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Male Disengagement: Assessing Educational Variables Impacted by Male Student Involvement

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Male Disengagement:

Assessing Educational Variables Impacted by Male Student Involvement

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A thesis

Presented to

The School of Graduate Studies

Department of Higher Education and Student Development

Taylor University

Upland, Indiana

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Development

_____

by

Ben Aalderink

May 2012

Higher Education and Student Development
Taylor University
Upland, Indiana

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL
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MASTERS THESIS
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This is to certify that the Thesis of

Ben Aalderink

entitled

Male Disengagement: Assessing Educational Variables Impacted by Male Student Involvement

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the Master of Arts degree

in Higher Education and Student Development
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ABSTRACT

Males have been traditionally thought of as being less engaged than their female peers while attending an institution of higher education. However, little research has been done on this topic at religious institutions of higher education, where overall engagement has been thought to be higher than secular institutions (Kuh, 2003b; Porter, 2006; Weaver-Hightower, 2010). This quantitative study looks at one religious institution and measures male student engagement using the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Males' level of engagement was assessed in terms of 3 separate variables: community service, study abroad, and social activities. It was measured for engagement in 2 NSSE benchmarks, Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL) and Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI). Males' overall engagement was also compared to females' overall engagement in these 2 areas (ACL and SFI). Males were found to be more engaged if they had been involved in community service and study abroad while no differences were found for social activities. Males and females also had similar levels of engagement overall.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

There has been a general trend since the 1970s that male college students are less

engaged academically, socially, and spiritually than their female peers (Astin, 1997; Kuh,

2003b; Kuh & Gonyea, 2006). Research suggests that this has been the case in a number

of different areas of higher education, beginning with more females attending college and

evident in higher involvement in service, volunteerism, and even student government

(Astin; Lipka, 2010). There are a number of differences between genders, including

motivation, academic achievement, and social activity, which may account for some of

the differences between males and females (Lidzy, 2005).

Multiple studies show that there is a difference between males and females when

it comes to engagement and involvement (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006; Kuh, 2003b, 2007;

Sax, 2008). Both Astin's (1985) theory of involvement and Kuh's (2003b) definition of

engagement give a well-rounded picture of what "good" engagement should look like.

Astin's (1985) theory states that students learn by being involved; there is a direct

relationship between learning and a students' level of involvement (Astin). Astin

describes an "involved" student as one who spends a considerable amount of time

studying and preparing for class, participates actively in student organizations and events,

and interacts frequently with other members of the campus, both faculty and students. So

according to Astin, the more involved students are in any given activity, the more they

will learn about that activity and other, similar activities. As students become more

involved, they devote much of their physical and psychological energy to educationally

purposeful activities, such as studying, interacting with faculty, and participating in student organizations (Astin).

George Kuh (2003b) describes engagement in a very similar way. The amount of time and energy students give to educationally purposeful activities, both inside and outside of the classroom, determines the overall level of engagement. Institutions should construct their policies and practices so they can more effectively facilitate student participation in these activities (Kuh, 1995; Lipka, 2010; Manning, Kinzie, & Schuh, 2006; Porter, 2006). Institutions of higher education should motivate students to engage around campus because the more engaged students are, the more they will learn (Kuh, 2003b; Kuh & Gonyea, 2006; Porter). In other words, the more time and energy that students put into educationally purposeful activities, the more they will learn, both in the classroom and outside of it (Astin, 1985; Manning et al.). Equally as important, though, is for an institution to implement practices that engage students in these activities. Both students and the universities share responsibilities in the level of engagement that is occurring on their campuses (Kuh, 2003b; Porter).

With these definitions in mind, many studies have shown a difference between males and females in both of these areas (Astin, 1997; Barone, 2006; Kuh, 2007; Lidzy, 2005; Sax 2008). Since the 1970s, females have been outpacing males in nearly every aspect of higher education (Astin). There are more females being enrolled, as well as earning more bachelor's degrees, scoring better on standardized tests, receiving better grades in the classroom, and participating more frequently in service opportunities (Barone; Lipka, 2010; Mortensen, 2003). While there are likely a number of possible reasons for this disparity in educational outcomes, one potential factor is the level of male

engagement. This is supported by research that demonstrates that male students who are less engaged tend to have lower performance in academics, volunteerism, and participation in meaningful events around campus (Astin; Barone; Mortensen).

The problem is not simply that males are performing less exceptionally than women in the classroom but also across the board in a number of different areas, such as community service, classroom engagement, and interacting with faculty (Michalowski & Newman, 2008). Males take much less pride in their work, are more likely to procrastinate, and have less focus when it comes to schoolwork (Michalowski & Newman). Females, on the other hand, care more about their schoolwork, are more committed to the work that they are doing, and are more mature and confident in general than their male counterparts (Michalowski & Newman). This disparity between genders has been apparent in higher education for the last 3 or 4 decades and is likely to remain that way (Astin, 1997; Michalowski & Newman).

The level of engagement between genders creates another problem for institutions of higher education. As already noted, women are much more likely to engage in educationally purposeful activities, and this serves to highlight the disengagement that exists among male students. Females generally outpace males in nearly every category related to engagement, not only in overall engagement but also for specific outcomes in each area (Gonyea & Kuh, 2009; Kuh & Gonyea, 2006; Lipka, 2007). Academically, females spend more time studying, get better grades, and interact more with faculty and staff (Sax, 2008). They also spend less time watching television and playing video games and give more of their time to community service, volunteerism, and participating in service-learning activities (Kuh, 2003b; Lipka, 2007; Sax). Although these are just a few

examples, researchers have found a number of areas in which females are far outpacing their male peers. Especially at private, religiously-affiliated institutions, engagement for females is much higher (Lidzy, 2005; Lipka, 2010).

There have been a number of variables that are linked to student engagement. Three of the most prominent variables for male engagement or disengagement are: (a) participating in a study abroad experience; (b) the amount of time spent on social activities such as, playing video games, spending time with friends, or spending time on Facebook; and (c) the amount of time spent volunteering or in service (Chesbrough & Defenbaugh, 2010; Gonyea, 2008; NSSE, 2010b; Sax, 2008). This study will focus on the effects of these variables on 2 of the National Survey of Student Engagement's (NSSE) benchmarks of effective educational practice: Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL) and Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI; NSSE, 2010a).

With these variables in mind, this study will attempt to answer 2 questions about male student engagement:

- How does involvement in study abroad, social activities, and community service impact the engagement levels of students, specifically in ACL and SFI?
- How do males and females differ in these same areas (ACL and SFI)?

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

At many institutions of higher education, engagement has become a point of interest; many colleges and universities have begun to pay increasing attention to engaging their students in more effective ways. One method some institutions use comes from data collected by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), or other similar research studies (Carini et al., 2006; Gonyea & Kuh, 2009; Handelsman, Briggs, Sullivan, & Towler, 2005; HERI, 2007; Heiberger & Harper, 2008; Kuh, 2003b, 2009; Kuh & Umbach, 2004; Pascarella, Seifert, & Blaich, 2010; Weaver-Hightower, 2010). Institutions take the compiled data and attempt to identify areas where they are effectively engaging their students. This research can be connected to theories about student engagement, and, hopefully, will give the institution a clearer picture of engagement within their institution. Alexander Astin (1985) was one of the first to come up with a theory for college students that focused on involvement, and even now this theory has defined engagement within higher education. George Kuh (2003b) also came up with a definition for engagement that many institutions of higher education utilize.

Astin states that involvement can be described by the amount of time studying and preparing for class, participating actively in student organizations and events, and interacting frequently with other members of the campus. Kuh (2003b) defines engagement in a similar way: the amount of time students spent on educationally beneficial activities, both inside and outside the classroom. The difference between the

two lies in students' motivation (Astin, 1985). Involvement focuses on the motivation to participate, while engagement focuses on the activity, growth, and changes that take place (Astin; Kuh, 2003b). Engagement at institutions of higher education is essential for the health of those institutions. The more students are engaging, the more they are learning, and the more likely they will become engaged in other parts of the university as a whole (Porter, 2006; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996).

However, there is a difference between males and females and the level that they are engaging around the campus. This gap between males and females creates an opportunity for a number of variables to be studied. One major aspect of engagement in higher education is a students' level of academic achievement. As students become more involved in educationally purposeful activities, they begin to develop habits and practices both inside and outside the classroom that increase their capacity for lifelong learning and personal development (Carini et al., 2006; Shulman, 2002). If the student is performing well in the classroom, it potentially could be the result of a number of variables, such as time spent studying, natural ability, interaction with faculty, and course difficulty (Carini et al.). These educationally purposeful activities, when studied, can give a good indication of students' level of engagement (or disengagement). The more that students become involved in their education and choose to engage in educationally purposeful activities both inside and outside the classroom, the more holistically they will learn throughout their collegiate experience (NSSE, 2010b). The manner in which they learn this information can also play a part in their overall involvement and engagement.

Student development educators across the country are beginning to recognize the unfortunate reality that male students are much less likely to be involved than females

(Hu & Kuh, 2002). In the same study, males were found to be less engaged now than they were 10 years ago (Hu & Kuh). While it is important to work for the greater engagement of all students, these studies and others make clear that male college students are not engaged at levels necessary to obtain the benefits that they should receive by being in college (Kuh, 2003b; Weaver-Hightower, 2010).

Another aspect of engagement important to this study is the effect of religion in higher education. Although the college setting does not appear to have an effect on students' religious beliefs (Hill, 2011), they are more engaged religiously (Mayrl & Oeur, 2009). This higher level of religious engagement may also create a contrast between religious and secular institutions. If religious students are more engaged in religious activities, they may be more engaged in other activities around campus as well (Hill; Maryl & Oeur). Religious students are broadening their experiences in hopes of increasing their own awareness of the world (Maryl & Oeur). However, as students look for these broad experiences in a number of different places, they fail to connect at deeper levels and instead remain shallowly engaged in a number of activities rather than being deeply involved in a few (Hill; Maryl & Oeur).

Factors Shaping Student Engagement

Because institutions should encourage more students to engage, it is necessary to identify factors that encourage students to pursue higher levels of engagement. The NSSE includes a number of potential variables that relate to high levels of engagement (NSSE, 2010b). Three such variables mentioned more than any others are involvement in social activities, community service, and study abroad experiences (Astin & Sax, 1998; Chesbrough & Defenbaugh, 2010; Gray, Murdock, & Stebbins, 2002; Gonyea, 2008; Hu

& Kuh, 2002; Hu, Kuh, & Li, 2008; Kuh, 1995; Sax, 2008). The understanding that these variables are related to higher levels of engagement raises the question of whether or not they are also predictors of student engagement. Each of these variables will be examined in more detail, beginning with arguably the most powerful factor of the three: social activities.

Social activities.

Involvement in social activities is one of the most notable factors when predicting the engagement levels of students (Kuh, 2001; Sax, 2008). Many scholars would agree that what happens outside the classroom can and will contribute to the value of the college experience (Kuh, 1995). In the NSSE, this variable includes a number of different ideas, from relaxing, watching television, and playing video games, to partying. In this area of engagement, students generally expect to relax and socialize as much as they actually do (Kuh, 2001). This is surprising, especially for males, because they tend to either engage far less than they expected upon entering college (usually the case), or exceed the amount of time they thought they would be engaging in activities around campus (Kuh, 2003b, 2007). This may be a factor in male student engagement as well; if students begin meeting their own expectations, the level of engagement experienced by these students might increase (Kuh, 2001).

It is important to note that in this particular variable, there are activities that positively impact student engagement, and, conversely, activities that negatively impact engagement. College students experience high levels of stress, and it is important for them to spend time doing things that they find relaxing (Misra, & McKean, 2000). The problem comes when students begin to spend excessive amounts of time involved in

these activities, and they begin to take time away from other forms of engagement, in turn taking away from their involvement around campus. Females have generally been much more effective at managing their time well and tend to spend an appropriate amount of time relaxing and socializing; males tend to spend too much time relaxing and appear less engaged largely because of that (Fountaine, Liguori, Mozumdar, & Schuna Jr., 2011; Kuh, 2001, Misra, & McKean).

Research has also been completed on how to effectively use social media in a classroom setting in order to increase engagement (Heiberger & Harper, 2008; Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2010). Forms of social media impact students' lives in a number of ways and educators have begun trying to find ways to integrate that media into a classroom setting (Chen, Lambert, & Guidry, 2010; Heiberger & Harper; Junco et al.). As social media continues to impact nearly every aspect of the average college student's life, educators need to find ways to embrace the technology and incorporate methods into their teaching so they can create another avenue to reach students (Junco et al.).

There is a large gender gap when it comes to time spent on leisure activities. Men spend significantly more time than women exercising or playing sports. Although this is normally construed as a good thing, the time spent is so much in excess that it is detrimental to other areas of their lives; college males, however, do tend to be physically healthier than females (Fountaine et al., 2011; Sax, 2008). Men also report spending a significantly larger amount of time in front of the television; males spend approximately 70 minutes per day (8.17 hours per week), while females reported spending around 48 minutes per day (5.6 hours per week) in front of the television (Fountaine et al., 2011). More than 22% of college men spend at least 6 hours per week playing video and

computer games, compared to less than 4% of women (Sax). The difference between males and females in areas such as these cannot be overlooked; as males continue engaging in these kinds of activities, females will continue to be more engaged in other areas around campus.

The more involved males are in social activities, the less time they have or are willing to devote to other types of activities. Research has shown that male students have chosen to take time away from things like academic work and community service and put it into activities that they find more relaxing, such as watching movies, playing video games, and participating in excessive amounts of exercise (Fountaine et al., 2011; Lidzy, 2005; Lipka, 2010; Sax, 2008). As the typical male student chooses to spend more and more of his time in these types of activities, he becomes less engaged in activities that allow him to grow, mature, and develop (Lipka, Sax).

Perhaps one of the best ways that universities can accomplish this task is to devote resources to achieving the goal of engaging their students, specifically males (Hu et al., 2008; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005; Manning et al., 2006). Simply knowing that spending time dedicated to engaging students successfully increases overall engagement has implications for the university as a whole. If an institution is devoting resources to get students involved, students are much more likely to be successful during their collegiate years as well as following graduation (Manning et al.). Individual student success can be achieved by getting students as involved and engaged as possible. In this case, student success can be defined broadly as retention, graduation, and educational success. The more engaged students are, the more likely their school will be to retain them until graduation as well as assist them in succeeding post-graduation (Hu et al.; Kuh

et al.; Manning et al.). It is important to remember that student success can only truly be measured by each individual student reflecting on the things that they have learned.

Study abroad experience.

Study abroad experiences are generally accepted as being academically enriching and a time where students grow and mature (Gonyea, 2008). Research has shown that there are many positive and substantial outcomes in the areas of cognitive, affective, and cultural development that come from the study abroad experience (Hadis, 2005; Gonyea). On top of the obvious cultural benefits and implications, students who studied abroad experienced and displayed personal growth and learning outside the classroom, increased academic knowledge and language skills, and increased levels of cognition following their time spent abroad (Gonyea).

One of the benefits of the study abroad experience is something researchers have come to call "deep learning." Deep learning has been best defined as "learning that takes root in our apparatus of understanding, in the embedded meanings that define us and that we use to define the world" (Tagg, 2003, p. 70). This concept is essential when looking at the effect of study abroad on engagement, especially among college-aged students. Deep learning almost always occurs naturally for students who study abroad because of its emphasis on active, learning-centered environments (Gonyea, 2008; Hadis, 2005). Some representations of this kind of learning are a personal commitment to understand the material, reading widely, combining different resources, discussion of ideas with others, reflection, and applying knowledge into real world situations (Nelson-Laird, Shoup, & Kuh, 2006). Through a combination of all of these things, it is easy to see why studying abroad has a major impact on students, especially after they return to campus. The

willingness and ability of students to engage within their culture is enhanced when they become immersed in an unfamiliar culture. Upon returning to their home culture, they find it much easier to become involved and engaged in multiple ways around campus (Kuh, 2003b).

Students who traveled outside of the United States were more engaged in opportunities that had been presented to them around campus, including community service, athletics, and social events. In one particular study, all of the students who had studied abroad engaged in activities that occurred on-campus (Gray et al., 2002). This was compared to the nearly 20% of students who had not studied abroad; these students were not participating in any of those same activities (Gray et al.). The decision to study abroad had a dramatic effect on a student's engagement, and it also affected students' views of culture and the cultural experiences that their school offered them.

At religious institutions, this trend becomes even more amplified. Students' involvement in religious activities comes with a whole new set of benefits. The kind of spirituality-enhancing activities that take place on these campuses greatly benefits engagement in other educationally purposeful activities and the desired outcomes of college (Kuh & Gonyea, 2006). This kind of participation is generally positively correlated when it comes to students interacting with people who have grown up with very different religious beliefs, political views, and personal values. Students who are involved in religiously-oriented activities find it much easier to connect with people who are different from them, no matter what those differences are (Kuh & Gonyea). Religiously affiliated students are also more likely to have some kind of previous international experience and therefore should understand those differences more than the

average college student (Hood, 1975). One way that students have the opportunity to get that experience is through mission trips. Mission trips give students a chance to have an experience similar to that of a study abroad trip, although mission trips are usually shorter in length (Van Engen, 2000). Depending on the length of the trip, the experience students have, and the type of work being done, students come away with different levels of learning (Van Engen). The students tend to gain more than the people they are serving during these experiences (Van Engen). International students and students that have diversity experiences (e.g. those who have gone on missions trips) are much more likely to be engaged (Kuh, 2003b).

Community service.

International students and students who go on mission trips are also more likely to be involved in community service than those who do not have those experiences (Gray et al., 2002; Kuh, 2003b). By the time students are seniors, nearly two-thirds (63%) have participated in some kind of community service or volunteer work (Kuh, 2001). Perhaps as a result, most students also viewed their campus environments as supportive and responsive to their needs, so they gave back to their university's surrounding community as a direct response (Kuh, 2001). A number of students are choosing to serve, but what we do not know is how often they are serving and remaining involved in their communities. Two-thirds of students are involved or have been involved in volunteerism or community service by their senior year, but first-year students are not nearly as involved. A vast majority of first-year students expect to participate in co-curricular and service activities, but almost one-third of these students spend no time in these activities

during their first year (Kuh, 2007). This difference in expectations and reality may be causing a rift in engagement throughout a student's time in college.

Students' participation in community service has also been shown to affect some of the other variables previously mentioned. Participants in service were more likely to spend at least 1 hour a week interacting with faculty and also spend a significant amount more time studying and preparing for classes (Astin & Sax, 1998). Thus one might posit that this variable is a good predictor for the levels of those variables in this study. In other words, if participation in community service is high, preparation for class and interacting with faculty are likely to be high as well.

Once again there is a major difference between males and females in this area. Research has shown that men have just as much time as their female peers to engage in some form of service or volunteerism during college but choose to spend their time differently (Chesbrough & Deffenbaugh, 2010). However, males still reported a much higher time constraint than females, as well as claiming to be unaware of service opportunities that were available to them. This lack of awareness for male students supports the generally accepted social norm that males are disengaged when it comes to serving. If this is the case, it indicates a need to create more effective ways of reaching out to males when promoting and marketing service opportunities (Chesbrough & Deffenbaugh; Kuh, 2001).

It is important, then, to find effective ways of marketing to male populations on college campuses. Chesbrough and Deffenbaugh (2010) studied just that and found women were predisposed to become involved in service for intrinsic reasons; they needed very little, if any, extrinsic motivation to serve. Males, on the other hand, were more

likely to become involved when they were prompted by some kind of external incentive. This incentive could be anything from a course requirement to being an add-on to an already expressed interest or hobby on campus. Men were much more likely to view service as a rational or analytical activity, or a manifestation of a larger global or societal duty, rather than as a relational activity in which they could choose to participate (Sax, 2008). Because of that mindset, men tend to place more emphasis on objective decision making, societal good, and ethical obligation when making decisions about service opportunities.

Summary

The issue of male disengagement has been a growing topic, and unless sources which increase engagement can be identified, it will continue to challenge college campuses around the nation. Research has shown that students who are engaged in different types of activities in a variety of areas – such as academics, spirituality, and socializing – are more academically and intellectually developed than those who are only engaged inside the classroom (Astin & Sax, 1998; Kuh, 2001, 2003b; Sax, 2008; Terenzini et al., 1996). Not only that, but females are generally more engaged than males within higher education. It has not been made clear, however, if that difference is as large at small, private, religious institutions, or if it exists at all at those types of institutions. This study will focus on the results at one such institution and attempt to find a difference between males and females in their overall level of engagement.

There are a number of factors that have a role in student engagement in higher education. Three of these factors have emerged as viable predictors to accurately assess whether or not a student is engaged. They have been outlined above as social activities,

study abroad experiences, and involvement in community service (Chesbrough & Defenbaugh, 2010; Gonyea, 2008; Sax, 2008). Gender also plays a large role in the level of engagement in higher education; although this study focuses on the male results of engagement, it is valuable to know how females are doing in the same areas of engagement so a comparison can be made between genders.

The purpose of this study is to assess how involvement in community service, study abroad experiences, and social activities affect the level of engagement in males and to compare the overall engagement of male students to their female peers. For this study, there are two hypotheses:

- Both Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL) and Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI) will increase with participation in study abroad programs and the amount of time spent volunteering and decrease with more involvement in social activities.

- Females will be higher overall in both ACL and SFI when compared to their male peers.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants of this study attended a small evangelical Christian university in the Midwest. This institution collected data from its students in 2011, but this study also used data that had been collected in 2008. In 2011, the NSSE sample size at the chosen institution included 815 total students, 485 first-year and 330 seniors, with 266 first-year respondents and 201 senior respondents. In 2008, the NSSE sample size included 840 total students, 496 first-year and 344 seniors, with 269 first-year respondents and 261 senior respondents. There were a total of 384 male participants, and 567 female participants.

A majority of respondents were ages 18-19 (50.3%) and 21-22 (43.6%), which is the age range of most freshman and senior students. First-year responses were slightly higher (54%) than senior responses (46%). At this particular institution, a majority of students (91.2%) are Caucasian / White. There were more female respondents (59.3%) than male respondents (40.7%). This sample was similar to the population of the institution.

Measures

At the studied institution, the NSSE is administered once every 3 years; the most recent data for the particular sample is from 2011. The NSSE is designed to assess the engagement of college students as well as what they gain from the college experience by annually surveying college students (Kuh, 2003b; NSSE, 2010b). Since its

implementation in 2001, the NSSE has grown greatly; the survey instrument is sent to over 2 million students annually and receives around 400,000 responses (NSSE, 2010b). Although NSSE has 5 benchmarks that measure student engagement, only Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL) and Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI) were used as measures of engagement.

Independent Variables

Community service.

One question on the NSSE focused on students' involvement in community service. Students' responses to this question were measured against engagement scores in ACL and SFI for the purposes of this study. Students were asked the question: "Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution?" They were given 4 options as a response: "Done," "Plan to do," "Do not plan to do," and "Have not decided."

Study abroad experience.

One NSSE question was asked regarding students' involvement in a study abroad program. Answers were tested for overall engagement in ACL and SFI. Students were asked the question: "Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution?" They were given 4 options as a response: "Done," "Plan to do," "Do not plan to do," and "Have not decided."

Social activities.

One question in the NSSE asked students how much time they spent participating in social activities. Responses to this question were compared for overall level of engagement in ACL and SFI. Students were asked to respond to the question: "About

how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following?"
This was followed by a set of 7 more specific questions, one of them saying "Relaxing
and socializing (watching TV, partying, etc.)." Students were given options in 5-hour
increments between 0 and 30, with the first option as 0, and the final option of more than
30. Student responses were compared to their scores on their level of engagement.

For the purposes of this study, some of the responses were combined in order to
even out the number of students in each group. The groups were combined into the
following categories: 0-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, and 21 or more hours.

Dependent Variables

Active and Collaborative Learning.

Students are more apt to learn when immersed in multiple settings. This can
include the classroom, dormitory, social settings, and even spiritual experiences. At the
same time, collaborating with others and learning from peers to solve problems or master
difficult material prepares students to deal with the unanticipated problems they will
encounter following college. The NSSE looks for this form of engagement by looking for
student participation in the following activities: (a) asked questions in class or contributed
to discussion, (b) made a class presentation, (c) worked with other students on projects
during class, (d) worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments, (e)
tutored or taught other students, (f) participated in a community-based project as part of a
regular course, and (g) discussed ideas from their readings or classes with others outside
of class (NSSE, 2010a). There are 7 total items involved in calculating this scale, and the
Cronbach's alphas for ACL are 0.666 and 0.672 for first-year students and seniors

respectively (NSSE, 2010c). A description of each of these items can be found in the Appendix.

Student-Faculty Interaction.

The interaction that students have with faculty, both inside and outside the classroom, plays a part in how engaged and involved they are on campus. Generally the more effort faculty members are putting forward to make a connection with their students, the more likely students are to be involved. The NSSE measures these by using the following standards: (a) discussion of grades or assignments with an instructor, (b) talking about career plans with a faculty member or advisor, (c) discussing ideas from their readings or classes with faculty members outside of class, (d) working with faculty members on activities other than coursework, (e) receiving prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on their academic performance, and (f) working with a faculty member on a research project (NSSE, 2010a). There are 6 total items involved in calculating this scale, and the Cronbach's alphas for SFI are 0.712 and 0.740 for first-year students and seniors respectively (NSSE, 2010c). A description of each of these items can be found in the Appendix.

Procedure

The data for the NSSE was collected in both 2008 and 2011. The survey was administered online, and students were sent an email asking them to participate. Participants were offered an incentive to take the survey in order to increase the response rate; everyone who took the survey would be entered into a drawing for a number of prizes.

After the data for these surveys were collected, SPSS statistics software was used to analyze the information needed to answer the 2 research questions. The first research question was answered by using an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test. If significance was found for either Active and Collaborative Learning or Student-Faculty Interaction, Tukey's post-hoc test was run to find differences between the levels of each independent variable. An independent samples t-test was used in order to look for significance for the second research question. After all tests were run, the data was compiled, reported, and analyzed.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

Analysis of Variance

A series of 6 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) procedures were used to analyze the first research question: How does involvement in study abroad programs, social activities, and community service impact the engagement levels of students, specifically in ACL and SFI? Within these analyses, each independent variable (community service, study abroad, and social activities) was compared against the dependent variables for engagement (Active and Collaborative Learning and Student-Faculty Interaction).

Community service.

The first independent variable tested was involvement in community service (4 levels). Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for males in both ACL and SFI for community service, while Table 2 displays the first ANOVA results. For community service, both ACL and SFI were significant (p < .001).

Table 1

Community Service Descriptive Statistics

	Active and Collaborative Learning			Student-Faculty Interaction		
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD
Have not decided	14	36.05	10.18	14	32.02	6.67
Do not plan to do	23	45.96	16.9	23	38.55	18.31
Plan to do	53	48.79	11.7	53	43.52	15.94
Done	297	53.18	14.44	298	49.27	19.09

Table 2

ANOVA - Males (Community Service)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Active and Collaborative Learning	Between Groups	5270.5	3	1756.8	8.800*
	Within Groups	76464	383	199.64	
Student-Faculty Interaction	Between Groups	6933.1	3	2311	6.616*
	Within Groups	134128	384	349.29	

*Note: *p < 0.001*

Since there were significant differences for both ACL and SFI, Tukey's Post-Hoc test was run to determine the differences between the 4 levels within community service. There was a significant difference ($p < 0.001$) in means on the Active and Collaborative Learning subscale between those who had done community service (M = 53.18, SD = 14.44) and those who had not decided (M = 36.05, SD = 10.18), and a significant difference ($p = .015$) between students who planned on doing community service (M = 48.79, SD = 11.7) and students who had not decided. For SFI, there was a significant difference between those who had done community service (M = 49.27, SD = 19.09) and two other groups; students who had not decided ($p = 0.005$, M = 32.02, SD = 6.67) and students who did not plan on participating in community service ($p = 0.042$, M = 38.55, SD = 18.31).

Study abroad experience.

The second independent variable tested was participation in a study abroad program (4 levels). Two separate ANOVAs were used to compare the 4 levels of study abroad participation against the students ACL and SFI. The results of this analysis are found in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3

Study Abroad Descriptive Statistics

	Active and Collaborative Learning			Student-Faculty Interaction		
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD
Have not decided	50	49.94	12.6	51	43.4	17.56
Do not plan to do	131	49.62	14.55	131	46.74	18.05
Plan to do	112	51.85	14.94	112	45	19.54
Done	94	54.42	14.72	94	52.41	20

Table 4

ANOVA - Males (Study Abroad)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Active and Collaborative Learning	Between Groups	1406.9	3	468.97	2.238***
	Within Groups	80452	384	209.51	
Student-Faculty Interaction	Between Groups	3861.4	3	1287.1	3.598**
	Within Groups	137355	384	357.69	

*Note: **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.1*

Overall, there was a significant difference ($p < .05$) in study abroad for scores on

SFI, though there were insignificant findings for the ACL variable ($p < .1$). Since there

was a significant difference for SFI, Tukey's Post-Hoc test was run to determine the

differences between the 4 groups within study abroad. There were significant differences

in the means of 2 pairings of Student-Faculty Interaction. There was a significant

difference between those who had studied abroad (M = 52.41, SD = 20) and 2 other

groups: students who had not decided (p = 0.032, M = 43.4, SD = 17.56) and students

who planned on studying abroad (p = 0.027, M = 45, SD = 19.54).

Social activities.

The final independent variable was social activities (5 levels). Table 5 shows the

descriptive statistics for males in both ACL and SFI for social activities, while Table 6

displays the ANOVA test. For social activities, neither ACL nor SFI were found to be significant.

Table 5

Social Activities Descriptive Statistics

Hours	Active and Collaborative Learning			Student-Faculty Interaction		
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD
0-5	85	52.94	15.49	86	50.78	19.91
6-10	99	53.92	13.76	99	48.13	19.59
11-15	86	50.51	13.84	86	43.49	17.32
16-20	59	48.71	13.3	59	44.93	17.68
21+	59	49.72	16.12	59	48.14	20.08

Table 6

ANOVA - Males (Social Activities)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Active and Collaborative Learning	Between Groups	1488.2	4	372.04	1.774
	Within Groups	80306	383	209.68	
Student-Faculty Interaction	Between Groups	2724.4	4	681.11	1.891
	Within Groups	138300	384	360.16	

Since there was no significance for both ACL and SFI, no further tests were needed.

These results partially supported the first hypothesis of this study. As male students participated in study abroad and community service, both Active and Collaborative Learning and Student-Faculty Interaction increased significantly. However, social activities were expected to decrease involvement in ACL and SFI, but for this study, no matter how much time students were spending on social activities, ACL and SFI were not significantly different.

Independent Samples Test

The second research question asks: How do males and females differ in terms of ACL and SFI? This comparison was made by running an independent samples t-test, comparing gender and overall level of engagement for both ACL and SFI. The descriptive statistics for ACL and SFI for both males and females can be found in Table 7 below.

Table 7

Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	SD
ACL	Male	414	51.48	14.52
	Female	604	51.83	14.74
SFI	Male	404	47.12	19.06
	Female	589	45.39	18.99

After the t-test procedure was run, no significant difference for ACL between males (M = 51.48, SD = 14.52), t(1016) = p = 0.704, d = 0.02 and females (M = 51.83, SD = 14.74) was found. There was also no significance between males (M = 47.12, SD = 19.06), t(991) = p = 0.161, d = 0.09 and females (M = 45.39, SD = 18.99) in SFI.

These results did not support the second hypothesis of this study. Females and males reported the same level of engagement in both Active and Collaborative Learning and Student-Faculty Interaction.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

The results supported the first hypothesis and failed to support the second hypothesis. Males were hypothesized to have higher levels of engagement in ACL and SFI if they had participated in community service or studied abroad than those who had not; they were also expected to have a lower level of engagement when they spent more time participating in social activities. Females were expected to have a higher level of engagement in both ACL and SFI than males. This study supported some of these expectations, but there were also some findings that were unlike those from previous research studies.

Based on previous studies utilizing NSSE data, male student engagement is typically thought to be significantly lower than female student engagement, with a number of studies showing exactly that (Gonyea & Kuh, 2009; Kuh, 2003b, 2009; Weaver-Hightower, 2010). However, the results of this study done at a faith-based institution found that males and females have similar levels of engagement. There were also very few significant findings for ACL, so these particular experiences (community service, study abroad experience, and social activities) have little or no effect on this particular aspect of male student engagement.

Significant Variables Impacting ACL and SFI

Based on the results of this study, there are a couple variables that significantly affect male student engagement, specifically, participation in community service and study abroad programs. Some of these variables had no significant differences when

compared with the dependent variables of ACL and SFI, but there were a number of significant findings. The next 3 sections will discuss the results for involvement in community service, study abroad programs, and social activities, and the overall level of engagement students have.

Social activities.

There were no significant differences in the level of engagement based on student involvement with social activities. The lack of significant findings for this particular study is important, however, because other studies reported exactly the opposite finding (Junco, 2011; Sax, 2008). The more time students spent on these social activities, the less engaged they were in ACL and SFI (Junco; Sax). As students were spending more time relaxing and participating in social activities, the less engaged they would become in educationally purposeful activities. However, in this study, regardless of how much time students spent on these social activities, they reported the same amount of overall engagement. Students who spent over 25 hours per week on social activities reported the same level of engagement in both Active and Collaborative Learning and Student-Faculty Interaction as students who reported spending 0 to 5 hours per week on social activities. According to previous findings, they should have been reporting significantly less involvement.

There are a few possible explanations for these findings. First, the structure of academic courses at the institution studied may have created a higher baseline in both ACL and SFI than other institutions. As a result of the higher baseline, differences between each of the levels do not appear in the results of the ANOVA. These findings could also mean that coursework and interaction with faculty is not considered rigorous

among students; no matter how much time students are spending participating in social activities, their academic performance and interaction with faculty are not being affected. It is impossible, however, to come to a definitive explanation for these results without doing more research on this topic.

Another important aspect of the social activities variable to keep in mind is that students' expectations of their level of engagement (especially males) are equivalent to how much time they spend with social activities (Kuh, 2003b, 2007). One possible explanation for these findings is that, more often than not, students' expectations are met regarding the amount of fun and relaxation they will experience, thus not impacting their engagement in ACL and SFI. So, at the studied institution, students may be relaxing and socializing as much as they expected, and, as a result, that time is not taking away from their engagement in Active and Collaborative Learning and Student-Faculty Interaction.

Study abroad experience.

Again, some of these findings were surprising, even in the areas where there was no significance. Deep learning is part of the study abroad experience and should be represented in the ACL scale developed by the NSSE (Gonyea, 2008; Kuh, 2003b). However, there were no significant differences in the level of engagement for males when it came to ACL. When students return from a study abroad experience, they tend to view the world, as well as their own experiences, differently than they did before their trip (Gonyea; Kuh & Gonyea, 2006). This is where deep learning occurs, and students begin actively searching for ways that they can continue to further their education (a large part of ACL). ACL may begin in any number of places for students – the classroom, residence halls, and small group discussions are just a few of the venues in which

students engage in Active and Collaborative Learning. It is through these kinds of experiences that students continue their trend of deep learning, which they first experienced while studying abroad.

Another aspect of this particular study is the religious nature of the institution. This study was completed at a religious institution, and many students with a religious affiliation have participated in an international or missions experience before they came to the institution (Kuh & Gonyea, 2006; Hood, 1975). Specific data was not collected for this research study, so it is unknown how many students had a missions experience prior to attending the institution. This may have had a role in the findings for this particular study. No significant differences in ACL were found, which could mean that many males have already had those kinds of experiences that are similar to a study abroad experience and were already showing the benefits of those experiences.

In terms of Student-Faculty Interaction, some significant results were found as a result of this study. Male students, especially those who had studied abroad, tended to have spent more time with faculty and teachers following a study abroad experience than they did before. This may be, in part, due to the nature of the experience; students are generally in close proximity to a small group of people for a long period of time, including their faculty. This trend of spending time with those people then continues following their experience abroad, and students continue to connect with their faculty members more often than they did before their trip.

Community service.

Many students, during their time in college, will participate in some form of community service, and by the time they graduate at least two-thirds will have completed

some kind of service (Kuh, 2001). In terms of ACL, the difference between students that have completed some community service and those that have not decided was significant for this study, as well as males that plan to do service and those that have not decided to participate in community service.

Participation in community service also relates to males being more likely to spend time with faculty (Astin & Sax, 1998). For SFI, there were significant differences between students who have done community service, those that do not plan to serve, and those that have not decided if they were going to serve. Previous research supports these findings for both ACL and SFI, as students who had participated in service were more likely to spend more time with faculty (SFI) and participate in more active learning (ACL) (Astin & Sax, 1998; Kuh, 2001, 2003b; Sax, 2008).

Males and Females

There was no significant difference in either Active and Collaborative Learning or Student-Faculty Interaction between males and females. The expectation was that females would report significantly more engagement in both ACL and SFI than males; however, for this study that was not the case. Even though it was not significant, males actually reported a higher level of SFI than females. Not only is this surprising, it is different than what is reported in most of the current literature (Gonyea & Kuh, 2009; Kuh & Gonyea, 2006; Lipka, 2007; Sax, 2008). Males tend to take less pride in their work, procrastinate, have less focus for their schoolwork, spend more time on social activities, and spend more time exercising (Michalowski & Newman, 2008; Sax, 2008). Females, on the other hand, tend to care more about schoolwork, are more mature and confident, spend more time studying, receive better grades, interact more with teachers

and faculty, and participate more in service-learning activities (Michalowski & Newman, 2008; Sax, 2008). Although previous findings indicate that females are more engaged than males, in this study the same levels of engagement in ACL and SFI were found.

Implications for Practice and Research

Although some of these findings are surprising, more research needs to be completed, especially at religious institutions of higher education. Much of the literature that has been written on student engagement focuses on secular institutions, with very few studies of faith-based institutions. As the type of institution plays a role in how a student develops, it is important to study engagement of those students and look for differences between religious and secular institutions. Along those same lines, studying how religion affects student engagement at religious institutions may support the findings in this study.

This study shows that, at small, religious institutions, male students are more likely to be involved academically and with faculty if they are involved in community service or a study abroad program. The more that administrators, faculty members, student development professionals, or other staff can do to get their male students involved in these activities, the more likely they are to be engaged academically and with faculty members. Academics are one of the main reasons students attend institutions of higher education, so anything that can be done to help them succeed should be attempted. An emphasis on volunteering and community service should be an important aspect of an institution, especially if those colleges and universities want their male students to be engaged academically and with faculty. Along these same lines, the more emphasis that is placed on sending male students abroad for semester-long experiences, the more likely

those students will be engaged upon their return. An increase in both ACL and SFI would give students a much better chance of receiving higher grades, caring more about their work, and learning more, both inside and outside the classroom.

Another important aspect of this study is that both males and females showed similar levels of engagement in ACL and SFI. This may be caused by the religious nature of the institution (Hill, 2011; Maryl & Oeur, 2009). Students with a religious background are much more likely to be engaged around campus, especially in religious activities (Hill; Maryl & Oeur). It is unclear whether this higher level of engagement can be attributed to the religious nature of those students or to some other factor. One other potential factor is that at smaller, private institutions, the faculty-student ratio is usually much lower (Kim & Sax, 2007), so students already feel like they are highly engaged academically and with their faculty members. More frequent interaction with faculty members could also lead to performing better academically, so students are much more likely to show higher levels of engagement in both Active and Collaborative Learning and Student-Faculty Interaction.

It might be useful to study this issue further by analyzing social activities in a number of separate categories, such as time spent on Facebook and Twitter, playing video games, watching television and movies, socializing with friends, and other similar categories. By collecting such data, researchers could search for significance in each of those individual groups, rather than placing them all together in one category. In terms of usefulness to higher education, identifying specific activities that either hinder or promote student engagement is essential to finding strategies to increase that engagement.

Limitations

Several limitations must be noted when considering the results of this study. The study as a whole compares freshmen to seniors, and does not include sophomores or juniors. This reduces some of the critical times that students are developing and experiencing different things, potentially skewing the findings. The variable for social activities encompassed a number of items, but the NSSE does not separate those items, making it difficult to tell if the results of this study accurately report the amount of time students spend on social activities. If the question had asked specifically about certain items (for example, the amount of time spent on Facebook), more accurate results may have been obtained. The number of respondents for community service was significantly different, with 297 students having completed some community service and the next largest group (planning to do community service) having only 53 respondents. Because of the difference in responses between the groups in community service, the significant findings for that variable may have been impacted.

Conclusion

Although male students have traditionally been thought of as more disengaged than their female counterparts, the results of this study challenge that idea. Males and females reported the same level of engagement for both ACL and SFI. Some of these results were different from what was expected but could be attributed to the fact that the institution studied was religious in nature. Students at these religious institutions tend to be more engaged than their peers at secular institutions (Kuh & Gonyea, 2006; Lidzy, 2005; Lipka, 2010), and this data tends to support that. However, that assumption cannot be made without more support and other research studies done on this particular subject.

For now, it appears that the more male students are involved in educationally purposeful activities, the more likely they are to engage with other members of the campus and with their schoolwork. In terms of Active and Collaborative Learning and Student-Faculty Interaction, males and females are equally engaged, suggesting that males are not disengaged in these categories.

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Appendix

Dependent Variables

Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL).

Both ACL and SFI were previously created scales on the NSSE. The ACL scale was based on the following seven categories: 1) Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions, 2) Made a class presentation, 3) Worked with other students on projects during class, 4) Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments, 5) Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary), 6) Participated in a community-based project (e.g. service learning) as part of a regular course, and 7) Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.) (NSSE, 2011). Students were asked to respond with one of the following options: 1) Very often, 2) Often, 3) Sometimes, or 4) Never (NSSE).

Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI).

The SFI scale was based on the following six categories: 1) Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor, 2) Talked about career plans with a faculty member, 3) Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class, 4) Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance, 5) Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.), and 6) Worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements (NSSE, 2011). For questions 1-5, students were asked to respond with one of the following options: 1) Very often, 2) Often, 3) Sometimes, or 4) Never. Question 6 asked for one of the following responses: 1) Done, 2) Plan to do, 3) Do not plan to do, or 4) Have not decided (NSSE).