Oral instructions, without the aid of writing on the whiteboard, could be difficult to remember and understand, resulting in an ambiguity about the task. Individual teachers were not obliged to teach outdoors during the intervention project but the social and informal pressure to participate in the project probably resulted in a number of outdoor lessons taught by teachers who felt unconfident in this new learning environment and would rather have stayed in the classroom. The professional outcome from participation in the professional development course was most certainly highly individual. A few teachers could rather quickly implement outdoor teaching in their daily practice but altering teaching method was probably for the majority of teachers, challenging and not underpinned by personal preference. That not all lessons were successful is thus not surprising. The interviews also revealed opinions of outdoor lesson as less serious, difficult to vary and with limited mathematical challenges. This might also reflect average school work–some lessons are successful and others are less successful, and many factors contribute–but it also enhances ecological validity by showing that the outdoor lessons were not something extraordinary but part of everyday school work.

Written tests were considered very important by the students and the best preparation was consequently to practice on similar tasks in the textbooks. Thus, the outdoor lessons were seen more as a kind of nice variation rather than important times for learning, especially by the youngest students. Although none of the students preferred classroom teaching only, they still considered the classroom as the best place to introduce new concepts. If school mathematics put more emphasis on practical mathematical understanding, the results in favour for classroom learning might be different. Although contemporary theories of learning emphasize the social and participatory aspect of learning (Illeris, 2007; Jarvis, 2006) mathematics learning in Swedish classrooms has been found to focus on individual textbook practice without much participation from peers or the teacher (Törnroos, 2005). Outdoor learning constituted a marked difference to this type of practice. All the students emphasized and enjoyed the increased communicative aspects when learning was moved outdoors. A majority of the students thought they learnt from each other when they had to discuss and present calculations and solutions to problems.

On-task orientation

The findings from this study indicate that on-task orientation was increased for some of the students in the outdoor setting. Lack of on-task orientation due to distraction was also reported and differences in the ages of students and the monitoring ability of the teachers might have an influence on students' ability to stay on-task. Although drawing upon a small sample, a finding was that there

seemed to be a difference between the ninth graders and the eighth graders on this issue. It was mainly the eighth graders that discussed problems with lack of monitoring and on-task orientation. Whether this reflects a teacher effect or an age effect is impossible to conclude from this small-scale qualitative study but could be worth further investigation.

Cooperative and student-centred learning

The outdoor lessons involved less individual work in textbooks but instead a focus on cooperative small-group problem-solving; sometimes with a competitive side that the students seemed to enjoy. The students' main experience was that they appreciated this structure with its improved possibilities for cooperative learning. (Gillies, 2003) argued that low-ability students might benefit from group work by a) receiving more detailed explanations from their more knowledgeable peers, and b) that high-ability students benefit from having to reorganize their own understanding to be able to explain to others. The aspect of benefit from receiving explanations from peers was articulated by the students in this study, but contrasting with Gillies, this was communicated by high-ability as well as low-ability students. The majority found it beneficial for their own learning to listen to other students' ideas and ways of solving problems. Another point of view was that work in pairs or smaller groups increased participation by pushing them all to contribute contrasting more individual work in the classroom. Proper skills for cooperative learning are important for successful group work and are not possessed by everyone. Listening to each other, encouraging everyone to participate, and trying to understand each other's perspectives are examples of skills suggested by Gillies (2003). The more positive opinions about the learning outcomes from cooperative learning from the older students might reflect improved skills in actually working in groups.

Limitations

Although the ecological validity in this study is high because outdoor learning was practiced on a regular basis, up to three years, particularly in mathematics and German as a modern language, it is a small case study with limited generalisability. The students' main experiences of outdoor learning originated from only two teachers' outdoor lessons. The teacher is the most important factor affecting students' success in school (Hattie, 2008), and to what extent the results would have been replicated with other teachers is a question for further research. This study was conducted one year after a one-year long intervention and all students therefore had experience of several different teachers' lessons outdoors. However, their major experience originated primarily from those two teachers' lessons.

Interviews can be a source of rich and spontaneous accounts of participants' lived experience but questions of reflexivity need to be addressed. Researchers need to critically scrutinize their own part in the research process, from the choice of interview questions and methods of analysis, to their impact on the interaction with the interviewee. Power relations are always an issue when researching children and this might have influenced the answers in the interview. Possible disadvantages of an interview study are the problems of socially desirable responses. One of the authors, who collected the empirical data, had met some of the students during earlier research at the school but she did not know any of them well. The participants' undesirable reaction of providing the researcher with socially desirable answers might have been limited by this lack of a previous relationship. However, socially desirable responses could not be disregarded in this study. The semi-structured interview guide contained several questions about the same topic and also indirect questions to check whether the answers were consistent. We therefore argue that the interviews to a large extent

captured the informants' perceptions with limited bias. However, we consider an interview not as a process of collecting facts from informant but as a co-construction between the interviewer and the interviewee (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Implications

In the present study we suggest that through a variation of context and learning environment the students are given the possibility to understand and strengthen their own learning process, particularly in mathematics which was the subject most regularly practiced outdoor in this study. In addition, the students are given the possibility to understand how one's proficiency can be enhanced and be used in an out-of school context. The students enjoyed outdoor learning as a complement to the ordinary classroom practice. However students stressed that the classroom practice was still the most important location for their learning. The way outdoor learning was implemented in this study enhanced cooperative and student-centred learning. It makes it possible for individuals to realize that there is often more than one solution to a problem and they can experience it embodied as well as visually. Finally, to work solely with outdoor learning will not solve all the challenges to teaching. It is the gain of the academic support they are given by the cooperative and student-centred learning as well as variation of context and learning environment that are to be seen as another dimension of the learning process. This dimension is important because it supports students in their understanding how to apply their knowledge in an out-of school context.

Conclusion and suggestions for future research

The aim of the present study was to investigate lower secondary school students' experiences and perceptions of regular outdoor learning. We want to emphasise that the results from this study originate from a small case study including only one school and 14 students taught regularly by mainly two teachers, but given this limitation on generalisability, we argue that the findings make a contribution to our knowledge about students' experiences of outdoor learning. The analytical perspective in our study was the group of central dimensions of learning environments derived from previous theory and research. Those dimensions were emotional and academic support, monitoring and students' autonomy.

The students perceived several potential advantages but reflected also on challenges from using this learning environment. A main result was that outdoor learning supported academic achievement and autonomy in terms of student-centred and cooperative learning. By solving problems and working together in small groups the students were enabled to discuss and exchange ideas which they found important for their learning. All 14 students expressed a solid perception of the outdoors as a positive and enjoyable learning environment. Some students reflected upon challenges for academic support and monitoring in terms of limitations in discipline, structure, and academic challenge. Outdoor learning as well as learning in the classroom needs to be organized so students feel motivated and know what to do. Using the outdoor environment seems to be a promising way of varying every-day school practice and to increase students' motivation for learning. However, teachers need appropriate training in using outdoor environments which is often lacking in pre-service teacher training. The results from this case study support the need for future observational studies. Future research may also focus on more in-depth analysis of the effects of learning in the outdoors.

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LIVING THE SOCIAL JUSTICE BRAND: ATTRACTING PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS TO A MASTERS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM

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In this article, I describe the process and importance of branding a graduate public administration program. Written from the perspective of a participant-observer, I describe how with the assistance of my department we have given our program a more distinctive identity and therefore a more identifiable brand. That brand is one that focuses on social justice and is entirely consistent with our university, a Jesuit institution, which also focuses on social justice. I this article, I note how other public administration programs brand themselves and make the case that our program by its fairly distinctive brand is engaging in market segmentation. Furthermore, I also note what steps the program has taken to make that brand a reality and thereby how as faculty members we are living the brand.

Introduction

This article focuses on the branding of a Masters of Public Administration Program (MPA). When trying to convince a prospective student to enroll in an MPA program, the department is not only competing with other colleges and universities, but also in some cases with other academic programs – very often Masters of Business Administration programs. Specifically, I will focus on how Seattle University's MPA program has put greater emphasis on its brand and how the faculty members and students of that department are **living the social justice brand** by making its principles an integral component of our academic program. Of course, other programs might choose a different brand. We chose to emphasize social justice brand because it aligned with our values as a faculty and was consistent with the overall values of our university.

What kind of messages do MPA programs convey to prospective students? After having reviewed all of the MPA programs accredited by the field of public administration's principal accreditation association, the Network of Public Policy, Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA), the following questions are often answered to a greater or lesser extent on member websites:

- How will students benefit economically and from a career perspective because of enrollment in the university or program?
- Relatedly, what resources does the organization have available to students that make their career success likely and what career successes have recently alumni attained?
- What knowledges and skills are students expected to acquire as a result of their educational experience?
- What makes the organization different and potentially superior to its competitors?

- What are the degree requirements?
- How is the program "cutting edge?"
- How is the student advantaged by a program's location?
- How do students gain hands-on, practical experience?
- How accessible is the program to working professionals? At what times are courses offered and is the program offered partly or wholly on-line?
- Does the program provide an opportunity to apply their newly acquired skills with a hands-on experience?
- Does the program offer prospective students financial assistance?
- How much will the degree cost?
- Is the program accredited?

First a caveat–although academic administrators are likely to embrace the importance of branding, many academics are cool to branding, seeing it as a form of crass commodification. In the past, I shared this apprehension. I have become a late convert to marketing and branding, not surprisingly when I became an administrator. I now subscribe to the point of view that branding is an important strategy for attracting students. By engaging in a deliberate branding effort, universities are being responsive to their environments and thus attempting to grow and prosper.

That environment is characterized by a decreasing supply of high school students in many states (Stephenson et al., p. 489) and an increasing supply of competing educational institutions (Weisbrod, et al, p. 39-40) – institutions that in many instances given the Internet, know no regional boundaries. In the not too distant past, most universities were relatively closed institutions with long hallowed traditions. Especially with the rise of the Internet and the educational world's embrace of distance learning, those same institutions have become increasingly open and adaptive institutions. Of course, there is a continuum of those institutions which have or have not bought into this relatively new dynamic educational environment. Driori, Delmestri and Oberg (2016) identify what they believe are four archetypal narratives that define the modern university: the guild-like classic narrative, a Republic of Scholars, which is managed by the academics; the professional scientific narrative that reinterprets the university into a science-centric institution; the local narrative in which the university is first and foremost of service to the community or the broader state; and the organization narrative, which is governed by a "managerialized" ideology whose governance and practice is not that dissimilar from a modern corporation. The guild-like Republic of Scholars institution is becoming increasingly rare, whereas the university that is guided by a "managerialized" ideology, has become more commonplace. And in that environment, branding is a central component.

Literature Review

As competition for students has increased, many institutions have placed an increased emphasis on branding. Rothblatt notes that within academe "an entire branding industry has arisen" (2008, p. 28-29). Peruta, Ryan and Engelsman write "Market factors such as increased competition, economic pressures, and scrutiny by parents and students acting as 'consumers' are putting increasing amount of pressure on institutions of higher education to stand out and differentiate from competitors" (2013, p. 11).

What is branding? The American Marketing Association defines it as "a customer experience represented by images and ideas" (2014). Judson et al. (2009) write that for the university, branding functions as a stamp of excellence. Bulotaite notes that "When one mentions the name of one's university to someone, it will immediately evoke

associations, emotions, images, and facts (2003, p. 450). Waeraas and Solbakk write that branding is "making higher education organizations more aware of the link between what they 'stand for' in terms of values and characteristics, and how they are perceived" (2009, p. 449). According to Bock, Poole and Joseph, "branding is particularly important in helping to position a product in the minds of the product's target market" (2014, p. 19). In addition, Pampaloni writes that brands create an image and "For institutions of higher education, image is important because it helps create a positive view of the organization, which determines if potential members are attracted enough to want to become affiliated (2010, p. 21).

Branding also focuses on differentiation. Organizations need to ask themselves the question how does the experience that I am selling differ from the experience other organizations are selling? And, importantly who am I targeting? An organization cannot be all things to all prospective students. The market is divided into segments. Bock et al. write "The objective of market segmentation in higher education is to improve the competitive position of the college or university by dividing the diverse college university market into groups of student-consumers with distinct needs and wants and then identifying which market segment it can serve effectively" (2014, p. 12).

Related to market segmentation is what Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) describe as brand identity "a vision of how that brand is perceived by its target audience," an identity that according to Goi, Goi and Wong "is not what a marketer creates, but what consumers perceive has been created" (2014, p.62). Furthermore, a distinctive brand identity is especially important in influencing consumer behavior toward a particular institution (Pinar, Trapp, Girard and Boyt, 2011). Weisbrod, et al. notes "Brand names are assets to any firm or organization. Colleges and universities are no different. Those that have national name recognition can attract a broader and more talented pool of applicants, more tuition revenue, and more donations" (2008, p. 175).

If a university is successful in developing its brand identity, it enhances its brand value. Rouse (2016) argues that a university's brand value is actually a proxy for rankings, especially important given many academic administrators and prospective students' penchant for a university's placement in outlets like the *U.S. News and World Report* and the *Times Higher Education*. Higher rankings, especially as compared to one's peer institutions, undoubtedly results in more students and hence more revenue.

Method

This article is a first-person account of how a chair of a public administration department and its faculty members sought to enhance its brand identity by more closely aligning their department's brand with the overall brand of their university. We believed that it would enhance our department's position vis a vis our competitors both regionally and nationally, but also because normatively we believed it would be of genuine value to our university and the surrounding community. Additionally, as mentioned previously, I reviewed the websites of all of the MPA programs accredited by NASPAA to determine how all of these programs were either deliberately or not deliberately trying to brand themselves.

Discussion

The University and the Region

The department, in question, is a public administration department at a private Jesuit university in the Coastal West – that in itself makes the program unusual because the vast majority of public administration departments are housed within public, often land grant

institutions. Nevertheless, it is not incongruent that Jesuit institutions would offer an MPA and that the program offered would have a strong social justice component. According to the Jesuits, "Today, the service of faith and the promotion of justice is the animating characteristic of the work being done at Jesuit middle schools, high schools, colleges and universities, parishes and retreat houses and in ministries around the world" (the Jesuits).

The Jesuits have played a central role in establishing and maintaining the organizational culture at Seattle University. Although the number of Jesuits are relatively few in number, they continue to shape the university's culture. They make their impact felt by emphasizing in a variety of forums the University's commitment to social justice. The mission of Seattle University is straightforward and concise "Seattle University is dedicated to educating the whole person, to professional formation, and to empowering leaders for a just and humane world" (Seattle University).

The mission statement is not empty rhetoric. Students who choose to enroll at Seattle University quickly find out that this is an institution where service to the larger community is valued. That message is conveyed on university websites and in its brochures, in classes and when the President of the University Father Steve Sundborg presides at public events inevitably he reinforces the University's commitment to service and social justice. Furthermore, as evidence that Seattle University's faculty, staff and students also take the commitment to service and social justice seriously, the University proudly states on its website that faculty and staff contribute 200 thousand hours of service annually and also that three out of four undergraduates participate in community service.

The Jesuit fathers and other university administrators also have instituted a number of policies to ensure that university's culture remains imbued with a service ethic. First, the University demonstrates its concern for its community by funding a very active Center for Community Engagement, which encourages students and faculty to participate in programs that aid our community's low-income residents. Second, job applicants applying for faculty positions are required to read a statement regarding the Jesuit philosophy of service and asked to explain whether their goals are aligned with those values. Third, whereas in most universities, faculty service is almost an afterthought, at Seattle University it takes on more significance. Illustrative of that commitment is that during their annual performance review faculty members can elect to have up to 30 percent of their evaluated time devoted to service.

It is also conducive that Seattle University is located in the Coastal West. The Coastal West has a long-standing tradition of liberal politics and social justice. In such an environment, a university with a commitment to similar ideals is highly consistent and reinforced by its larger environment.

The Department

The department called the Institute of Public Service (IPS) has been in existence for about 40 years. IPS enrolls approximately 140 students at the graduate level, most of whom work full-time and are employed by either government or non-profit organizations.

The median age of the student body is approximately 30 years old. So as to accommodate working students, all classes are offered on weekday nights and on Saturdays. Students are taught by seven full-time faculty members and approximately 10 part-time adjunct instructors. The vast majority of students are drawn from the Coastal West.

In terms of admission requirements, students are expected to have achieved a 3.0 undergraduate grade point average or better. They are required to provide two letters of

recommendation; a resume; evidence that they have at least one year of organizational experience; and a letter of intent in which in addition they articulate their reason for applying. We also look at both their letter of intent and their experience to determine whether they have a commitment to social justice.

In years past, the Institute of Public Service had almost a lock on students interested in a MPA degree within the immediate area. However, in recent years, like many MPA programs, IPS is undergoing competition with on-line programs and to a certain extent MBA programs in the area. Due to that increased competition, IPS has explored and in some cases undertaken new approaches to increase enrollment, including considering whether to open a branch program in another relatively nearby city; offering courses that include an on-line component, which require less time for students to spend on campus and thus increase our regional reach; offering a four course certificate program in public administration that serves as a method of inducing students to enroll in the MPA program; and entering into agreements with foreign universities for the purpose of increasing international enrollment.

How Other MPA Programs Market Themselves on Their Home Pages

I analyzed the home pages of 173 websites, all of which are NASPAA accredited. I examined only the initial home page of the NASPAA accredited programs, which contained themes, which presumably were ones that these programs most wanted to highlight. Some programs only listed the requirements necessary for a MPA degree and/or the requirements for admission while making or no effort to convince potential students of the value of a degree. On the other hand, it seemed clear that other programs, given their alluring photographs and eye-catching layout, had chosen to hire a marketing firm. The majority of MPA programs fell between these two extremes. What were the major themes that programs emphasized?

Program status was a theme that frequently came up. Those programs with a high overall national ranking advertised that fact. Indeed, 10 percent of all MPA programs noted that they were ranked, usually by the *U.S. News and Report,* as one of the highest ranked MPA programs in the country. Some programs noted their ranking within a particular specialization, such as city management or budget and finance. The most common component of NASPAA accredited programs was the mention of their status as a NASPAA certified program and 54 percent did so.

Many programs made a point of demonstrating the **usefulness** of their MPA degree. In this regard, repeatedly programs emphasized that their MPA degree provided their students with the requisite skills and abilities, often of a practical nature, that would enhance a student's career. Relatedly, they also made a point that they were in the business of training people to be leaders and managers. Furthermore, 10 percent of all program websites included biographies and pictures of current students or recent graduates as a means of providing real-life examples of the utility of their degrees. Twenty percent of all programs emphasized what **values** they stood for in the form of their mission statement. Additionally, 27 percent of all programs laid out in varying levels of detail the special **programs or concentrations** they offered.

Several programs advertised their **accessibility**. That accessibility was emphasized by six percent of all programs stressing that their classes were held during the evening and/or on weekends to emphasize their program's suitability for working professionals. Accessibility was also a selling theme for 13 percent of all programs that had an on-line or hybrid component.

Curiously, only one percent of all programs identified the overall **tuition cost** of their degree and only two percent of all programs mentioned the availability of **financial assistance**. Finally, four percent of all programs emphasized their **location.** In some cases, the programs emphasized the beauty of their surrounding area or the utility of living in a large urban area. In other cases, they made reference to the resources available in their area – in several cases describing their communities as "learning laboratories." Other selling points for an MPA degree, included emphasizing the quality of a program's faculty and their research production; the availability of student internships, particularly those that were paid; and the existence of a student association.

Very few programs mentioned an emphasis on **social justice** on their home pages – only two percent. That presents an opportunity for our program. Specifically, it presents an opportunity for market differentiation. The remainder of this article outlines the process that IPS underwent to develop a coherent social justice brand.

Efforts Taken at the Institute of Public Service to Enhance the Brand

What do we mean by social justice? We subscribe to a definition developed by the Center for Economic and Social Justice. That definition states:

> Social justice encompasses economic justice. Social justice is the virtue which guides in creating those interactions. In turn, social institutions, when justly organized, provide us with access to what is good for the person both individually and in our association with others. Social justice also imposes on each of us a personal responsibility to work with others at whatever level of the 'Common Good' in which we participate, to design and continually perfect our institutions as tools for personal and social development (2017).

Specifically, how do the members of IPS live its social justice brand? Furthermore, how has the theme of social justice better permeated our values and curriculum? The efforts taken in this regard included the following:

- revising our curriculum to include required courses in Ethics and Human Resource Management;
- offering courses relevant to our students' social justice concerns;
- providing courses that utilize service learning and emphasize service to the community;
- developing a mission statement, which emphasizes the importance of social justice;
- incorporating social justice into the learning outcomes that we want our students to take away from our Program when they graduate;
- sponsoring public discussions, which we call "Conversations" with leading public officials that emphasize issues related to social justice; and
- housing within IPS a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant, which funds the Project on Family Homelessness.

Previously, our program was primarily known as a MPA program that catered to working students because of the availability of classes during weekday evenings and on Saturdays. That was our default brand – a program that was accessible. In my view, this was a losing strategy, because on-line programs, of which there are many, are even more accessible than a program that offers night and Saturday classes.

Requiring Courses in Ethics and Human Resource Management Requirements

To better align our focus on social justice, it was essential that we augmented our curriculum. Thus, we added three new courses to our core requirements, two of which were directly related to our social justice agenda, namely courses in ethics and human resource management. Prior to this change in our curriculum, an ethics course had never been offered and a human resource management course had been offered only occasionally.

It is absolutely essential to make an ethics course a requirement in a program that emphasizes social justice. Presumably employing ethical norms is a necessary approach for determining what is socially just. Such a course provides students with a necessary compass.

Furthermore, it may seem rather peculiar that human resource management was not a requirement, particularly since almost all NASPAA accredited programs have made that course a requirement. Nevertheless, there may have been a paradigmatic reason why the human resource management and the ethics course were not part of our required curriculum. As Burrell and Morgan (1979) note in their seminal work *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis*, public administration is a field divided into four paradigms and the proponents of two of those paradigms view the field as science-based, whereas the proponents of the other two paradigms are decidedly values-based. Given that previously faculty members in IPS were firmly committed to a science-based paradigm, they likely did not believe that courses that are usually decidedly values-based like Ethics and Human Resource Management should be part of the required curriculum. Nevertheless, a Human Resources Management course could be taught focusing almost entirely on human resource techniques to the exclusion of the explicit consideration of values. For example, the instructor in a science-based program could devote her course on issues like how to hire; conduct performance evaluations; and set pay scales. A broader course, specifically one that also focuses on values, would additionally examine hiring along with the justification and implementation of equity concerns like affirmative action and diversity; whether performance evaluations are actually necessary and what could be implemented as an alternative; and whether the market should be the primary determinant of salary setting or whether one can deduce the "inherent worth" of a position, employing the methods of comparable worth.

Offering a Social Justice Course and Other Courses that Mirror Our Focus on Social Justice

Prior to our increased emphasis on social justice, one of the ways that the program specifically focused on social justice was a course entitled "Social Justice and Social Policy" that related social justice to topics, including income distribution, globalization, taxation, regulation of business, racial discrimination, poverty, education and campaign finance. Additionally, in Academic Year 2016-2017 we offered a year-long course on homelessness. The problem of homelessness not only plagues most major cities in the United States, but it especially affects Seattle. Thus, we offered a course that over a year covered the literature on homelessness; established a dialogue with leaders on homelessness issues in Seattle; all of which culminated in conducting studies developed for two city governments, specifically Seattle and the neighboring suburb of Auburn. Working in groups of 4-6 students, the teams conducted three projects, which included the following:

- best practices for managing a homeless shelter;

- how to get sheltered residents to interact more humanely with unsheltered residents; and
- best practices for establishing and maintaining a tiny house village.

Offering More Service Learning Courses

We used the homelessness course as an experiment for how we might want to offer additional service learning courses in the future that could provide assistance to our community. We found that service learning courses probably would involve more work on the part of the instructor – especially with regard to logistical issues. The principal planning and logistical issues include identifying potential clients; getting the clients to commit to a project; ensuring that the students stay on task; and producing a final product that answers the client's questions and is of high quality.

Although the homelessness course was not without its implementation problems, we felt that the course was of sufficient value that we should incorporate elements of the model into some of our future courses. Specifically, we decided to alter the nature of one of our final Capstone courses. Until recently, students in all of our Capstone courses were required to write a 15 – 20-page paper on a policy issue. Now students have the option either to write a policy paper or participate in a group project that serves a particular client. Our hope is that students who choose the service learning option will be able to apply the skills and knowledge they learned during our program while at the same time providing service to our community partners.

Developing a Mission Statement

In the past, our program did not have a mission statement. Our mission statement has been an ideal vehicle for driving change in our department. We also found that in many ways the process of developing a mission statement was just as important as the mission statement itself, because it required faculty to consider the main values that should guide our program.

As a first step, I set two parameters – our mission statement should include a statement of our values and the skills we want to teach our students. I wrote the first draft. For the next several months, the faculty and staff edited the document. Once we reached a consensus, we then provided the draft mission statement to our newly formed MPA Advisory Council, a group composed of nonprofit and university executives, alumni, the president of our student association, and two faculty members. The Advisory Council also suggested several changes and thus the mission statement went back to the faculty and staff for additional drafts. The final Mission statement reads:

> The Institute of Public Service's Master of Public Administration program educates public service professionals primarily in the Pacific Northwest. We develop our students' leadership and administrative potential to solve public problems in the government and nonprofit sectors. Our program is guided by the following values consistent with Seattle University's Jesuit tradition.
>
> - Social justice and the empowerment of diverse communities through policy and service;
> - Ethical standards of accountability, integrity and transparency in pursuing the public interest; and
> - Positive relationships that foster respect and fairness for colleagues and community members.
>
> In our program, students will learn:
>
> - Practical skills to address organizational problems;

- Management and leadership skills that incorporate collaboration, teamwork and self-reflection;
- Oral and written skills that emphasize cogency and professionalism;
- Critical thinking skills to competently develop and design empirical research and engage in logical analysis; and
- Advocacy that facilitates civic engagement and collective action.

Incorporating Social Justice into Our Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are skills that students should learn as a result of taking a particular course. We have two learning outcomes for each of our 11 required classes. Each quarter our Curriculum Committee evaluates one course's learning outcomes to determine whether our students are learning the desired skill. We do this by looking at class assignments that are tied to a particular learning outcome to evaluate whether the student has, in fact, attained that skill. In the process of doing this evaluation, we also provide feedback to the instructor regarding how that person may want to adjust his course for the purpose of better meeting the learning outcomes.

So as to further incorporate social justice into our MPA program, two of our learning outcomes relate directly to social justice. One of these learning outcomes is part of our Economic Analysis course and it states, "Demonstrate ability to analyze and communicate how economic decisions are made and can be used to advance social justice." The other learning outcome is part of our Capstone course and it states, "Apply analytical skills in the conduct of original research for the purpose of furthering social justice."

Sponsoring Public Interviews with Area Leaders on Issues Pertaining to Social Justice

We are fortunate enough to have sufficient funding to host prominent area leaders who are active in issues pertaining to social justice. The discussions are conducted by Joni Balter, a prominent Seattle journalist and myself. We stage these public discussions three times annually. These "Conversations", not only reinforce our brand, but they also provide us with considerable free publicity since most of the programs have been televised.

Recently, we put on the following Conversations:

- The Governor of Washington Jay Inslee discussing the issue "Government Service and Ethical Leadership in the Era of Trump;"
- Prominent environmentalist Bill McKibben discussing the issue of global warming;
- Mayors Ed Murray of Seattle and Mayor Ed Lee of San Francisco discussing the issue of homelessness;

Hosting the Project on Family Homelessness

In 2016, we inherited a grant from another department in the University that is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation entitled the Project on Family Homelessness. The goal of the Project is to work with advocacy partners, dedicated to reducing family homelessness, across the region to help tell the stories of families who are homeless and connect those stories to meaningful action. The Project sponsors relevant conferences, films that focus on family homelessness and speakers on the subject. In addition, it also convenes informational meetings on a bi-annual basis of relevant nonprofits.

Conclusion

By effectively branding a program, academic departments are able to more effectively communicate what they are prepared to offer prospective students. Effective branding transforms a program‘s message so that it is succinct and easy to understand. It also can distinguish your program from cross town and internet competitors.

However, beyond establishing a brand, the department, including faculty and students should also be willing to live the brand. Establishing a brand and living a brand usually involves changing to a certain extent the culture of a given program or department. Our department did undergo cultural change. Probably the greatest change we have undergone is changing the focus of the program from one that was known for its accessibility and convenience for students to a program that is values-focused and committed to living and teaching social justice.

As a consequence of this change in emphasis, the students who apply to our program have also changed. We have seen a decided increase in the percentage of applicants who not only mention their interest in social justice in their letter of intent, but also have work or volunteer experience in that area. Furthermore, as more of our students have been attracted to our program because of our emphasis on social justice, not surprisingly the racial composition of our students has also changed. In our most recent year 40 percent of our enrollees are students of color as compared to 27 percent just two years ago. We have found our niche and in upcoming years we will continue to refine our emphasis.

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