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CHALLENGING MALE STEREOTYPES:
Male Student Engagement in a Co-Curricular, Interdisciplinary Program

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CHALLENGING MALE STEREOTYPES:
Male Student Engagement in a Co-Curricular, Interdisciplinary Program

BY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my boys, Robert and Anderson.

To my husband, partner in life, and best friend, Robert:

Through this long, sometimes frustrating journey, you were always there with your support, love, patience, and willingness to occupy Anderson on many, many nights and weekends so that I could work. Our lives have changed and grown in so many ways during this whole experience, and I look forward to more adventures.

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CHALLENGING MALE STEREOTYPES:
Male Student Engagement in a Co-Curricular, Interdisciplinary Program

Lauren Christine Campbell, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2014

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The gender gap in American college attendance has grown over four decades (see for example, Sax, 2008). The National Center for Educational Statistics noted that women received 57 percent of all bachelor's degrees conferred in 2009-2010. Furthermore, women engage in college opportunities inside and outside the classroom at greater rates than men. Engagement opportunities connect students to their college environment, support student learning, and contribute to student persistence (see for example, Astin, 1993). However, little research is available that focuses on which specific co-curricular opportunities men and women choose and any gender differences in engagement that exist within those programs (Sax, 2008).

Many colleges offer interdisciplinary programs as a co-curricular student engagement option. Interdisciplinary studies allow students to study broad topics from many disciplinary perspectives and synthesize the various methods and theories for an often better understanding of the topic at hand (Newell, 1992). However, there is a paucity of research regarding gender differences in students who choose to pursue interdisciplinary programs.

The purpose of the study was to investigate why male students choose or choose

not to get involved in a specific interdisciplinary program at a large research institution in the southwestern United States. Moreover, the study examined the perceptions of administrators regarding male student involvement and their strategies to recruit male students.

The study design was qualitative, and interviews of students and program administrators were the primary data source. The researcher employed two conceptual frameworks in the study: Terenzini and Reason's (2005) college experience model and Harris' (2010) model of the meanings college men make of masculinities.

Key findings of the study indicated that there was a gender imbalance in student engagement in the interdisciplinary program. Furthermore, male students interested in the interdisciplinary program eschewed masculine norms both in their co-curricular pursuits and their academic interests.

The study contributes to the field of student affairs by focusing on a research gap in male student engagement in interdisciplinary programs. By examining engagement experiences through the lens of male gender identity, the study provides rich data and offers strategies to student affairs practitioners.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that there is a growing gender gap in college enrollment, and women have outpaced men in college attendance for nearly four decades (Ewert, 2012; Flashman, 2013; Kinzie, Gonyea, Kuh, Umbach, Blaich, & Korkmaz, 2007; Pryor, Hurtado, Sáenz, Santos, & Korn, 2006; Sax, 2008; Sax & Harper, 2007). Moreover, the rate of college completion for women continues to rise, and the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) noted that women received 57 percent of all bachelor's degrees conferred in 2009-2010 (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The NCES also reported that this enrollment gap is evident in graduate school attendance where women received nearly 63 percent of master's degrees and 53 percent of doctorates during the 2009-2010 school year.

In the October 2012 issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education,* the gender gap in college student engagement received attention in the paper's special Gender Issue. Sander noted that women and men engage in college in different ways, and women tend to do so at greater rates than men and through many different curricular and co-curricular avenues, including study abroad, volunteering, and longer hours studying for their classes. Student engagement, both inside and outside the classroom, connects students to peers, faculty, student affairs administrators, and the broader institutional culture, and positive connections and engagement experiences have a positive impact on student persistence and success (see for example, Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993). However, beyond data regarding academic engagement in the classroom and evidence of a gender gap in studying abroad, little empirical research is available that focuses on which specific co-

curricular opportunities men and women choose and any gender differences in engagement that exist within those programs (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2010; Sax, 2008).

Like study abroad programs, internship opportunities for academic credit, and student research initiatives, interdisciplinary programs offer one avenue of co-curricular engagement for students on many college campuses. According to Augsberg and Henry (2009), interdisciplinary studies appear in different forms, from single seminar classes covering a broad topic, to full, four-year interdisciplinary degree programs. Repko (2012) defined interdisciplinary studies as:

> A process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline, and draws on the disciplines with the goal of integrating their insights to construct a more comprehensive understanding. (p. 16)

In the last few decades, several national organizations have called for American universities to increase their interdisciplinary offerings for undergraduate students to allow more emphasis on integrated learning. In 1998, the Boyer Commission sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation published a report calling for research universities to adopt interdisciplinary learning throughout undergraduate curriculum. The report authors noted, "As research is increasingly interdisciplinary, undergraduate education should also be cast in interdisciplinary formats" (*Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint,* 1998, p. 23). Furthermore, in 2007 the National Institutes of Health created and funded nine interdisciplinary research consortia in biomedicine "as a means of integrating aspects of different disciplines to address health challenges that have been resistant to traditional research approaches" (*NIH Launches Interdisciplinary Research,* 2007).

Newell and Green (1982) examined the benefits of interdisciplinary studies and noted that studying real world topics from an interdisciplinary perspective provided broader insight than studying a subject from a single disciplinary perspective. The skills learned through an interdisciplinary approach include deductive reasoning, synthesis, critical thinking, and creativity (Astin, 1991; Newell & Green, 1982). Furthermore, Newell and Green (1982) asserted that interdisciplinary students graduate having learned a variety of skills and developed characteristics, including openness to new ideas and tolerance for ambiguity. Lastly, Astin (1993) found that interdisciplinary courses had both a positive effect on a student's satisfaction with the college environment and a positive effect on student cognitive and affective development, which could lead to greater levels of engagement and ultimately academic success. Involvement in interdisciplinary programs is an area of student engagement that has not been examined for possible gender gaps and the effects of a gender imbalance in involvement.

The current study investigated the engagement of male college students in an interdisciplinary, co-curricular college program at a large research university in the southwestern United States. I examined how interdisciplinary and other program administrators perceived male student engagement. Furthermore, I investigated their thoughts on how to recruit male students when was a gender imbalance in the co-curricular program. Finally, I examined why male students choose to or not to get involved in the interdisciplinary program, including, what conflicts, if any, arose based on their notions of masculinity and how those notions fit with their co-curricular choices. The specific interdisciplinary program that was the focus of the study is open to all

undergraduates; thus, it provided a unique, accessible site in which to study involvement decisions.

This introductory chapter provides an overview of the research for the study, including the background of young male educational achievement and what this may mean for their involvement in college. The problem statement and research questions offer a framework for the research. Finally, the method, assumptions and limitations of the study are summarized in the final sections of the chapter.

BACKGROUND CONTEXT

Before addressing the engagement patterns of male students in college, it is valuable to examine the school environment for boys and the developmental and educational issues that may arise as boys mature into college-aged males. According to the 2010 United States Census, an equal number of five to six year old boys and girls were enrolled in primary schools in America ("United States Census Bureau," 2011). NCES reported that from 1980-2011, there was a marked increase in rates of high school graduation of students of all races and ethnicities (NCES, 2012). However, when achievement by gender was examined, where there once was no statistical difference in the rates of male and female high school graduation in 1980, the most recent data indicate females are now three percentage points ahead of their male counterparts in earning a high school diploma. While this gap is not vast, when the rates of college enrollment are examined as a natural next step after high school graduation, the data indicate a widening gender gap.

The American Council on Education reported that from 1990-2009, female college enrollment increased from 32 to 46 percent, a 14 percent rise, whereas male college enrolment only increased from 32 to 37 percent. Boys show a greater propensity towards enlisting in the military, which accounts for some differences in college enrollment (Jacob, 2002). Moreover, as Bailey and Whitmire (2010) noted, military service is often appealing for its pathway to higher education; thus, it is possible that some young men who have forgone higher education in the short-term may ultimately seek out college through their military benefits.

Concerns about boys in school

The gender gap in high school graduation, and more notably, the increased rate of college attendance and graduation among women has warranted attention by both academic researchers and popular culture writers beginning in earnest in the early 1990s (Anderson & Accomando, 2002; Capraro, 2000, 2004; Gurian, 2001; Hoff Sommers, 2000; Kimmel, 2008, 2010; Weaver-Hightower, 2003). These authors and researchers were focused on determining the causes of gender imbalances in American schools, and offered opinions, some rooted in empirical research, some rooted in assumption, about why boys are not performing as well academically as girls and how to reverse this widening gap in educational attainment.

In 2006, *Newsweek* published an article about the underperformance of boys in American schools. The reporter profiled boys who were talented in many subjects and social areas but, as they progressed in their studies, had an increasingly difficult time conforming to the structure and expectations of school. Some aspects of learning

differences between boys and girls were attributed to biology, but other imbalances were pinned on both family environments where male role models may be scarce and the increasing absence of male-oriented learning conditions in schools. “Scientists caution that brain research doesn't tell the whole story: temperament, family background and environment play big roles, too. Some boys are every bit as organized and assertive as the highest-achieving girls. All kids can be scarred by violence, alcohol or drugs in the family” (Tyre, 2006). Finally, the article concluded by noting the struggle boys are having as they enter high school and the impact their academic difficulties ultimately have in their ability to be admitted to college.

Hoff Sommers (2000) garnered national attention with the publication of her book, *The War Against Boys: How Misguided Feminism is Harming Our Young Men*. The first line in the text pointedly states, “It's a bad time to be a boy in America” (p. 13). She described the war on young male students as one propagated by academics and writers who promote a feminist educational agenda to better serve girls, including Carol Gilligan and the American Association of University Women. Hoff Sommers criticized the educational system as one that has sacrificed a pedagogy of discipline, competition, and structure that once allowed boys to thrive to one that caters to girls’ learning styles by eliminating competitive grading and infusing collaborative learning. She argued, “Inevitably boys are resented, being seen both as the unfairly privileged gender and as obstacles on the path to gender justice for girls” (p. 23). Hoff Sommers concluded her book by assailing American society as a collective group that has forsaken boys in order

to build up the self-esteem and achievement of girls. In a concluding paragraph, she wrote, "An unacknowledged animus against boys is loose in our society" (p. 211).

In response to Hoff Sommers (2000) and others who continue to publish controversial research and information promulgating the idea of a war against boys, several sociologists, including Anderson and Accomando (2002), Kimmel (2008, 2010), and Weaver-Hightower (2003) have responded with pointed criticism of the popular war metaphors being used and their own research concerning male student achievement. Anderson and Accomando (2002) noted that writers like Hoff Sommers made unsuccessful arguments in part because they neglected to delineate differences in male achievement by race, ethnicity, class, or other demographics important to discussions of educational disparities:

> These authors ultimately fail to examine the privilege and power in forming gender identity. In short, these authors advance decontextualized arguments without meaningful discussion of powerful inequalities, class, race, sexuality or other factors that necessarily form the basis of the social construction and intellectual analysis of gender. (pg. 492-493)

Moreover, Anderson and Accomando (2002) critiqued data from Hoff Sommers and others by pointing out that girls perform better in school in areas like reading and writing and boys tend to score better in math and science; thus, they argued, educational differences by area are as not concerning. Anderson and Accomando noted that achievements in math and science often translate to better paying jobs in science and technology for male students. Hence, while both sexes seem to score higher in different achievement areas, ultimately once men enter the workforce, their math and science skills

allow them to pursue careers in areas that offer greater compensation than the fields often deemed as women's work, like healthcare and education.

Boyhood and masculine identity

Kimmel (2008, 2010) offered a different theory as to why boys are not succeeding in schools at the same rate as girls. He refuted Hoff Sommers and other "pop psychologists" who wrote about a boy crisis caused by feminism and the desire to place female educational goals above those of males. While Kimmel contested their evidence of a "feminization" of the American educational system, he acknowledged several areas of concern over the decline in achievement of male students. Kimmel explained that boys are not falling behind in certain academic areas "because of feminist efforts to improve the lives of girls, nor even because testosterone inhibits the memorization of French syntax. It's about an ideology of masculinity" (2008, p. 96). Masculine norms are learned early and have a negative impact on the ways in which boys approach their educational environments.

Furthermore, Levant (2004) wrote, "From their earliest development, boys must confront emotionality. Although boys start out more emotionally expressive than girls, they wind up much less due to their socialization by parents and peers" (p. 101). He argued that this squelching of emotions that express vulnerability, care, and connection by boys leaves anger and aggression as the more prominent and socially accepted emotions for young males. According to the research, this translates to young men needing more structure and more competitive play in school and feeling pressure to be tougher in peer interactions and conform to the emerging masculine role.

Kimmel (2008) explained that boys are not succeeding in the school system and in higher education because they are attempting to live up to a socially imposed definition of what it means to be a man in America. Through his research on male identity development, Kimmel suggested that the social structures and implications of a strict masculine ideal causes boys to inhibit their emotions, exhibit risk-taking behavior, and fear doing anything that may get them labeled as homosexual. Moreover, this conformity does not allow boys to live up to their potential in school as they struggle with adhering to a rigid definition of masculinity for fear of rejection by their peers, both in the classroom and on the playground. Consequently, Kimmel (2008) described serious concerns over the state of American boys academically and socially as compared to girls:

> Boys drop out of school, are diagnosed as emotionally disturbed, and commit suicide four times more often than girls; they get into fights twice as often; they murder ten times more frequently and are fifteen times more likely to be the victims of a violent crime. Boys are six times more likely to be diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder. Boys get lower grades on standardized tests of reading and writing, and have a lower class rank and fewer honors than girls (p. 93).

He noted that boys, sometimes in an effort to live up to family expectations, over-assert their academic abilities and often languish in math and science simply because they are unrealistic about their competence and they are trying to conform to the idea that boys must pursue the technical fields. While many boys may find a better academic fit in the arts and humanities, Kimmel suggested that they do not pursue classes in English, foreign languages, and others for fear that these academic pursuits do not fit within the narrow confines of the definition of masculinity which includes the concern over being labeled as gay.

In adolescence, boys traverse through what is often described as a momentous period of physical and social change where they find gender roles becoming more defined, and they often struggle in familial and peer relationships to discover their own place within the confines of masculinities (Chu, 2004). Chu argued that adolescent males should not be viewed nor should they view themselves as victims of gender assumptions.

> Evidence suggests that individual boys are able to play a mediating role, for instance, through their capacity to resist as well as internalize pressures to accommodate masculine norms through their ability to make meaning of, and give significance to, their experiences of gender socialization. (p. 5)

Therefore, McGee Bailey and Whitmire (2010) put the onus on gendered assumptions of learning by both the school system and parents for not preparing boys to succeed academically at a young age and for only teaching subjects like literature during select school years. They compared these gendered assumptions to those placed on girls pursing math and science. "It's a 'girl thing' to read; real boys don't sit around with a book. Parenting practices contribute to this; from an early age mothers read more to their children than do fathers." (p. 52). McGee Bailey and Whitmire also noted that:

> Girls arrive in kindergarten far more ready than boys to engage the verbal-rich curriculum that awaits them. By the end of elementary school, the gaps become significant, and in middle school they widen, in part because many schools don't teach literacy skills after 6th grade, only 'literature.' In 9th grade, where poorly prepared boys first encounter the full force of the college-readiness curriculum, you can see a pileup, or bulge, as 9th-grade classes are far larger than 8th-grade classes, the result of students being retained before entering 10th grade.

Jacob (2002) offered that it is not cognitive deficiencies causing the gender gap in schooling; instead he said it is the male students' weaker "non-cognitive skills" that contribute to their learning issues, including "the inability to pay attention in class, to work with others, to organize and keep track of homework or class materials and to seek

help from others" (p. 590). Furthermore, in a 1998 *New York Times* article on the growing educational gender gap, Lewin suggested that girls may simply be better at tolerating boredom than boys, so they can persevere through high school at greater rates, and are more prepared for the academic environment of college.

Weaver-Hightower (2003) also refuted Hoff Sommers' (2000) assertion of the feminization of education, and he offered that the learning styles of all children, inclusive of racial, ethnic, and other differences should be taken into account in the creation of curricula:

> Careful thought should also be given to constructing curriculum and materials that simultaneously meet the needs of girls and of children of different races, religions, sexualities, and other subjectivities. Such an approach would include making masculinity a subject in the curriculum, so that students could deconstruct and interrogate it as a way to accomplish goals of social justice (p. 489).

The work of Kimmel (2008, 2010), Levant (2004) and others connected to the current study as it provided insight into young males and their experiences during their early school years. The research offered theories concerning the childhood origins of masculine identity and descriptions pre-college gender norms, which are noted in several studies of male college student development. The gendered norms, to be described in detail in chapter two, affect male college student identity and the decisions men make about student engagement so as to conform to the norms learned in boyhood (Davis, 2002; Davis & Laker, 2004; Edwards & Jones, 2009; Kimmel, 2000, 2010).

Boys in high school and college

High school is often a turning point in the lives of boys and the way they see themselves in context to their male peers. During this time in development, there is an

increased desire to conform to a specific role and not veer outside of the prescribed ideal. According to Kimmel (2010), for male students high school is:

> A moment of intense insecurity coupled with an equally intense injunction to prove one's self and to establish one's place in the hierarchy. Guys are vulnerable, they're impressionable, and most of them are searching for a way to be that will leave them feeling in control. It's a massive identity project, one that will take each of them a lifetime to complete. (p. 71)

In his 2010 book, *Guyland*, Kimmel expanded his research on young male identity development to include data on what he deemed to be a world of "guys" from late-high school teens to post-college men who have not matured much beyond their college years. This racially diverse world, mostly inhabited by men of some economic privilege, includes a "guy code," which Kimmel defined as "the collection of attitudes, values, and traits that together composes what it means to be a man" (p. 45). According to Kimmel, traits of masculinity within the guy code included: (a) not being seen as weak, effeminate or gay; (b) striving to acquire more wealth, power and status; (c) possessing the need to be a rock, a pillar, and reliable in a crisis; and, (d) desiring to live on the edge, take risks, and just go for it.

Kimmel noted that while in college, this need to conform to a specific masculine role necessitated that "guys" adhered to certain activities, including attending social activities and parties usually to the detriment of academics. "In college, they party hard but are soft on studying. They slip through the academic cracks, another face in a large lecture hall, getting by with little effort and less commitment" (Kimmel, 2010, p. 3). The author noted that not all men live in *Guyland*, but for those that do, high school, college, and the years beyond, require a balance of masculine conformity and, often, a mediocre

effort at achievement in education. The description of Kimmel's research on high school and college males provides insight into the ways in which young males are concerned about conforming to specific roles and how this affects their decisions about their social and academic pursuits in college.

The above background information on boys and young males in schools is meant to offer context about the current educational climate for male students as they enter college and pursue degrees. Research on masculinities indicates that boys and men feel pressure to conform to specific roles provides evidence as to why young males may inhibit their emotions and pursue a narrow path of activities and academic interests so as to not veer too far from the socially-accepted norm.

Male college student enrollment

The United States Census Bureau's *2012 Statistical Abstract* reported a 2010 projection of college admissions for all higher education institution types. The data indicate that of the 20.5 million American students enrolled in college, 57 percent are female and 43 percent are male. Male students are not attending college at the same rate as female students, and this gap has increased for four decades (Ewert, 2012; Flashman, 2013; Kinzie et al., 2007; Pryor et al., 2006; Sax, 2008; Sax & Harper, 2007).

The gender gap in college attendance translates to a gender gap in student engagement on college campuses (see for example, Sax, 2008). Male students are not as involved as their female peers in many academic opportunities that enduring research by Astin (1993), Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), and Tinto (1993), among many others, has proven to be beneficial to student learning and, ultimately to student persistence (Sax,

2008). Sax and Harper (2007) and Sax (2008) reported that male students have higher rates of academic self-confidence than their female peers despite earning lower grades in college.

Furthermore, in Sax's (2008) comprehensive study of the gender gap in college attendance and engagement patterns, she noted important differences in the ways male and female students spend leisure time, with men spending many more hours on leisure activities like playing video games. Male college students also focused more on sports and exercise than women, although her research indicated that these activities resulted in higher grades for women and lower grades for men.

Moreover, Sax (2008) reported gender differences in other areas of college that may translate to gaps in student engagement, including a commitment to social activism, the desire to influence social values, the desire influence the political structure, and willingness to engage in community action; women reported at greater rates in all of the listed areas. Her research offers support for gender differences in involvement in the interdisciplinary program that is the focus of the study because the program offers socially conscious topics of study that may appeal to females more. This research suggested that because male college students are more academically confident they may feel they do not need to engage as heavily as their female colleagues in co-curricular activities to enhance their academic experiences and credentials.

The aim of the current study was to add to the body of research concerning male student engagement in college. The study focused on an interdisciplinary, co-curricular program and examined the perceptions of administrators regarding male engagement.

Furthermore, I investigated why male students chose to or not to be involved in the interdisciplinary program, and whether notions of gender conflict influenced their engagement decisions.

The following sections offer a description of the purpose and significance of the study, as well as an overview of the method utilized by the researcher.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

While research has focused on some aspects of gender gaps in college student engagement, primarily in study abroad programs and academic initiatives like tutoring and supplemental instruction, modest empirical research is available regarding exactly which co-curricular opportunities men and women choose and any gender gaps that exist within those programs (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Salisbury et al., 2010; Sax, 2008).

Many colleges offer interdisciplinary studies programs as a co-curricular student engagement option. Interdisciplinary studies allow students to study broad topics from many disciplinary perspectives and synthesize the various methods and theories for an often better understanding of the topic at hand (Newell, 1992). Furthermore, most interdisciplinary programs offer practical application of this knowledge beyond the classroom through research and internship opportunities.

The current study adds to the body of literature regarding male engagement in co-curricular programs, specifically interdisciplinary programs. Because engagement opportunities like interdisciplinary programs benefit student learning (see for example, Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), there was a need to examine gender

disparities that may exist in student participation in these worthwhile programs; thus the study expanded on this research.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study examined the engagement of male college students in an interdisciplinary, co-curricular college program at a large research university in the southwestern United States. The university reported a total of 39,955 undergraduate students in fall 2012. Of this total, 20,543 were females and 19,412 were males (Office of Information Management and Analysis, 2012). The university conferred 8,860 bachelor's degrees between fall 2011 and summer 2012. Of these degree recipients, 4,695 were women and 4,165 were men. The university is the largest in the state, and it comprised a diverse student body in terms of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status from which the sample was drawn.

The specific interdisciplinary program that was the focus of the study is open to all undergraduates; thus, it provided a unique, accessible site in which to study involvement decisions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study answered the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of student affairs administrators regarding male student engagement in co-curricular programs, and what strategies do they use to reach out to male students to get them more involved?

2. Why are male students choosing or not choosing to be involved in the opportunity to pursue an interdisciplinary program?

    a. What conflicts, if any, are arising based on their notions of masculinity and how those notions fit with "co-curricular" choices?

In order to answer these research questions, I used two conceptual frameworks that, when combined, offered a multi-pronged approach to examine the study's research questions. The first framework was Terenzini and Reason's (2005) model of college student experience, which helped represent the complexities of college experiences for male students in the study. The second framework I employed was Harris' (2010) conceptual model of the meanings college men make of masculinities. This framework provided a model of the decisions male students make about college involvement based on their background, concept of, and any internal conflicts with masculinity and traditional masculine ideals. A more detailed description of these frameworks is provided in chapter two.

The study was qualitative and interpretivist in its methodology. The primary reasons for utilizing this method included the adaptability that it allowed for both the multiple realities of the participants to be expressed and for inductive data analysis to recognize and account for those realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Semi-structured interviews were the primary source of data for the study. Some demographic information was retrieved from the interdisciplinary program database, and interview subjects were asked demographic questions.

Students were drawn from a database of those who attended a regularly offered information session about the interdisciplinary program and asked to participate in an interview. A second round of student recruitment was necessary after the initial participant recruitment did not yield a large enough sample. I contacted and recruited the second round of students through the program's information session database.

Administrators were selected for interviews based on their experience with the students and their ability to provide a unique perspective.

Further detail regarding the method and research design will be provided in chapter three.

SIGNIFICANCE

Through this study, I gained a greater understanding of the gender differences in student engagement and how student affairs administrators perceive male student involvement in their co-curricular programs.

While the effects of student engagement have been studied for several decades (see for example, Astin, 1993; Kuh et al., 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993), only a few studies have focused on gender differences in specific college student co-curricular engagement opportunities such as study abroad, and none have examined interdisciplinary programs specifically (Kinzie et al., 2007; Salisbury et al., 2010; Sax, 2008; Sax & Harper, 2007). Interdisciplinary curriculum, whether as a single class or a complete academic major, offers students the opportunity to gain broader insight into real world topics by studying them from multiple, integrated perspectives rather than a single disciplinary perspective (Newell & Green, 1982).

The study explored gender differences in a specific interdisciplinary program at a large research institution. Data analysis responding to the posed research questions offered insights into what gender distinctions exist and why male students were choosing to engage or not engage in the program. I expected that there would be gender differences in the engagement level of students in the interdisciplinary program. Moreover, I

believed, based on the research regarding male college student identity development by Davis (2002), Edwards and Jones (2009), and Harris (2010) among others, that the male students who chose not to pursue the program would cite other involvement opportunities that offered more male peer connections and more readily fit within prescribed masculine norms.

I employed Terenzini and Reason's (2005) conceptual model of college student experience and Harris' (2010) model of the meanings college men make of masculinities to examine male college student engagement and rationales for choosing to or choosing not to become involved in the specific interdisciplinary program.

An additional aim of the study was to add to the body of student affairs practitioner knowledge. I offered strategies for practitioners of similar programs to better understand why male students may make specific engagement decisions based on the desire to both conform to masculine norms and seek male peer bonding opportunities (Davis, 2002; Edwards & Jones, 2009; Harris, 2010). Finally, by examining the experiences of program administrators, the study added to the body of research that offers insight into gender differences in engagement and suggested ways administrators can recruit and retain male students in programs with gender disparities (Davis, 2002; Davis & Laker, 2004; Edwards & Jones, 2009; Harris, 2010; Paciej, 2010).

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The current study focused on male students who attended an information session about the interdisciplinary program. This study did not follow the students through to the completion of their interdisciplinary certificate upon graduation. The study only

examined student decisions regarding their choice to apply to the program and their experiences with student engagement opportunities outside of the interdisciplinary program. In addition, I only interviewed interdisciplinary program administrators and two outside administrators for their perspectives on the topic.

ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

There were a few assumptions to consider about the study. One assumption was that the students who attended an information session about the interdisciplinary programs were there for similar reasons and of their own volition.

A second assumption was that the students who chose to attend an information session about the interdisciplinary program did so because they had some previous knowledge of interdisciplinary studies and the potential benefits of pursing the program. Information sessions were advertised to students in various ways, including in their freshmen orientation brochures, during class visits by program staff, and through faculty and academic advisor interactions where the person may have referred a student to an information session based on his interest in the program topics. Thus, the experiences of students who were unaware of the program were not expressed in the study.

Furthermore, a third assumption was that student engagement was beneficial to student learning, as the body of engagement research supports (see for example, Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Engagement theories noted the value in students participating in co-curricular opportunities while in college as these experiences supported student learning and persistence.

The final assumption was that male students might experience internal conflict with respect to their masculinity or gender identity (O'Neil et al., 1986; Davis, 2002; Davis & Laker, 2004; Edwards & Jones, 2009; Harris, 2010). Based on previous research, I assumed that many male students would experience some conflict with the gender identity concerning conforming to social roles and masculine norms.

There were several limitations to the study. One limitation was that it did not track students who joined the program until the completion of their interdisciplinary certificate upon graduation. Thus, it only focused on those who choose to apply to the program and those who do not and their reasons for doing so. It was possible that students would not choose to follow through with completing the program either because they change their minds or because their grades did not meet the minimum requirement for graduation with the certificate. Interviews of participants were conducted, thus it was assumed that the student perceptions of their engagement experiences were accurate.

Finally, this study was dependent on the researcher as the instrument, thus researcher bias was a concern (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I was once employed by the interdisciplinary program which allowed me to have unique insights and knowledge of the program; however, I was no longer employed by the program at the time of the study, and I was not familiar with the group of students who attended the information sessions and applied to the program. I address aspects of positionality and challenges to me as the researcher in chapter five.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of the study, the following terms are defined:

Co-curricular – activities connected to learning in college both inside and outside the classroom. Activities inside the classroom are meant to support student learning and comprehension of course material. Activities outside the classroom include student organizations, service learning, and leadership opportunities, and are intended to provide additional reinforcement of broad college learning objectives although they may be offered as separate from the classroom (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). For the study, co-curricular refers primarily to the interdisciplinary program that is the focus of the study. The program design includes inside the classroom and outside the classroom involvement opportunities. Moreover, the program itself was not a requirement for graduation, thus students pursued the program on a voluntary basis.

Gender gap – "the discrepancy in opportunities, status, attitudes, etc., between men and women" ("Definition of Gender Gap in English," 2013). In the study, this term refers specifically to the gender gap in the educational system and in institutions of higher education.

Interdisciplinary studies – "a process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline, and draws on the disciplines with the goal of integrating their insights to construct a more comprehensive understanding" (Repko, 2012, p. 16). In contrast to interdisciplinary, the concept of "multidisciplinarity refers to the placing side-by-side of insights from two or more disciplines."

Masculinities - "the social roles, behavior, and meanings prescribed for men in any given society at any one time. As such, the term emphasizes gender, no biological sex, and the diversity of identities among different groups of men" (Kimmel, 2004, p. 503).

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter one offered background information regarding male students in the education system and provided an overview of the study. In order to give context for the study, chapter two will review literature germane to the study and describe the conceptual frameworks employed in the research design. Chapter three will outline the research method and design utilized in the study. Chapter four will detail the findings of the study organized around seven themes developed through data analysis and synthesis. Lastly, chapter five provides a discussion of the primary findings, implications for research and practice, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The study examined the engagement of male college students in an interdisciplinary, co-curricular college program. The following chapter will review existing literature that pertained to male student engagement and the benefits of pursuing an interdisciplinary program. Sax (2008) noted that women and men engage in college in different ways, and women tend to do so at greater rates than men and through many different curricular and co-curricular avenues, including study abroad, volunteering, and longer hours studying for their classes. However, beyond data regarding academic engagement in the classroom and evidence of a gender gap in studying abroad, little empirical research was available regarding exactly which co-curricular opportunities men and women chose and any gender gaps that existed within those programs (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Salisbury et al., 2010; Sax, 2008). Because research surrounding the gender gap in college did not often delve into specific engagement options, there were nominal data available regarding differences in the rates of men and women pursuing interdisciplinary opportunities.

The subsequent literature review addresses five important topics concerning the study, including (a) gender identity development; (b) the gender gap in college enrollment and engagement; (c) theories regarding college student engagement; (d) male college student engagement data; and (e) the definition and benefits of interdisciplinary studies. Finally, the chapter concludes with a description of the two conceptual frameworks employed in the study.

GENDER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

In order to study the patterns of male college student engagement, it was valuable to first recognize aspects of male development that may have led students to make specific decisions about their involvement in college. An understanding of male identity development involved gaining insight into the definition of masculinity and the emergence of male gender-role conflict and its influence on the ways in which men situate themselves in specific contexts, including their college environment.

In his influential research on masculinity, Pleck (1985) offered a definition of the traditional American masculine role prior to the 1950s as one that valued strength and expected men to remain unemotional unless expressing anger or aggression. Men adhering to this stereotype preferred spending time with other men to validate their masculinity. Moreover, the traditional role typically perceived women in simplistic terms, as either mothers or sexual partners.

In contrast, Pleck noted that contemporary men prefer to associate with women in order to validate their masculine identity. Heterosexual relationships are more emotionally connected and often the greatest source of connection instead of male-to-male friendships. Furthermore, "[modern] masculinity is validated by economic achievement and organizational and bureaucratic power. Interpersonal skills and intelligence are esteemed insofar as they lead to these goals" (p. 140). Pleck explained that while the modern male still sought to control his emotions in order to maintain his masculine identity, anger was not always perceived as an appropriate display of emotion as it had been in previous generations.

O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, and Wrightsman (1986) conducted the foundational study that examined male development and gender conflict. According to the researchers:

> Gender-role conflict is a psychological state where gender roles have negative consequences or impact on a person or others. The ultimate outcome of this conflict is the restriction of the person's ability to actualize their human potential or the restriction of some else's potential. (p. 336)

O'Neil et al. cited the need to understand the social construction of male identity development and the impact of conflict on men as the rationale for the their study. Moreover, until their study, there was no scale or instrument to empirically measure the gender conflict that many men experienced, thus they developed Gender-Role Conflict Scales I and II.

Gender Role Conflict Scale I (GRCS I) asked participants to rate their agreement or disagreement with statements focusing on gender issues in order to evaluate their feelings about gender-role behaviors. Gender Role Conflict Scale II (GRCS II) asked participants to rate their comfort or conflict level with gender-oriented situations. Study results indicated that:

> The patterns of success, power, and competition, restrictive emotionality, lack of emotional response, were clearly evident in men's self-report and also in a situational context. The subjects also self-reported restrictive affectionate behavior with other men and homophobia was identified as a situational gender-role conflict issue. Likewise, conflict between work and family relations was self-reported and public embarrassment from gender role deviance was identified as a situational problem area. (p. 348)

The GRCS I and II provided an influential view of male identity development by highlighting how participant concerns over adhering to specific gender roles and being perceived as homosexual affected they way they interacted with others. Moreover, the work of O'Neil et al. provided a foundation for subsequent studies of male college

student identity development (Davis, 2002; Paciej, 2010). The scales are used to situate male students in context to their self-expression and the social influences of their identities, which can ultimately affect the ways in which they choose to engage or disengage in college.

Because identity is not based on a single characteristic such as gender, religion or race, Jones and McEwen (2000) created the multiple dimensions of identity (MDI) model to portray the intersections of various aspects of identity. They developed the model through a qualitative study of female college students but it extends to male students as well. The study focused on how students recognize their own identity, their personal understanding of difference, and where the intersection of multiple identities shapes their sense of self.

The results of the study were the development of the MDI, a conceptual model that captured the multiple key categories of identity, including cultural values, race, and the intersection of gender with other dimensions. According to the authors, "The model is a fluid and dynamic one, representing the ongoing construction of identities and the influence of changing contexts on the experience of identity development. Therefore, the model is illustrative of one person's identity construction at a particular time" (p. 408).

Jones and McEwen's MDI model includes a core at its center, which depicts personal identity or inner self. Surrounding the inner core are the various identity dimensions that intersect with one another and must be viewed in relation to one another, such as sexual orientation, race, gender, and religion. These dimensions vary in their salience to the person depending on how they interact with contextual influences,

including family background, current life experiences, and sociocultural conditions. The researchers suggested that student affairs administrators guide students to consider the multiple dimensions of their identities that they may not have explored, which could include issues surrounding male gender roles.

The importance of Jones and McEwen's research to the current study is the emphasis on multiple intersections of identity development and how male college student identity is shaped by many internal and external influences that may affect where and how men engage in college co-curricular opportunities.

Summary

The foundational research by Pleck (1982) and O'Neil et al. (1986) helped shape the definition of modern American masculinities and the gender-role conflicts many men experience during their identity development. Moreover, Jones and McEwen's (2000) multiple dimensions of identity (MDI) model offered an approach to examining identity in its various intersections.

This research regarding male development provides insight into the reasons students might make specific decisions about their involvement in college. Masculinity and the gender conflicts that surround male identity development in context with social structures help guide the study focusing on male decision-making regarding engagement in co-curricular opportunities.

MALE COLLEGE STUDENT IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

While Pleck (1985) offered a definition of modern masculinity, and O'Neil et al. (1986) and Jones and McEwen (2000) provided models to study gender identity development, the following research focuses specifically on male college student identity development and how this may affect patterns of student engagement by gender.

Davis (2002) studied male college students to better understand the social construction of their development and the influence of gender-role conflict in the development process (O'Neil et al., 1986). Davis' results indicated that gender-role conflict influenced the male participants in several ways, including evidence of an overarching concern for the way others perceive their masculinity. According to the study, the participants wanted to avoid the possibility of being labeled as a homosexual so they limited their self-expression and were conscious of the experiences they chose so as to conform to their perceived social constructions of masculinity.

Davis' work provided additional confirmation of the gender role conflict research of O'Neil et al. (1986), and how the social construction of male college student identity development, specifically conforming to strict masculine roles, may affect their involvement decisions in college.

Edwards and Jones' (2009) research offered a theoretical underpinning for student affairs professionals to use as they develop programming aimed at college men. The results indicated that, regardless of their race or ethnicity, there are expectations of men to be: competitive, emotionally in control, aggressive, responsible, in a position of authority, and be the breadwinner in a relationship. The participants noted the social

expectation to treat college as free time or time to party. Men also put on a “mask of masculinity” either intentionally or unintentionally. This mask included partying, not taking academics seriously, and acting in ways they deem socially approved, such as having multiple sexual partners. Men of privilege as compared to men in marginalized groups donned this mask more frequently. The less privileged men believed they could not afford to waste time “partying.” Edwards and Jones noted:

> A part of performing masculinity was avoiding, limiting, or hiding behaviors that colleges and universities would encourage such as taking academics seriously, putting time and energy into studying, being involved, worrying about grades, taking an internship, and engaging in self-discovery. (p. 222)

Furthermore, they asserted that privilege played a key role in the types of curricular opportunities male students participated in. Men who perceived themselves as less privileged placed greater importance on participating in activities that could have helped them to succeed after graduation. Privilege afforded some male students the ability to seek out more leisure and social opportunities without concern over the risk of harming their future career paths.

Edwards and Jones suggested that academic curriculum could help male students "gain consciousness" of their mask-wearing ways by guiding students to frame their experiences in terms that give them insight into why they may be acting in specific ways.

Similar to Edwards and Jones (2009), through his research Harris (2010) developed a conceptual model of the meanings college men make out of masculinities to underscore how gender intersects with other aspects of identity and to expand on the importance of social contexts on development. Harris used Jones and McEwen's (2000) multiple dimensions of identity (MDI) model to emphasize the social interactions and

expectations for men during their college years. The male participants expressed many characteristics of masculinity, including being respected, being self-confident, assuming responsibility (breadwinner), and the need to be the leader.

Harris noted that students' pre-college conception of gender roles, specifically those from their fathers, influenced their notion of masculinity in college. The participants said playing and watching sports was a way to connect to their fathers. The participants' academic interests often aligned with fields that might have led them to more "breadwinner" careers such as law and business. Campus involvement in traditionally masculine activities like sports, student government, and fraternities helped conceptualize the masculine role in college. Moreover, participants expressed a need for space to cultivate male bonds in college. Harris' research highlighted specific engagement opportunities that are attractive to male students, thus providing insight into why men may choose to pursue certain organizations and programs over others.

Davis and Laker (2004) called for student affairs professionals to better engage and retain men in college by offering opportunities that include an understanding of male student development. Male student identity development theory is not often part of graduate student affairs curriculum, and it is often seen as implied in general student identity development theories because men, specifically white men, were the subjects of many studies used in early student identity theories (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Erikson, 1980). However, the authors emphasized that although men were study subjects in the development of the theories, their identities were not part of the overall basis for the theory and the studies were actually gender-blind.

Davis and Laker (2004) contended that graduate student development curriculum perpetuates gender stereotypes, and thus must change to work effectively with men to aid in their college success. The developmental theories the researchers cite include gender role conflict, which asserts that the gender roles in society restrict male development as they enforce negative male stereotypes (See for example, O'Neil et al, 1986).

The male college student development researchers all suggested ways in which student affairs professionals could help men connect to their college campuses (Davis, 2002; Davis & Laker, 2004; Edwards & Jones, 2009). Moreover, they asserted that student affairs practitioners should not see displays of restrictive emotionality and inexpressiveness as an individual deficit in male students, but as part of playing the role ascribed by society.

The researchers suggested that learning communities, student organizations, fraternities, athletics teams and others should offer supportive spaces for men to begin to let go of gender-role constraints. Furthermore, student affairs professionals should be aware that men often communicate in a relational way, thus engaging male communication through one-on-one versus group communication may allow for more open self-expression on the part of the men (Davis, 2002).

Masculine identity and the link to fraternities

Conflict with one's gender role can have many negative consequences, one of which is a higher likelihood of abusing alcohol to conform to notions of masculinity, according to Berkowitz (2004). He noted, "Men who experience conflicts being men (gender-role conflicts) drink with more negative consequences, regardless of how these

'masculinities' may be defined in terms of race, class, ethnicity, and historical period" (p. 17). He asserted that men in the throes of gender-role conflict might experience depression, which can lead to binge drinking habits. Binge drinking and college partying are often linked, as Capraro (2000) explained, and increased access to both is regularly available when men are involved in fraternity life. Capraro noted that many college men are attracted to fraternity life for the sense of belonging that comes along with being in a brotherhood of men adhering to a masculine role. Fraternity life often also means greater access to alcohol and drinking activities that promote over-consumption. Capraro wrote that fraternities are:

> The riskiest environments for heavy and problem drinking. Nationally, just over 80 percent of fraternity residents binge drink, whereas just over 40 percent of all college students binge. Drinking in fraternities is perhaps best understood as an extreme on a continuum of college men's drinking, dramatizing what may be going on to a lesser extent in traditional student life among a range of men. (2000, p. 312)

Capraro (2004) offered that the "psychology of brotherhood," which reflects the need for college men to feel kinship, is the reason men feel a link to fraternities. Fraternity life can challenge emotional growth and pressure male students to reject healthy relationships to place distance between the stereotypical male role and anything deemed feminine. According to Capraro, this includes traditional student affairs efforts and programming. "I theorize that most college men perceive programs and services offered by student affairs professionals as a return to 'domesticity,' in other words as reconstituting their own feminization, because such programs are inherently nurturing," (p. 6). Thus he noted, male students are thus seeking out social environments, including involvement options, which allow for more connections to their male peers and validation

of their masculine roles (Pleck, 1982).

Tuzin (2004) expanded on research surrounding the need for male bonding experiences before, during and after college (Pleck, 1985). He noted, "Male bonding is a distinct psychological and social attachment based on the parties shared maleness…Male bonding typically forms among peers within life stages or institutional settings in which maleness, as such, is a defining feature" (p. 488). The psychology of brotherhood and research on male bonding offer an understanding into the reasons male college students may gravitate to specific engagement opportunities over others (Capraro, 2000, 2004; Tuzin, 2004).

Summary

The previous section focused on male college student identity development, including specific research on the affects of male student engagement in fraternities has on identity development. The work of Davis (2002), Davis and Laker (2004), Edwards and Jones (2009), and Harris (2010) examined the various social constructions of male college student identity development, and how this may affect their involvement decisions in college. Moreover, they suggested ways in which student affairs administrators can support male students to reject conformity to social pressures in terms of involvement, and to better understand how social forces influence their perceptions of masculinity.

Edwards and Jones (2009) and Harris (2010) found that there were expectations of male students to focus more on socializing, to find ways to cultivate male bonds in college, and to adhere to masculine norms, which often included restricting campus

involvement to traditionally masculine activities like sports, student government, and fraternities. Edwards and Jones described this adherence to specific social roles as a "mask of masculinity" donned by male students so as not to challenge stereotypical masculine ideals.

Capraro (2000, 2004) and Tuzin (2004) both offered data regarding the need for men to engage in male bonding experiences to feel a connection to their peers. Capraro (2004) further theorized that this male need for connection to other males in college influenced their decisions to pursue specific engagement opportunities that further validate their masculinity.

In conclusion, the research regarding male college student identity development provides valuable information about the reasons male students make specific decisions about college involvement based on obeying masculine norms developed from their background influences, male peers, and the broader social pressures to conform to specific roles. This research was valuable to the study in that it offered the identity development connection to the broader research on student engagement described further in the chapter.

GENDER GAP IN ENGAGEMENT

The previous section focused on male identity development and research regarding how male students develop their identities through college. As noted previously, women are attending college and graduate schools at a greater rate than men (Ewert, 2012; Flashman, 2013; Kinzie et al., 2007; Pryor et al., 2006; Sax, 2008; Sax & Harper, 2007), and it is valuable to understand where the gender gap in college student

attendance exists and how this gap can affect male and female college student success. The following section provides research on what the growing gender gap means for colleges, and more specifically, how it is reflected in student engagement patterns.

The purpose of a longitudinal study by Sax and Harper (2007) was to examine the possible origins and characteristics of the gender gap between male and female college students. Study data were drawn from a national longitudinal study of college students conducted by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute. Participants completed the Fall 1994 CIRP Freshman Survey that collected data on student values, educational achievements, and goals, and a Spring 1998 follow-up, the College Student Survey (CSS) that gathered data on students' perceptions of and experiences in college and post tested items that were on the Freshman Survey.

For twelve of the outcomes, there were significant gender gaps attributable to college experiences:

> Several of these outcomes reflect gender differences in self-concept, with women rating themselves lower than men on emotional health, math ability, and competitiveness, and scoring lower than men on self-perceptions as scholars, leaders, and artists. Women also report higher college grades, but feel more frequently overwhelmed by all they have to do. In the area of life goals and career choice, women report greater interest in raising a family, while men exhibit a stronger commitment to making a contribution to science. Finally, while women report lower levels of political engagement, they report greater opposition to traditional gender roles. (p. 682)

Sax and Harper offered suggestions for college administrators to help decrease gender gaps in the noted outcomes, including encouraging female student involvement in physical activity to reduce their stress levels; encouraging male student involvement in volunteering; encouraging women to feel more confident in their ability to lead; and

offering more encouragement in the confidence level of women in the STEM subjects where female students lack self-confidence and thus do not see these areas as a career option as readily as men. They noted that vast majority of gender differences appeared well before college matriculation; however, they asserted that college administrators understand the existence of the gaps and devise programs to help minimize or bridge the gaps so they do not increase during the college years.

Sax (2008) performed a comprehensive study of the gender gap in college attendance by utilizing CIRP databases, including the Freshman Survey administered between 1966 and 2006 and the 1994 and 1998 Longitudinal College Student Survey.

According to Sax's results, there was an intellectual confidence gap between the sexes. While both male and female students demonstrated equal academic skill levels, women tended to underestimate their abilities despite strong performances on actual exams. Sax reported that, except in their writing skills, female first-year students suffered from a lack of confidence in their academic abilities, which equated to approximately 50 percent of female students considering themselves to be above average in intellectual self-confidence; this compared to over two-thirds of the male students who believed themselves to be above average in the same category.

Furthermore, Sax noted that throughout their college experience, female students became less academically confident and the gap in intellectual assuredness increased. According to Sax's study, men spent many more hours on leisure activities like playing video games. However, devotion to gaming provided students with an opportunity to become comfortable with technology, and increased the likelihood that those with this

aptitude would focus their studies on computer programming or another technological major, areas where female students are lacking (Margolis & Fisher, 2002). Because male students are more academically confident throughout their college years, they may feel as though they do not need to engage as heavily as their female colleagues in co-curricular activities to enhance their academic experiences and credentials.

In support of the data from Pryor et al. (2006) and others that women are outpacing men in their plans to pursue graduate school, Sax's study indicated that over the 40 years of the CIRP data collection, there was a considerable increase in women reporting their plan to earn a doctoral degree. In 1966, only 8.6 first-year college women planned to earn a doctorate whereas 32.3 percent planned to do so in 2006. The choice of student engagement opportunities by men and women may be based on the findings that men are seemingly more focused on fun and women, conversely, are choosing to concentrate on their future educational goals over leisure experiences.

Sax also found a gender gap in commitment to social activism with women surpassing men in their desire to help others, influence social values, influence the political structure, and engage in community action, and this continued over the four years of college. Men also begin their college lives with a stronger sense of their own leadership skills, and this may contribute to their interest, or lack there of, in certain student engagement opportunities.

Sax reported that exercising and playing sports resulted in higher grades for women and lower grades for men. The research indicated that women receive better grades than men overall; thus she recommended campuses focus on increasing academic

engagement rates for male students with the goal of helping them raise their grades.

Sax's data are valuable to the current study in that she offered the most comprehensive and recent view of the gender gap in college. Her findings that men are more focused on leisure experiences and have higher levels of academic confidence provide insight into why they may not chose to pursue a co-curricular experience like the interdisciplinary program that is the focus of the study.

Supporting Sax's findings, Kinzie et al. (2007) used data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) completed by students in 2005 and 2006 to examine the relationship between gender and student engagement, specially focusing on academic engagement.

> In general, both first-year and senior male students devoted more time to non-academic activities, such as relaxing and socializing, exercising and participating in physical fitness, and co-curricular activities. Men also more often came to class unprepared than their female counterparts. (p. 12)

In addition, the researchers noted that male first–year students were more likely to participate in academic engagement than senior male college students. For Kinzie et al. this was a troublesome finding as the less a male student engages over their time in college, the more difficult it is for him to reap the benefits of engagement, including the good grades that are often attributed to on-campus involvement (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Summary

The previous section provided research on what the growing gender gap means for colleges, and its impact on student engagement patterns and programs. Sax and Harper (2007) and Sax (2008) reported significant gender gaps attributable to college

experiences, including lower rates of academic self-confidence for women despite higher grades than their male peers. Furthermore, in Sax's (2008) comprehensive study of the gender gap in college attendance, she noted important differences in the ways in which male and female students spend leisure time, with men spending many more hours on leisure activities like playing video games. Male students also focused more on sports and exercise than women, although research indicated that these physical activities resulted in higher grades for women and lower grades for men.

Moreover, Sax (2008) reported gender differences in other areas of college that may translate to gaps in student engagement, including a commitment to social activism, the desire to influence social values, the desire to influence the political structure, and willingness engage in community action, with women reporting greater rates of all listed areas. There are socially conscious topics of study offered through the interdisciplinary program that was the focus of the study; thus, the research by Sax (2008) indicated that the appeal of social activism and community action to female students might contribute to any reported gender gaps in student engagement in the interdisciplinary program.

According to the data, while gender differences in educational goals are evident prior to college, it is important for student affairs administrators and faculty to recognize the gaps and offer opportunities to help bridge them during the college years so that male students see the academic benefits of student engagement like their female peers (Sax, 2008; Sax & Harper, 2007; Kinzie, et al, 2007). The research suggests that because male students are more confident, they may feel they do not need to engage as heavily as their female colleagues in co-curricular activities like the interdisciplinary program to enhance

their academic experiences and credentials.

College Student Engagement

In order to understand concerns over the gender gap in college enrollment and academic engagement, it is valuable to understand the importance of student engagement broadly and it benefits college student success (Astin, 1993; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993). The following section will expand on foundational theories of college student engagement.

In his seminal work Chickering (1969), and later in a revision of the original, Chickering and Reisser (1993), studied students' psychosocial development during their time in college. Chickering and Reisser's seven vectors of college student identity development including developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, and establishing identity. The sixth vector of theory is developing purpose, which pertained specifically to studying the process of engagement decisions by students. During this point in development, students were asking questions about who they are, who they want to eventually become, and how to get to that goal. In order to develop purpose, students in this stage of the model attempted to integrate career goals and aspirations, personal interests, and the values instilled by their family.

Chickering and Reisser suggested ways in which universities can foster student development based on their theory. One proposal was to ensure regular student-faculty relationships in the classroom and in outside settings. Moreover, they advised that faculty promote student learning through dedicated curriculum and pedagogy. Finally, Chickering and Reisser (1993) suggested that student services and engagement programs

be designed to integrate faculty involvement to promote curricular and co-curricular alignment.

Curricular engagement and faculty interactions

Astin (1993) developed his theory of involvement and its influence on college student development with his *input-environment-outcome* (IEO) model. He used data from the CIRP sample of college freshmen entering institutions of higher education in fall 1985. Among his numerous study outcomes, Astin examined the effects of faculty interaction on student scholarship, which included academic ability and intellectual self-confidence. He found:

> The degree of student interaction with faculty has a substantial positive effect on scholarship: students who interact most with faculty show a net increase between 1985 and 1989 of 3.2 percent in the number who qualify as Scholars, whereas those who interact least with faculty show a net decline of 3.9 percent. (p. 112)

Astin (1993) investigated academic and cognitive development as an outcome, and, within this outcome, the self-reported ability to think critically. His research indicated that enrolling in interdisciplinary courses was one of the variables that had a positive effect on the ability to think critically. Moreover, both student-faculty interaction and enrollment in interdisciplinary courses played an important role in student degree aspiration.

In their meta-analysis of student engagement, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) linked specific types of academic engagement to psychosocial development in college students, including collaborating with a faculty member to conduct research, participating in service-learning courses, and taking classes in which the instructor utilizes active learning techniques. In a summary of several studies, the researchers reported:

> The weight of evidence suggests that student-faculty interactions outside the classroom that reinforce and extend the intellectual ethos of the classroom or formal academic experience, or that focus on issues of personal growth, positively influence dimensions of general cognitive development such as post-formal reasoning, analytic ability, and critical thinking skills. (p. 614)

Pascarella and Terenzini elaborated that the commitment a student made to out-of-class, co-curricular learning opportunities also had a positive affect on student learning. These were engagement experiences, such as library time, writing centers, and supplemental instruction, which strengthened and deepened what a student learned in the traditional classroom setting.

Out of classroom engagement

In his long-standing work on student persistence and attrition, Tinto (1993) theorized that students matriculate with patterns of personal, familial, and academic characteristics, skills, and goals. Students then review and revise these goals during their many interactions with peers, faculty, student services staff and other systems of the institution. Tinto said that as students become more integrated into campus life and campus culture, their commitment to their goals and to the institution strengthens. However, if the interactions the student has with the institution's systems are negative, the process of assimilating into university culture may be stymied, and the student may not achieve his or her personal goals. This lack of integration may ultimately lead to withdrawal from the institution.

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) noted that student interactions with peers in organizations and other settings had an impact on learning in college, although not always in a positive way.

> Nonclassroom interactions with peers and faculty that extend and reinforce what happens in one's academic experience appear to have the most consistent positive impact. Similarly, there is reasonably consistent evidence that interaction with racially and culturally diverse peers and involvement in academically integrated service learning experiences enhance subject matter knowledge. (Kindle Locations 2466-2469)

They offered that, while most co-curricular experiences had a positive impact on student learning, large football and basketball programs along with first-year Greek life experiences had a negative impact specifically on male college students.

In a recent text, Kuh et al. (2010) wrote primarily about the ways in which successful institutions promote student learning and co-curricular opportunities on campus. Based on NSSE data, the researchers identified ways in which institutions that developed effective ways to promote student learning were supporting student engagement opportunities. Their research indicated that these schools offered myriad involvement options such as diversity experiences, community service, internship, and study abroad that enriched a student's academic and social experiences. Kuh et al. detailed suggestions for campus administrators to build a supportive culture that supports student engagement options that promote success:

> The conditions characterizing a supportive campus environment represented on the NSSE survey include (1) and institutional emphasis on providing students the support they need for academic and social success, (2) positive working and social relationships among different groups, (3) help for students in coping with their nonacademic responsibilities, and (4) high-quality student relationships with other students, faculty, and the institution's administrative personnel. (p. 241)

The work by Kuh et al. (2010) endorsed the value of student engagement in curricular and co-curricular programs. Based on study data, colleges that were successful

at promoting student learning did so in various ways, some of which included purposeful involvement activities that support traditional academic teaching.

Summary

The aforementioned theories and research on college student engagement provided evidence of the positive benefits of engagement inside and outside the classroom. Chickering (1969) and Chickering and Reisser (1993) authored established theories on college student psychosocial development that supported the importance of student-faculty relationships inside and outside the classroom. An important result of Astin's (1993) foundational work on student involvement as it pertains to the current study was the evidence that student enrollment in interdisciplinary courses had a positive effect on both the ability of students to think critically and the promotion of student degree aspirations.

The work of Astin (1993) and Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) supported student-faculty interactions as valuable engagement opportunities for students inside and outside the classroom. Moreover, student effort to become involved in other academic pursuits that directly support their classroom learning, like supplemental instruction, also supported student success. Finally, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) and Kuh et al. (2010) offered evidence of the positive benefits student received when they chose to engage in outside-the-classroom, co-curricular programs like diversity experiences, community service, internships, and study abroad experiences.

These foundational student engagement theories and data on the benefits of inside and outside the classroom involvement supported the current study by providing evidence

that opportunities like the interdisciplinary program that was the focus of this study could benefit student learning.

MALE COLLEGE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

The previous sections focused on the emerging gender gap in college attendance and empirical data on the benefits of college student engagement. The following section introduces information and data related specifically to how male students engage on college campuses. There is a paucity of research in this area, which indicates a need for more study on specific male engagement habits beyond traditional academic experiences as offered by the study.

In her dissertation, Paciej (2010) asserted that the vacuum in male college student engagement research means that student affairs professionals have little information to consult to try to bridge the growing gap in male college student engagement in leadership opportunities and student organizations. She examined levels of student engagement in co-curricular activities of male versus female college students at Catholic colleges in the Northeast using a masculinity development model. Paciej surveyed men and women using a Student Life Engagement survey based on NSSE and the Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS) (O'Neil et al., 1986). Only the male participants were provided questions pertaining to the GRCS.

Paciej found that men were engaged more than women, however, their engagement focused on athletics, intermural sports, student government, fraternities, campus publications, and ROTC. In addition, when she analyzed the relationship between the GRCS and the Student Life Engagement survey she found a correlation between

Restrictive Emotionality on the GRCS and a Student Life Engagement score. Restrictive Emotionality relates to the notion of being a real man, and the consequences for this social and cultural role are lower self-esteem, depression, shame, and issues in relationships. Thus, her results indicated that men were engaged, but only in specific programs that offered opportunities for male bonding (Tuzin, 2004).

Varalakshmi and Gabriel (2012) studied student engagement at a large community college in order to discover individual differences between race and gender and how this may translate to student achievement. The researchers cited the 40 percent attrition rate at community colleges as a particularly important reason for discovering ways students stay engaged. They analyzed data on a large community college from the Community College Study Report, the survey instrument of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE).

While the study focused on community college student engagement instead of engagement at baccalaureate institutions, the results offered pertinent information. On the CCSSE benchmarks Student Effort and Academic Challenge, compared to males, female students studied more and found their college experiences to be academically stimulating. Moreover, the researchers noted that "male students spend less time working on their coursework and related activities; they are more likely to go to classes unprepared, and less likely to involve in co-curricular or extracurricular readings" (p. 816).

Varalakshmi and Gabriel explained, "It seems that males behave the way they do (show lower engagement), not because they are slackers, but rather because they believe that the course work does not call for so much effort" (p. 817). They noted that females

generally showed higher "academic ethics" than their male counterparts. They suggested that campuses would benefit from understanding engagement differences by gender and race and organizing programs accordingly.

While there was generally a void in research on specific college engagement opportunities, the gender gap in study abroad participation has been examined. Salisbury, Paulsen, and Pascarella (2010) analyzed the differences between male and female first-year student intentions to study abroad. Overall, women intended to study abroad at greater rates than men. The researchers found that an increase in peer interactions negatively affected male students' intentions to study abroad, whereas as there was no affect on women. They noted, "This research may suggest that some facet of the social environment- both in high school and during the first year of college- undermines male interest in studying abroad" (p. 634). While this study focused solely on the intention of men and women to study abroad, research on study abroad engagement may provide guidance for examining other areas of student involvement. The suggestion by Salisbury et al. that peer interaction had a negative effect on how male students view study abroad opportunities may be similar to the concerns men have about other co-curricular programs.

Summary

The previous section introduced information and research related specifically to how male students engage on college campuses. Paciej (2010) utilized O'Neil et al.'s (1986) Gender-Role Conflict Scales (GRCS) to examine the ways in which conflict with one's gender role may influence male student engagement in college. Her study results

indicated that while men were engaged more than women on campus, their engagement was primarily limited to traditionally male areas like sports and student government. Moreover, Paciej found a correlation between Restrictive Emotionality on the GRCS and engagement, thus confirming that men were involved in specific programs because they offered opportunities to bond with male peers.

Varalakshmi and Gabriel (2012) studied differences in race and gender in community college student engagement patterns and the ways these differences may affect student learning. Their results indicated that male students are less academically engaged in their coursework than females because they do not believe their classes warrant much studying. Finally, Salisbury et al. (2010) studied gender differences in first-year student intentions to study abroad and found that peer interactions negatively affect the way male students view study abroad opportunities.

Overall, other than the abovementioned studies, there is little research concerning male college student involvement rates and patterns in specific engagement opportunities and programs outside the classroom and beyond the broad data presented by Kinzie et al. (2007), Sax (2008), and Sax and Harper (2007). The current study added to this body of literature concerning gender differences in engagement in particular programs.

INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAMS

The primary reason I chose to examine the interdisciplinary program's gender imbalance as the focus of the study was due to the dearth of research regarding gender gaps in this specific co-curricular opportunity. Interdisciplinary studies appear in different forms, from single seminar classes that introduce freshmen to a broad topic to

full, four-year interdisciplinary degree programs offered at many institutions around the country (Augsberg & Henry, 2009). The following section defines interdisciplinary studies and provides data on the benefits of students pursuing such opportunities.

Context for interdisciplinary programs

Beginning in the 1920s, American colleges and universities began offering challenging interdisciplinary seminars to students in an effort to provide a more cohesive general education curriculum that went beyond the disciplinary structures (Augsberg & Henry, 2009). During this time, the pragmatic philosophies of Dewey (1916) and the Progressive Movement exerted influence on undergraduate curriculum. These education reformers called for greater emphasis on experiential learning, developing critical thinking skills, and collaboration in the school system, which was then reflected in college level curricular reform efforts. Moreover, the *Yale Report* of 1828 remained an influential guide to college faculty and administrators as it called for maintaining the foundations of classical college curriculum so that students could learn the principles of the sciences and humanities no matter what career they chose. The Yale faculty fully supported a liberal education: "The ground work for a thorough education must be broad, deep, and solid" (p. 6). The *Yale Report* demanded a decrease in professional training offered to students so that there could be greater emphasis on the traditional disciplines and the connections between them. The authors proclaimed, "We doubt whether the powers of the mind can be developed in their fairest proportions, by studying languages alone, or mathematics alone, or natural or political science alone" (p. 9). In their view,

classical, connected curriculum taught through the liberal arts and sciences provided the best, most thorough education.

Several decades later, the civil-rights movements of the 1960s generated a wave of support for courses and programs of study that focused on various ethnicities, races, and gender by integrating multiple disciplines to form a cohesive concentration (Augsberg & Henry, 2009). By the 1970s, the concept of interdisciplinary programs and interdisciplinary degrees was introduced at several progressive colleges, such as Miami University's School of Interdisciplinary Studies.

One primary impact of the Progressive Movement and, in time, the civil rights movements, was the challenge for universities to be more student-centered with greater opportunities for independent and critical thinking. Many interdisciplinary programs fit the bill as they were often characterized by active learning pedagogy and student-focused curriculum (Newell & Green, 1982). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, 32,012 baccalaureate degrees were awarded to students in 2005-2006 in the category of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary studies (NCES, 2008). The following section offers various definitions of interdisciplinary programs and discusses the benefits of students pursuing such programs during their college years.

Defining interdisciplinary programs

Newell and Green (1982) described the reasons for and benefits of creating and sustaining interdisciplinary studies programs at American colleges and universities: "Interdisciplinary studies are inquiries which critically draw upon two or more disciplines and which lead to an integration of disciplinary insights" (p. 24). They noted that

studying real world topics from an interdisciplinary perspective provided broader insight than studying a subject from a single disciplinary perspective.

Moreover, Newell and Green offered that it is not simply the inclusion of more than one discipline in the study of a topic or in the design of a course curriculum that makes a program truly interdisciplinary; actual synthesis of each discipline is required. This synthesis includes the acknowledgement and analysis of the similarities and differences offered by the various disciplines involved; otherwise defined as a more realistic study of modern problems.

Newell (1992) differentiated between disciplinary studies versus interdisciplinary studies through the use of a lens. "The lens through which a discipline views the world is its most distinctive feature, as the incorporation or integration of disciplinary perspectives into a larger, more holistic perspective is the chief distinguishing characteristic of interdisciplinary studies" (p. 213). Newell noted that there are opponents and skeptics of interdisciplinary studies. In order to appease critics, Newell distinguished between the pedagogy of teaching a specific discipline with the pedagogy developed and used by dedicated interdisciplinary faculty. "While interdisciplinary courses indeed make use of concepts, theories, methods and factual knowledge from various disciplines, the interdisciplinary understanding they develop is grounded primarily in perspectives from which those concepts, theories, methods and facts emerge" (p. 213). Interdisciplinary faculty members helped students make connections across disciplines to develop an integrated understanding of a subject.

Benefits of interdisciplinary study

The skills learned through an interdisciplinary approach, according to Newell and Green (1982), include deductive reasoning, synthesis, and creativity. The authors wrote, "Interdisciplinary studies encourage breadth of vision and develop the skills of integration and synthesis so frequently demanded by the programs of a culture in the midst of a profound transition" (p. 23). The researchers asserted that interdisciplinary students graduate having learned a variety of skills and developed personality traits like being open to new ideas and a tolerance for ambiguity.

Furthermore, Newell (1992) used his experiences developing and teaching at the interdisciplinary Miami University Western College Program to offer evidence of student achievement in college and beyond. He explained the experiences of interdisciplinary students as compared to their peers who study a specific discipline. Despite the fact that students in the various interdisciplinary programs offered by the college did not take discipline-specific courses, they met or exceeded expectations on their knowledge of the disciplines. In addition, program alumni rated their preparation for career and skill development higher than students in other programs. Because of budget cuts and political conflicts, Miami University merged the Western College interdisciplinary program with their honors college in 2007.

In his enduring work on college student involvement, Astin (1993) acknowledged the benefits of interdisciplinary studies. He found that the opportunity to take interdisciplinary courses had a positive effect on a student's satisfaction with the college environment, which led to greater degree attainment. In addition, Astin's research

indicated taking interdisciplinary courses had a positive impact on a student's cognitive and affective development, which could lead to greater levels of engagement and ultimately academic success.

In 1994, Lattuca and Stark studied epistemological differences among various disciplines in order to find areas of connection for integration opportunities like interdisciplinary programs. The researchers employed content analysis to study the Association of American Colleges (AAC) Task Forces on Curricular Reform report (1988) that called for faculty to develop more connected learning experiences for college students. Connected learning requires students to apply content learned in one context to another and for students to connect what is learned in the classroom to real world examples and situations. Interdisciplinary studies often offer opportunities for students to make these connections by studying real world problems through the lens of multiple, integrated disciplines. The researchers asserted, "A carefully developed interdisciplinary program may offer an attractive and practical solution for undergraduate study" (p. 422). Lattuca and Stark concluded that more interdisciplinary programs should be developed in order to achieve connectedness in college curricula.

Student learning in interdisciplinary programs

In an effort to offer further assessment data on the results and potential successes of interdisciplinary courses, Lattuca et al. (2004) explored the question of whether students learn more in interdisciplinary courses. The researchers utilized theories of learning and cognition to analyze student-learning outcomes in interdisciplinary courses. Analyzing syllabi and conversing with instructors from two interdisciplinary courses at

the University of Chicago and Miami University, the researchers investigated student-learning outcomes from interdisciplinary teaching and any differences between the interdisciplinary courses and the learning outcomes of specific disciplinary courses.

Lattuca et al. (2004) found that because the sample course assignments required students to draw on their personal experiences and previous disciplinary knowledge, the interdisciplinary courses challenged student learning in a more complex way. They noted that through the use of the Socratic method and Socratic dialogue, the two sample course instructors challenge students to think more critically. The courses helped students develop multiple perspectives and thus a more sophisticated knowledge of the topic by requiring students to synthesize material from multiple disciplines. While the researchers examined the achievement of learning outcomes in two specific interdisciplinary courses, they explicitly noted the fulfillment of these learning outcomes might not be limited to interdisciplinary courses alone.

Lattuca et al. noted that the use of in-depth studying of real world issues in these courses might motivate students and engage their interests more than lectures from specific disciplinary perspectives on similar topics. Rather than requiring students to memorize information or attempt to learn difficult theories on their own, the sample course instructors used seminar discussions as an environment for student engagement and learning. The researchers explained that while active learning techniques were regularly woven into the sample interdisciplinary courses, active learning was not limited to interdisciplinary teaching, although the topics and approaches of interdisciplinarians may make active learning more prominent.

Throughout their study, Lattuca et al. offered areas for future research because the assessment data of learning outcomes for interdisciplinary courses are very limited. The researchers hoped to motivate future examination of interdisciplinarity by asking questions about the effectiveness and success of interdisciplinary teaching methods.

Interdisciplinary programs often promote active learning activities such as group work, lively classroom discussions, and independent research as more enriching and sustainable ways for college students to learn from various perspectives and, ultimately, retain information (Newell, 1992). Braxton's et al. (2000) study sought to explain how classroom settings affect a student's social integration into the institution by using Tinto's (1975, 1993) interactionalist theory for why students leave college. Social integration affects a student's commitment to college and is one of Tinto's theoretical propositions for students to remain in college.

The researchers contended that the college classroom is one influence on a student's commitment to remain at that institution, and positive classroom experiences may help contribute to lower college departure rates. Specifically, the researchers focused on the influence of active learning on classroom experiences. They defined active learning activities as "discussion, questions faculty ask students in class, cooperative learning, debates, role playing, and the questions faculty ask on course examinations" (p. 571). Active learning is not synonymous with academic integration, which is a foundational aspect of Tinto's theory. Instead, the researchers noted that active learning is an important part of a student's ultimate academic integration into the classroom.

In 1995 and 1996, participants completed three CIRP surveys distributed during

summer orientation, during the fall semester, and during the spring semester. The results indicated that two of the four active learning activities, classroom discussion and higher order thinking activities, had a statistically significant, positive influence on social integration and, consequently, on student persistence.

While studying first-year students offers insight into their experiences in college and how they may be different from high school, this study by Braxton et al. (2000) did not take classroom experiences in the second year and beyond into account. Active learning activities may evolve for students as the challenge of their classes increases and, as often happens through the course of four years, as the size of the classes decreases allowing for the possibility of more or deeper active learning activities. Despite its limitations, the results indicated that active learning offers the opportunity for students to connect to their studies and, perhaps, find more success in class. Because several aspects of active learning are key to interdisciplinary studies, the work of Braxton et al. supports the stated benefits of interdisciplinary studies mentioned previously.

Summary

The setting for the current study was a co-curricular, interdisciplinary program at a large university in the southwest. Accordingly, it is valuable to understand the definition of interdisciplinary studies; the benefits students receive when pursuing this route, and the continued work on assessing student learning in such programs.

The rise of modern interdisciplinary programs began during the civil rights movements of the 1960s when students pressured colleges for integrated approaches to learning about racial, ethnic, and gender studies (Augsberg & Henry, 2009).

Interdisciplinary curriculum emphasizes experiential learning and the synthesis of multiple disciplines for an integrated learning experience (Newell, 1992; Newell & Green, 1982). The skills learned through an interdisciplinary approach include deductive reasoning, synthesis, critical thinking, and creativity (Astin, 1993; Newell, 1992; Newell & Green, 1982).

Furthermore, Astin's (1993) research on student involvement indicated that interdisciplinary courses had a positive effect on a student's satisfaction with the college environment as well as on student cognitive and affective development. Astin noted that all of these benefits might lead to greater levels of engagement and ultimately academic success. Moreover, Lattuca et al. (2004) studied two sample interdisciplinary curriculum and faculty pedagogy to provide evidence of the integrated learning that may occur in interdisciplinary courses. Finally, the research of Braxton et al. (2000) offered support for the cognitive benefits of active learning programs, which often include interdisciplinary studies.

The current study added to the existing body of research concerning student engagement in co-curricular opportunities like the interdisciplinary program. As noted in the work of Astin (1993), Newell (1992), and Newell and Green (1982), there are benefits of interdisciplinary studies, thus studying gender differences in the program supported the goal of finding pathways to better recruit and retain students who are not choosing to pursue them.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The above literature emphasizes the need for additional research into male student engagement, and specifically, the ways which male students make decision about particular opportunities to pursue. The current study employed two conceptual frameworks to explore and guide the investigation: Terenzini and Reason's (2005) college experience model and Harris' (2010) conceptual model of the meanings college men make of masculinities.

Terenzini and Reason's (2005) model

The first framework is Terenzini and Reason's (2005) model, and it was used to examine the influence of involvement on student experiences in college (Figure 1).

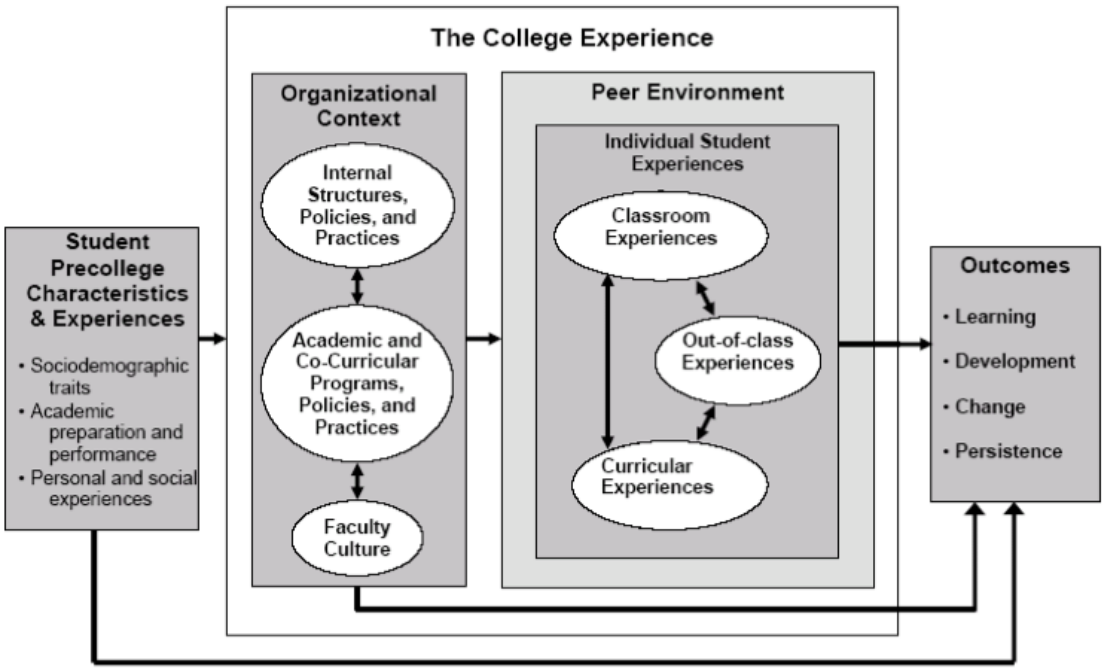

Figure 1: Terenzini and Reason's (2005) model of college student experience

Terenzini and Reason (2005) developed the college experience framework to study the first-year student experience and the various ways in which pre-college experiences and peer, faculty, and institutional influences have an impact on persistence. However, the researchers noted that the comprehensive nature of the "college impact model" makes it useful beyond the first year. This framework combined aspects of earlier models that focus on the developmental patterns of college students such as Chickering (1969) and Chickering and Reisser (1993) and other college impact models that incorporate demographic characteristics of students and the effects of the college environment (Astin, 1985, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993). Terenzini and Reason argued that the previous models were incomplete and they sought to remedy

this by incorporating missing aspects of institutional dynamics and culture in their model. They explained:

> [An] institution's internal organizational features, such as structures, curricular configurations, budgetary and staffing issues, policies relating to course sizes and who does the teaching in introductory courses, faculty recruiting and reward policies, or budgetary and staffing arrangements specific to the first year of college, all of which may potentially play a role (indirectly, if not directly) in shaping students' college experiences. (p. 2)

Through the use of four constructs, Terenzini and Reason's model illustrated the various influences that affect college student learning and, ultimately, college students' ability to persist.

The first set of constructs was labeled student precollege characteristics and experiences, and included demographic characteristics, academic preparation, disposition, and social experiences. The researchers noted that these were comparable to previous college impact models (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993).

The second set of constructs pertained to the organizational context of the institution. Terenzini and Reason asserted that the most important parts were the organizational character and culture that interacted most with the students. The internal structures, policies, and practices of an institution, including budgets, staff support, and operating characteristics, had an impact on students. Moreover, curricular and co-curricular programs, policies, and practices shaped student experiences:

> The curricular factors in the organizational context include both the "intended" curriculum (the curricular and classroom experiences the institution formally seeks to deliver) and the "enacted" curriculum (what is, in fact, offered to students). Students' experiences with the curriculum and in the classroom constitute the "received" curriculum (what the students experience or perceive to

be happening). Similar distinctions can be made within the student affairs realm. (p. 9).

The authors noted that the most important aspects of this set of constructs pertained to personnel policies and practices of faculty and student affairs staff as they have the closest contact with students. Service learning courses, student research initiatives, learning communities, mentoring programs, and new student orientation were examples of the formal academic and co-curricular program policies and procedures that influenced student development and helped students integrate their academic and non-academic college experiences. The final aspect of the construct of organizational context of an institution was that of faculty culture. Terenzini and Reason defined faculty culture, as the primary philosophical believe system of the institution, one that reflected the commitment to student learning and the formal and informal availability of faculty to students.

Peer environment was the third construct in Terenzini and Reason's model. They referenced Astin (1993) who wrote, "Every aspect of the student's development – cognitive and affective, psychological and behavioral – is affected in some way by peer group characteristics, and usually by several peer characteristics" (p. 363). The authors noted that a peer group was not the group of friends a student regularly interacts with, instead, it was the "ethos of the student body…The peer environment embodies the system of dominant and normative values, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations that characterize a campus' student body" (2005, p. 11). They elaborated that students, over time, tended to conform to both academic and social attitudes and beliefs held by the broader student body.

Lastly, individual student experiences composed the fourth construct of Terenzini and Reason's college experience framework. In order to develop a more cohesive construct than previous models offered (see for example, Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), the authors sought to connect the three primary categories of curricular, classroom experience, and out-of-class experiences to create the individual student experiences construct. Curricular experience related to student exposure to general education courses, the courses that composed a major, and other degree-specific experiences like internships. Classroom experience included faculty pedagogy and the feedback a student received in the academic setting. The final aspect of the construct pertained to individual student out-of-class experiences, which included a student's employment status, living situation, family support, and co-curricular involvement level. Terenzini and Reason (2005) stated, "Student experiences in all three of these areas are important to a full understanding of how students change and grow… any serious study of college effects on just about any outcome cannot ignore students' curricular, classroom, and out-of-class experiences" (pp. 12-13).

Harris' (2010) conceptual model

The second framework for the study is Harris' (2010) model of the meanings college men make of masculinities (Figure 2). This model was used to study the ways in which traditional or stereotypical assumptions of masculinity affected male college student decisions about their involvement on campus.

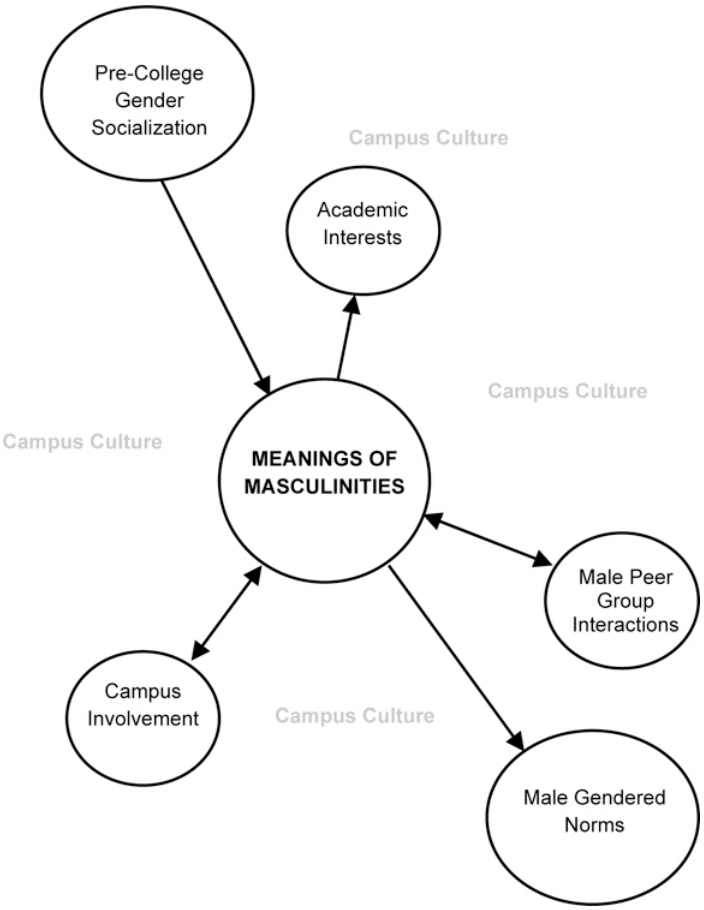

Figure 2: Harris' (2010) conceptual model of the meanings college men make of masculinities

Harris' placed "meaning of masculinities" at the core of his model. He used the following concepts to define the meanings of masculinities:

> "Being respected," "being confident and self-assured," "assuming responsibility," and "embodying physical prowess." According to the participants, these were some "defining characteristics" of men and reflected the attitudes and behaviors about masculinities that they learned and were reinforced before they enrolled in college. (p. 305)

Harris elaborated on the concepts that define masculinity. "Being respected" concerns the ability to defend oneself and one's values when questioned by others. It also related to the ability to garner respect from male peers for being a student who seemed to

achieve consistent academic and social successes. The concept of "being confident and self-assured" was one in which an individual male was able to eschew masculine norms and act with authenticity instead of playing a role or being overly concerned with being labeled homosexual. Harris noted:

> The men in the study spoke of rejecting masculine stereotypes and making conscious decisions to perform masculinities based on what they themselves deemed appropriate, rather than simply conforming to popular notions or others' expectations. They also reported that self-assured men are able to engage in activities and exhibit behaviors that may be perceived as contradictory to masculine norms without being concerned about raising suspicions about their sexual orientations. (p. 305)

The third meaning of masculinities, as described in Harris' model, was "assuming responsibility." This referred to the men aspiring to be the breadwinner in a relationship, and, for fathers, it referred to taking care of the family financially. Moreover, this reflected the desire for male students to be viewed as leaders on campus and in future careers.

Physical stature was the last meaning of masculinities expressed in the model. Being large, muscular, and attractive to women equated to masculinity. Furthermore, when physical attractiveness by males led to sexual experience or peer perception of sexual experience with women, they were viewed as being masculine.

In Harris's model, several contextual influences were illustrated with connecting arrows (Figure 2), and they included: precollege gender socialization, the campus culture, campus involvement, academic interests, and male peer group interactions. According to Harris, "These variables of the model capture the experiences and interactions that: (a) reinforced previously learned lessons about masculinities or (b) challenged the

participants to acknowledge other ideas and expressions of masculinities and reconsider their own beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions about masculinities" (p. 306).

Within the pre-college gender socialization factor, Harris noted that "parental influences, male peer interactions, and participating in sports and other 'masculinizing' activities" all had considerable influence on the ways in which males learned about masculinity before college matriculation. According to Harris, while mothers tended to enforce more well-rounded, masculine behaviors in boys by encouraging emotion, fathers had a more prominent impact on their sons' understanding of masculine norms. "Parents, especially fathers, socialized the participants to behave and interact in ways that were deemed acceptable by traditional expectations of masculinities. Avoiding feminine behaviors and attitudes as well as expressing masculinities through physicality and toughness were notable in this regard" (p. 306).

Harris explained that other male role models like coaches and male dominant environments like sports practices and teams reinforced masculine stereotypes. "Expressing masculinities through toughness, physical aggression, and by not showing weakness were some of the key lessons about masculinities the participants recalled learning by way of their involvement in these activities" (p. 307). Moreover, the emphasis on toughness in sports like football, for players and for fans, created an image of a hyper-masculine male. In this environment, homosexuality was hidden and boys and men strived to be seen as living up to a heterosexual image.

Academic interests were a contextual influence in Harris' model of the meanings college men make of masculinities. This was illustrated by one-directional arrow coming

out from the core of the model because Harris did not find that a student's academic interests had an effect on his meanings of masculinity. Instead, traditional views of masculinity influenced the decisions male students made about which fields of study to pursue. Business, law, and engineering were deemed to be financially secure career areas that would allow for the male students to be the breadwinner in their family, an aspiration within the masculine stereotype. Harris explained that male students expressed that:

> Men had to be purposeful in choosing a major or a career path because making the wrong choice could limit their earning potential thereby making it more difficult to fulfill the breadwinner role. They also assumed that women did not face these same pressures because, despite earning a college degree, most would settle down, get married, and stay at home to raise their children. (p. 309)

A second contextual influence in the model was campus involvement, which included traditionally male dominated organizations like sports teams and student government as well as more gender-neutral organizations like major-specific associations and residence hall councils. Male students often pursued leadership opportunities in these organizations in order to express a traditional masculine role. Moreover, campus involvement also included the opportunity for students to interact with a diverse student population, which, according to Harris, often provided a view of masculinities different from the traditional American male role.

Male peer group interactions were a third contextual influence in Harris' model. For male students, these included "interactions and conversations that often [take] place within their respective male peer groups and [the students make] very clear connections regarding the ways in which these interactions influenced their behavioral expressions of

masculinities" (p. 310). Often these conversations were about women, and, as Harris noted, they were sometimes sexually crass.

The final contextual influence in the model was male gendered norms, which included having work hard-play hard mentalities, exhibiting hypermasculine performance, and expressing the desire for male bonding experiences. According to Harris, these were "the outcomes of the interactions" between the meanings of masculinities of male students and the other contextual influences. Harris defined the work hard-play hard mentality as one in which male students felt pressure to attend parties and stay up late while maintaining good grades. This often led to a delicate balancing act that included all-night study sessions sometimes resulting in missed assignments and academic struggles.

Harris explained that the second male gendered norm of hypermasculine performance was the set of behaviors male college students used "strategically to express themselves as men in ways that were consistent with stereotypical expectations" and included alcohol abuse, misogyny, and sexual relationships without emotional commitments (pp. 312-313). Harris noted that hypermasculine performance included a:

> Generalized fear of femininity among the heterosexual participants, which was manifested most strongly during discussions about their interactions with openly gay men. These participants admitted that they would find it difficult to embrace a gay friend, teammate, or fraternity brother out of fear that others would assume they were also gay if they were seen interacting publically with these men. They also expressed anxiety and discomfort about being the object of a gay peer's affection, which can also be linked to their fear of femininity and hypermasculine performance. (p. 313)

The last part of the model's contextual influence of male gendered norms was male bonding. For male college students, male bonding provided the opportunity to

connect and communicate with male peers in what Harris called healthy friendships. A close group of male friends allowed for an emotional connection for many men in a campus environment that was competitive and impersonal for some.

In Harris' (2010) conceptual model of the meanings college men make of masculinities, campus culture was noted as a background variable because the interactions of the other variables all occurred within the context of the college environment. Harris explained that the site of the study in which the model resulted was very academically and socially competitive for male students. This competitive campus culture "centered on traditionally masculine pursuits and activities like consuming alcohol, playing video games, working out in the gym, participating in sports, and having sex with women," as well as academic competition for better grades (p. 308).

Overall, Harris' model offered a lens through which I examined the ways in which male college students make meanings of masculinity and how choosing to engage or not engage in a specific program affected these concepts.

Summary

The above literature review addressed five important topics that concerned the study, including (a) gender identity development; (b) the gender gap in college enrollment and engagement; (c) theories regarding college student engagement; (d) male college student engagement data; and (e) the definition and benefits of interdisciplinary studies. Furthermore, the chapter provided a discussion of the two conceptual frameworks I employed to analyze research data: Terenzini and Reason's (2005) model

of college student experience and Harris' (2010) conceptual model of the meanings college men make of masculinities.

The use of Terenzini and Reason's (2005) conceptual framework helped represent the complexities of college experiences for male students in the study. This model reflected the many influences operating in multiple settings that affected student learning and, ultimately, persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The model's construct of student pre-college characteristics and experiences provided insight for the reasons male students make decisions about college involvement based on their previous academic background and social and familial influences, among others. The construct labeled as the organizational context of the institution included curricular and co-curricular influences on a student, and this was particularly useful in analyzing the ways in which the institution, including faculty and student affairs staff, played a role in engagement. Previous models (see for example, Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) did not include organizational context as an area of influence on student learning. Finally, the individual student experience construct included curricular, classroom, and out-of-class influences on student learning, an important aspect of the study as it pertained to examining the reasons why a male student chose or chose not to be involved with the interdisciplinary program at hand.

In terms of studying male engagement in college, a missing element of Terenzini and Reason's model was the influence of gender development, specifically male concepts of masculinity and their influence on engagement decisions. Harris' (2010) conceptual model of the meanings college men make of masculinities provided a lens through which

gender identity was examined in the study. This model included pre-college gender socialization, which focused on the influences and pressures of family and peers on the way males define masculinity for themselves (Anderson & Accomando, 2002; Capraro, 2000, 2004; Hoff Sommers, 2000; Kimmel, 2008, 2010; Weaver-Hightower, 2003). Moreover, campus involvement and male gendered norms were two contextual influences included in the model that guided the examination of how and why male students made decisions in college that may have been based on specific masculine ideals and norms. The model suggested that, because of these gender influences, male students felt pressure to choose involvement opportunities that adhered to certain stereotypes (Kimmel, 2008, 2010).

Terenzini and Reason's (2005) model offered a broad view of college engagement, including student background, organization and individual influences, and Harris (2010) provided a model to study masculine identity development in male college students. The two models complemented each other by creating a multi-pronged approach to examine the research questions within the study, including the ways in which male students made decisions about involvement in the interdisciplinary program and how administrators perceived their involvement in the program and on the larger campus. An inclusive view of engagement was necessary to see the scope of influences. Moreover, a model for studying how identity played a role in engagement decisions was equally as critical to answer the research questions posed in the study.

The following chapter elaborates on the research methodology and design, including start codes developed based on the two conceptual frameworks.

Chapter 3: Method

The study focused on male college student engagement in a co-curricular, interdisciplinary program at a large, research institution. I used qualitative research methods to garner an understanding of the reasons why male students chose to pursue the specific program and to identify the experiences of student affairs administrators who worked with the students. The following chapter describes the study methodology. Furthermore, the research design is explained, including site selection, participant selection, data collection, and data analysis.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to contribute to research regarding the college student engagement in an interdisciplinary program, this study answered the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of student affairs administrators regarding male student engagement in co-curricular programs, and what strategies do they use to reach out to male students to get them more involved?

2. Why are male students choosing or not choosing to be involved in the opportunity to pursue an interdisciplinary program?

    a. What conflicts, if any, are arising based on their notions of masculinity and how those notions fit with "co-curricular" choices?

QUALITATIVE OVERVIEW

This study was qualitative and interpretivist in its methodology. Snape and Spencer (2008) summarized the characteristics of qualitative research, which includes a flexible research approach and a deep and interpreted understanding of the experiences of research participants. Moreover, they noted that qualitative research includes "data collection methods which usually involve close contact between the researcher and the

participants, which are interactive and developmental and allow for emergent issues to be explored" (p. 5). Because the goal of qualitative research data collection is to allow for rich and meaningful details to develop, I interpreted the data to analyze ideas and identify patterns in order to represent the experiences of the participants.

The study utilized an interpretivist paradigm. Willis (2007) asserted that the view of reality through the interpretivist lens is one of context where the researcher is focused on how the research is situated in order to find meaning. The goal of interpretivist research is not to find truth or universal laws, as interprevists believe that reality is socially constructed and they are committed to discovering the context surrounding that reality. Willis elaborated:

> Interpretivism views all research as subjective, but proponents are not extreme relativists who see every viewpoint as just as good as any other. They are comfortable arguing for their particular viewpoint despite the subjectivity of their foundations. They simply argue that the conclusions from any program of research could be wrong and that we should all be aware of and open to findings from other perspectives and traditions. (p. 122)

There were several benefits to utilizing qualitative research methods and the interpretivist paradigm for the current study. The adaptability warranted by this design allowed for the multiple realities of the participants to be expressed, and for inductive data analysis to recognize and account for those realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As Lincoln and Guba noted, one of the values of qualitative research, and naturalistic inquiry specifically, is the ability to "interpret data (including the drawing of conclusions) ideographically (in terms of the particulars of the case) rather than nomothetically (in terms of law-like generalizations) because different interpretations are likely to be meaningful for different realities…" (p. 42). Moreover, a qualitative research design, as

described below, allowed me to use purposeful sampling to select a representative sample of participants so multiple perspectives were expressed and rich descriptions were developed from those experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ritchie et al., 2003). I was afforded the flexibility to interact with participants in order to follow up on any concerns about the study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative research design requires a process of constant review that may necessitate modification throughout the different stages of the research. While meticulous planning is vital, Lewis (2003) noted that the flexibility of qualitative research is valuable, but can lead to the possibility of unexpected issues. Because of the "elastic and non-linear" qualities of qualitative research, the design of the study was continuously reviewed for possible revisions in the process (p. 47). There are essential components of qualitative research design that will be introduced in the subsequent sections.

I secured permission to use the interdisciplinary program as the study site in order to answer the research questions. I used qualitative research methods to interview participants, and the interviews were semi-structured to allow for consistency and flexibility. As Lewis (2008) noted, in-depth interviews "provide an opportunity for detailed investigation of each person's personal perspective, for in-depth understanding of the personal context within which the research phenomenon is located, and for very detailed subject coverage" (p. 58).

Moreover, I interviewed key program administrators in order to answer research question one. I selected the administrator participants based on their position within the

interdisciplinary program with the goal of achieving a broad view of student engagement on the campus. Moreover, two administrators who worked with campus-wide student leaders and student organizations were also part of the sample. The collective perspectives of the administrators provided a global and historical view of male engagement in co-curricular programs on campus.

For research question two, I obtained contact information for potential participants from a database of those who attended a regularly offered information session about the interdisciplinary program and were asked to participate in an interview. This initial round of student interviews did not fulfill the sample size I set as a goal. Thus, I asked the program for an additional list of students who attended an information session the previous semester. Students were then contacted from this list, and five participated in a second round of interviews. Some demographic information was retrieved from the interdisciplinary program database, and student interview subjects were also asked demographic questions.

Source of data

Study data were collected through two sources: survey data and interviews. The survey data were collected from questions already asked by the interdisciplinary program as well as a request to be an interview participant. Interviews were the primary source of data for the study, and participants were male undergraduate students and interdisciplinary program administrators.

Site selection

The study was conducted at a large, public institution with a reported population in fall 2012 of 39,955 undergraduate students. Of this total, 20,543 were females and 19,412 were males (Office of Information Management and Analysis, 2012). The university reported 8,860 bachelor's degrees conferred between fall 2011 and summer 2012. Of these degree recipients, 4,695 were women and 4,165 were men. The university is the largest in the state, and it included a diverse student body in terms of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status from which the sample was drawn.

Moreover, the site was chosen because it offered a large selection of student curricular and co-curricular engagement opportunities. Undergraduate students could choose from 100 academic majors in 18 schools and colleges, including architecture, education, engineering, social work, and the arts and sciences; thus, this site provided a diversity of academic interests for students. There were 1,100 registered student organizations in spring 2013. In addition, there are a variety of other co-curricular programs offered, including Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), student government, and intramural athletics. The university reported that 3.4 percent of male undergraduates participated in fraternities during the 2012-2013 academic year.

Furthermore, as the Boyer Commission noted, research universities are those most in need of expanding interdisciplinary opportunities for undergraduate students (*Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint*, 1998). Thus, because this site was a research institution, conducting the study on this campus added to the body of evidence regarding interdisciplinary programs, including access to them and the participant make-

up of them, as recommended by the Commission.

A final reason for the site selection was that I was a recent employee of the interdisciplinary program that was the focus of the study; thus I had the unique position of understanding the internal aspects of the program and the roles of the staff administrators. I had inside knowledge of the details of the program, and I was familiar with program curriculum and student requirements (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Participants

In order to include a representative sample of perspectives and to ensure a diversity of experiences were reached, I utilized purposive sampling to select student participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ritchie, et al., 2003). Because the study focused specifically on male student engagement, I used gender as the primary criterion for selecting the sample. A secondary criterion was age. The university reported an average age of all students to be 21 years old during the 2012-2013 academic year. Age was factored into the selection in order to obtain a sample of students of similar ages for comparison purposes. However, this criterion was modified as the study progressed because I was unable to obtain a sample without including two non-traditionally aged students. While the perspectives of these students differed from their traditionally aged male peers, I described where age was pertinent to the results in chapter four. In addition, I made every effort to include students of different races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic statuses based on the initial survey results of students who volunteered for the study.

The interdisciplinary program exists at the undergraduate level and serves students from all schools and colleges at the university. Approximately 2000 students

participate in the program. This total includes students who are active and inactive in the program in that they have not yet graduated from the university. An average of 144 students apply to the program every fall and every spring. The rejection rate is an average of 16 percent from 2010-2013 and is typically based on a student's grades or a student's lack of focus on a specific interdisciplinary area.

Students were invited to become participants through a question on a survey instrument already used by the interdisciplinary program. The survey primarily gathers data on student demographic information, student interest in a specific aspect of the program, and information about where the student learned about the program. For the purposes of the study, an additional question was added to the survey to solicit participants.

The fall 2013 application deadline for the interdisciplinary program was in October 2013. After the application deadline, I matched information session survey data to the application database in order to determine the students who chose to apply and those who did not. An emailed invitation was sent to male students who followed through with their program application and those who did not (Appendix A). Permission was secured from the assistant dean who heads the program to contact students who agreed to be participants.

Because I did not fulfill my initial goal for student participants, I received Institutional Review Board permission to utilize the program's applicant database to send an email invitation to male students who attended an information session in Spring 2013

but did not apply to the program (Appendix B). Permission to contact these students was again secured from the program's supervisor.

Finally, I received permission to interview administrators, and administrators were recruited through an emailed invitation (Appendix C). I included administrators who had a variety of roles within or associated with the program with the goal of ensuring diverse perspectives. All administrator interviews took place in November 2013. All student interviews took place between November 2013 and January 2014.

Participant profile

I interviewed six staff administrators, four students who applied to the program, six students who intended to apply, and one student who did not apply to total 17 interviews. Six students and five administrators were interviewed in-person, and five students and one staff administrator were interviewed through videoconference software. Participant profiles are provided in detail in chapter four.

Interdisciplinary program data

The program consists of twelve curricular paths that culminate in a certificate for a student upon graduating from the university. Certificate topics include issues related to policy, health, culture, children, technology, and entrepreneurship. Each path requires its own application process fielded by groups of faculty members from various disciplines. The requirements for the program include classroom credit hours, experiential learning courses, and various assignments to assess a student's synthesis of the interdisciplinary topic.

I analyzed student data routinely collected by the program to examine the trends in enrollment by gender. The program database is updated each semester based on the university's institutional database. Table 1 provides information about interdisciplinary program participation by gender from fall 2011 through spring 2014. The interdisciplinary program provided these data.

	Men	Women	Total	Percentage of men in total
Fall 2011	383	1012	1395	27%
Spring 2012	419	1102	1521	27%
Fall 2012	455	1183	1638	27%
Spring 2013	484	1272	1756	27%
Fall 2013	501	1332	1833	27%
Spring 2014	525	1428	1953	27%

Table 1: Enrollment in Interdisciplinary Program by Semester

These data indicate that while total enrollment in the program increased by 28 percent over six semesters, the imbalance of enrollment by gender stayed the same. In fall 2011, 27 percent of the students were male and in spring 2014, the most recent semester, male enrollment remained at 27 percent of the total.

METHOD

The following method section provides information about the interviews and the data analysis.

Data collection

Study data were collected from semi-structured interviews conducted of male students and interdisciplinary program administrators who volunteered their experiences to me. Student recruitment emails are included in Appendices A and B and an administrator recruitment email is in Appendix C. Interview protocols are included in Appendices D, E, and F, and Institutional Review Board consent forms for both students and administrators are in Appendices G and H. Demographic information was also collected during the interviews. Interviews were digitally recorded and audio files were numerically identifiable. Participants were provided an opportunity to ask questions after the interview, and my contact information as the primary investigator was given to each participant for any follow-up questions or concerns. Pseudonyms were assigned to each interviewee to protect his or her anonymity. Files were maintained at my residence in a locked cabinet.

Data coding and analysis

All interviews were recorded and transcribed to produce raw data, which is the complete description of the participants' experiences. Before the transcription and analysis, I took notes about the interview in order to discover any initial themes that developed. The raw data were coded in order to organize concepts and synthesized the concepts into themes. According to Miles and Huberman, codes are "tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during the study" (1994, p. 56). Terenzini and Reason's (2005) model of college student

experience offered one introductory list for data coding (Table 2). Table 2 indicates which codes address each research question.

Start Code	Definition	Research Question (Q1, Q2,)
BG	Student Background	Q2
OCI	Organizational Context- Internal	Q1
OCC	Organizational Context- Curricular and Co-Curricular	Q1, Q2
OCF	Organizational Context- Faculty Culture	Q1, Q2
PE	Peer Environment	Q2
ISEC	Individual Student Experience-Curricular	Q2
ISECR	Individual Student Experience-Classroom	Q2
ISEO	Individual Student Experience-Out-of-Class	Q2

Table 2: College Experience Start Codes

A secondary list of start codes was derived from Harris' (2010) conceptual model of the meanings college men make of masculinities (Table 3).

Start Code	Definition	Research Question (Q1, Q2)
PGSP	Precollege Gender Socialization- Parents	Q2
PGSS	Precollege Gender Socialization- Sports	Q2
CCA	Campus Culture- Academic	Q1, Q2
CCS	Campus Culture- Social	Q1, Q2
AI	Academic Interests	Q1, Q2
CI	Campus Involvement	Q1, Q2
MPGI	Male Peer Group Interactions	Q2
MGNW	Male Gendered Norms- Work Hard/Play Hard	Q2
MGNH	Male Gendered Norms- Hypermasculine Performance	Q2
MGNM	Male Gendered Norms- Male Bonding	Q2

Table 3: Meanings of Masculinities Start Codes

While the above lists acted as preliminary guides, open coding was also utilized in order to discover other emergent ideas (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I employed emic coding in order to answer the research questions when they were not answered by the start codes developed from the theoretical frameworks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, I kept memos during data collection and analysis, as this helped make connections across conceptual areas. Memo writing captured the ideas and impressions that emerged through close contact with the data (Maxwell, 2005).

POSITIONALITY

Regarding positionality in the research design, I was aware of my position and the possible issues within the study could have arisen with this reality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Having recently been employed by the program that was the focus of the study, I had the unique position of understanding the internal aspects of the program and the roles of the staff administrators. This insider perspective was a strength of the research design and was beneficial when examining the details of the program, as I was familiar with the program curriculum and student requirements. Because it was six months since I departed the program and the university at the time of the first round of interviews, I did not know any of the students, as they were new to the program. Moreover, I had already departed the program before the students in the second round of interviews attended an information session, so I did not know any of them either.

In addition, my gender as a female was an issue of positionality when interviewing male participants. In a research study on the potential effects of the gender of the researcher interviewing male respondents, Williams and Heikes (1993) noted that researchers employing in-depth interviewing techniques must keep in mind that study participant responses may be formulated within the "gendered context of the interview."

> Voluntary research participants will likely try to avoid offending or threatening the interviewer with unflattering or socially undesirable opinions and will tend to frame responses in ways designed to minimize this possibility. We found that people used the interviewer's gender as a cue to gauge the interviewer's orientations and opinions, and they developed their responses within that gendered context. (p. 288)

Williams and Heikes offered that while a female researcher must understand the possibility of gender assumptions causing different responses from male participants than

if the researcher were male, overall the themes from the responses remained the same even if the language used to express those themes was different. Thus, I kept gender differences in mind throughout the interview process, which necessitated revising some interview questions and probing for further information when the respondent seemed hesitant to offer an honest response.

ASSUMPTIONS

There were several assumptions to consider about the study. One assumption was that the students who attended an information session about the interdisciplinary programs were there for similar motivations and of their own volition.

A second assumption was that the students who chose to attend an information session about the interdisciplinary program did so because they had some previous knowledge of interdisciplinary studies and the potential benefits of pursing the program. Information sessions are advertised to students in various ways, including in their freshmen orientation brochures, during class visits by program staff, and through faculty and academic advisor interactions where the person may refer a student to an information session based on their interest in the program topics. Thus, the experiences of students who were unaware of the program were not expressed in the study.

Furthermore, a third assumption was the student engagement is beneficial to student learning, as the body of engagement research supports (see for example, Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Engagement theories noted the value in students participating in co-curricular opportunities while in college as these experiences supported student learning and persistence.

The final assumption was that male students experience internal conflict with respect to their masculinity or gender identity (O'Neil et al., 1986; Davis, 2002; Davis & Laker, 2004; Edwards & Jones, 2009; Harris, 2010). Based on previous data, I assumed that male students experience some conflict with the gender identity concerning conforming to social roles and masculine norms while in college.

LIMITATIONS

There were several limitations to the study. One limitation was that it did not follow students who joined the program until the completion of their interdisciplinary certificate upon graduation. Thus, it only focused on those who chose to apply to the program and those who do not, and their reasons for doing so. It is possible that the students will not choose to follow through with completing the program either because they change their minds or because their grades do not meet the minimum requirement for graduation with the certificate. Second, interviews of participants were conducted, thus it was assumed that the student perceptions of their engagement experiences were accurate. Another limitation was that the male students who participated in the study were limited to those who expressed that they did not feel family pressure to pursue certain academic paths. The study did not include students who are not as supported by their family in their academic pursuits.

Finally, this study was dependent on the researcher as the instrument, which could have led to bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I was once employed by the interdisciplinary program which allowed me to have unique insights and knowledge of the program; however, I was no longer employed by the program at the time of the study and I was not

familiar with the students who attended the information sessions and applied as they were new to the program.

DELIMITATIONS

One delimitation of the study was that conclusions drawn from the research data were limited to students who were already aware of the interdisciplinary program or the benefits of pursuing similar programs. As noted in a previous assumption, the participants already had baseline knowledge of the interdisciplinary program because they decided to attend an information session based on an advertisement or a referral. Thus, the conclusions of the research did not pertain to students who had no knowledge of the interdisciplinary program at hand or to those who decided not to attend an information session.

A second delimitation was that the study focused mostly on traditionally aged male college students and their interest in the interdisciplinary program. While including more non-traditional students would have offered more diverse perspectives, I was limited by student responses to the solicitation for interviews, thus only two of the eleven students were over the age of 24.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

While measuring for reliability and validity in qualitative studies is distinct from the ways these two aspects of generalizability are measured in quantitative research, it is important in qualitative research to note the "strength of the data" and the ways in which the results can be generalized to other settings and populations (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003, p. 270).

In order to maintain reliability, or as Lewis and Ritchie noted, in order to explain the "sturdiness of the data" and the "soundness of the study," the researcher must express ways in which the study findings may be replicated (p. 271). According to the authors, there are two ways to confirm the possible replication of qualitative data:

> First, there is the need to ensure that the research is as robust as it can be by carrying out internal checks on the quality of the data and its interpretation. Second, there is the need to assure the reader/enquirer of the research by providing information about the research process. (p. 272)

Lewis and Ritchie offered several questions researchers should ask in order to determine if the data are reliable, including: Was the sample representative of the population without missing coverage? Were participants allowed to fully express their experiences to the researcher? Were multiple assessments used to analyze the data so that the analysis was completed in a comprehensive way? Did the researcher interpret the data based on the evidence? For the current study, I made every effort to select a representative sample. I allowed participants to express their experiences, I developed thick and rich descriptions of those experiences, and I fully analyzed the data so that conclusions are comprehensive and offer ways in which the study can be replicated with other programs and other student populations.

Another critical aspect of generalizing research findings is to express the validity of the data. Validity refers to the accuracy of the way the data are interpreted by the researcher and the ability to test the results against another part of the population (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). In order to ensure the correctness of the study, I utilized techniques offered by Ritchie and Lewis, including member validation so that participants were able to confirm that the interpretation of their experiences was correct. In order to confirm

accuracy of the interviews, transcripts were shared with the participants.

SUMMARY

This chapter offered information about the methodology and research techniques that were utilized to complete the study. Study data were collected through interviews of male students who, after attending an information session, decided to apply to the interdisciplinary program and interviews of male students who decided not to apply. Furthermore, data were also gathered through interviews of program administrators. The study findings offered insights to students and program administrators regarding engagement choices male college students make and the reasons for these choices.

The following chapter provides the results, including a detailed description of the seven emergent themes developed after study data were analyzed and conceptualized.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of the study was to examine the engagement of male college students in an interdisciplinary, co-curricular college program at a large research university in the southwestern United States. In order to contribute to research regarding the college student engagement in an interdisciplinary program, this study answered the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of student affairs administrators regarding male student engagement in co-curricular programs, and what strategies do they use to reach out to male students to get them more involved?

2. Why are male students choosing or not choosing to be involved in the opportunity to pursue an interdisciplinary program?

    a. What conflicts, if any, are arising based on their notions of masculinity and how those notions fit with "co-curricular" choices?

This chapter provides a description of the findings from the data that were gathered and analyzed for the study. The findings are presented in themes developed through the analysis of the in-depth interviews of students and staff administrators. The themes were synthesized in the context of the research questions and the two conceptual frameworks: Terenzini and Reason's (2005) model of college student experience and Harris' (2010) conceptual model of the meanings college men make of masculinities.

The data analysis yielded seven primary emergent themes: four themes are specific to the administrator data and three themes are specific to the student data. The administrator themes are (a) males are underrepresented in campus involvement opportunities; (b) male students are less academically exploratory; (c) interdisciplinary program attracts fewer male students; and (d) gender make-up of program staff causes

concern. The student themes are (e) academic interests are diverse and outside gendered norms; (f) acceptance is in, Greek involvement is out; and (g) the individual student's involvement experience.

The themes are described in detail in the following sections with the administrator section providing a broad view and the student section offering more specific experiences. I use the participants' voices to provide detail to the themes so that the reader receives the direct account of the experience as it relates to the themes. Moreover, I utilize what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call "thick descriptions" to expand on the themes and best represent the participant perspective.

There were six administrators interviewed for the study. Four administrators worked directly for the interdisciplinary program that was the setting for the study, and two of the administrators worked for the same university in positions in which they interacted with and supervised students from across the campus with various personal and academic backgrounds. The administrators occupied their positions in durations ranging from ten months to seven years. Several worked with student government and other governing bodies across campus as well as the campus Greek community. One administrator worked with undeclared and exploratory students in a previous position with the university. All participants were given a pseudonym and identifying information was altered to protect their anonymity.

ADMINISTRATOR THEME 1: MALES UNDERREPRESENTED IN CAMPUS INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Terenzini and Reason (2005) included campus involvement in curricular and co-curricular experiences as a component of their model for student engagement in college. In the current study, the administrators worked with students in a variety of capacities related to student engagement outside of the classroom. The following description of this theme relates to their experiences with male students in leadership programs and in Greek social fraternities. I asked about these involvement experiences to get a sense of where men spend their time and how this aligns with other co-curricular involvement opportunities. Research by Capraro (2000, 2004) and Harris (2010) suggested that leadership roles and the ability to have male bonding experiences often drive male student engagement decisions. The interdisciplinary program is an opportunity for involvement that does not specifically fit into these two categories, thus understanding where administrators see men getting involved helped determine their motivation in seeking out a program outside of these male norms.

The Males Underrepresented in Campus Involvement Opportunities theme includes the subthemes of Leadership and Greek community to provide specific details regarding male student involvement from the administrator perspective.

Leadership

According to Sax (2008), college men arrive on campus already having a sense of their own leadership skills, a finding confirmed by the experiences of several of the administrators in this study who noted that men are not as engaged in leadership

opportunities as their female peers. From the administrator perspective, one co-curricular opportunity that men sought out more was student government, which corroborated research by Harris (2010) that involvement in student government conforms to college males' meanings of masculinity because this opportunity tends to be high-profile and adheres to masculine norms.

Catherine was an administrator who worked with student leaders across campus. Her programs introduced students to leadership opportunities in their first-year. She described the students she worked with as a unique group that were highly motivated to be involved in co-curricular activities, both inside and outside the classroom:

> I think for the most part, given what I do, I think the majority of students that I see are the really highly engaged student and so I would say I do see a very specific cross-section of the student body: the students who are highly engaged in student organizations, very motivated in terms of wanting to be in leadership positions and aspiring for leadership positions.

Catherine explained that her programs were available to all students in any academic major. In terms of gender balance, she reported that women outnumbered men in their level of involvement in the programs. For the male leaders she worked with, Catherine described them as being small in number; however, those who were present were highly involved and motivated to go beyond the requirements of their positions:

> These are students who go out and do leadership workshops and trainings for student organizations and both of these teams have more women than men. And then the men we do have sort of are involved in everything. I am thinking especially a few of our male students who are kind of our rock star students.

She went on to note that most of the male students she worked with were students of color. These were students who were committed to campus-wide programs and they continued to work with them as they progressed in their college career. "I would say the

majority of males we have are students of color, I would also say many of them are first generation college students or students who were part of academic support programs and then got connected with us and continued on."

In his model on the meanings college men make of masculinity, Harris (2010) specifically cited student government as a popular engagement opportunity among male students seeking leadership positions. Being involved in campus politics gives men a leadership platform that conforms to a traditionally masculine role. Catherine noted that working with student leaders involved in student government provided an opportunity to see the gender dynamics among the male and female students:

> You know [here] we have this system where we have the president, vice president of student government and then you have an executive board and then you have at-large members for student government. I've definitely seen a rise in female at-large members but I think student government is primarily male-oriented.

Catherine went on to note that women were active in many influential roles in student government, but those tended to be behind the scenes, and they frequently left the higher profile positions to their male peers and running mates:

> It's interesting to hear that women sometimes self-select themselves to be vice presidents and put up a male to be president. And, traditionally, the vice presidents tend to do a lot more of the work than presidents but the presidents are in rooms that have a higher level of visibility. The presidents sit on the university president's advisory committee, things like that. But in some ways the women vice presidents are doing a lot of the work. So, it's a very interesting dynamic, and I would say at least in two cases, I know women who were either running or became vice presidents, and who intentionally and strategically said, no I want to become vice president, I don't want to be president because I need to put this person up for president because they are going to attract more votes but really I will be the one doing all the work. And then we also see the chief-of-staff role as one where you are seeing more women which is an interesting role to have because this position has a lot of influence, a lot of power, but not as much visibility, and again I am seeing more women be a part of that.

Natalie, an interdisciplinary program advisor, had similar experiences working with student leaders in student government on a different campus in the same state:

> The senate was very male-dominated…these male students were the ones who were trying to change policies at the university and things like that and you have sort of these very high profile roles and they had the ears of congressmen and president of the university and vice president of student affairs. It mirrors what we see in our own government nationally as well as on the state level, and so I think some of those positions of power, as much power as you can have as an undergraduate student…that was probably the attraction there.

Greek community

Several of the administrators worked or currently work with students in a variety of Greek organizations. Catherine described the social fraternities as being imbalanced in terms of male and female involvement with the campus. She noted that women in the Greek community were more engaged with the university administration and in leadership positions. "Women were definitely more represented on the leadership side. Especially in the Greek community, it is so easy to see those differences because they are split by gender," she said. Elizabeth, an administrator who helped oversee rules and regulations in student activities, noted that male Greek students tended to be less structured in their recruitment efforts than their female sorority peers. She did not see this as a negative thing, just a different way of going about the member recruitment process:

> I just think they go about it a little differently sometimes. There is more of a wink, wink nudge, nudge kind of laid back cool thing that I have seen a little bit more. For example sorority rush [here], it's just so structured and the men are just like "come around and then after you come around a lot then you are like okay you are going to become [a member]." It's just a little bit more casual.

Catherine explained that the Greek community tended to be a challenging environment for gay students and students who did not fit the hypermasculine stereotypes

described by Harris (2010):

> I think gender and sexual orientation go hand in hand for a lot of men in Greek life because being gay challenges people's notions of what is masculine so these students have to negotiate that. Outside of Greek life I have also encountered students who have also wanted to run for positions like the student government president or executive board member and to navigate what do I do, do I come out and say that I am a gay man or not, and I think those questions are questions heterosexuals don't have to answer and what does that mean when someone has to make that decision and navigate that. So, I think for men oftentimes, going into leadership positions as a gay man are challenging because there are perceptions that gay men are not masculine enough.

Summary

The administrators explained that while student government was a co-curricular engagement opportunity dominated by men on campus, other areas of leadership were not as appealing to the male students. In their experiences, the male students that participated in leadership opportunities tended to be those in underrepresented groups such as students of color. Of those male students that did participate, the administrators reported that they brought a lot of passion and commitment to their positions.

For the administrators, the Greek community was seen as a popular involvement opportunity for men. However, for those men who did not fit in the hypermasculine gender norm, this area of engagement often felt oppositional to their identities.

ADMINISTRATOR THEME 2: MALE STUDENTS ARE LESS ACADEMICALLY EXPLORATORY

In the study, several of the administrators described male students they have worked with as being less open to academic exploration than their female peers. They offered that family pressure and an individual desire to conform to specific male roles were two primary reasons male students seemed less likely to explore other academic fields. When asked if she noticed any gender differences in the willingness of students to explore their academic options, Catherine said:

> I think women are more likely to explore or be open than our male students. I think it goes back to your earlier question of gender roles. So a male and a female student might come in both wanting to do business, and then for the woman she may find out there's economics or communication or psychology and she may want to explore those. But for the male student psychology does not conform to my gender role or education doesn't conform, maybe I will look into economics but business is acceptable.

Program advisor Natalie agreed, and described how, in her experience, this less flexible approach to academic endeavors may hinder male students from seeking other co-curricular experiences:

> I think the female students tend to be a little bit more exploratory. And by exploratory, I mean not in the sense that they don't know what they are interested in or what they want to do, but exploratory in terms of those are the students who sort of have an open canvas. They are very open to the ways that they are going to explore their [interdisciplinary] program whether its going abroad or if it's adding on a minor, changing their degree programs, they are very fluid in terms of how they approach their academic career overall here. And then the males are more concrete and so knowing what their end goal is and how they want to get there. And into that point it could be a little detrimental if they only have this tunnel vision of how they want to get to their end goal, they might not think that studying abroad is an option or they might not ever consider changing their major unless they can't get into a major…. unless they hit that barrier.

Nina was an interdisciplinary program advisor and in a previous position she

worked with exploratory students, some of who were students who were not accepted into their choice of major. She described scenarios in which male students felt the need to conform to certain roles in their choice of major, and if they were restricted from that, they felt a sense of disappointment:

> Some of my male students were more career-driven in terms of their choice of major, not that I didn't have female students as well, but you know engineering, business, those were probably the top two and these were students who had been turned down by those colleges and now they were in this college that they didn't want to be in and they were being told that it would be very difficult to get where they wanted as far as the degree, and my role was to help them work toward that goal if that's what they had determined they wanted but also to ask them to really evaluate whether that was going to be the best fit and thinking about non-linear career paths and I think sometimes there was some resistance to that especially if they were getting very different messages from parents or other people in their lives. I had a lot of students who would doggedly pursue trying to transfer into one of those majors they had decided when they were in high school they needed, and despite the fact they weren't succeeding in that path, having a really hard time thinking about being open to other possibilities. I had a lot of students who would end up on scholastic probation and I think the majority of them were male students who had gone down that path of taking calculus for engineering or business and just not succeeding and then being in a position where they felt like they had fewer options… It can be a very emotional [exploration] process for students because oftentimes their identity is [based on] parental pressure, or you would be good at math in high school and all your teachers said you should be an engineer. Because you know your good at math in this small town high school and then coming here and realizing oh, and everyone else is ten times better in a subject I've been told I'm good at and then I have to rethink who I am and what are my strengths and what I am I going to do with myself.

Catherine expanded on her thoughts regarding gender differences in academic exploration and noted that, in her experience, students of color were willing to explore their academic options at greater rates than White students:

> I think gender role wise I think oftentimes women are a little more open to exploration. I think, again, just again from my experiences, I think our students of color in some ways are more open to different choices, but oftentimes they experience a different pressure in terms of I need to do well in college but it may not be that I have to be in a specific major, and exception of course is our Asian

> American students who feel the pressure to be in this particular major and get this particular degree. Our Latino, our African American students, our Native American students oftentimes have more flexibility in terms of changing their majors.

On the other hand, Elizabeth offered that in her experience students with economic privilege were less likely to explore their academic options and interests no matter their gender. "I think it might come down more to privilege. I think students who come with less socio-economic privilege are higher risk takers than students that come in that are wealthier." Elizabeth's experience related to Edwards and Jones' (2009) findings that male students with various types of privilege such as being in the dominant race and those with financial stability, were less likely to be concerned about their level of campus involvement and were more likely to adhere to masculine norms in terms of their academic majors.

Summary

According to the administrators, male students who were not accepted into their choice of major found it difficult to explore other academic areas. They noted these men felt a sense of conflict over not following the academic paths that adhered to male gender roles such as business and engineering. For the administrators, female students and students of color tended to be more exploratory and open to academic majors. This theme corroborated some of Harris' (2010) findings that male students desired specific, male-dominated academic majors that offered greater financial opportunities and, in their mind, a better chance at being the breadwinner in the family. If a male student sought out a certain path and was unable to reach his goals because of restrictions to admission into business and engineering programs, for example, this created a conflict with his gender

role.

ADMINISTRATOR THEME 3: INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAM ATTRACTS FEWER MALE STUDENTS

I interviewed four administrators who worked in several different positions within the interdisciplinary program that is the focus of the current study. The four administrators described overall student interest and engagement in the program. In addition, they added their perspectives on why male students, specifically, were interested in the program. The following description of the theme ends with a section that includes the administrators noting characteristics of males who are actively involved in the interdisciplinary program.

Student interest in the certificate program

The four interdisciplinary program administrators all agreed that male and female students seek out the interdisciplinary certificate options for a variety of reasons. Melanie noted that genuine interest in the topic fuels most of the students' interest. "I feel like they are generally pretty passionate, like they are connecting to whatever the topic is that they are applying to for this program in a way that maybe they aren't in their major," she said. Melanie explained that many of the students she advised for the program were highly motivated in their academic pursuits and their grades. "I think this program in general attracts really high-achieving students who are really ambitious. I end up with a lot of honor students in the program," she described. Although the interdisciplinary program was not an honors program, she said often those were the types of students who sought it out to expand their academic portfolio.

Natalie noted that because the interdisciplinary program requires experiential learning through internships and research, students interested in the program found these requirements to be beneficial to their future careers or graduate school goals:

> I think a lot of students are looking for something as a complement to their major. So a lot of times if their major doesn't offer that practical experience, for example, research or an internship, then students will apply to [the program] seeking those experiences to be a little bit more in depth with the experience of their major. And then there are other students who want to study in additional areas of specialization, something that is completely different from their major, but they may not have the time to do another degree program or a minor might not be an attractive option to them because it's all within one discipline and they just really want to get a variety of perspectives related to one specific topic of specialization.

Finally, Erica, an interdisciplinary program administrator, noted that students were seeking out the program for a number of reasons, one of which was to add a credential to their resume:

> I think they all seem very motivated to do something extra in addition to their major. You know they are looking for an additional type of credential. I think some of them are more motivated by that and some of them are more motivated by the actual topic itself. The extra credential is not that big of a draw as for some of the students it might be more of a draw.

Natalie agreed with Erica, and she offered that some students sought it out primarily as a resume-builder. "A lot of times they do tell me it's because it will look good on their resume. Also, it will be attractive for graduate schools and again, I think it goes not just for the coursework but really for the [experiential] component of the program in terms of how they might be able to gain experience in a professional setting."

Male engagement in the interdisciplinary program

When asked about the number of male students in the program, all of the program administrators confirmed that there were more women than men, as the attendance data in

chapter three indicated. The administrators did note that there were distinctions regarding which of the programs tended to appeal to men, with those that are more technical in their requirements being more popular. Nina noted:

> I think definitely we don't see a lot of male students. I think the exception for that is [the technical certificates], I haven't actually looked at the numbers but I feel I have equal parts male and female, maybe actually more male students in that [one] which is kind of interesting.

Natalie explained that men often sought out the interdisciplinary program as a substitute for an academic major they were not accepted into because of grade restrictions. In her view, because they tended to be less academically exploratory, some men sought out specific topics in the program in an attempt to connect to what they could not pursue as their primary major:

> With males, if they can't get into their major of choice, a lot of times they will try seek out the [program] that's going to fulfill that interest. They are willing to sort of switch their academic goals I think if they hit a barrier with their first choice…I got that this past semester with a student who I think is an economics major. He wants to do [a business-related certificate]. He has a particularly low GPA, but he essentially said, "I need an alternative to a finance degree" and so sort of coming to the [program] looking for that and we talked about how that wouldn't necessarily fulfill what he was looking for.

Natalie's previous comment was similar to those regarding male students and their desire to focus on academic majors that fit into the masculine norms like business and engineering. In her experience, if those male students were not accepted into one of these areas, they pursued whatever options may seem most connected.

Characteristics of male students in the program

Nina worked with a few of the interdisciplinary topics. One of her topics was dominated by females, but she said of the male students she worked with who decided to

pursue a path that did not fit into a masculine norm, many tended to be quite secure in themselves. "I'm thinking of specific faces right now and they [male students] tend to be, but not all, fairly outgoing and intellectually curious, which probably all of our students have that intellectual curiosity." Melanie also spoke about how the few male students she advised seemed very dedicated and passionate about their topic:

> Since the program [includes] more women, I see more women. I do feel like there are those students again who are so motivated. There are all these men that I see all the time. They are the same ones showing up to everything. It's definitely dominated by women. I see more women in advising, I see more women at events…But it's interesting, those men who are really committed to the program and have a goal and want to achieve something are here all the time.

The perspectives of Melanie and Nina provided a view that although there are not as many male students who pursued the interdisciplinary program, the ones who did were highly engaged and secure in their choices. This was similar to how Catherine described the men she worked with in campus-wide leadership programs: they were small in number but highly motivated and secure in their directions.

In her research on the gender gap in engagement, Sax (2008) noted that men were less interested in social activism than women. Contrary to this research, Nina said that the male students she worked with in the technical interdisciplinary certificate seemed particularly interested in social good:

> With those [technical] students, the male students in particular, what I have noticed which I think is kind of interesting, who know they are interested in game design and development, what I have heard from them is that they see applications for using the skills they are developing for doing social good which is not at all part of that [certificate], it's not a focus of it.

ADMINISTRATOR THEME 4: GENDER MAKE-UP OF PROGRAM STAFF CAUSES CONCERN

Several of the administrators noted that the staff overseeing many of the campus co-curricular programs was predominately female. They wondered if the gender make-up of the staff might make prospective male students feel less connected to the program. Natalie and Melanie both talked about particular situations in which male students have confronted them in group meetings in ways that made them feel uncomfortable. They did not know if this was specifically related to gender, but they felt like because they were female administrators, a few men were more aggressive in their communication in ways they would not have been with a male staff member. Natalie said:

> We are an all-female staff. I know we have been challenged. Again, I don't know if it's because of gender, but there is one particular student that I know that I was consistently challenged by and I know that he did the same to another advisor during a connecting experience check-in. In terms of the requirements for the program, saying in the [meeting], "This is a waste of time. Why am I here?"

A few administrators noted trying to hire more male staff members and graduate assistants so that male students see and connect to people who are similar to them. Catherine, who worked with campus-wide programs, said:

> Our staff is very female heavy. We are predominately female staff. We have just one male full-time member. One of the things we have tried to do, we know if we are trying to engage males, we have to have that reflected in our staff as well, so we are really trying to think what are some ways we can really engage our male students. We have tried to see and really do some targeted recruitment with our student leaders and tried to get more males on our team.

Similarly, Melanie noted that having a male administrator in the past seemed to change some dynamics of the interdisciplinary program's ability to relate to male students. She explained:

> We did have a male staff person at one point, and I just anecdotally think that it did make a difference having him present at events like he seemed to really connect to the men in the program, actually. I don't know if that affected our numbers, but it just seem like when we had events, he was really engaged in talking to men which is now what he does after he left the program – he does now social work with young men. He was interested in experiences and kind of well being of men.

One of the interdisciplinary administrators expressed that some of the names of the programs and the marketing material could be more appealing to female students based on assumptions of gender roles and career choices. Natalie said:

> I think reexamining maybe the names of some of our programs. I think that could be helpful highlighting more of our male students. If we think about [the materials] we pass out [to recruit students to information sessions], I think we only have one male currently featured on that and three females, and so just being intentional about our recruitment literature.

Summary

Students sought out the interdisciplinary program for a variety of reasons, among them were: to add a credential to their resume, to gain experiential skills, and to learn more about the interdisciplinary topic that was a passion of theirs. The program data in chapter three showed that women outnumber men in the interdisciplinary program. The administrators knew this and confirmed that they primarily have experiences working with and advising female students. In addition, they also provided evidence that many of the men that were interested and did commit to the program were unique in that they were passionate about the subject and seemed confident in their identity even if it did not adhere to male norms in terms of academic choice.

Finally, several of the administrators discussed concerns over the gender make-up of the program staff. They wondered if having more males in position of leadership

within the programs would help recruit and retain male students.

The following sections provide descriptions of each student participant and detail the three themes conceptualized from the student data.

STUDENT PARTICIPANT PROFILES

The student participants were primarily of a traditional college age 18-22. There were two non-traditional students: one aged 25-35 who transferred from a community college after working for several years in the culinary industry, and one who was aged 25-35 and was seeking his second undergraduate degree after working in a variety of positions. The majority of students were White with one or both parents identifying as college graduates. Their academic majors varied and several of them held jobs. Each participant was given a pseudonym and identifying details were altered to protect his anonymity. In addition, ages of the participants were grouped as 18-24 and 25-35 to protect anonymity. Table 3 provides an illustration of the students described below.

Charles. Charles was an 18-24 year old liberal arts major from a large city in the state. He was a second year student who described his ethnicity as Latino. Charles was a first-generation college student who explained that his parents did not have much influence on his college decisions. He was attending college with a full scholarship that covered tuition and living expenses. He described himself as very involved, and he held several leadership positions in organizations. In addition, he had a part-time retail job. Charles applied to the interdisciplinary program in fall 2013. He was the only participant who did not attend an information session prior to submitting his application.

David. David was the only double academic major in the sample. He was

studying film and communication. Because of placement credit, David was a junior in academic credits but he was in his second year at the university. David was an 18-24 year-old White student from a large city in the state whose parents attended college. He qualified for financial assistance that provided a work-study position on campus. David attended an information session in spring 2013, and he applied to the interdisciplinary program fall 2013. He described himself as a driven student who liked to be very involved on campus and off in a variety of film and event planning organizations.

Derrick. Derrick was a 25-35 year-old science major. He returned to campus six years after graduating with another major. He was in his second year of this second major. He described himself as White with parents who both attended college. Derrick did not work, and he was involved in a few student organizations but did not describe them as a large commitment. He was the only student participant who planned to join a social fraternity. Derrick attended a program information session in spring 2013 and applied to the program fall 2013.

John. John was an 18-24 year-old, White student from a suburb of a large city in the state. He began his first year as an engineering student but in that same semester he switched to an undeclared major and he said was exploring his academic options. Both of his parents attended college, and his father earned a graduate degree. John did not work, and he was a member of three student organizations, although he did not hold a leadership position in any. He attended an information session and applied to the program in fall 2013.

Mark. Mark was an 18-24 year-old architecture major in his second year of

college. He was the only out-of-state student and the only Black student in the sample. Mark's mother graduated from college. He did not have a job, and he participated in two student organizations. He did not hold a leadership position in either. Mark attended an interdisciplinary program information session in spring 2013 but he had not yet applied. He had, however, taken a few courses in the curriculum, and he planned to apply in a future semester.

Thomas. Thomas was a first-year business student. However, he was uncertain about his desire to stay a business major, as he was interested in switching to a more artistic academic path. He was 18-24 years old and from a suburb of a large city in the state. Thomas' father had a graduate degree. He described his race as White. He worked for a consultant off campus, and he was involved in three student organizations. He said he held a leadership position in the business organization he was involved in. Thomas learned about the interdisciplinary program while attending an information session during summer orientation. He had not applied because he wanted to focus on his business major but he intended to apply in his second year.

Gavin. Gavin was in his third year of college but was in his first year on campus as a community college transfer student. He was 25-35 years old and he studied science. Gavin was White and he had many college and graduate school graduates in his family. During the time of the interview, he worked in the culinary industry about an hour from campus, but he intended to leave that job to focus more on his academics and to get more involved in campus life. He attended an information session in fall 2013, and he intended to apply the following semester.

Elliot. Elliot was a White transfer student in his first year on campus but his second year in college. He was 18-24 years old and from a suburb of a large city in the state. He was one of two first-generation college students in the sample. Elliot was a communication major, and he described himself as very involved on the campus debate team. He did not work. He attended an information session in the fall 2013 but he did not apply because of his hectic schedule. He intended to apply spring 2014.

Chris. Chris was a White, first-year liberal arts major from a large city in the state. He was 18-24 years old, and he had a job with an organization associated with the university. His dad graduated from college and his mother attended some college. Chris was in a few student organizations, but he reported he did not hold a leadership position in any. He attended an information session in fall 2013 but he did not apply because his schedule was too busy. He intended to apply to the interdisciplinary program in a future semester.

Blake. Blake was a White, first-semester business student. He was 18-24 years old and he reported that his parents attended college. Blake attended a program information session as a freshmen summer orientation student. He did not belong to any student organizations and he had a job working on a computer program. Blake did not apply in the fall because he wanted to wait a semester, and he intended to apply spring 2014. As a first semester freshman, he attended an interdisciplinary program introductory class open to all students that also introduced him to the subject.

Sean. At the time of the interview, Sean was an undeclared major who intended to finish pre-requisite requirements and apply to the school of social work. He was an 18-24

year-old, second-year White student from a small town in the state. Sean reported that both his parents attended college. He was active in the marching band, and he reported that this took up much of his time outside of class. He said he was thinking of quitting band so that he could focus on other co-curricular interests. Sean was the only student study participant who attended an information session but did not intend to apply. He cited the challenging and inflexible requirements of the social work program as the reason he chose not to apply.

Table 4 provides a graphic illustration of the student participant information. All students were male. Each participant was given a pseudonym and identifying details were altered to protect his anonymity.

Name	Major	Year in College	Race/ Ethnicity	Age	First Generation College Student?	Semester attended info session	Program Application Status
Charles	Liberal Arts	Second	Latino	18-24	Yes	Did not attend	Applied, Fall 2013
David	Film and Communication	Second	White	18-24	No	Spring 2013	Applied, Fall 2013
Derrick	Science	Second	White	25-35	No	Spring 2013	Applied, Fall 2013
John	Undeclared	First	White	18-24	No	Fall 2013	Applied, Fall 2013
Mark	Architecture	Second	Black	18-24	No	Spring 2013	Intends to apply
Thomas	Business	First	White	18-24	No	Fall 2013	Intends to apply
Gavin	Science	Third	White	25-35	No	Fall 2013	Intends to apply
Elliot	Communication	Second	White	18-24	Yes	Fall 2013	Intends to apply
Chris	Liberal Arts	First	White	18-24	No	Fall 2013	Intends to apply
Blake	Business	First	White	18-24	No	Summer 2013	Intends to apply
Sean	Undeclared- focusing on Social Work	Second	White	18-24	No	Spring 2013	Did not apply

Table 4: Student Participant Demographic Data

After collecting and analyzing the student interview transcripts, I decided to group all students together when developing study themes. All but one student attended an information session, and he applied to the program despite not doing that. What I discovered was that the act of attending the information sessions privileged the students: they sought out the program on their own knowing at least some information about it.

Despite being in different groups, all the students shared similar characteristics in terms of their academic decisions and acceptance of their identities as male college students. The one student who did not apply to the program shared similar attributes to the students that did as he attended an information session and had an academic reason to not pursue the program. The students who did not apply but intended to all expressed a passion for the subject and had not gone through with the application for various reasons explained in the sections below.

Student Theme 1: Academic Interests are Diverse and Outside Gendered Norms

In his research on college males and masculinity, Harris (2010) described the choice of an academic major as one that is often grounded in traditional views of masculinity which pressure male students to choose an academic direction that leads to the opportunity to be the breadwinner. Harris cited law, business, and engineering as a few of the more male-dominated majors. In the current study, students were asked about their academic major and how this choice conformed or did not conform to any norms they felt as a male. Several students noted that while their academic direction was not the typical path for a male student, after contemplation, none expressed concern over their academic choices.

Charles, who applied to the program, was confident in his decision to pursue a liberal arts major, as he knew his academic strengths were best suited for this path. However, he did notice the gender imbalance in his classes and he expressed an understanding of the male gender norms that caused some male peers to pursue more

stereotypical math and science degrees. Charles explained:

> I think that people expect because if you're a male, you're supposed to be studying math or science or be an engineer or chemistry or a doctor. I mean, it's apparent. The sex ratio in most [of these] fields is dominated by males. The field that I'm in, liberal arts, is mostly dominated by females. That's just the way it is or it's the way it's been.

First-year student Chris, who intended to apply to the program, was also pursuing an academic path atypical of a male student. He wanted to be a teacher and held this as a goal after admiring a teacher he had in middle school:

> I wanted to be a teacher since I was in seventh grade… I'm doing [liberal arts] and I'm also doing [teacher certification], so I want to be a teacher. I want to be able to understand children, adolescence, teenagers, and minors basically, on a level more than just my experience as one.

Chris' confidence in his desire to teach came from his childhood experiences and the impact teachers have had on his life. Finally, second-year student Sean, the only student who did not intend to apply to the program, was taking pre-social work major requirements. He expressed comfort with his choice after attempting to pursue a pre-medical track with a science major that left him feeling overwhelmed. After taking a public health class he changed his major to ultimately go into public health studies after he graduates. "Not a lot of people understand why I want to do [social work], and it is odd because if you look at the classes that graduate from the school, it's 48 girls and one guy. It's still stuck in the dark ages when it comes to gender roles and I feel like that's very prevalent [here]."

Interdisciplinary program

Several participants viewed the interdisciplinary program and the required experiential components as an opportunity to add practical skills onto an academic path

in ways that may have been unavailable in their academic major if their major did not offer credit for internship and research experiences. Derrick, who returned to college after completing an undergraduate degree and working for a few years, noted:

> I used to graphic design. I still graphic design but not really for a living. And, so I thought it would be a good way to expand my horizons a little bit, learn some things I didn't know, solidify by current knowledge, and get that certification…I thought it might be nice to get some sort of formal training.

Likewise, Thomas was a business major but he was considering switching to an art degree. He expressed an awareness of the lack of male students pursuing artistic majors, and he noted that adding an interdisciplinary studies certificate might help him add more practical, career-oriented skills to make him more marketable in the career field. Thomas explained:

> I think the biggest pressure I feel about switching to art is that it's art. It may not be professionally like having an occupation afterwards that's why the [interdisciplinary] program would be so great. They even suggested in art 'take the certificate,' which I was kind of already looking into.

David, a communication major, noted that his choice in pursing an interdisciplinary certificate was different from his male peers who he felt were more likely to be attracted to business. "I think as far as being more appealing in the job field. As far as the actual topics, I think, again being more stereotypical I would think guys would be more geared toward business."

Family support for major choice

When asked about family pressure to pursue specific majors, a few student participants noted that, while their families were concerned about their initial decisions to pursue fields that are more female-dominated, they came to an understanding and became

fully supportive. Sean, the pre-social work student, said:

> I felt family pressure to become a doctor, and I got here and I did realize [social work] would be a better path for me and that is what changed. I came in biology pre-med and started taking classes and hated it and that's why I went to [social work]. My family completely supports me.

John, a student who was leaving the school of engineering, explained that his father was a practical person who focused on the link between academic major and career success. "He's always bringing it back to 'well how are you going to do something with that? What are you going to do?'" He went on to say that he felt supported by his parents despite his father's focus on career decisions:

> Both of my parents want me to study whatever I want to study. My dad is a business major and he's always looking for the practical application and how I can make a living and that kind of thing. So I definitely pay a lot of attention to outside of college if I want to study that or make it at a job.

Overall, none of the students noted family concern over their academic choices. This may indicate an area of privilege for students interested in academic majors that fall outside of the male gender norms as well as co-curricular opportunities like the interdisciplinary program. In addition, no student reported feeling concerned about his financial status as it pertained to his choice in academic major and other co-curricular commitments. A stable economic situation may indicate another aspect of privilege for these students. For those male students who do feel family or financial pressure to pursue certain academic paths, seeking out programs like this may not conform to their family's desires.

Summary

The students were diverse in their choices of academic major. Several fit within

the male gendered norms by choosing to pursue more technical or business fields. However, several students were outside these norms. They were liberal arts majors, a social work major, and a student interested in switching from business to art. They were interested in the interdisciplinary program because it would provide another credential to their skill set and let them learn more about subjects they are passionate about, as noted by the administrators as well. Moreover, all the students expressed that their families either fully supported their academic path or they were independent from their families so they did not feel pressure to fit into a specific role.

STUDENT THEME 2: ACCEPTANCE IS IN, GREEK INVOLVEMENT IS OUT

As Terenzini and Reason noted in their model of college student experience, the peer experience is one of the primary influences on student learning (2005). The peer environment stretched beyond the friends a student regularly interacts with, and instead, it was the "ethos of the student body…the peer environment embodies the system of dominant and normative values, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations that characterize a campus' student body" (2005, p. 11). The authors elaborated that over time students tended to conform to both academic and social attitudes and beliefs held by the broader student body.

In his model of the meanings college men make of masculinities, Harris (2010) noted that campus involvement typically included male-dominated organizations such as student government and sports teams. Moreover, he theorized that male peer group interactions were a contextual influence in his model. These interactions offered the

opportunity for male students to express masculine norms within social settings. By and large, the narratives of the student participant did not adhere to Harris' model.

Fitting in is easy

Participants were asked about their thoughts on what it took to fit in on campus. According to the students, fitting in was easy at a large university that offered so many options for involvement. Chris said, "I think at a school like [this], there's so many students there that you can fit in, no matter who you are, if you look for it."

A few participants expressed that the only male gender norm they felt the need to conform to was what Harris described as a work hard play hard mentality, and this was expressed through the gym and sports culture on campus. Mark, an out-of-state student, noted, "I feel like that most male students here are usually physically active, playing a type of sport or intramurals, going to gym. I've seen more in-shape people here than I have anywhere." Charles agreed, "Male student wise there is a really big focus on fitness, and using a lot of the services that [we] have like the gym. There's a big social need for that [here]."

Several participants said that fitting in meant achieving in academics and conforming to a peer environment that expected academic success (Terenzini & Reason, 2005). David noted, "I think at a high[ly] ranked university like [this one] it's not cool to be the dumb kid, so working hard on academics is something." Sean expanded on the idea of fitting in by achieving academically, and in his opinion this meant standing out among the large student body either through academic achievements or through co-curricular experiences: "Fitting in is really easy, I would say. What's difficult is doing

something that makes you standout. That's one of the reasons why it's hard for me to give up band. There are only 400 people [in band] out of [thousands here]."

Harris and Capraro (2000, 2004) wrote about the need for male students to have male bonding experiences as part of their need to conform to male gendered norms. Several participants noted that they did not feel a desire to cultivate these gender-specific friendships. For them, their social interactions were based primarily around their academic and co-curricular interests. Gavin said, "I've always kind of been my own guy, so I've never been somebody that really desired to get into groups. I've always had a very eclectic group of friends, although there are always those one or two things that tie us together." Thomas offered, "I used to mainly spend time with female friends. More recently, I have joined a boys' group with [my church organization] so that's helped make sure I still have guy friends cause I tend to lean more towards hanging out with girls."

Rejecting Greek life

In his research on college men and fraternities, Capraro (2004) noted that many college men were attracted to Greek life for the sense of belonging that comes along with being in a brotherhood of men who were frequently conforming to masculine norms. He said it was the "psychology of brotherhood" that attracted many men to join fraternities. Derrick was the only one of the eleven students who said he was in a social fraternity or planned to follow through with the recruitment process to join. Derrick was seeking out his second degree at the university after graduating and working for several years. He noted that he did not want to join a fraternity during his initial time as an undergraduate

but he felt that it could benefit him during his second major:

> I have been going to a fraternity to meet the people and do all the stuff to see if I want to join. I hadn't done it and it was like I didn't know what it was about. When I was getting my first degree I was very anti that lifestyle. I had long hair and I was very hippy-oriented. So, why not broaden your horizons, meet people, that whole thing. I think it can be good to make those kind of connections.

Most of the other participants expressed a negative association with fraternities, citing their concern over the hypermasculine and partying ways often associated with the organizations (Capraro, 2004; Harris, 2010). David expressed alarm over what Harris described as the hypermasculine performance of some members of Greek organizations:

> I definitely thought about [joining a fraternity], and then after about 20 seconds of thinking about it I said no. I feel like the benefits you can get can be found in other places as well, and also especially in the past few months I've noticed that it's stereotypical in one sense and I know not all fraternities are like this but, in going to parties a guy can't get into their party unless he's either pledging or unless he brings a certain number of girls. That to me is like you're paying for your entry with girls and that idea is very sickening.

Similarly, Mark noted that in his opinion only certain types of men get involved in Greek life and he did not see himself conforming to the role. "I do feel like the fraternities were probably the popular kids in high school and it's just on a larger scale on a college campus. I feel like the fraternities, there is a certain type of person you associate with fraternities. I am not one of those people. They just aren't for me." Elliot described himself as a feminist and someone who was open to various expressions of gender. He said that fraternities force conformity to hypermasculine stereotypes, and he expressed that members of these organizations sought to exclude others who did not adhere to certain male roles. He said, "I guess you're supposed to join fraternities and things like that." When asked if he felt pressure to do so, he explained, "Yeah, definitely, like there's

a lot of exclusionary practices I think that affect people who choose not to join fraternities, people that don't want to participate in those lifestyles, very exclusionary life styles."

Finally, Blake noted that fraternities offered an opportunity for male bonding that did not appeal to him because he did not feel a need to seek out groups of people with similar interests: "Other people feel like they need to be part of a frat or a group of people they really like or look up to in order to be around those people they have to do what those people do, or they want to be around them so they do what they do." He described himself as an introvert who liked to socialize with a small group of friends.

Taken as a whole, the students were not fond of the Greek social community on campus. The assumptions they made about the attitudes and expectations of fraternity members and their organizations dissuaded them from joining. They did not express the need to find formal groups for male bonding experiences, thus the fact that the interdisciplinary program was predominately female did not concern them as they pursued their co-curricular goals.

Finding acceptance

Several students discussed their experiences in finding acceptance on campus when their choices of academic major and co-curricular interests were not aligned with masculine gender norms (Harris, 2010). As Terenzini and Reason (2004) noted, individual student experiences inside and outside of the classroom encompass one construct within their model of college student experience, and these experiences were valuable elements in student learning and persistence.

John, a student who had recently left the school of engineering to become an undeclared major to explore his academic options, noted that he felt accepted despite recently leaving an academic path that fit a male gender norm. "I'd say like one thing I have noticed is that this campus is so accepting and no matter what I choose to do, I'd find a place at least I can could be accepted. So I don't feel worried at all about that now." Likewise, Charles, a liberal arts major, expressed that he had come to terms with pursuing academic interests that were different from some of his male peers but he was aware of the gender imbalance in his classes:

> I'm doing what I love. It doesn't affect me. I'll hear them out, but it doesn't phase me. 'Okay, that's your opinion and you're entitled to it', but I'm doing what I love. I'm not good at science or math, so I'm not going to study that. But it is, I can tell, that most of my classes are filled with girls and not really with men.

Similarly, Elliot described finding both personal and social acceptance for his plan to study communication and pursue an interdisciplinary certificate. He noted that some of his male peers were pursing curricular and co-curricular paths because of a need to conform to male gender norms rather than out of personal desire. "I don't know if everyone is being true to what they're choosing to study, because I chose to study what I have a passion for. Others might choose to study to make the most money."

Summary

The student participants all expressed feeling accepted on the campus no matter their academic and co-curricular choices. They noted that because the campus is so large with students from a variety of different backgrounds, one could easily find peers and fit in socially and academically. They each expressed confidently that there were no peer or social pressures to adhere to specific gender roles because of this accepting environment

on campus. For those that were pursuing paths not within the masculine norms, they acknowledged the difference, but they did not indicate that they felt challenged by this.

In addition, most of the students had strong opinions about not wanting to pursue membership in the Greek community, and only one of the eleven students planned to participate in fraternity recruitment. Capraro (2000, 2004) and Harris (2010) both noted that male students sought out bonding experiences among other males, and Greek life often fulfilled this need. However, in the current study, the students interested in the interdisciplinary program did not fit this characterization from the research, and many of them spoke negatively about their experiences with socializing among the Greek community.

STUDENT THEME 3: THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT'S INVOLVEMENT EXPERIENCE

Individual student involvement was one of the four primary constructs of Terenzini and Reason's (2005) conceptual model, and there were three categories that encompassed individual student experiences: curricular, classroom experience, and out-of-class experiences. The authors noted, "Student experiences in all three of these areas are important to a full understanding of how students change and grow… any serious study of college effects on just about any outcome cannot ignore students' curricular, classroom, and out-of-class experiences" (pp. 12-13).

For the current study, the students spoke about several areas related to their individual student experiences in the capacity of Terenzini and Reason's construct, and these included their employment status, the co-curricular activities they are involved in,

their thoughts on leadership positions, their free time, and finally, their thoughts on how their male peers are engaged on campus.

Student employment

Of the eleven student participants, five said they had a regular job. Two participants worked certain times of the year: one as a mentor for a first-year program on campus and another did some intermittent work with the local government designing computer programs. Four of the students responded that they did not work at all. Gavin had a job but he intended to quit because, at the time of the interview, he was commuting to a nearby city on weekends and he did not spend any time on campus during that time. Because of the job, he was unable to get more involved outside of his classes. He explained, "But once I can get rid of that job, I'm going to take a work study job up here, so I'll be on campus a lot more. And I won't have that big chunk of time on the weekend. Friday it's 6 p.m. until Sunday at noon when I get back up, so I'm not involved in school."

Co-curricular involvement

The students varied widely in their level of involvement on campus outside of the classroom in co-curricular experiences. Several of the first-year students described being involved in a few organizations after exploring options when they arrived on campus. John said he participated in a culinary organization, a business organization, and an association related to engineering. He described himself as an explorer on campus, and he enjoyed discovering his interests and what he could get involved in next: "I'm starting to think I kind of want to write articles, I want to tell people about my ideas and what's

going on campus, what's happening in the world. But what I'm hoping to do is start to maybe go to the [campus newspaper]."

Thomas was more intentional in his desire to be involved in co-curricular programs. He set goals for himself before he began as a first-year student: "My expectation I set for myself was to get involved in a church group, an art group and a service group. That is exactly what I did. I think having those goals was really good. I think now, man, I'm glad I set those goals out. I don't know if I was always thinking about that, but underneath I was hoping to find those groups."

First-year student Chris was more involved on campus than he expected to be before he arrived, and he enjoyed being busy outside of class. During his first fall semester he was working for an organization that coordinated media for football games, a position that would not be available during the spring semester:

> My expectations for next semester, I don't want to be as involved. Some of these organizations will obviously end since we will no longer be tailgating because football season will be over. So that'll be nice, then I'll have Saturdays. And then some of the other ones will slow down, actually, and some of them will pick up. So I'll probably have about the same amount of time, which is fine with me, because I enjoy being in all of these things. It's not high stress at all. So, the expectations, I understand now I just can't do what I want necessarily. If I do any organizations, sometimes I do have to give up some free time in order to maintain my grades. So I guess my expectations have changed.

Two of the eleven students were not involved in any student organizations or any other campus groups outside of class. Blake, a freshman business student, said he was not involved in any student organizations although he did audition for a music group but he was not accepted. He explained that he has been researching business school-associated student organizations but he had not committed to joining any. When asked if he felt

pressure to be involved, he said, "Oh yeah, definitely. 'What are you going to put on your resume?' Heck, in our [business] class, that is all it is, is how do you pad your resume. Not much pressure from family. I guess just self-imposed pressure." Gavin, a first-year transfer student, noted that he felt that involvement was important to be connected and meet others. Once he finished commuting to his job, he planned to join student organizations. "I definitely want to be involved in things like that for a variety of reasons. I mean ultimately college is just as much about networking as it is about getting an education."

A few of the participants described being heavily involved on campus. In addition to his work-study position, David, a second-year communication student, was a member of a student activity planning committee that required much of his time. In addition, he was the founding member of a group not associated with the university that organizes various art events. He explained that being involved was part of his identity. "My personality is I like to take on a lot of things. I don't do something unless I know I can commit to it. I do like to take on a lot of things. That has been the case since high school." Further, he noted that pursuing an interdisciplinary certificate was part of his desire to commit to valuable endeavors: "The bigger factor was me seeing the potential of [the program], how beneficial it would be being required to have the internship it was like oh now I don't have an excuse. An internship will help me get a job in the future. Also the certificate itself will look amazing on applications and such."

Charles did not begin his first-year being involved at all. He earned a full scholarship and wanted to initially focus on his classes, however, he noted that too much free time was detrimental to his grades:

> So after the first semester, I wasn't involved at all first semester; I did nothing. I went to a couple of info sessions, but it was just like, okay like maybe, but no I don't want to do anything. Then after my grades came back and I saw how that affected me, and I said, "Okay, there's a big problem here. I have so much time and my grades still aren't, and I was like, what's the difference? Because I'm not involved?" So second semester I joined [a service organization], then I became an officer for this semester. And I joined [an athletic organization] and became an officer for this semester as well. I became more involved in my scholarship association, and my grades were much, much better!

Sean did not apply or intend to apply to the interdisciplinary program in part because he felt like the social work curriculum did not allow for additional academic pursuits. Moreover, he was a member of the marching band, which required much of his time during the fall semester. He said he might quit the marching band to have the opportunity to join public health organizations, which pertained to his career goals in social work. "I thought I would be in a lot more things. I realize how my time has to be split between smaller things. In high school you can do a lot more things because the work isn't as demanding. With classes being as demanding as they are you have to divide your time. So, I can't be in six clubs."

Leadership

In his research on male college students, Harris (2010) noted that men prefer to get involved in organizations where there is a leadership opportunity such as student government. Most of the male students in this study did not express a strong desire to seek leadership positions, and only one intended to run for an elected office on campus.

Four of the students were in their first year so they likely did not have the opportunity to take on leadership positions within student organizations.

Of the second-year students, David expressed the most interest in leadership. He was one of the founding members of an arts organization that was unaffiliated with the university. He explained that this position was one of leadership and required that he help make decisions about the direction of the association. In addition, he intended to increase his involvement in the student activity planning organization by running for an elected leadership position. "I am actually right now in about two weeks I am going to start my campaign for [committee] president which is a student-elected position like along with student government president. I would really like to work my way up." Similarly, Charles was involved in several organizations and held a leadership position in two. "I am in [a service organization], I'm an officer…I'm an officer in [a sports organization], and I'm also an officer in my scholarship association." Finally, Derrick noted that he is a committee chair in an organization that promotes well being through physical activity.

Free time

In her research on the gender gap in college attendance and graduation, Sax (2008) noted that men had more leisure time than women, and they were more likely to socialize with friends on a regular basis. Moreover, male students were more likely to be playing sports or watching sports than their female peers. However, in the current study only two of the eleven students noted that they play or watch sports regularly. Chris described sports as a large part of his leisure time:

> As much as I can, I'm hanging out with friends anytime I get the chance. Sometimes that involves playing basketball. Other times, I'm going to different

> sporting events. That is free time for me I guess. And then if I'm not doing either of those things, then I'm studying.

Likewise, Sean explained that he played sports regularly and he coached as well: "I [swim] a lot. I actually do [swimming] lessons on the weekends and I swim recreationally with friends. I travel off campus to give the lessons if they are not [college] students."

A few students noted that they liked to hang out with friends whenever they had free time. Unlike Sax's research, which found that video gaming was prevalent among college males, the students in this study did not note that gaming was part of their leisure activities. First-year student Thomas spent his time playing music: "My brother and I have a band. A lot our free time is spent jamming, playing with each other. I started picking up the mandolin. Learning that beyond drumming. Other free time just spent with friends hanging out and talking to them."

First-year student Blake described himself as more of an introvert, and he liked to split his free time among his friends and on his own learning foreign languages. "A lot of studying and quite a bit of hanging out with friends, and that pretty much encompasses what I do. We just go to restaurants or free local places," he said. Derrick, a science major, spent his free time learning more about his career ambitions in graphic design. He said:

> I say a big passion of mine is the digital arts and media activities. Over the Christmas holiday I was working on my portfolio website, I was coding that out and getting everything sorted as far as the organization and content. And, I read a lot of articles and scientific journals, entrepreneurial magazines like *Fast Company*, and I socialize, of course.

John described himself as someone who enjoyed exploring his new college environment to find new opportunities and events: “I kind of explore the campus as much as I can. Whenever I find an opportunity that is relevant to my interests, I actually go to them, events and talks as well as just like TED, a lot like NPR.”

Several students said they their academic commitments did not allow much leisure time. Mark was an architecture major, which required time in the studio in addition to class and study time. He described having little free time but when he did he spent it on solo activities: “I guess if I had free time it’s usually watching TV, listening to music, sometimes I like to read. I have a few architecture books around here and a couple books in general.” Elliot, who is very involved on the speech team, said he has little time outside of this commitment and his academic studies:

> All of my free time is [speech] because that’s just like I feel it kind of consumes your life. It’s weird, but I’ve noticed recently like in the past, my recreational reading and my school reading have always been very separate things. But after becoming really involved in [speech], my recreational reading has been reading these books that have to do [with speech], like philosophy books that I would used to think not at all. So free time is a lot of speech study and research.

Gavin, a new transfer student who commuted to his job on weekends, said he did not have much free time because of his work commitment. “Well, I don’t have a lot [of free time]. I don’t have a lot right now, but I think that’s mostly a time-management issue. I’m a reader; I like to read a lot.” He noted that when he left his position, he wanted to spend more time finding friends on his new campus.

Thoughts on male involvement

I questioned the students about their thoughts on male student engagement in college and what their experiences have been. Sean was a mentor for a fist-year student

program, he noted, “Guys tend to stick to special interest clubs, something they like, and I had a group of 14 girls and one guy in my [mentee group] last year so I really can’t tell you much about that one guy.” He continued by noting that it was interesting to him that only one male student chose to pursue this optional activity compared to the 14 women.

Derrick had a firm opinion about his male peers and their willingness to get involved on campus: “Men are much lazier than women. Women are just much more active in social aspects. You can see this in things like traveling and club activity. And you can see this in the [interdisciplinary program], women seem to be much more likely to be involved than men. Men just typically sit around and watch sports.”

The perspectives of the administrators and students provided a unique look at male engagement in co-curricular activities. The administrator themes offer a broad look into the ways in which college men are involved and the areas on campus where their involvement is lacking. The students explained where they chose to spend their time both in student organizations and other associations and their leisure time. In addition, they provided with their thoughts on how to fit in on campus and what it means to those who pursue academic and social interests outside of the prescribed gendered norms such as hypermasculinity and a work hard play hard mentality (Harris, 2010).

Summary

The theme of student involvement focused on student organizations, employment, leadership, and leisure time. Harris (2010) noted that male college students often sought out opportunities to prove their level of self-assurance and more dominant position in a hypermasculine environment. While some of the students were involved in co-curricular

programs and leadership positions in various capacities, they did not seem to pursue the roles Harris theorized they would in order to adhere to gender norms. Many were members of a few student organizations, about half had jobs, and several noted that they spent their free time with friends, exploring the city, discovering restaurants, and playing or watching sports. Overall, the students were diverse in their interests and tended to eschew the hypermasculine associations Harris anticipated.

The following chapter provides a report of the key findings of the study, a discussion of the conceptual frameworks used in the study, and a section on the implications for practice.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

The current study sought to look at issues related to gender imbalance and engagement within a specific program on a large university campus in the southwest. Research on the growing gender gap indicated for forty years that men are trailing their female peers in college attendance and graduation (Ewert, 2012; Flashman, 2013; Kinzie, Gonyea, Kuh, Umbach, Blaich, & Korkmaz, 2007; Pryor, Hurtado, Sáenz, Santos, & Korn, 2006; Sax, 2008; Sax & Harper, 2007). Moreover, once on college campuses men engage in curricular and co-curricular programs in different ways than female students (Sander, 2012). They are less involved in community service work, study abroad programs, and other co-curricular programs. In addition, they tend to earn lower grades than women (Sax, 2008). Long-standing research by Astin (1993), Tinto (1993) and many others acknowledged the benefits engagement in curricular and co-curricular programs had on student persistence and retention.

For the current study, I chose to investigate enrollment and engagement by gender in an interdisciplinary program. Interdisciplinary studies is an option for students on many college campuses, whether in the form of an academic major or as a separate program such as the one that is the focus of the current study. These programs often provide students the opportunity to concentrate on a subject that exceeds the boundaries of a single discipline in order to understand perspectives from a variety of different disciplines and synthesize knowledge for a broad understanding of the subject (Newell, 1992). Moreover, many interdisciplinary programs offer experiential learning opportunities such as internships and research projects, like the one that was the focus of

the study. Furthermore, Astin's (1993) research found that the opportunity to take interdisciplinary courses had a positive effect on a student's satisfaction with the college environment and a positive impact on a student's cognitive and affective development, both of these connections related to student persistence in college and greater rates of completion.

The following section provides a review of the research questions and a review of the methodology of the study.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to add to the body of literature regarding male engagement in co-curricular programs by focusing specifically on the interdisciplinary program as one venue for engagement. The current study focused on gender disparities and their influences on male college student engagement in a co-curricular, interdisciplinary program at a large, research institution in order to add to the research on student engagement in co-curricular opportunities.

In order to contribute to research regarding the college student engagement in an interdisciplinary program, I conducted a total of 17 interviews: six staff administrators, four students who applied to the program, six students who intended to apply but had yet to apply to the program, and one student who did not apply. Through this research, I intended to answer the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of student affairs administrators regarding male student engagement in co-curricular programs, and what strategies do they use to reach out to male students to get them more involved?

2. Why are male students choosing or not choosing to be involved in the opportunity to pursue an interdisciplinary program?

a. What conflicts, if any, are arising based on their notions of masculinity and how those notions fit with co-curricular choices?

In order to answer the research questions, I utilized two conceptual frameworks to study male student engagement. Terenzini and Reason's (2005) model of college student experience provided a lens of college engagement from a comprehensive perspective, including student background, individual student experiences, and organizational and individual influences. The second framework, Harris' (2010) conceptual model of the meanings college men make of masculinities, offered the perspective of masculine identity development and how its various contextual factors affect male college students. By employing two theoretical frameworks for the study, I was able to examine the research questions from both a student engagement model and a male identity model; thus, I was able to gain a comprehensive understanding of the individual and organizational influences on male college student engagement.

I used a qualitative research design for the study, which included semi-structured interviews of all participants (Lewis, 2003). To obtain student contact information, I included a question regarding interest in participating in the study on the interdisciplinary program's information session survey given to all session attendees. I then contacted students based on those survey responses. Because the student sample size was not large enough after the initial round of student interviews, I received prospective student contact information from the interdisciplinary program and sent email messages soliciting additional participants. Eleven students were interviewed. For administrators, I used purposive sampling to contact and interview six relevant subjects.

Six of the student interviews and five of the administrator interviews took place on the university campus. Five subsequent student interviews and one administrator interview were conducted through teleconference software. I took notes about the interviews in order to discover any initial themes in the conversations. All interviews were recorded and transcribed to produce the complete description of the participants' experiences. The raw data were then coded using open coding and axial coding. The data were organized into concepts and then synthesized to produce emergent themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The interdisciplinary program that was the subject of the current study has a gender gap in engagement with men totaling 27 percent of the program enrollment in fall 2013. However, simply looking at the total gender gap in enrollment does not provide evidence for the motivations of male students who chose to apply. It was essential to investigate the influences on male students in their involvement decisions. The study achieved this by using the narratives of both the administrators and students. The experiences of student affairs administrators, some of whom worked directly with student leaders and others who worked specifically with the interdisciplinary program, added a global perspective to the study. Moreover, this study provided personal accounts by male students of their experiences with co-curricular involvement and their decision to apply or not to apply in order to investigate the rationale for their decisions to engage in the interdisciplinary program. By focusing on the historical and practitioner perspectives of the administrators as well as the personal perspectives of the male students, I was able to glean a full understanding of the ways in which male students engage in co-curricular

programs and, more specifically, why they chose to pursue the interdisciplinary opportunity, or not.

There were seven primary emergent themes garnered from the data analysis, with four themes specific to the administrator data and three themes specific to the student data. The administrator themes were (a) males are underrepresented in campus involvement opportunities; (b) male students are less academically exploratory; (c) interdisciplinary programs attract fewer male students; and (d) gender make-up of program staff causes concern. The student themes were (e) academic interests are diverse and outside gendered norms; (f) acceptance is in, Greek involvement is out; and (g) the individual student's involvement experience. Through the syntheses of the themes, three main findings emerged from the study. The following section offers a detailed description of the study's key findings.

DISCUSSION OF MAJOR FINDINGS

The seven emergent themes presented in chapter four were developed from the analysis and synthesis of the administrator and student participant narratives of the study. I chose to first consider the administrator narratives in conceptualizing the findings, as they provided the global perspective and a wide view of male engagement on campus. Moreover, the administrators offered an historical lens that became a comparison tool to use in analyzing the student participant narratives. Although some student participants applied to the program, some intended to apply, and one ultimately chose not to apply, the act of attending an information session to learn more about the interdisciplinary program signified a decision on their part to seek out the opportunity. The student

narratives offered an individual perspective and one I used to compare and contrast with the global view of the administrators.

The seven emergent themes were distilled and resulted in three overall findings for the study: (1) There was a gender imbalance in student co-curricular engagement; (2) Student interests in the interdisciplinary program challenged masculine gendered norms; and, (3) Academic choices of the students varied and eschewed masculine stereotypes. The following section provides a detailed discussion of these major findings.

Major Finding 1: There was a gender imbalance in student co-curricular engagement

All four of the emergent administrator themes related to a gender imbalance in student involvement and helped answer part of research question one: What are the perceptions of student affairs administrators regarding male student engagement in co-curricular programs? These perceptions corroborated research by Sax (2008), which indicated that men were less engaged in many co-curricular opportunities on campus.

Sax (2008) examined how men and women report their own leadership skills prior to entering their undergraduate college experience. She found that men tended to have a more positive perception of their own leadership skills before stepping foot on campus. The administrators in the study, specifically the two who work with campus-wide programs, reported that women were more involved in leadership development programs. The administrators did see males seeking leadership positions in higher-profile areas like student government. This finding aligned with the work of Harris (2010) who offered that men are attracted to leadership roles specifically in high-profile environments like student

government. In the current study, Catherine noted that women were also involved in student government, but many of them did so from a lower profile position. She said:

> It's interesting to hear that women sometimes self-select themselves to be vice presidents and put up a male to be president. And, traditionally, the vice presidents tend to do a lot more of the work than presidents but the presidents are in rooms that have a higher level of visibility. The presidents sit on the university president's advisory committee, things like that. But in some ways the women vice presidents are doing a lot of the work.

In her research on the gender gaps in college, Sax (2008) found that women sought out opportunities for social activism at greater rates than men. The interdisciplinary program includes certificate topics with socially conscious themes related to children, public health, culture, and ethical leadership. While the program is primarily focused on academics rather than actual activism, the topics may attract more women than men based on this notion that college women find social activism more appealing than men.

Pryor et al. (2006) noted that women pursued graduate school at higher rates than men. As the administrators for the interdisciplinary program reported, many of the students who apply to the program did so because they were interested in the experiential internships and research opportunities that could help guide their graduate school goals and, ultimately, help aid in their admission. If women are attending graduate programs more than their male peers, it makes sense that they would pursue undergraduate opportunities to support their goals and bolster their credentials.

On a similar note, Sax (2008) found that women were less academically confident than men throughout their college experiences. Because of this greater sense of confidence, men were more likely to spend regular leisure time on socializing, sports and

gaming. Seeking out ways to add to their experiences inside and outside the classroom as well as boost their graduate school or career objectives, women pursued involvement options like the interdisciplinary program as a way to improve their academic standing whether their concern about their grades was founded or not. Nina, an interdisciplinary program advisor, noted that she worked with prospective female students who were less confident about their technical abilities in areas like computer science and game development despite having years of experience comparable to their male peers:

> I think sometimes the female students, when they are applying, they seem to be less secure about their skills they have coming into the program…they'll say things like 'you know I don't really have any skills in this area' but then we start talking and they were building websites when they were 12 or they have created video game storylines.

In the view of these administrators, male students were not as likely to seek out co-curricular opportunities, and they were not as open to exploring curricular and co-curricular options as females. This finding occurred not only in engagement at the university level in campus leadership initiatives and positions, it also occurred within the interdisciplinary program.

For the current study, part of research question one was: What strategies do student affairs administrators use to reach out to male students to get them more involved? The administrators expressed concern that the staff members managing the co-curricular programs they work with were predominately female. They noted that a female-dominated staff might affect the way prospective male students feel welcomed to the program. A few administrators mentioned trying to hire more male staff members and graduate assistants so that male students see people who are similar to them. One noted

that some of the names of the programs and the photos in the marketing material could be more appealing to female students based on assumptions of gender roles and career choices. Each of these points underscore the need for administrators of gender-imbalanced programs to determine ways in which they can reach out to male students to get them more involved. Further in the chapter, I provide suggestions for practitioners regarding male recruitment concerns.

Overall, the first major finding from the administrator interviews corroborated previous research by Sax (2008), Sax and Harper (2007), and Kinzie et al. (2007) that male students were not as likely to seek out co-curricular opportunities, and they were not as open to exploring curricular and co-curricular options as female students.

Major Finding 2: Student interests in the interdisciplinary program challenged masculine gendered norms

The second key study finding is that the male students who were interviewed for the study, whether they applied to the interdisciplinary program or intended to do so in the future, were unique in regards to Harris' (2010) model of the meanings men make of masculinity. They chose academic and social experiences that eschewed the male gendered norms Harris identified in his model of the meanings men make of masculinity.

These students attended a program information session of their own volition, thus they had some prior knowledge about the program to seek out the one-hour session and take the time to listen. This information session privileged students who were already engaged at some level with the university and who had the time in their lives and their schedules to pursue the information.

The first part of research question two was: Why are male students choosing or not choosing to be involved in the opportunity to pursue an interdisciplinary program? The participants stated a variety of reasons for their interest in the interdisciplinary program. A few cited knowing one or two friends or classmates in the programs, but they all reported attending an information session of their own accord without peer pressure. They chose to attend an information session because of a passion for one or more of the program subjects. This expression of an interest in the subject included Sean, the one student who did not intend to apply after attending an information session. Although he explained that he was very interested in studying public health, he could not foresee fitting the interdisciplinary program requirements into his social work curriculum and his obligation to the marching band. He did not express any concerns regarding adhering to gender norms as a reason not to apply. Chris, who wanted to be a teacher said:

> I'm really interested [in learning about children] because I've always wanted to do studies with orphans and orphanages and go into that area. I really want to have that area of study, because I don't think that I could get that focus without doing [this program].

Thomas, who intended to apply after his first year in the business school, even touted the program to friends who were exploring their options, "Whenever someone is like 'I really don't know what to do.' I'm like you should check out [this] program. It's really cool because one issue I have with [this university] is that it's really hard to take classes that are outside of your major."

Many of the students were engaged in a variety of organizations outside the classroom including religious groups, music groups, and a few specific to their academic majors. However, all but one of the eleven students were not interested in social Greek

fraternities. Although male bonding opportunities were available in other venues, the Greek community was a direct way to seek out involvement with male peers in a hypermasculine setting (Capraro, 2000, 2004; Harris, 2010; Tuzin, 2004). Despite nearly all participants noting that fraternity life was high profile because of the parties and recruitment events, most said they were able to overcome any pressure to join by finding other involvement outlets on campus.

Sax (2008) and Harris (2010) and others noted that male students tended to prioritize leisure time more than female students. In this regard, several of the participants noted that they did enjoy playing sports like tennis and attending sporting events during their free time. However, no participants said they enjoy video gaming on a regular basis, and most said they are not the type of student to attend parties. Instead, they socialized with smaller groups of friends by watching television, seeing live music, and exploring the city's restaurants.

In summary, the second major finding contradicted Harris' model and the results of previous research by Davis (2002) and Davis and Laker (2004) regarding the meanings college men make of masculinity. The results of the study showed that students tended to avoid hypermasculine environments and peer settings and were involved in many opportunities outside the gendered norms.

Major Finding 3: Academic choices of the students varied and eschewed masculine stereotypes

In his research on the meanings college men make of masculinities, Harris (2010) noted that the academic decisions were contextualized in their desire to conform to

masculine norms. This led students in Harris' study to choose academic paths and majors that would more readily lead to "breadwinning" careers in business, engineering, and law. Financial security and a future family to support helped guide these decisions and frequently led college men to feel pressured into directions not necessarily aligned with their own academic strengths and passions. The final key finding in the study was that male students interested in the interdisciplinary program tended to reject the notions of masculinity described above in their choice of academic direction, including the desire to seek out the interdisciplinary program information session. This finding answered the second part of research question two: What conflicts, if any, are arising based on their notions of masculinity and how those notions fit with "co-curricular" choices?

Charles, who applied to the program, said he has reflected often on his choice of liberal arts and how this related to his male peers. He felt satisfied knowing that this choice supports his passion and his desire to study international human rights. He noted:

> I think that people expect because if you're a male, you're supposed to be studying math or science or be an engineer or chemistry or a doctor. I mean, it's apparent. A lot of people, the sex ratio in most fields are dominated by males. The field that I'm in, Liberal Arts, is mostly dominated by females. That's just the way it is or it's the way it's been.

Sean, the pre-social work student and the one student who did not intend to apply, and Chris the liberal arts major who planned to be a teacher, both acknowledged that their choices were outside of the stereotypical male major. Sean had initially pursued pre-medical school coursework but switched to social work because his passion was for public health and he felt social work was a better academic path for this career choice. He explained that he knew his decision was unique for a man but, with the support of his

family in place, he felt good about the change.

In addition, students interested in the interdisciplinary program were exploratory in their academic directions. While several seemed content in their initial choice of major and had not changed their minds, most sought out the interdisciplinary program because they felt a passion for a particular subject and wanted to explore ways to link that subject to their degree plan. Gavin, a science major, wanted to study environmental issues. He noted: "You know the environment has always been an interest of mine, so it's one of the things that has got me back into school but really more from a standpoint of kind of allowing business and environmental concerns to meet in the middle."

For those students who were undecided in their academic decisions, seeking out the interdisciplinary program was a way to explore their options in subjects of interest to them. For example, Thomas was a business major but he was questioning that academic choice, and he said he had thought about switching to something arts-based. He viewed the interdisciplinary program as a way to explore art courses while he is figuring out his direction.

These exploratory students had the family support to seek out their own passions. All of the students said they either had the support of their family or their choices were solely their own because their families were not involved in college decisions. This lack of family pressure to pursue a specific career path, one that was more career-based or fit a masculine stereotype, was a privilege of these male students interested in the interdisciplinary program. By and large, they were not concerned about parental or family support wavering if they chose an academic field or co-curricular opportunities outside of

the masculine norms. Moreover, this commitment to their individual choices might have stemmed from being primarily from privileged groups: most were not first-generation college students, most were White, and they all expressed stable financial situations.

In conclusion, the final major finding of the study challenged Harris' model, which posited that male college students choose academic majors and paths that adhere to masculine norms. Many of the students interested in the interdisciplinary program were pursuing majors outside of the gender norm. In addition, the finding also indicated that these students were not experiencing any gender role conflicts in their identity development.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The following section provides my recommendations for student affairs practitioners and implications for research on the topic of male student engagement in co-curricular programs. The section begins with an overview and reflection on the conceptual frameworks and their effectiveness in the study.

Reflections on the conceptual frameworks

I utilized two conceptual frameworks in the current study. The following section details my reflections on the usefulness of the two conceptual frameworks for the current study and for future studies.

The first framework was Terenzini and Reason's (2005) model of the college student experiences (Figure 1). This "college impact model" illustrated the complexities of college experiences and helped me investigate the myriad influences on the male participants.

The first construct in the model pertained to a student's pre-college characteristics and experiences. This was useful in determining how each student study participant's educational and familial background influenced his involvement decisions in college.

The organizational context construct was beneficial in examining research question one, which pertained to the perceptions of student affairs administrators regarding male student engagement in co-curricular programs. The interdisciplinary program was one co-curricular opportunity that fit within this construct in the conceptual model. The "intended" curriculum in college, as Terenzini and Reason described it, was the formal classroom and advising aspects of the interdisciplinary program, and the "received" curriculum was the information the students actually received. These definitions proved valuable when investigating the intentions and perceptions of the administrators in their interactions with male students in comparison to the narratives of the student participants.

The peer environment was the third construct of the model. I explored how the peer culture and the ethos of the students may have influenced student engagement (Terenzini & Reason, 2005). The students spoke about their perceptions of fitting in on campus, their opinions of what it takes to conform on campus, and their thoughts on the Greek community. These all related to the peer environment as the culture of the university for the student participants.

The final construct in the model was individual student experiences, which related to the individual student's out-of-class experiences, such as student employment status, living situation, family support, and co-curricular involvement. Terenzini and Reason

(2005) noted that one could not study the effects of college on a student without including these important out-of-class experiences. In the current study, the students discussed their leisure time, jobs, families, and engagement with student organizations to provide a full account of their outside influences in college and how these might have affected their motivation and ability to get involvement in opportunities like the interdisciplinary program.

The second conceptual framework used in the study was Harris' (2010) model of the meanings college men make of masculinities (Figure 2). This model was utilized to investigate the ways in which traditional or stereotypical assumptions of masculinity affected male college student decisions about their involvement on campus. Harris' research helped answer the second part of research question two: What conflicts, if any, are arising based on the notions of masculinity and how those notions fit with "co-curricular" choices [of male students]?

The students were asked a series of questions regarding what it takes to fit in as a male student on campus and what their concepts of male college student identity were. As noted in the major findings, the data indicated that students interested in the interdisciplinary program seemed to have little concern regarding gender norms and the various meanings of masculinity Harris noted in his model. Overall, they expressed no conflicts with their co-curricular choices; this included the students who applied, intended to apply, and the one student who did not apply. This student did not apply because of his restricted pre-nursing curriculum, not because of any concern over the program.

In the model, the second meaning of masculinity was "being confident and self-assured." The students in this study fit this description in terms of their confidence in their choice of academic major and co-curricular choices even when they did not adhere to masculine norms. The liberal arts, pre-social work, communication, and exploratory majors all expressed understanding that their paths were different than their male peers, but they were satisfied with their decisions as they understood their own strengths and passions.

The other meanings in Harris' model did not resonate with the students: being respected (demanding respect), assuming responsibility (being the breadwinner), and physical stature (being physically attractive). Overall, the participants did not express any concerns or conflicts with these aspects of Harris' model. In addition, the contextual influences in the model did not fit most of the participants.

Moreover, Harris' model was useful in investigating research question one concerning administrator perceptions of male student engagement in co-curricular programs. Because the administrators provided the global view in the study, many of their experiences working with male students outside of the interdisciplinary program often fit Harris' framework. They spoke of men seeking out higher profile roles in student government, which fit in the campus involvement element of the model. One noted that gay students often feel insecure in the Greek letter community because of the masculine gender roles, which pertains to the male peer group interactions' contextual influence in the framework. Finally, the administrators expressed experiences working with male students who are less academically exploratory than their female peers and

more concerned with seeking out a major that fits in the "breadwinner" category, as Harris noted.

By combining the two conceptual frameworks, I was able to fully investigate student engagement with Terenzini and Reason's (2005) college impact model and the addition of male college student identity with Harris' (2010) conceptual model of the meanings college men make of masculinities. The college impact framework offered a broad view of student engagement and the influences on student life. The use of a model like this was valuable when investigating co-curricular involvement and the choices and pressures students face.

Moreover, while the students did not express any conflicts based on their notions of masculinity in their discussion of co-curricular choices, the use of Harris' model provided an opportunity to look at male identity development and student engagement. However, it was not a framework that offered multiple perspectives, as there was no reference to the intersection of gender and race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Harris' model was created through the study of a specific college, and while it was generalizable, the fact that it lacks the inclusion of other elements of identity did make its use limited.

Implications for research

The findings of the current study vary in their support of previous research. The major finding from the administrator data was that male students are not as likely to seek out co-curricular opportunities, and they are not as open to explore curricular and co-curricular options as females confirms previous research by Sax (2008), Sax and Harper (2007), and Kinzie et al. (2007). The second and third key findings that male students

who sought out an information session, and who have seriously considered applying, intended to apply, or have already applied, do not conform to most of the contextual influences in Harris' model of the meanings men make of masculinity because they were academically exploratory, eschewed hypermasculine characteristics, and were involved in many opportunities outside the gendered norms. Because the narratives of the male participants did not fit within Harris' framework, I suggest further investigation of characteristics of male students interested in programs similar to the interdisciplinary one. Overall, the students did not adhere to the meanings college men make of masculinities found in Harris' research.

Astin (1993) researched the benefits of interdisciplinary studies, and he noted that the enrollment in interdisciplinary courses had a positive effect on a student's satisfaction with the college environment and a positive impact on a student's cognitive and affective development. The current study examined male students interested in the interdisciplinary program. While the program was broader than a single interdisciplinary class, it provided the opportunity to investigate characteristics of students who may be interested in pursuing these types of programs. A suggestion for future research is to examine the academic interests and personal characteristics of both male and female students who enroll in interdisciplinary classes or programs. This study was limited to male students in its scope; however, studying female students and their motivations would provide another perspective on engagement, specifically in interdisciplinary studies.

Suggestions for practitioners

I am a practitioner in higher education, and my experiences over fifteen years in the field offered insight into the ways the findings of this study can be used for those who work directly with students. The following suggestions relate to understanding college male identity development, the inclusion of male staff on program teams, and ways to market and recruit male students for programs that are gender imbalanced.

Understanding male college student identity development

In order to better understand the motivations of male college students and how they make decisions about co-curricular involvement, I suggest practitioners gain an understanding of male identity development in college, which other researchers have noted is not often taught in higher education graduate programs (Davis, 2002; Davis & Laker, 2004). Male student identity development theory is viewed as implied in general student identity development theories because the studies used in early identity research used samples containing only men, specifically white men (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Erikson, 1980). While men were the subjects, their specific identity and the context in which it developed was not part of the overall basis for the theory making the studies mostly gender-blind (Davis, 2002; Davis & Laker, 2004). Having a greater understanding of the way male students interact with their peers as well as their communication habits would allow student affairs professionals to better connect with them and help support their co-curricular engagement choices. For example, Davis (2002) offered that practitioners should communicate with male students one-on-one instead of through group communication, as individual attention supports the communication style of male

students. Many programs utilize group meetings and group advising models that, based on this research, may not be appealing to male students. I suggest programs use assessment tools to better understand if their current methods of communication and interaction are effective for both male and female students. If their practices are unsatisfactory, practitioners should consider changing their approaches to add a diverse array of communication methods to better reach students. For example, if a program conducts a survey of students about their recruitment and advising practices, and male students indicate that they are not being served and guided as well as they should, then the program should update their methods based on previous research regarding male identity development theory so that they are reaching all students instead of a portion of their population.

Recruiting and retaining more male administrators

Prior research has shown that student interaction with faculty and staff creates important connections to the university (Chickering, 1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Terenzini & Pascarella, 2005). In the classroom, these relationships help foster academic engagement and confidence; outside the classroom, they help build connection to the university and support learning (Chickering, 1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya, 2010; Terenzini & Pascarella, 2005). While much has been written about value of male teachers in the lives of pre-college boys as mentors and role models, there is modest evidence regarding the influence of the gender of practitioners in higher education and the relationship to male student experiences (see for example, Allan, 1993). Several of the administrators in the current study mentioned their

predominately female staffs and expressed concern over the impact this gender imbalance may have on male student engagement in theirs and other co-curricular programs. I suggest, when possible, recruiting and retaining more males in higher education administration may allow male students to connect to more student engagement opportunities. More male administrators may help male students who are not as secure in their identities feel as though they will fit in when they are making involvement decisions. Moreover, as Harris (2010) and Capraro (2004) noted, college men often seek out male bonding opportunities. If program staff are all, or majority, female, based on Capraro's research, college men may not foresee opportunities for bonding experiences because they may perceive that female leaders do not understand this need.

Recruiting and retaining male administrators in programs must originate with more men seeking out practitioner positions in higher education. This relates to the research concerning male college students choosing academic paths that typically align with male-gendered norms, which often precludes education and other "feminine" careers (Harris, 2010). In order for men to seek out roles in higher education administration, they have to view this academic and career path as supporting their passions and goals. Thus, I suggest administrators help mentor male undergraduate students who may be strong candidates for a career in high education. Mentorship can be both a valuable experience for the mentee and the mentor as it provides insights for both people (Cherwitz, Griffin, & Reddick, 2011).

Along with the need for more male representation in administrator positions, I suggest more meaningful professional development opportunities regarding gender

awareness and understanding gender differences across all program staff. Those in higher education leadership positions should provide staff members with opportunities to develop their understanding of male and female college student academic and social differences and to stay attuned to current research on this topic.

Marketing to male students

The final suggestion for practitioners is directed towards those who are concerned about a gender imbalance in their programs should review their own recruitment efforts and marketing materials with the goal of ensuring that their communication practices are resonating with male students. There are many studies focused on the role and significance of gender in marketing across industries (see for example, Zayer & Otnes, 2012). By studying marketing strategies, administrators can discover ways to produce materials more conducive to male student attention. Reviewing program materials such as photos and written communication to better represent what the research suggests can ensure information is communicated to male students effectively.

Finally, seeking out male dominated student organizations such as fraternities, ROTC, and student government to publicize specific co-curricular programs can help reach college men where they already are. In addition, utilizing male students already involved in programs to speak to their male peers may allow students to see themselves on a similar path. I suggest practitioners work with the administrators across their campus who have access to large male student populations in order to find ways to reach those students who may be interested in the co-curricular opportunity.

ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

As Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted, the researcher must be aware of her position and the possible issues that could result from this perspective. In the current study, I had insider status as a recent employee of the interdisciplinary program. This provided me with the unique position of understanding the internal aspects of the program and the roles of the staff administrators. The insider perspective was helpful in maintaining connections with the administrators.

In addition, as an insider I had knowledge of the program curriculum and student requirements, thus I did not have to familiarize myself with those to understand some of the administrator and student perspectives. This gave me a unique opportunity to connect to the students when I was establishing rapport as the interview was beginning or when I needed to explain any interview questions. This insider knowledge sometimes led to advising students on opportunities to explore around campus based on their stories. During several interviews, I suggested students meet with either the interdisciplinary program advisors or their major advisor to ask questions regarding their curriculum. This positively affected the quality of the data as it allowed the students and administrators to feel a sense of connection and freedom to express their perspectives.

My positionality as a female was important in my role as the researcher. Williams and Heikes (1993) investigated the "gendered context of the interview," when the subjects seek out cues to determine how the researcher might respond to their conversation if the primary researcher is not the same gender as the research subjects. They noted, "Voluntary research participants will likely try to avoid offending or

threatening the interviewer with unflattering or socially undesirable opinions and will tend to frame responses in ways designed to minimize this possibility," (p. 288). However, Williams and Heikes determined that, although the words the study subject chose may differ when someone of the same gender asks the questions, the meaning of the conversation does not change.

I was cautious of my positionality as a female among the male students, particularly when discussing any concerns about male gender role conflict. If a student seemed to not understand questions, I would rephrase them and ask if the question made sense. My expert knowledge of the program and the university was valuable in this situation because it allowed me to establish rapport with the students by speaking to them about their own interests and how to find programs, events, and classes to correspond with those interests. This connection helped eliminate the formality of the interview so that the students could speak openly.

Another element of positionality concerned my race as it related to the race of each study participant. Nayak (2006) noted that in research power, privilege, and voice are areas of tension and important challenges to address. Milner implored researchers to understand their own "racialized and cultural" positionality in order to "consider dangers foreseen and unforeseen in conducting research" and not exploit or misrepresent participants (p. 388, 2007). He created a framework for researchers to utilize to reflect on their role. While the current study did not directly focus on race, I was keenly aware of my own position of power and the consequences of this. I am a White woman; of the administrator and student participants, four were persons of color and thirteen identified

as White. I made every effort to produce a racially and ethnically diverse sample of students, however, I was limited to the students who responded to my request for participants. For the administrators, I interviewed all those directly related to the interdisciplinary program and two who hold high-level leadership positions with student activities and engagement. I employed the use of each participant's own narrative to provide the most accurate account of his or her experience. I asked open-ended questions, probed for further details, and offered opportunities for participants to add their own thoughts and ask questions of her. In addition, as part of validating the data, I communicated with each participant about his or her interview transcript and corrected any concerns the participants had about their own narrative.

CHALLENGES TO THE RESEARCHER

There were several challenges I faced during the current study. The first challenge was determining the appropriate design of the study to address my initial interest in male student engagement in the interdisciplinary program. As a former administrator with the program, I had insider knowledge as well as curiosity regarding the reasons why male students were less motivated to join this unique opportunity. Because of the limitations of scope and duration, I ultimately chose to focus on administrator perceptions in order to understand the practitioner perspective as well as male students interested in the program to investigate their motivations and influences. A longitudinal study would have allowed me to focus on the long-term decisions of the male participants.

A second challenge was finding enough students to have an appropriate sample size for the study. The initial round of invitations to students garnered six replies, and

they were all students who applied to the interdisciplinary program or intended to apply. At the outset, despite receiving a list of student contacts in this category from the program, I was unable to locate male students who had attended a program information session but chose not to apply. Weeks later, I was able to contact an additional group of students who had attended the information session from a previous semester and had not applied. Again, several of the students in the second round intended to apply in a future semester. Ultimately, only one student said he would not apply to the program after attending an information session. The challenge of not locating students matching the description in the original research design caused me to redesign my study, which led to all the students fitting into one category: male students who attended a program information session.

A final challenge of the study was the physical distance I was from the campus I studied. I live in Seattle and the study site was in the southwestern United States. While technology allowed me to communicate easily with colleagues and participants, I was not working and studying among the academic community I had previously felt supported by which led to personal struggles with motivation and connection to my research. I was able to travel to conduct most of the interviews, and videoconference technology allowed me to connect to the six other participants with whom I did not speak to in person. Overall, the distance was not insurmountable but it did create a challenge in terms of confidence in my ability and motivation to finish the study.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The initial design of the study included a group of students who attended an

interdisciplinary information session and who then chose not to apply. What I did not anticipate was that a majority of students in this group would express a desire to apply to the program in a future semester. Only one student of the eleven in the sample said he did not plan to apply. The first suggestion for future research is to implement the original study design by seeking out male students who intended an information session and decided not to apply at all. This would provide an opportunity to include more narratives from a different perspective to investigate if these have any concerns regarding masculine norms that influenced their decisions not to apply.

Another recommendation for future research is to expand the sample size to include more students of color, first-generation college students, and those in other underrepresented groups on campus. Despite my efforts to include diverse perspectives in the sample, the students in this study did not fully represent the population of male students at the university. Including these perspectives could provide valuable insight into the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and other aspects of identity.

Another opportunity for future research is to follow male students over the duration of their college career. This would provide a longitudinal look at what their engagement decisions were and the influences for making these decisions. Because there were limitations to the scope of the study, I was unable to follow students for longer than a single semester.

Finally, including women in a future study would provide a comparison opportunity for research. While this study was designed to include the global perspectives

of student affairs administrators and the individual narratives of the male students, including the views of females would allow a future researcher to examine if women choose or choose not to pursue the interdisciplinary program for similar reasons as their male peers. One could then investigate if women feel any pressure to conform to specific female norms regarding co-curricular engagement.

CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH

The current study makes several contributions to already existing areas of research. First of all, the study adds to the modest research available on student motivation in interdisciplinary programs. Although many colleges and universities offer various interdisciplinary majors and programs, little is known about the motivations of students who pursue these paths, specifically by gender. The work of Newell and Green (1982) described the ways in which students benefit from studying real world topics from an interdisciplinary perspective. Astin (1993) found that the opportunity to take interdisciplinary courses had a positive effect on a student's cognitive and affective development and on his satisfaction with the college environment. These benefits often lead to greater levels of engagement and student success in college. This study provides data concerning the characteristics of male students interested interdisciplinary programs and the suggestions for administrators regarding how to recruit male students who may be interested in this type of opportunity.

A second contribution of the study is that it adds to the body of research on specific areas of male college student engagement. The research on gender gaps in college engagement presented by Kinzie et al. (2007), Sax (2008), and Sax and Harper

(2007) offered a broad view of the ways in which men and women differ in their involvement in classroom and leisure activities. Moreover, Paciej (2010) utilized O'Neil et al.'s (1986) Gender-role conflict scales (GRCS) to examine the ways in which male college student engagement is influenced by conflict with his gender-role. However, beyond this research and the work of Salisbury et al. (2010) and others on gender differences in studying abroad, little is known about the specific co-curricular programs male students are motivated to join and why. This study adds to the understanding of the characteristics of male students who are interested in an interdisciplinary program as a specific co-curricular opportunity, thus providing another example of the influences of male student engagement.

Finally, through the use of Harris's (2010) conceptual model of the meanings college men make of masculinities, I was able to examine if gender role conflict influenced the ways in which male students made decisions about getting involved in the interdisciplinary program. The study contributes to the body of research pertaining to male college student identity development in that the findings indicated that these specific students were not generally concerned with adhering to the gendered norms expressed in the work of Davis (2002), Davis and Laker (2004), Edwards and Jones (2009), and Harris (2010). The study challenged some of the expectations of male students based on the findings of the previous researchers by offering another set of perspectives from the male students interested in the interdisciplinary program and the administrators who interacted with them. It also suggests that more research must be

completed to better understand the motivations of male college students in co-curricular student engagement.

Appendix A

Student Participant Recruitment Email
First Round of Interviews

Hello,

My name is Lauren Campbell, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Higher Education Administration at The University of Texas at Austin. I am writing to request your participation in a research study. This study will investigate how male students make decisions about which student organizations and programs to participate in while in college.

You are receiving this message because you attended an information session for the [interdisciplinary program] this fall, and you provided your name on a survey as someone who may be interested in speaking about your experiences.

In order to conduct the study, I am seeking participation in individual in-person interviews that will be approximately 40 minutes in length and at a convenient time and location for you. The interviews will be audio recorded and all participants will be given a pseudonym to ensure their confidentiality. Information shared in the interviews will be kept confidential. All data from the interviews will be stored in a secure location. Participation in the study in no way affects your ability to participate in any opportunities on campus. I am a student researcher and not affiliated with any programs. Your confidentiality will be protected and not provided to any staff. Participants will receive a $10 Amazon gift card as compensation for their time.

This study aims to provide an understanding of the reasons male students make decisions about involvement opportunities in college, specifically the [interdisciplinary program]. Through this research, I hope to contribute to the field of student affairs practice by analyzing the experiences of students who have chosen to pursue the program, students who have chosen not to pursue the program, and program administrators, in order to provide practitioners more insight into the experiences of male students.

If you are interested in participating in this study or have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email or phone. In addition, if you or potential participants have any questions about their rights as a research participant, or if you have complaints, concerns, or questions about the research, please contact The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685 or the Office of Research Support at (512) 471-8871.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lauren Campbell
(512) 496-5164

Appendix B

Student Participant Recruitment Email
Second Round of Interviews

Hello,

My name is Lauren Campbell, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Higher Education Administration at The University of Texas at Austin. I am writing to request your participation in a research study. This study will investigate how male students make decisions about which student organizations and programs to participate in while in college.

You are receiving this message because you attended an information session for the [interdisciplinary program] in spring 2013.

In order to conduct the study, I am seeking participation in individual interviews via Skype or other teleconference software that will be approximately 45 minutes in length and at a convenient time for you. The interviews will be audio recorded and all participants will be given a pseudonym to ensure their confidentiality. Information shared in the interviews will be kept confidential. All data from the interviews will be stored in a secure location. Participation in the study in no way affects your ability to participate in any opportunities on campus. I am a student researcher and not affiliated with any programs. Your confidentiality will be protected and not provided to any staff. Participants will receive a $10 Amazon gift card as compensation for their time.

This study aims to provide an understanding of the reasons male students make decisions about involvement opportunities in college, specifically the [interdisciplinary program]. Through this research, I hope to contribute to the field of student affairs practice by analyzing the experiences of students who have chosen to pursue the program, students who have chosen not to pursue the program, and program administrators, in order to provide practitioners more insight into the experiences of male students.

If you are interested in participating in this study or have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email or phone. In addition, if you or potential participants have any questions about their rights as a research participant, or if you have complaints, concerns, or questions about the research, please contact The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685 or the Office of Research Support at (512) 471-8871.

Thank you for your consideration.
Lauren Campbell

(512) 496-5164

Appendix C

Administrator Participant Recruitment Email

Hello,

My name is Lauren Campbell, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Higher Education Administration at The University of Texas at Austin. I am writing to request your participation in a research study. This study will investigate male student college student engagement in an interdisciplinary program. In addition, the study will examine data from program administrators regarding their experiences with any gender differences in engagement.

You are receiving this message as and administrator with the [interdisciplinary program]. In order to conduct the study, I am seeking staff participation in individual in-person interviews that will be approximately 60 minutes in length and at a convenient time and location for you. The interviews will be audio recorded and all participants will be given a pseudonym to ensure their confidentiality. Information shared in the interviews will be kept confidential. All data from the interviews will be stored in a secure location. Participants will receive a $10 Amazon gift card as compensation for their time.

This study aims to provide an understanding of the reasons male students make decisions about involvement opportunities in college, specifically the [interdisciplinary program]. Through this research, I hope to contribute to the field of student affairs practice by analyzing the experiences of students who have chosen to pursue the program, students who have chosen not to pursue the program, and program administrators, in order to provide practitioners more insight into the experiences of male students.

If you are interested in participating in this study or have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email or phone. In addition, if you or potential participants have any questions about their rights as a research participant, or if you have complaints, concerns, or questions about the research, please contact The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685 or the Office of Research Support at (512) 471-8871.

Thank you for your consideration.
Lauren Campbell
lauren.campbell@utexas.edu
(512) 496-5164

Appendix D

Interview Protocol – Student who applied to the program

1. What is your major(s)?
2. What year are you in college?
3. Are you a first-generation college student (did your parents go to college)?
4. How did you hear about the interdisciplinary program?
5. What do you recall about the information session you attended?
6. Why did you decide to apply to the program?
7. Describe the process for deciding to apply?
8. What do you hope to learn through the program?
9. Do you have any friends in the program or who are applying at the same time?
10. If so, would you say that their participation helped you decide to apply?
11. Do you find that this program fits within the concept of what it takes to "fit in" as a male on campus?
12. What student organizations do you participate in?
13. Are you a leader in any organizations? If so, which?
14. What do you spend free time doing?
15. How much time do you spend doing these things?
16. What are your thoughts about the research and/or internship requirements of the program?
17. What short-term goals do you have after graduation?
18. When you entered college, what expectations, if any, did you have for getting involved?

19. Has anything changed about these expectations? Have they been met?

20. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix E

Interview Protocol – Student who did not apply to the program

1. What is your major(s)?
2. What year are you in college?
3. Are you a first-generation college student (did your parents go to college)?
4. How did you hear about the interdisciplinary program?
5. What do you recall about the information session you attended?
6. Do you have any friends in the program or who are applying this semester?
7. Describe any influence friends may have had on your decision.
8. What made you decide not to apply to the program?
9. Do you find that this program fits within the concept of what it takes to "fit in" as a male on campus?
10. What student organizations do you participate in?
11. Are you a leader in any organizations? If so, which?
12. What do you spend free time doing?
13. How much time do you spend doing these things?
14. What short-term goals do you have after graduation?
15. When you entered college, what expectations, if any, did you have for getting involved?
16. Has anything changed about these expectations? Have they been met?
17. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix F

Interview Protocol – Program Administrator

1. What is your role within the interdisciplinary program?
2. How long have you been in this role?
3. Describe the general profile of students in the program in terms of academic interests and goals.
4. What are some reasons why students apply?
5. What are reasons that you know as to why students choose not to apply?
6. Do you see any subgroups of students who participate more or less than other subgroups of students?
7. Have you experienced any issues or concerns related to gender when students seem interested in the program?
8. Have you found that any male students seem in conflict with gender norms in terms of their decisions to apply or not to apply to the program?
9. Do you find you come in contact with more male or female students in your role?
10. Describe your thoughts on gender differences in student program involvement.
11. Describe any other experiences you have working with students where there are gender differences in involvement.
12. Do you have any thoughts on how to better recruit specific subgroups into the program?
13. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix G

Consent for Participation in Research – Student Form
Institutional Review Board

Title: Male engagement in a co-curricular, interdisciplinary college program

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. The person performing the research will answer any of your questions. Read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to be involved in this study, this form will be used to record your consent.

Purpose of the Study

You have been asked to participate in a research study about male student participation in an interdisciplinary college program. The purpose of this study is to (a) examine gender differences in the ways students choose to get involved in college and (b) understand the experiences of program administrators who work directly with students.

What will you to be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview either in person or through videoconference software. This study will take approximately 40 minutes and will include approximately 18 study participants.

Your participation will be audio recorded.

What are the risks involved in this study?

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, the opinions and experiences you provide will benefit student affairs research and practice by providing a greater understanding of college student engagement decisions.

Do you have to participate?

No, your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate at all or, if you start the study, you may withdraw at any time. Withdrawal or refusing to participate will not affect your relationship with The University of Texas at Austin (University) in anyway.

If you would like to participate please sign this form prior to the interview beginning and return to the researcher. You will receive a copy of this form.

Will there be any compensation?

You will receive a $10 Amazon gift card for participating in the study. The gift card will be given before the interview begins.

You will be responsible for any taxes assessed on the compensation.

How will your privacy and confidentiality be protected if you participate in this research study?

Your privacy and the confidentiality of your data will be protected by the researcher. Audio files will be numerically identified and pseudonyms will be assigned to each interviewee to protect anonymity. Files will be maintained at the researcher's residence in a locked cabinet.

If it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review the study records, information that can be linked to you will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order. The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate it with you, or with your participation in any study.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only the research team will have access to the recordings. Recordings will be kept until the study is complete and then erased.

Whom to contact with questions about the study?

Prior, during or after your participation you can contact the researcher **LAUREN CAMPBELL** at **512-496-5164** or send an email to **lauren.campbell@utexas.edu** for any questions or if you feel that you have been harmed.

This study has been reviewed and approved by The University Institutional Review Board and the study number is 2013-09-0013.

Whom to contact with questions concerning your rights as a research participant?

For questions about your rights or any dissatisfaction with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at (512) 471-8871 or email at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Participation

If you agree to participate, please sign this form prior to the interview beginning and return to the researcher.

Signature

You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

_____
Printed Name

_____ _____
Signature Date

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, procedures, benefits, and the risks involved in this research study.

_____
Print Name of Person obtaining consent

_____ _____
Signature of Person obtaining consent Date

Appendix H

Consent for Participation in Research – Administrator form
Institutional Review Board

Title: Male engagement in a co-curricular, interdisciplinary college program

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. The person performing the research will answer any of your questions. Read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to be involved in this study, this form will be used to record your consent.

Purpose of the Study

You have been asked to participate in a research study about male student participation in an interdisciplinary college program. The purpose of this study is to (a) examine gender differences in the ways students choose to get involved in college, and (b) understand the experiences of program administrators who work directly with students.

What will you to be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview. This study will take approximately 1 hour and will include approximately 18 study participants.

Your participation will be audio recorded.

What are the risks involved in this study?

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, the opinions and experiences you provide will benefit research in higher education by providing a greater understanding of college student engagement decisions.

Do you have to participate?

No, your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate at all or, if you start the study, you may withdraw at any time. Withdrawal or refusing to participate will not affect your relationship with The University of Texas at Austin (University) in anyway.

If you would like to participate please sign this form prior to the interview beginning and return to the researcher. You will receive a copy of this form.

Will there be any compensation?

You will receive a $10 Amazon electronic gift card for participating in the study. The gift card will be emailed to you before the interview begins.

You will be responsible for any taxes assessed on the compensation.

How will your privacy and confidentiality be protected if you participate in this research study?

Your privacy and the confidentiality of your data will be protected by the researcher. Audio files will be numerically identified and pseudonyms will be assigned to each interviewee to protect your anonymity. Files will be maintained at the researcher's residence in a locked cabinet.

If it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review the study records, information that can be linked to you will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order. The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate it with you, or with your participation in any study.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only the research team will have access to the recordings. Recordings will be kept for until the study is complete and then erased.

Whom to contact with questions about the study?

Prior, during or after your participation you can contact the researcher LAUREN CAMPBELL at 512-496-5164 or send an email to lauren.campbell@utexas.edu for any questions or if you feel that you have been harmed.

This study has been reviewed and approved by The University Institutional Review Board and the study number is 2013-09-0013.

Whom to contact with questions concerning your rights as a research participant?

For questions about your rights or any dissatisfaction with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at (512) 471-8871 or email at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Participation

If you agree to participate, please sign this form prior to the interview beginning and return to the researcher. You will receive a copy of this form.

Signature

You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

_____
Printed Name

_____ _____
Signature Date

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, procedures, benefits, and the risks involved in this research study.

_____
Print Name of Person obtaining consent

_____ _____
Signature of Person obtaining consent Date

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