2016

The Experience of Introverted Students on a Residential College Campus

Erica Gleason
Taylor University

THE EXPERIENCE OF INTROVERTED STUDENTS

ON A RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE CAMPUS

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A thesis

Presented to

The School of Social Sciences, Education & Business

Department of Higher Education and Student Development

Taylor University

Upland, Indiana

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Development

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by

Erica Gleason

May 2016

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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MASTER'S THESIS

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This is to certify that the Thesis of

Erica Gleason

entitled

The Experience of Introverted Students on a Residential College Campus

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the

Master of Arts degree
in Higher Education and Student Development

May 2016

_____   _____
Drew Moser, Ph.D.   Date   Scott Gaier, Ph.D.   Date
Thesis Supervisor   Member, Thesis Hearing Committee

_____
Steve Bedi, Ph.D.   Date
Member, Thesis Hearing Committee

_____
Tim Herrmann, Ph.D.   Date
Director, M.A. in Higher Education and Student Development

Abstract

The residential college setting often seems dominated by social opportunities and experiences, which may not prove conducive to the dispositions and preferences of introverted students. The current study sought to describe the overall experience of introverted college students on residential campuses in order to understand challenges they face and how they respond. Using a qualitative, phenomenological design, the study explores how introverted students experience the residential environment, friendships, and involvement in college. The researcher interviewed nine junior and senior students identified as introverts on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator; participants discussed their experience of introversion in the context of residence halls, college friendships, and involvement on campus. Interview data yielded four themes describing the residential campus experience of introverted college students. Participants experienced introversion on a spectrum, uniquely defined their introversion, and experienced various challenges and advantages associated with introversion. They provided depth and stability in friendships but experienced the process of becoming friends gradually. While satisfied by their residence life experiences, particularly with regards to community, they experienced pressure to participate in the residence hall environment. Finally, introverted students were highly involved, found both challenge and benefit in their involvement, and gradually learned to lead out of their strengths and preferences as introverts. Implications of the current study offer higher education professionals a balanced perspective to working with both extraverted and introverted students.

Acknowledgements

In many ways, this document is a product not only of my own time and effort, but also of the people, places, and processes that have guided me along the way.

Steve, Matt, Brittane, Wil, Katie, and the rest of TSO, thank you for being my team—in every sense of the word—these last two years. You're the people who have kept me grounded, who have sat with me, who have laughed with me, and who have shaped who I am and who I want to be as a higher education professional.

Olson Hall, my DC and DA families, and my undergraduate mentors and supervisors, thank you for being a significant step on my path toward calling, for giving me space to become who I am, and for encouraging me toward the field of student development.

MAHE Cohort 8, thank you for being my people. You've taught me more about what it means to think critically, to question, to hope, to struggle, and to be a faithful community member. These two years have been an inexpressibly odd, stretching, and fun season, and I'm grateful to have shared them with you, and to embark on the journey of becoming a scholar-practitioner alongside you.

Drew Moser, Scott Gaier, and Shawnda Freer, thank you for being my guides in the thesis process. This is a process I've immensely enjoyed and from which I've learned so much about being curious and treasuring and trusting the process. Thank you for your help and feedback along the way.

All glory to God. May this work serve toward the call to care for others and to be

for one another in the wonderful, terrifying, and mysterious process of learning together.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

During college, students feel challenged to grow intellectually, interpersonally, spiritually, and psychosocially through relationships, living environments, academics, involvement, and exposure to new experiences (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Many situations and experiences impact students, but students' own personal characteristics play a role in their experiences, too. Personality influences the way students receive and respond to the challenges presented by the college environment and may affect processes of adjustment, making friends, and learning. Therefore, since personality encompasses so many factors, a need exists to understand which facets of personality carry the most weight as students navigate the new challenges and experiences of college.

Under the large umbrella of personality are introversion and extraversion, two personality types that describe the direction of one's focus and energy and significantly impact one's day to day living (Cain, 2012). An individual's level of introversion or extraversion determines how he or she responds to and interacts with his or her environment, including how he or she processes information and relates to others (Myers, McCaulley, Quenk, & Hammer, 1998). An understanding of the effect of such personality factors can prove helpful both to students and higher education practitioners.

Introversion

Laney (2002) and Myers and Myers (2010) described introversion as a temperament or disposition that prefers the inner world. Approximately one third to one half of Americans identify as introverts: they focus and derive energy from internal sources such as concepts, ideas, and internal experiences (Cain, 2012; Myers et al., 1998). Introverts obtain energy from time spent alone or with small groups of friends, usually prefer listening, like to focus deliberately on one task at a time, and often appear reserved and reflective (Cain, 2012; Nelson, Thorne, & Shapiro, 2011; Quenk, 2009).

In many studies, the difference between introversion and shyness has remained unacknowledged or unexplored (Barry, Nelson, & Christofferson, 2013; Watson & Nesdale, 2012). Unlike shyness, introversion is not defined by social discomfort, tension, or anxiety but by a lack of energy focused on or obtained from social settings and other external sources (Cheek & Buss, 1981). Those introverted and those shy may both avoid social interactions but for different reasons. The difference, though perhaps difficult to observe, has implications for the college experience, making it important to distinguish and understand introversion as a construct entirely separate from shyness.

The College Experience

The college years contain multiple transitions and tasks associated with emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000; Pittman & Richmond, 2008). As college students explore the possibilities of life, they experience changes and development in faith, relationships, and identity (Arnett, 2000; Barry et al., 2013; Chickering & Reisser, 1993). While tasks of emerging adulthood emphasize self-sufficiency and independence, they occur in largely social settings (Arnett, 2000). During college, many changes and developmental

experiences result from peer interaction in residence halls, student clubs or organizations, and meaningful relationships (Blimling, 2015; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

College living environments, friendships, and leadership roles or other forms of involvement provide social settings that can play key roles in students' development (Astin, 1984; Blimling, 2015; Pittman & Richmond, 2008; Schroeder & Jackson, 1987). Considered a source of some of the most significant impacts of college, on-campus residence halls provide challenge and support (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Schroeder & Jackson, 1987). Friendships and other meaningful relationships play an important role in university adjustment and personal development (Nelson et al., 2011). Student leadership and extracurricular involvement provide many opportunities for interactions and experiences that contribute to student development (Astin, 1984; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Because each of these major components of the college experience prove highly socialized, a need exists to explore how a personality disposition such as introversion might influence a student's engagement with and experience of the living environment, relationships, and opportunities for involvement.

Problem

While introverts prefer social settings less often than extraverts do, social opportunities and experiences dominate the college setting. The extraverted values of American society manifest on American residential college campuses, with strong emphasis on social gatherings, participation in student leadership and activities, verbal class participation, and community living (Blimling, 2015; Rocca, 2010; Shertzer & Schuh, 2004). In addition to the extraverted values of American culture reflected in the college experience, the misunderstanding of introversion as shyness also contributes to an

"Extravert Ideal," or the belief that the ideal person seems outgoing, social, and quick to act (Cain, 2012). The prevailing extravert ideal and highly social emphases of the college setting may not prove conducive to the dispositions and preferences of introverted students. Indeed, an introverted student living and studying on a residential campus may at times feel out of place and exhausted by the demands of an extraverted culture. Previous studies point to the differences between extraverts and introverts in adjusting, leading, and making friends during college (Bauer & Liang, 2003; Nelson & Thorne, 2012; Shertzer & Schuh, 2004), but there remains a need to describe the overall experience of introverted college students on residential campuses in order to understand what challenges they face and how they respond.

Purpose and Benefits

This phenomenological study sought to explore the experience of introverted students on a residential college campus. The realm of higher education increasingly recognizes that introverts learn and relate differently than extraverts (Cain, 2012; Nelson et al., 2011; Pannapacker, 2012; Rocca, 2010; Salisbury, 2014). While not surprising based on theories of introversion and extraversion, the reality that introverts and extraverts approach the same experiences differently calls for adjustments both by individuals and by an increasingly extraverted society. The results of this study can enhance higher education professionals' knowledge of the lived experiences of introverted students. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do introverted students describe their overall college experience?

2. How does a student's introversion influence the way he or she experiences the residential environment, friendships in college, and involvement?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Personality impacts the way students experience college. A person's level of introversion or extraversion represents one of the most important aspects of personality and affects how emerging adults experience college (Arnett, 2000; Barry et al., 2013; Cain, 2012; Provost & Anchors, 1987). In particular, introverted students may experience college differently than extraverts do, necessitating the exploration of introverted students' experience (Barry et al., 2013; DiTiberio & Hammer, 1993). In order to support this study's exploration of the way introverted students experience college, this literature review provides an overview of existing theories of introversion-extraversion and specifically defines introversion. This section also discusses the impact of personality on the college experience, exploring previous research on the connection among personality, emerging adulthood, and formative aspects of the college experience, including relationships, the living environment of residence halls, and student involvement and leadership.

Theories of Introversion-Extraversion

Swiss psychologist Carl Jung developed the earliest popular theory of introversion-extraversion (Bair, 2003). According to Jung, two basic personality types determine the focus of a person's energy (Jung, Read, Fordham, & Adler, 1953). The introvert focuses on subjective factors, while the extravert focuses on objective factors

(Jung et al., 1953). In other words, introverts' energy channels inward and extraverts' energy channels outward. Lieberman and Rosenthal (2001) described Jung's theory in terms of "attentional orientation": "for the introvert, the stimuli deemed worthy of attention are those of the introvert's own mind… the internal reaction takes precedence over the thing reacted to, out in the world," while the extravert pays attention to the "tangible reality" (p. 295). Another important part of Jung's theory of psychological types states that no one can remain purely introverted or purely extraverted (Jung et al., 1953). All people have some balance of both, but most prefer either introversion or extraversion to some degree (Eysenck, 1970; Jung et al., 1953).

Eysenck (1970) theorized introversion and extraversion in terms of stimulation. According to Eysenck, introverts have "higher baseline levels of cortical arousal," which means they have naturally higher levels of sensory stimulation than extraverts do (Lieberman & Rosenthal, 2001, p. 295). Thus, extraverts pursue activities that "involve greater sensory stimulation" (p. 295), such as social interaction. Put simply, introverts experience more stimulation by their own thoughts than extraverts do, providing them less energy to allot to social or other types of outward stimulation.

Perhaps the most well known perspective of introversion-extraversion comes from the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), grounded in Jungian theory and dating back to the 1940s (Quenk, 2009). The MBTI contains four dichotomous categories, each with two "preference poles," toward one of which every individual has an "innate disposition," resulting in a four letter type (, p. 5). The beginning letter of each type, either E or I, indicates an individual's preference for either extraversion or introversion. The inclination for extraversion or introversion denotes the individual's preference for

either the inner or outer world (Myers & Myers, 2010). The preference for introversion or extraversion also determines whether the individual's dominant process of judging or perceiving focuses internally or externally. For example, if an introvert's dominant process is judging, his or her judgment focuses on the internal world of ideas, while the auxiliary process of sensing or feeling addresses matters of the outer world of action (Myers & Myers, 2010). According to Myers and Myers (2010),

> The introvert's main interests are in the inner world of concepts and ideas, while the extravert is more involved with the outer world of people and things. Therefore, when circumstances permit, the introvert concentrates perception and judgment upon ideas, while the extrovert likes to focus them on the outside environment. (p. 7)

An overview of Jung, Eysenck, and Myers and Briggs indicates introversion and extraversion as descriptions of how an individual directs his or her energy and interacts with the inner world and the outer world. The existing theories of introversion-extraversion differentiate the two personality preferences in terms of the direction of a person's attention and natural and needed levels of stimulation. The following section provides a succinct definition of introversion and describes common traits of introverts.

Defining and Describing Introversion

Based on the introversion-extraversion theories of Jung et al. (1953) and Eysenck (1970), an individual's level of introversion or extraversion entails a preferred way of existing in the world, describing the direction of one's attention and energy (DiTiberio & Hammer, 1993; Lieberman & Rosenthal, 2001). The present research defined introversion as a preference for the inner world and the focus and derivation of energy

from internal sources rather than external sources (Jung et al., 1953; Laney, 2002; Myers & Myers, 2010). People exhibit this preference as introverts, who Myers et al. (1998) defined as those "oriented primarily toward the inner world; thus they tend to focus their energy on concepts, ideas, and internal experiences" (p. 6).

Researchers and authors describe introversion in terms of preferences and ways of functioning. Unlike extraverts, who surround themselves with numerous friends and enjoy small talk, introverts prefer intimate friendships and depth in conversation (Cain, 2012; Laney, 2002; Nelson et al., 2011). They prefer "richness" to "muchness" (Laney, 2002, p. 24). They prefer listening to talking, often express themselves better in writing, and think deeply before they talk or act (Cain, 2012; DiTiberio & Hammer, 1993; Helgoe, 2008; Quenk, 2009). Because of their devotion of energy to "the inner world of ideas, reflection, and internal experiences" (Quenk, 2009, p. 8), introverts feel energized by time spent alone. Other words frequently used to describe introverts include reserved, cautious, focused, quiet, and reflective (Cain, 2012; Cheek & Buss, 1981; Gudjonsson, Sigurdsson, Bragason, Einarsson, & Valdimarsdottir, 2004; Pannapacker, 2012).

Introversion often becomes associated or interchanged with shyness (Watson & Nesdale, 2012), but many studies indicate that shyness differs from introversion (Barry et al., 2013; Bowker & Raja, 2010; Cheek & Buss, 1981). The key distinction of shyness is anxiety. In a study of the difference between shyness and sociability, Cheek and Buss (1981) concluded, "Shyness is something other than merely low sociability" (p. 333). If sociability prefers the company of others, low sociability simply lacks that preference. Shy people, on the other hand, may desire the company of others but experience fear, low self-esteem, and discomfort in the presence of others (Cheek & Buss, 1981).

Unsociability, also referred to as low sociability or asocialness, is one type of social withdrawal and can have different causes and motivations (Barry et al., 2013; Bowker & Raja, 2010). Unsociability represents a "benign" type of social withdrawal because unsocial individuals may not initiate social interactions, but they do not avoid them altogether and thus do not experience the internalizing issues, loneliness, or inept social skills characteristic of shy peers (Bowker & Raja, 2010, p. 210). The research on asocial or unsocial individuals provides definitions similar to the words used to describe introversion, pointing to introverts as not necessarily shy. They may prefer to withdraw from social situations but simply out of dispositional preference, not fear or anxiety.

The "Extravert Ideal"

Common descriptions of introversion and American cultural values point to what Cain (2012) described as "the Extrovert Ideal" (p. 4). According to Cain, the extravert ideal presents the ideal person as outgoing, quick to take action, social, and comfortable with attention. Indeed, similar to Cain, other researchers point to the many advantages that extraverts have in the classroom, workplace, and social atmosphere (Bowker & Raja, 2010; Grant, Gino, & Hofmann, 2011; Hendrick & Brown, 1971; Lieberman & Rosenthal, 2001; McCroskey, Burroughs, Daun, & Richmond, 1990; Myers & Myers, 2010; Toma, 2015). Jung et al. (1953) acknowledged the common depreciating view of introverts and "present extraverted sense of values" (p. 375), and as Myers and Myers (2010) pointed out, Jung's theory, by failing to present the effectiveness of introverts in the outer world, contributes to the misunderstanding of Jungian theory and leaves room for the development of the extravert ideal.

Additionally, many descriptions of introverts present them in terms of what they lack. In describing extraversion and introversion, most researchers present extraversion first and then define introversion in the negative form of language used to describe extraverts (Bowker & Raja, 2010; Gudjonsson et al., 2004; Harrington & Loffredo, 2010; Lischetzke & Eid, 2006). For example, while extraverts seem sociable, active, welcoming, and assertive, introverts seem asocial, reserved, withdrawing, pessimistic, and lacking in assertiveness (Barry et al., 2013; Gudjonsson et al., 2004). Studies also describe introverts as "impaired" in their ability to interpret interpersonal cues (Lierberman & Rosenthal, 2001, p. 307), and their operation in the inner world of ideas seems a disadvantage as they engage with the outer world (Myers & Myers, 2010). Thus, subtle nuances in the language used to describe introverts point to an overarching extravert ideal permeating the research and society at large.

The extravert ideal dominates major societal institutions. The workplace is characterized by teamwork, and schools represent social settings designed for group learning (Cain, 2012). The college setting stresses polished verbal performance in the classroom, places students in social living arrangements, and believes social relationships impact adjustment and development significantly (Nelson et al., 2011; Rocca, 2010). Where group interaction and verbal performance become required, introverts may not thrive as easily as extraverts (Lynch, 1987). In a study in which college students evaluated introverted and extraverted strangers, Hendrick and Brown (1971) found both introverted and extraverted students preferred extraverts on measures of liking, interesting at a party, ideal personality, and leadership. These results indicate extraverts

may not only have an advantage in the classroom but also in social situations, where many favor the outgoing, charming personality type over the reserved type.

While there remains a perceived disadvantage for introverts who must succeed in the outer world (Myers & Myers, 2010), some within the realm of higher education recognize college can unintentionally favor extraverts; these practitioners seek to spread an awareness of the disadvantage placed on introverted students (Falwal, 2012; Pannapacker, 2012; Salisbury, 2014). Salisbury (2014) argued personality differences impact how students experience college in the same way that demographic differences impact how students experience college. By pressuring introverts to participate in college in the same way extraverts do, many institutions create an extravert privilege and unintentionally limit introverts' sense of belonging. Considering the impact of personality on college student involvement and satisfaction, Toma (2015) similarly reported introverted participants found themselves "embedded in a society prone to carving out hierarchies or normative standards" and described themselves "on the inferior end of a personality hierarchy" (p. 136). Others who recognize the advantages introverts bring call for a more balanced perspective. Introverts' strengths may not seem as outwardly noticeable and accepted as those of extraverts, but as Myers and Myers (2010) stated, introverts should not become systematically limited or defined by their disadvantages but appreciated for who they are.

Introversion-Extraversion and Emerging Adulthood

A person's level of introversion or extraversion has important implications for how they navigate the tasks of emerging adulthood. Traditionally-aged college students, or emerging adults, operate in a period of life "characterized by change and exploration

for most people, as they examine the life possibilities open to them and gradually arrive at more enduring choices in love, work, and worldviews" (Arnett, 2000, p. 279). According to Arnett's theory, emerging adults explore and experience significant changes in relationships, jobs or sense of purpose, and beliefs and values.

While personality impacts an individual's experience of emerging adulthood, it remains unclear how introversion affects this stage of life. In a study comparing groups of shy, asocial (or introverted), and "normal" college students, Barry et al. (2013) noted that each of these three groups approached the traditional tasks associated with emerging adulthood differently, as measured by their strength of religious faith, identity development, and relationship quality. The researchers argued the explorations and tasks of emerging adulthood occur primarily in social contexts, making it difficult for shy and introverted individuals to adjust in the same ways as their non-shy, social peers. Indeed, the study indicated shy students struggled in all three areas (identity development, relationships, and religious strength), but asocial, or introverted, individuals reported greater levels of identity commitment, greater religious strength, and no significant difference in relationship quality than the normal comparison group. These results gained support from a similar study that showed few differences between unsociable emerging adults and a comparison group on measures of relationship quality, self-esteem, and internalizing characteristics (Nelson, 2013). Thus, while introverted emerging adults seem to obtain results for identity development, faith development, and relationships comparable to their non-introverted peers, further research must explore how the difficulties introverts have engaging the outer world impact their overall journey through the highly socialized stage of emerging adulthood and specifically the college experience.

Introversion-Extraversion and the College Experience

A student's time in college brings change and opportunities for development. As they enter college, students face "multiple transitions, including changes in their living arrangements, academic environments, and friendship networks" and must adapt to "greater independence and responsibility in their personal and academic lives" (Pittman & Richmond, 2008, p. 344). Social, emotional, and personality factors impact the way students adapt to these changes (Bauer & Liang, 2003; Pritchard & Wilson, 2003; Pritchard, Wilson, & Yamnitz, 2007). For example, when investigating the effect of personality on college outcomes, Bauer and Liang (2003) identified extraversion as significantly and positively related to students' effort in personal and social activities. First-year students who welcomed new experiences and risks, a characteristic connected to extraversion (Raynor & Levine, 2009), more likely engaged in new academic and social activities, leading to greater gains in critical thinking and academic performance (Bauer & Liang, 2003). Thus, students' levels of introversion or extraversion appear to influence the way they approach their college experience and the resulting outcomes.

As evidenced by the gaps between research on shyness and the role of extraverted qualities in college adjustment, a need exists to further explore the connection between introverted students' personalities and their college experience (Barry et al., 2013; Pritchard et al., 2007; Swenson, Nordstrom, & Hiester, 2008). The rest of this literature review describes three important aspects of the college experience—the residential environment, friendships, and student involvement and leadership—in order to set the stage to describe how introverted students approach and experience each.

Friendships. Relationships, specifically friendship, serve as an important component of the college experience. The quality of relationships formed in college positively impacts adjustment and sense of university belonging (Pittman & Richmond, 2008; Swenson et al., 2008). However, introverts and extraverts develop and experience relationships differently (Nelson & Thorne, 2012). First, the extravert more likely interacts with other people and enters into and enjoys social settings (Harkins, Becker, & Stonner, 1975; Lucas & Diener, 2001). Second, extraverts and introverts experience the process of becoming friends differently. According to Nelson and Thorne (2012), "If friendship formation were like entering a swimming pool, entry with an extraverted partner would feel like jumping in, whereas entry with an introverted partner would feel like dipping one's toes into the water and slowly becoming immersed" (p. 609). Friendship formation depends on personality, and the level of introversion or extraversion of a new friend influences the development of a friendship. Third, extraverts and introverts play different roles in friendships (Nelson et al., 2011). Introverts often enjoy spending time with friends close to home, provide stability in friendships, slowly welcome outsiders, listen more than talk, and gradually disclose personal and emotional experiences. Nelson et al. (2011) described these preferences but found mutually introverted friends reinforced introverted preferences, while mixed dyads (introvert paired with extravert) mutually accommodated one another. Introverts and extraverts approach and experience friendship differently, and, because friendships play a major role in college adjustment and outcomes, it is important to explore how this difference connects to the college experience. Introverts in particular seem to form friendships at a slower, more intense pace than extraverts do, and a deeper understanding of their

friendship experiences during the college years could inform ways of appropriately supporting introverted students.

The residential environment. Where a student lives during his or her college years is an important part of the college experience. The residential environment can be a key source of the challenge, support, learning, and satisfaction necessary for student development (Blimling, 2015; Gerst & Moos, 1972; Sanford, 1966; Schroeder & Jackson, 1987). Because introverts and extraverts need different levels of stimulation and energy and relate to people in different ways, they may experience the residential environment, along with the challenge and support it offers, differently (Schroeder & Jackson, 1987). For example, extraverts need more stimulation in the living environment than introverts do, often reflected in the way they personalize and maintain their living space (Schroeder & Jackson, 1987). According to a study of students' ideal and perceived residence hall experiences, extraverts desire greater emphasis on spontaneity and a variety of activities, while introverts desire a focus on academics or other pursuits with an inward focus (Grandpre, 1995). Because extraverts are more likely than introverts to express expectations of a residence hall environment, take social risks, and sacrifice academics for social activities, extraverted students are "predisposed to 'fit in' within the residence community" (Rodger & Johnson, 2005, p. 95). In an environment focused on spontaneity and social activities, it appears that introverts may experience imbalanced levels of challenge and support and reduced feelings of belonging (Rodger & Johnson, 2005; Schroeder & Jackson, 1987).

The differences in students' ideal and perceived residence hall environment are important not only in the context of a student's hall or floor, but also in the roommate

relationship. Satisfaction in the roommate relationship is one of the most influential factors contributing to student satisfaction in the residence hall (Foubert, Tepper, & Morrison, 1998). Study and sleeping habits are important dimensions of roommate compatibility, yet introverts and extraverts often differ greatly in their habits of sleep and study (Schroeder & Jackson, 1987). Because of these differences, introverts and extraverts may feel less supported when paired together in a living environment and "may find it difficult to feel at home and simply be themselves with one another" (Schroeder & Jackson, 1987, p. 78). The residential environment influences the overall college experience, affecting the degree to which students pursue relationships and seek involvement (Gerst & Moos, 1972). It is therefore critical to understand how introverted students feel challenged, supported, and satisfied by their residential environment in order to better understand their overall college experience.

Student involvement and leadership. Just as introverts and extraverts differ in needs and preferences in relationships and the living environment, they also differ in levels and types of involvement in college. Involvement, defined by Astin (1984) as the amount of physical and psychological energy a student invests in his or her experience, is an important ingredient in the student's growth and development. Additionally, involvement in the form of extracurricular activities provides an outlet for expression and can contribute to student satisfaction and well-being (Provost & Anchors, 1987). Forms of involvement include academics, student government, athletics, student-faculty interaction, and involvement in a residence hall (Astin, 1984). Because introverts and extraverts focus their energy differently, they often focus their involvement in the college experience in different ways. For example, extraverts devote more time and interest to

social involvement, such as attending parties and committing to Greek membership, than introverts do (Bauer & Liang, 2003; Provost & Anchors, 1987; Toma, 2015). Introverts typically enjoy smaller group or one on one interactions, solitude, and intellectual pursuits (Provost & Anchors, 1987; Toma, 2015). Toma (2015) connected introverts' involvement preferences with three characteristics associated with introversion—sensory-processing sensitivity, reflectivity, and low reward sensitivity. That is, introverts were more likely to choose forms of involvement that placed them in less overwhelming environments than extraverts chose, were less swayed by social rewards than extraverts, and reflected deeply on the purpose and significance of their involvement. They were highly motivated by personal development, and thus often chose to pursue growth in social, communication, and networking skills, even if it placed them in challenging or uncomfortable situations (Toma, 2015). Further research must explore how introversion impacts a student's involvement, especially in a campus culture that favors extraversion.

Another form of involvement that many students pursue is student leadership. In the college setting, it is apparent that extraverted traits are considered ideal for leadership roles, but that introverts are capable leaders. In a study of college student perceptions of leadership, Shertzer and Schuh (2004) found that students have empowering and constraining beliefs that either motivate them to pursue a leadership position or cause them to self-select out of leadership opportunities. One of the most important leadership qualities identified by both student leaders and disengaged students was extraversion; all student leaders in the study identified as extraverts and "believed that extraverts had an advantage over introverts in securing leadership roles and positions at their institution" (Shertzer & Schuh, 2004, p. 119). Disengaged students believed that personality

constrained their leadership potential, but voiced the possibility that introverts could exhibit quieter, "behind the scenes" leadership (Shertzer & Schuh, 2004, p. 119).

Introverts often serve in leadership roles but may experience leadership differently than extraverts do. Because of such differences, while 63% of Resident Assistants (RAs) preferred extraversion over introversion as indicated by the MBTI, no statistically significant dominant type emerged (Krouse, 2006). Explaining this result, Krouse (2006) wrote RAs may frequently display extraverted traits on the job, but this may not mean they prefer extraversion on the MBTI:

> For example, Resident Assistants may appear to be very outgoing and energetic while interacting with a group of residents, but they may not actually be extroverted. This process of interaction could be very tiring for them if they prefer introversion and they may need time alone to reenergize after such activities. (p. 65)

College student leadership idealizes and perhaps requires some level of extraversion. However, introverted students can and do participate in leadership roles, but there remains more to learn about their quieter leadership and involvement.

Conclusion

Personality differences are just one of the many factors comprising the differing realities of college students. A thorough knowledge of personality traits can equip anyone working with students to better acknowledge differences and facilitate learning (Bauer & Liang, 2003).

In particular, the current research focuses on introverted students, who direct and derive energy from internal sources. In the college environment, introverted students

may face a cultural "extravert ideal" and engage the tasks of emerging adulthood and aspects of the college experience—the residential environment, relationships, and involvement and leadership—in ways unique from their extraverted peers. In working with any student or group of students, it is important to listen to the narratives they represent as they navigate the tasks of the college experience. Specifically, the present study explores the experiences of introverted students with an aim to better describe and understand the way they experience college.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Approach and Design

In order to understand the experience of introverted college students, this study used a qualitative, phenomenological design. The researcher selected phenomenology as an appropriate approach because it examines a common lived experience, or phenomenon, among a group of individuals. Phenomenology seeks to forge a common understanding from the experiences of several individuals and discover the true essence of the experience (Creswell, 2012; van Manen, 1990). A phenomenological study results in the ability "to grasp the nature and significance of this experience in a hitherto unseen way" (van Manen, 1990, p. 39).

In the present research, participants shared the common lived experiences of college and introversion—a preference for the inner world and the derivation of energy from internal sources rather than external sources. Other research, also phenomenological in nature, related to introversion-extraversion and aspects of the college experience: the 2011 study by Nelson et al. of introverts' and extraverts' roles in relationships, the 2012 study by Nelson and Thorne of how introverts and extraverts become friends, and the 2004 study by Shertzer and Schuhbof students' perceptions of leadership. Each of these studies explored experiences related to relationships or leadership, but few studies have connected general aspects of the college experience to

the experience of being introverted. The current study thus used a phenomenological

design to identify the themes common to the experiences of introverted college students.

Context

The research took place at a small, faith-based liberal arts institution in the

Midwest. The institution has about 2,000 traditional, undergraduate students and is

highly residential, with approximately 90% of students living on campus for at least three

years. Whole-person focus stands out as an anchor point of the institution, strongly

emphasizing student development and involvement. Development begins in the

residence halls and becomes enriched by other opportunities to serve and lead through

student activities, student government, student ministries, intercultural programs, and

highly attended campus traditions and events. The institution prizes its identity as an

intentional community and claims to build community into everything it does.

Participants

The researcher used purposeful sampling, seeking participants who experience the

central phenomenon of introversion (Creswell, 2008). Nine undergraduate students

participated in the study: five currently enrolled in their fourth year, three in their third

year, and one in her fifth year. The researcher limited participation to upperclassmen

because of their tendency for further development than underclassmen in establishing

identity and sense of self (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), and they have more college

experience to reflect on and contribute to the data. All participants spent at least three

years living in university residence halls on floors of 30-100 residents and lived with one

to three roommates each year. The researcher sought a majority of participants who

served in a student leadership position or had some other form of involvement (e.g.

resident assistant, student government, student council, student ministries, orientation leader) for at least one of his or her undergraduate years.

Procedures and Instruments

The researcher selected participants from four groups of students who have taken a variation of Form M of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), either as part of an introductory psychology course, as part of orientation leader training, as part of service-learning preparation, or as part of resident assistant training. The MBTI, a forced-choice personality inventory, yields 16 possible personality types (Myers et al., 1998). Participants received scores in each of eight categories—extraversion (E), introversion (I), sensing (S), intuition (N), thinking (T), feeling (F), judgment (J), and perception (P)—with the higher raw score of each dichotomous category signifying the student's preferred type. For example, a score of 19 in introversion and 2 in extraversion signifies a clear preference for introversion.

Participants completed the MBTI at least once during their undergraduate years and received the Myers-Briggs required interpretative training from the faculty member who supervised the student group requiring completion of the MBTI. With the help of these faculty members who facilitated the MBTI, the researcher obtained a list of students who met the qualifications of senior status and introvert scores on the MBTI. The researcher sent an email to all students who met the qualifications with a description of the nature and goals of the study and an invitation to participate. Lack of response from seniors required the researcher to open the invitation to juniors, resulting in the use of three juniors as participants.

Upon obtaining consent from each participant (see Appendix A), the researcher conducted individual, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews, involving "an informal, interactive process and [utilizing] open-ended comments and questions" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 114). Interviews lasted 38 to 70 minutes and followed a semi-structured design around two broad questions: "What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?" (Creswell, 2013, p. 81). Participants answered questions (see Appendix B for interview protocol) about their experience of introversion in the context of their college experience, including situations related to relationships, the residential environment, and involvement. To ensure clear questions that yielded accurate data, the researcher conducted a pilot interview and used subsequent feedback to refine the protocol (Creswell, 2008). The researcher asked follow-up questions for clarity. Interviews took place in a quiet location free from distractions, and the researcher audio-recorded the sessions (Creswell, 2013). In order to protect participants, the researcher stored the data on a password-protected computer that only the researcher could access and changed participants' names to ensure anonymity.

Analysis and Summary

After the interview transcription, the researcher conducted a preliminary exploratory analysis to "obtain a general sense of the data" (Creswell, 2008, p. 250). The researcher wrote memos in the margins to represent key concepts within the data. The researcher then grouped the memos into codes and assigned labels to each code before matching the labels to text segments. The researcher grouped similar codes into similar themes representing major ideas in the data. The researcher then utilized member

checking to verify the accuracy of themes with participants. The results of the study are based upon the researcher's development of a textural description—what the participants experienced—and a structural description—how the participants experienced college in terms of introversion (Creswell, 2013). The themes and descriptions inform the researcher's exploration of the research questions.

Chapter 4

Results

This study generated rich data pertaining to the experiences of introverted college students. Participants eagerly shared and demonstrated a deep level of reflection. The researcher generated protocol questions based on prominent themes from the literature, which shaped the themes emerging from interview data. Four major themes developed, each with corresponding sub-themes: participants' description of introversion, friendships, residence hall experience, and involvement and leadership. Advantages and challenges arose as two sub-themes associated with participants' description of introversion. Sub-themes under friendships included role in friendships, preferences in friendships, and the process of becoming friends. Perceptions of residence life, roommate experiences, and expectations and pressure emerged as sub-themes under residence hall experience. Lastly, the sub-themes of challenges, motivation and benefits, and perception of self as leader arose under involvement and leadership.

Theme 1: Participants' Description of Introversion

At the beginning of each interview, the participant read the researcher's definition of introversion (see Appendix B) and discussed how he or she connected with the definition. While all participants referred to several aspects of the definition with which they agreed, eight disagreed with at least one aspect of the definition, pointing to exceptions in their identity as an introvert, such as enjoying talking or gaining energy

from socializing with people. Each participant could identify both advantages and challenges of introversion.

Sub-theme: Advantages. Participants identified many positive aspects of their experience as introverts. When shown the definition of introversion, all nine of the participants agreed they felt reflective and/or internally focused, and most identified their propensity for reflection as positive. Every participant demonstrated a deep level of reflection throughout the interview time itself. For example, Ryan connected lessons learned from his study abroad semester to other shaping components of his time in college. For many, the ability to reflect and maintain an internal focus led to growth and learning and provided a means of processing thoughts and experiences. Describing her reflective nature, Larissa said, "I think . . . like a really big part of my life is just thinking really critically about things that are happening within me and, um then as a result how those are going outward into like behavioral patterns or interactions." Describing his inner focus, Matt named the personal growth resulting from internal reflection as one of the biggest advantages of being an introvert.

Related to participants' reflectiveness was self-awareness. Five participants mentioned their self-awareness as something they valued about being an introvert. Describing the connection between reflection and self-awareness, Eleanor said,

> I like that I seem to understand myself pretty well, because in my alone time, like
> that's when I'm doing my best thinking. . . . it's how I know myself. And so I
> don't really have to rely on other people to get that as much . . . . Other people can
> give input and it's helpful, um, but I feel like I know myself really well.

Another positive aspect of introversion came as the value of time spent alone, which eight participants offered as a defining factor of their introversion. Seven mentioned that spending time alone allowed them a means of recharging, and many discussed how much they enjoyed time spent alone. Larissa, for example, thought, ". . . [It's] really an amazing thing that I as an introvert am really comfortable with just being with myself and my thoughts and it doesn't scare me in any way."

Finally, three participants offered their ability to focus on schoolwork as another advantage of introversion. These participants connected their introversion to their abilities to focus for long periods of time, pay attention, and listen well. Lucas said, "I mean it's definitely been an advantage for me in studying just 'cause I can spend a lot of time just straight studying."

Sub-theme: Challenges. As they identified with several aspects of the definition of introversion, participants also named challenges they experience as introverts. First, the process of recognizing their introversion could prove difficult, especially when they did not realize the extent of their introversion. For example, Ryan blamed not his introversion but his lack of awareness of his introversion for the challenges he faced living in a residence hall: "So it wasn't necessarily like being in a residence hall was hard because I was an introvert, but it was hard because I wasn't as aware that I was introverted." For many participants, the process of recognizing introversion occurred during their first year and changed how they spent their time and approached friendships.

As another challenge, seven participants described at length feeling misunderstood or encountering others' negative perceptions of introverts. Two participants recalled feeling pitied during time spent alone, two described feeling

forgotten in social settings, and three said others assumed they did not enjoy being around people or were intimidating.

Eleanor described others' misconceptions that she either did not want to be around people or that she lacked some social capabilities:

I think it's a common misconception that introverts don't like being around people. I've had people ask me like, "if you're an introvert, you seem to do so well around people." And I think that's something that isn't always like explained well because I enjoy being around people and I like that time.

Elaborating on elements of introversion she disliked, Larissa implied that some people believed she did not have the "right college experience":

I think I don't really like sometimes other people's perception of me as an introvert um so just feeling . . . that people like pity me because I am alone or that people are like trying to make me do something I don't want to do or their idea of having the right college experience is being out all the time and being with friends all the time.

Matt discussed the frustration that comes along with others' assumptions that he does not want to spend time with people:

I am frustrated that, I think because I'm an introvert, people don't think that I want like group experiences that I like. . . . I would still like to be invited to things, like I feel like [people think] "oh you know, [Matt] isn't gonna want to do this," and . . . it is frustrating.

Sean described a similar experience of feeling "forgotten" in "certain groups" or not being chosen to participate in a large group activity.

For most participants, others' negative perceptions connected to their own perceived disadvantages or negative perceptions of themselves. Two participants talked about feeling selfish in wanting time or space alone. Three thought of themselves as weak communicators. Larissa said, "I feel like I can't express myself, like verbally is like pretty hard sometimes," while Sean mentioned he could use "some strengthening in my small talk conversation sort of style." Four participants wished they could become more involved or felt they had missed out on opportunities due to their introversion. Finally, two described introversion as a weakness that holds them back.

Theme 2: Friendships

Friendships emerged as the next major theme. Participants explained in great detail the role they play in friendships, the preferences they have as they engage in friendships, and the process they experience in developing friendships.

Sub-theme: Role in friendships. As participants talked about their friendships, they discussed at greatest length the role they play in friendships. Eight participants described themselves as providing steadiness in friendships and bringing a sense of calm, peace, and a listening ear. For example, Matt said, "I would be able to bring a sense of calm and like a, more of a—I hate talking about myself like this—but more of a quiet strength to their lives and peace." Matt and five other participants also said they often become sources of advice, comfort, or wisdom for their friends. Describing her role, Larissa stated, "I mean usually, just general statement: I'm like usually not the one falling to pieces. So I would be the one who was like helping to put people back together again or like . . . giving them advice if they need it." Similarly, Neil said he became "kind of the mom of the room," tending "to play more [of a] constant position in those closer

friendships, where . . . I like try to ask them a good question a couple times a week, you know, and just see where they're at."

Five participants differentiated between friendships with introverts and friendships with extraverts. Larissa, for example, described a friendship with an introverted roommate as "very reciprocal, too, like sometimes I'm talking about myself and sometimes she's talking about herself, and sometimes I'm giving advice, and sometimes she's giving advice." Contrarily, in friendships with extraverts, participants felt pushed to involve themselves more in campus events and do spontaneous things.

Finally, seven participants discussed their desire to invest in community and friendships, displaying a strong value of community. Even as a senior, Lucas talked about his desire to get to know freshmen on his floor, while Eleanor, Neil, and Matt desired to show care and facilitate growth in the relationships they built through leadership positions. Describing the significance of floor activities, Matt said, "I love that it gives me like this in on being their friend, and it lets me get to the point where I can like have those deeper conversations." Sean described friendships as one of the most important and enjoyable parts of his college experience, stating that, without friends, "I'd just want to get through the four years and then get my degree and leave."

Sub-theme: Preferences in friendships. In addition to their role in friendships, every participant described preferences in engaging in friendships. Eight participants preferred interacting with friends one on one or in small groups. Lucas said,

> It tends to be more I guess small group interactions rather than like a very large
> mass of people, just 'cause at that point . . . it's harder to actually have a
> conversation about something meaningful and build like a relationship I guess.

Additionally, Matt mentioned his preference for one-on-one interactions as one of his favorite parts of himself:

> That is one of my favorite parts about . . . who I am, is being able to really connect with people easily in one on one interactions. Like I feel like I can make connections with people and really like get down to like who they are, and I think that's awesome.

Seven participants also expressed a preference for depth in friendships and conversations with friends. Eleanor said,

> I found it really difficult my freshman and sophomore year, knowing that I had a lot of like surface level friendships, um but like not knowing how to go deeper with anyone, and I really found that frustrating at times because I'm not someone who likes having like, a lot of just like ok friends and just being surrounded by those, like I would rather have just like a few really solid friends, and I just wasn't able to like find that with the friends on my wing.

Finally, participants' preferences for small groups of friends and depth impacted their preferences for activities with friends. Five participants mentioned enjoying talking and having deep conversations or discussions with friends, especially in their residence halls or around the dinner table. For example, Neil said, "We love watching movies and um listening to music and stuff. . . . so like a lot of times last year, it was just in our room, like we'd watch a movie then just have like a natural discussion of it afterwards."

Sub-theme: Process of becoming friends. As they talked about friendships, every participant described the process of how they became friends with some of their closest friends. Four described the process as slow or gradual, and five attributed the

development of friendship to common interests or experiences, such as living on the same floor. Nina mentioned a friendship formed on the basis of common interests: "We had a lot of common interests, um knitting yarn in general, spinning and just things that we were able to talk about, plants, so a lot of common interests, and I guess just general proximity."

Heather described the slow process of making friends, noting some ramifications of the gradual pace: "I'm pretty . . . I take a while to open up to people and like really let people get to know me, and so it was hard for me to make like friends that I could like trust fully and count on." Some participants' friendships also required multiple encounters or opportunities for interaction, such as meeting at orientation, having classes together, living on the same floor, or having mutual friends before becoming friends.

Theme 3: Residence Hall Experience

Participants also answered questions about their experiences living in a residence hall. Three sub-themes that emerged from their reflection on residence life included perceptions of residence life, roommate experiences, and pressure and expectations.

Sub-theme: Perceptions of residence life. While every participant described overall positive experiences within residence life, most categorized their experience into positive and negative components. For most participants, the most positive aspect of their experience living in a residence hall was the community. Larissa described her community as "a really sweet wing, a lot of genuine people," while Matt concluded that he was "satisfied with experiences in residence life…because of the relationships I've had." Though participants enjoyed the overall experience of living in a residence hall, many mentioned what they disliked about living in a residence hall. Four participants felt

particularly challenged to find space for solitude. As she discussed the differences between living in a suite-style residence hall and living in an apartment building, Larissa realized that living in the dorm did not suit her personality as well:

> I loved living in the dorms so it wasn't like I ever had like a really bad experience in the dorms but now that I'm in an apartment I can't imagine living anywhere else. I was like, "How did I like live?" There's always people around and they were always making noise and they were always barging into my room and so yeah I've really loved apartment life. I love my little area, my room. I love our living room and it's just like really peaceful there compared to living in the dorms.

Participants also held both positive and negative views of their residence hall activities and events. Five expressed a value of the relationship-building aspect of floor activities, but many felt uncomfortable in those settings. For example, Lucas, whose floor requires participation in a campus-wide competition, appreciated the tradition's ability "to promote bonding with the wing" but said it "was just out of my comfort zone," especially because it required performing in front of a large audience."

The institution where the research took place strongly emphasizes residence hall floor community. Seven participants described the close-knit nature of their residence hall community and recognized it as a benefit in allowing them to form community and build friendships more easily. For example, Sean compared his floor community to the closeness of a sports team:

> Well I like how [the university] sets up the wings in general, just because of, for me, I played sports in high school and so I liked being part of a team and I feel

like the wing is kind of like a team and you like, you can always hang out with the

guys that are on your wing or girls that are on your wing so I really like that. Um

just being able to not have to find your own friends, but you can just meet them

easily like the first couple weeks of school and then you have a group that you can

always go to.

For Sean, the wing provided the security of a few close friends he could always go to,

making him thankful for his residence life experience.

Sub-theme: Roommate experiences. Within residence life experiences, the

researcher asked participants about the roommates they lived with during their time in

college. Two participants described the experience of living with other introverts as easy

and cohesive, as introverted roommates seemed good at "giving each other space." The

same two participants, plus three others, reflected on experiences living with extraverts.

Larissa described the difficulty caused by differences in processing emotions:

. . . She just wanted to talk about [her emotions] a lot and I was very

uncomfortable a lot of times. . . . we just have very different ways of processing

our emotions. . . . I never really voiced that I was like really uncomfortable with

the way that she was doing things [and] she never thought it was a problem.

For Larissa, this experience proved difficult not only because of the differences between

she and her roommate but also because she did not feel comfortable telling her roommate

how those differences impacted her. Four other participants who lived with extraverts

described their roommates as profoundly different from them but did well in adapting to

differences in personality and preference. Neil, for example, lived with two extraverts

who were "always around people," and he reflected,

. . . that actually ended up working out . . . 'cause like they would just come back

to the room to sleep and you know we'd watch TV together, like yeah, if they

were doing homework they were out, so that kind of like gave me a nice alone

spot in the room um for that year.

Four participants also mentioned a preference for cleanliness and described

roommates' messiness as a challenge in their roommate experiences. Perhaps the aspect

of their roommate relationship that mattered most to participants was the depth of their

relationship, which five participants discussed at great length. Matt, for example,

described his two most recent roommates in terms of the depth of the friendship they

developed and the ways they caused him to experience personal growth.

Sub-theme: Expectations and pressure. Eight participants described the

expectations and pressure associated with living in a residence hall. They referred to the

pressure to participate in residence hall activities or social events and to build

relationships with everyone on their floor. Heather mentioned the expectation that "you

attend every single wing event" and spend as much time as possible on the wing:

I think . . . it's good to be involved in the wing, but I don't think you, I mean I feel

pressured to like do every single event, and like it's impossible to do everything,

and do homework and stuff. And so I just feel a lot of pressure with that.

Heather also often felt as though the disappointment her wing expressed when she chose

not to participate was blamed on her status as one of the only seniors on her wing,

causing her to feel further misunderstood as an introvert. The participants who described

the pressure to participate described it as challenging, intimidating, weird, unhealthy,

difficult, and something they did not like about living in a residence hall.

Theme 4: Involvement and Leadership

Finally, participants described the groups and activities they were involved in during their time in college. All nine participants held at least one leadership position during college. Four served as orientation leaders, three as resident assistants, and two in campus ministries; four participated in a semester abroad, five in short-term service learning experiences, three in student activities, two in the admissions office, three in musical groups or theater, and three in clubs related to their major. Each participant spent at least one year, some all four years, participating in meetings and events related to their leadership role or form of involvement. As participants described their involvement, three sub-themes developed: challenges, motivation and benefits, and perception of self as a leader.

Sub-theme: Challenges. All nine participants described challenges associated with their involvement. Six felt challenged by the amount of time their involvement required them to spend around people. Eleanor, who served as a resident assistant, and Larissa, who gave campus tours through the admissions office, both faced difficultly in having a job that required significant amounts of interaction with people, especially with strangers or, in Eleanor's case, with people with whom she may not have chosen to spend time. Though they encountered challenge, both Eleanor and Larissa viewed these experiences as valuable for them; they learned to interact with people and thus developed a greater level of self-awareness. Heather also learned about herself through her experience as an orientation leader, especially through the extensive amounts of time spent with people and energy required during welcome weekend:

So welcome weekend last year, I like cried all the time because I was so

exhausted from being with people all the time, and like it was just awful. I did not

think I was going to be able to do it . . . but I got through it and it was fine. . . . I

learned a lot about when I need alone time, and where my breaking point is.

Through the challenges of involvement, Heather thus grew as a leader as she more clearly

identified her own strengths and limits. Four participants also described the challenges of

managing a group of people, such as leading discussion, growing comfortable with

confrontation, thinking of others, and relating to different types of people.

Sub-theme: Motivation and benefits. When asked to describe how they got

involved and what benefits they saw in their involvement, participants provided a range

of answers, many relationship-focused. Heather decided to serve as an orientation leader

again because of the impactful relationships she built with freshmen students, while Sean

decided not to continue volunteering at a weekly after-school program because "it was

kind of difficult to build a relationship with the kids." Similarly, Neil enjoyed his time as

a resident assistant because seeing his events and relational efforts "go well is life-giving

and seeing like good participation and like enjoyment of that is really good." Other

participants got involved in order to pursue interests such as music, to learn from their

experiences, or to help or serve others. Several participants described the benefits of

learning and growth, especially on a personal level. Matt captured this concept well:

I think there's always benefits. Um no matter what you're involved in. I think you

always learn something, either about yourself or about others, about what you

need to get better at or what you're already good at. Your strengths and

weaknesses, I think you always can learn those things.

Ryan also described personal growth, saying his involvement in a culture-focused student activities group helped him discover many of his own views and ways of thinking.

Sub-theme: Perception of self as a leader. As every participant served in at least one leadership role, the researcher asked them to describe if and how they viewed themselves as leaders. Eight of the nine participants identified as leaders. They discussed several of their leadership qualities, and many talked about not fitting the common mold of a leader. Heather, for example, described herself as a "laidback" leader and said, "I think I'm more of a quiet leader. . . . I don't think people would see me as a leader per se, but um I would say that I'm a leader maybe just in different ways I guess." Five other participants described themselves as quiet or less vocal leaders, some viewing this trait as a strength, while others viewed it as a struggle. Describing her leadership style as a resident assistant and orientation leader, Eleanor said,

> I'm probably not one of those like loud in your face kind of like always going, always um like, always around kind of leaders, um like I feel like I see some people who are just like they never stop and that was not me as a leader, that is not me. Um I think I'm more of a quiet leader.

Sean also said he differed from other leaders but struggled to embrace it. When asked whether or not he viewed himself as a leader, he said,

> I guess not in the way that a lot of people view a leader, like in the front, talking to people and stuff like that. But kind of like a behind the scenes leader I guess. . . . sometimes I get down on myself for like not being as vocal or whatever, or not being like a typical leader. Um so yeah I guess my natural tendency would be to like tear myself down rather than um like building myself up.

Other participants described their preference for leading from the background or through service. Lucas said,

> . . . leading through service I guess allows me to be more like hands-on oriented rather than being like, I don't know, up on a podium like talking.…I prefer more to be interacting on like a more one on one or small group level more than being a leader in front of like a mass group of people just 'cause that wouldn't fit me I guess.

Referring to their experiences as orientation leaders, Heather and Nina also described their role as "background" leaders who kept things organized and planned for multiple outcomes.

While several participants described the benefit of relationships built through their leadership positions, Matt described himself as a "relationship-based leader":

> Um I feel like I'm at my best in leadership positions when I can, when I can have the opportunity to connect with others. I feel like I can, in a lot of ways, bring out like the best in others, in those one on one type situations. . . . a strength God's given me is to be really like genuine and caring with other people, and I think that shows itself in leadership in lots of different aspects, but mainly in how I can make others feel loved.

Finally, three participants discussed the importance of following. Eleanor described how she let others lead even if she held the leadership position, while Ryan described his process of realizing that following functions as its own form of leadership:

> So then just kind of realizing that like following and being able to follow is like so overlooked. Um and just the value of that and the value of being able to like do

those things at the same time and also like switch between them. . . . like being

able to lead, but then like also follow someone, like tell someone 'ok can you do

this?' and then like if you're working with them, like being subservient to them

almost. Um so just kind of like coming to terms with that and realizing that . . .

following is its own form of leadership.

For these participants, following provided a way of empowering those they led and

aligned well with their preference for quieter or more laidback leadership.

Summary

Participants provided meaningful reflection on their college experience and

identified how their experience of being introverted influenced aspects of their

experiences in college. In ways both similar to and unique from one another, they

connected with the theory-informed definition of introversion, discussing both challenges

and advantages of introversion and providing shape to the diverse experiences of

introverted students. Expanding on the findings of previous similar studies, introverted

students described friendships in college, presenting themselves as steady and intentional

friends who may form friendships slowly and often prefer depth to quantity in social

settings. Participants explained their residence life experiences and presented challenges

and highlights of living in community, including the pressure to participate in social

activities and the desire for depth in relationships in the residence hall setting. Each

participant became involved in a leadership role or extracurricular activity, learned

through both challenges and benefits of involvement, and could express a clear sense of

his or her style and identity leader based on leadership strengths and preferences.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Introduction

The present research focused on understanding the experiences of introverted

college students. The college setting, particularly residential college campuses, often

emphasizes social experiences and opportunities as important factors of student

development. The current study focused specifically on three key aspects of the college

experience: friendships, the residential environment, and involvement. With each highly

social aspect, the present research sought to understand how introversion might influence

the way a student engages with friendship, residence life, and involvement.

To accomplish this purpose, the researcher nine interviewed students who

provided reflection on their college experience. Themes from the literature shaped both

the interview protocol and themes from the research data: participants' description of

introversion, friendships, residence hall experience, and involvement and leadership.

Focusing on these four themes, the following sections connect findings from the literature

and the present study, provide implications for student affairs practice, explore further

research possibilities, and suggest some of the research limitations.

Defining Introversion: Participants' Experience of Introversion

Theories of introversion-extraversion define the personality trait as a spectrum

describing what creates and draws energy. Introverts focus energy internally, on

thoughts, ideas, and internal experiences (Jung et al., 1953; Laney, 2002; Myers & Myers, 2010). Because their energy focuses more on thoughts, they often have less energy for external stimuli, such as social interactions (Eysenck, 1970; Lieberman & Rosenthal, 2001).

The ways participants identified with the provided definition of introversion supported the spectrum nature of introversion-extraversion. Most participants disagreed with some aspect of the researcher's definition and related to other aspects to varying degrees. While most participants liked and felt recharged by solitude, many also enjoyed time with people. Heather, for example, said, "I don't think I always . . . get energy from being alone. I think there are other times where I do get energy from being with other people." As many of the participants' campus involvement indicated, introverts can and do choose to engage successfully in large group activities and social events; they might even seem loud or become the center of attention. For example, Larissa's involvement in residence life, admissions, and improvisational theatre often put her in the spotlight; despite some discomfort, she ultimately thrived as she facilitated floor activities, gave campus tours, or led improvisational scenes. Thus, participants experienced introversion on a spectrum, defined their introversion in different ways from one another, and often found success in settings that challenged aspects of their personalities.

The participants' experience of introversion also supported the differences between introversion and shyness. While shy people choose to withdraw from social settings because of fear or anxiety, introverts choose to withdraw because of energy levels and preference for time alone (Cheek & Buss, 1981). Eleanor and Heather, for example, both enjoyed spending time with friends and members of their residence hall

communities but regularly chose to spend time alone for reenergizing. Similar to the findings of Bowker and Raja (2010), the students in the present study chose to withdraw from social settings when they preferred solitude but did not experience the anxiety, loneliness, or low social capability characteristic of shyness.

While research often defines introverts in terms of what they lack (Bowker & Raja, 2010; Gudjonsson et al., 2004; Harrington & Loffredo, 2010; Lischetzke & Eid, 2006), the participants in the current study identified several advantages of introversion. Their internal focus yielded rich reflection from which they gained high levels of self-awareness and experienced personal growth. They seemed thoughtful in their words and able to engage easily in deep conversation. They felt comfortable working alone and able to focus for long periods of time on solitary tasks, such as schoolwork.

Though participants recognized advantages, they often felt challenged by the ways they seemed misunderstood. Participants encountered assumptions that something was wrong when they chose to spend time alone or that they did not want invitations to large, potentially uncomfortable group gatherings. Others might have thought their introverted peers did not have the "right college experience" because they did not always go out or spend all their time with friends. Not only did this create pressure to experience college in a certain way, it also formed how introverts in the study thought negatively of themselves. Because they felt pressured to constantly spend time with people, they thought time alone was selfish. Because social and academic performance often seems measured by verbal ability, introverts thought the quality of their communication did not match up to that of their extraverted peers. Misunderstanding, assumptions, and pressure represented some of the most significant challenges introverted students faced.

Introverts as Friends

Participants' friendship experiences in the college setting affirmed findings from previous research and provided some unprecedented results. Similar to what Nelson and Thorne (2012) described, introverts in the current study experienced the process of becoming friends gradually. They enjoyed time with friends close to home, usually in their residence halls, slowly welcomed outsiders, and provided steadiness, calm, peace, a listening ear, "quiet strength," and advice in friendships. In the context of friendships with other introverts, participants seemed mutually reinforced—they felt listened to and could enjoy shared interests with one another. In friendships with extraverts, introverts felt challenged to engage more with the social environment of college and spend more time with people. Friendships with extraverts prompted personal growth but could feel taxing when participants desired space with fewer people. Introverts and extraverts tended to accommodate one another mutually, as extraverts provided challenge and introverts provided stability and safe space. Extraverts and introverts became helpful friends for each other, offering challenge and support. These findings built on the study of Nelson et al. (2011) on personality differences in friendships between young adults.

Perhaps most significantly, every participant in this study communicated a deep value of relationships. Participants desired to invest in others and viewed friendships and community as one of the most important aspects of their college experience. They wanted to know people deeply and to see people brought together in community.

Introverts as Residents

Overall, introverted students seemed satisfied by their residence life experiences, identifying relationships and their experience of community as the biggest factor behind

their satisfaction. Residence hall activities helped in building relationships but could become uncomfortable. For example, Lucas's experience with floor traditions requiring spontaneity or being at the center of attention became uncomfortable at times but valuable in terms of his desire to participate in the close community on his floor. While he and other participants experienced the imbalanced levels of challenge and support that came with living in a highly social setting described by Rodger and Johnson (2005) and Schroeder and Jackson (1987), he did not experience any lack in sense of belonging. Although participants' residence hall communities emphasized social participation, they often were described as close-knit. Many participants found a close-knit living environment beneficial because it gave them the opportunity to develop friendships with just a few people close in proximity to them.

Introverts experienced roommate relationships differently, depending on the level of introversion or extraversion of their roommates. For the most part, mutually introverted roommates seemed good at giving each other space, while extraverted roommates could prove challenging. Introverts also struggled to confront or express discomfort with their roommates but often cited this challenge as a source of learning and growth. To most participants, the most important aspect of the roommate relationship was not introversion or extraversion but the depth of their relationship with their roommate. These findings add to the limited literature on the influence of introversion-extraversion on roommate relationships. While previous studies emphasize the impact of differences between introverts and extraverts' study and sleep habits (Schroeder & Jackson, 1987), the present findings add to those of Foubert et al. (1998), who described the importance of the roommate relationship for overall satisfaction in the residence hall.

Personality differences do impact the way roommates function, but perhaps the most important factor, at least for introverts, remains the degree to which roommates form meaningful friendships with one another.

Introverts as Student Leaders

The participants in the present study highly involved themselves in campus activities and leadership roles. Together, participants represented many different types of involvement: leading groups of students, interacting with campus visitors, and performing. These involvements required participants to adjust to new places, build close relationships, or plan events. No type of involvement seemed pursued by a majority of participants, but most chose to become involved because they valued relationships and community or to pursue an interest or learning.

Challenges of involvement included a requirement to spend a lot of time around people or to interact with people in ways beyond participants' comfort zone. Participants often pursued such challenges out of a desire for personal development. While this challenge did not prevent participants from becoming involved, it did provide participants with an awareness of their preference for small group or one-on-one interactions. Many of the roles participants found themselves in, such as orientation leader or resident assistant, required large group leadership, but many participants found ways to lead out of their strengths and preferences. Matt and Neil, for example, found purpose in large floor activities because of the initial connection they made with residents that allowed them to invest later in residents individually. The challenge of spending significant amounts of time with people also gave participants reason to find ways to recharge healthily, similar to what Krouse (2006) described in a study of the impact of resident

assistants' Myers-Briggs types on their leadership. The current findings also confirm the conclusion by Toma (2015) that introverted students found congruence less by changing personality and more by selecting environments suited to their preferences. As the results of the present research convey, introverted students selected environments suited to their personality, not necessarily altogether avoiding highly social leadership roles but instead finding space within their roles to operate out of their strengths and preferences.

While Shertzer and Schuh (2004) found that college students thought extraverts had an advantage in securing and succeeding in leadership positions, the participants of the present study had less constraining perceptions of their ability to lead. Introverts see themselves as leaders but may not see themselves as fitting the mold of college student leadership. They seem laidback and quiet and enjoy behind the scenes leadership. Participants differed in recognizing their approaches to leadership as strength or weakness. Sean, for example, expressed disappointment in himself for not being a "typical leader," while others more easily embraced their identities as "quiet leaders," finding ways to capitalize on their abilities to connect with people on an individual level. Some participants led out of their personalities by following. As leaders, when they allowed others to lead and chose to follow their peers, they could to empower their peers and bring out the best in others.

Implications for Practice

While the present research defines introversion as a preference for the inner world and the focus and derivation of energy from internal sources, one must recognize that an introvert does not always remain quiet, always process internally, or always prefer time alone. As the findings of the present study demonstrate, introversion-extraversion occurs

on a spectrum, and no participant identified with every aspect of introversion. This finding proves important for the higher educational setting. How students derive and focus their energy influences how they learn and live during college, but because all people possess some level of introversion and some level of extraversion, educators should adopt a balanced perspective. Structuring a residence hall, a student leadership group, or other learning environments based entirely on introverted preferences or entirely on extraverted preferences helps no one. Whatever the learning environment, educators and student affairs professionals should remain mindful of how personality impacts learning style, making space for students who learn or function best in solitude, for those who learn or function best with other people, and for introverts and extraverts to grow and learn in ways that might differ from what they prefer.

As the literature shows, and as participants in the study reinforced, introverts often feel misunderstood as shy or incapable or avoidant of interacting with people. A more full understanding of introversion-extraversion would help student affairs professionals support and challenge students in ways better suited to their personalities. For example, in working with an introverted student leader, an understanding of introversion could help student affairs professionals better empower that student to lead out of his or her strengths, with less pressure on an introvert to fit an extraverted mold of leadership. Just as Shertzer and Schuh (2004) recommend staff development opportunities for student affairs personnel to learn about different leadership perspectives, the findings of the current study merit staff development focused on how student leaders' personality traits inform appropriate methods of challenge and support. Development in this direction should also prioritize the importance of the language used

to describe introverts, paying close attention to avoid language that implies deficiency in the way introverts engage in community or leadership.

In this study, introverts felt satisfied by their residence hall experiences because of the opportunities to participate in a close-knit community. The difficulties participants faced as introverts in the residence hall included the challenge to find quiet space for solitude, as well as the pressure to participate in residence hall activities and to befriend everyone on the floor. They felt that others seemed disappointed when they chose not to participate. Resident directors and resident assistants should continue to provide opportunities conducive to the community-building preferences of both introverts and extraverts, making space for both relaxed, small group interactions like game nights in the hall or small group movie or book discussions, and for high energy, large group activities such as large group outings or initiation experiences. In structuring residence hall environments, practitioners should consider physical space and whether or not students have space to choose solitude.

Student affairs personnel must consider how personality impacts friendship formation and sense of belonging in the college setting. Colleges and universities often provide fast-paced programs for first-year students during their first week or weekend on campus, full of opportunities to meet and interact with other new students. While these programs may prove helpful for meeting people, they also often feel overwhelming and draining, especially for introverted students. If students who prefer introversion form relationships more gradually than extraverted students, providing ongoing opportunities proves crucial, especially for first-year students, to meet other students and build friendships. A knowledge of the friendship-building preferences of introverts and

extraverts should thus inform the practice of student affairs professionals, particularly those who work with first-year students.

In their study of college students' perceptions of leadership, Shertzer and Schuh (2004) suggested that "colleges and universities should spend time reflecting on how the environment helps to shape how their students perceive leadership" (p. 127). The findings of the current research provide reason to extend Shertzer and Schuh's suggestion. Colleges and universities should spend time reflecting on how campus culture shapes students' experiences in building friendships, living in residence halls, leading, and becoming involved. As many participants noted, the campus culture of the institution at which the present study took place favored extraversion. If student affairs professionals desire to make space for and develop students with all types of personalities, they must consider ways to create balanced environments in which both introverts and extraverts can thrive.

Limitations and Implications for Further Research

As one potential limitation, this study used in-person interviews. While introverts typically feel more comfortable in one-on-one settings than in group settings, some introverts feel even more comfortable expressing thoughts in writing. The use of essay questions in further research on the experiences of introverted students may yield more detailed or accurate responses. Another limitation of this study came with the researcher's familiarity with some of the participants. Because some participants knew the researcher from shared experiences, they may have felt more comfortable disclosing their thoughts and feelings with a familiar person or less comfortable disclosing judgments of experiences they shared with the researcher. A third limitation emerged in

the variety of Myers-Briggs instruments utilized by participants and their varying

understanding of their MBTI results. Participants came from four different student

groups that utilized three variations of the MBTI. The four different student groups

experienced varying interpretations of their MBTI results and thus had varying levels of

understanding of the definition of introversion. As a fourth limitation, the researcher

conducted the study at an institution heavily focused on leadership and community, and

every participant was involved in a leadership role. Institutional focus may have strongly

influenced participants' answers to questions about leadership and relationships.

Uninvolved introverts may experience college differently than introverts who have found

ways to engage successfully in leadership roles and other forms of involvement.

Because of its relatively unprecedented nature, the focus of this study remained

especially broad. Future studies could hone in on any specific aspect of the college

experience discussed in this study. For example, an entire study on the roommate

experiences of introverted students or on the leadership experiences of introverted

resident assistants could yield results that would continue to inform the practice of

resident directors. Further research could also compare the experiences of introverted

students with those of extraverted students to understand more specifically the unique

features of how introverted students experience college. Much literature related to

introversion explores how introverted students experience the academic setting in

primary school, but few studies focus particularly on the university setting, which, like

other academic settings, has often become dominated by group work and discussion.

Future research should explore how introversion impacts the way students experience

university classrooms as a way to develop a more balanced approach to educating both

introverts and extraverts. Finally, many participants connected their introversion to identity development and spiritual development. Future studies could explore how introversion-extraversion influences spiritual development and various aspects of identity development, such as racial or gender identity.

Conclusion

The impact of personality on college students' experiences proves largely underexplored. The present research sought to explore the experiences of introverted students on a residential college campus, particularly with regard to friendships, residence life, and involvement. With a desire to provide living and learning opportunities balanced for the preferences of all personality types, the results of this study provide informed ways for educators to challenge and support introverted students appropriately in settings known to favor extraversion. Introverted students identified as introverts in varying ways and thus experienced friendships, residence halls, and involvement in varying ways; however, they shared common motivations, hopes, and challenges. They experienced unique pressure and challenges but also enjoyed many aspects of their experiences, learned about themselves, and deeply valued participating in the community they found in college. In short, introverted students could to grow into their own authentic selfhood, discovering and living, learning, and leading out of a truer sense of their limits and potentials (Palmer, 2000). The findings of this study encourage anyone working with college students to continue to seek understanding of how personality impacts students' experiences and how they as practitioners might foster students' growth into authentic selfhood.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent

TAYLOR UNIVERSITY INFORMED CONSENT

The Experience of Introverted Students on a Residential College Campus
You are invited to participate in a research study exploring the experience of introverted college students. You were selected as a possible subject because you have taken the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and scored in the introvert range, and because you are a junior or senior with two or more years of college experience upon which to reflect. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. The study is being conducted by Erica Gleason, Master of the Arts in Higher Education and Student Development 2016 candidate.

STUDY PURPOSE:
The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the experiences of introverted college students on a residential campus.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
If you agree to participate, you will be one of ten subjects who will be participating in this research.

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:
If you agree to be in the study, you will do the following things:
1. Participate in a 1-on-1 interview, lasting approximately 45 minutes.
2. Agree to be quoted and/or have your experiences referenced in the results of the researcher's study.
3. The study will take place throughout the Fall 2015 semester, but your participation will simply consist of your interview and a follow up email to make sure the themes developed from the research accurately reflect your experience.

RISKS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
While on the study, the risks of completing the interview include possible emotional risk associated with recalling parts of the college experience.

BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
Direct benefits are unknown.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the study

may be published. Transcripts and recordings will be stored in a password-protected computer. Tape recordings of interviews will only be made accessible to the researcher and will not be used for any other purposes.

Organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis include groups such as the study investigator and his/her research associates, the Taylor University Institutional Review Board or its designees, and (as allowed by law) state or federal agencies, specifically the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) etc., who may need to access your research records.

PAYMENT
You will not receive payment for taking part in this study.

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS
For questions about the study, contact the researcher or faculty advisor:
Researcher:
Erica Gleason
erica_gleason@taylor.edu
 (209) 769-6810

Faculty Advisor:
Dr. Drew Moser
drmoser@taylor.edu
(765) 998-5384

Inquiries regarding the nature of the research, your rights as a subject, or any other aspect of the research as it relates to your participation as a subject can be directed to Taylor University's Institutional Review Board at IRB@taylor.edu or the Chair of the IRB, Susan Gavin at (765) 998-5188 or ssgavin@taylor.edu.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF STUDY
Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. You decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with Taylor University.

SUBJECT'S CONSENT
In consideration of all of the above, I give my consent to participate in this research study. I will be given a copy of this informed consent document to keep for my records. I agree to take part in this study.
Subject's Printed Name: _____

Subject's Signature: _____   **Date:** _____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____   **Date:** _____

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Definition of Introversion:

Introverts focus energy and derive energy from internal sources rather than external sources (Jung et al., 1953; Laney, 2002; Myers & Myers, 2010). They are "oriented primarily toward the inner world; thus they tend to focus their energy on concepts, ideas, and internal experiences" (p. 6).

Introverts prefer intimate friendships and depth in conversation (Cain, 2012; Laney, 2002; Nelson et al., 2011). They prefer "richness" to "muchness" (Laney, 2002, p. 24). They prefer listening to talking, often express themselves better in writing, and think deeply before they talk or act (Cain, 2012; DiTiberio & Hammer, 1993; Helgoe, 2008; Quenk, 2009). Because of their devotion of energy to "the inner world of ideas, reflection, and internal experiences" (Quenk, 2009, p. 8), introverts are energized by time spent alone. Other words frequently used to describe introverts include reserved, cautious, focused, quiet, and reflective (Cain, 2012; Cheek & Buss, 1981; Gudjonsson, Sigurdsson, Bragason, Einarsson, & Valdimarsdottir, 2004; Pannapacker, 2012).

1. How do you personally connect with the provided definition of introversion?
    a. How have these qualities influenced your time in college?
2. Describe your overall college experience. What have been some of the challenging and shaping aspects of your experience and why?
3. Where have you lived on campus? Describe the environment of each of the places you lived.
    a. What was the physical arrangement of your floor (traditional or suite style)?
    b. What was the community like on your floor?
    c. What did you like and not like about living there?

      d. What were some of your perceived expectations of members of your living community?

      e. What were some of the traditions and regular events or activities of your floor?

      f. Describe your roommate relationship(s). How were you similar or different from your roommate(s) and how did that impact your experience living with them?

      g. How did you feel challenged and supported in your living environment?

      h. Overall, do you feel satisfied by the experiences you had within residence life? Why or why not?

4. Tell me about some of the closest friendships you have formed during college.

      a. How many close friends do you have here at college?

      b. How did you become friends? Describe the process.

      c. What do you like to do with your closest friends? Where do you like to spend time?

      d. How would you describe your role in some of your closest friendships? (i.e. Do you listen or talk more? Do you give or receive advice more?)

      e. How would you describe the role friendships have played in your college experience? What have they you learned from your college friendships and how have they shaped and challenged you?

5. Describe your role in co-curricular or extracurricular activities during college.

      a. What have you been involved in, when, and for how long?

      b. What have been the benefits and challenges of your involvement?

      c. In the ways you have been involved, do you see yourself as a leader?

          i. If so, how? What leadership qualities do you see in yourself?

         ii. If not, why?

      d. How does your personality influence your involvement and/or leadership?