

Evaluating the Associations Between Demographic Background and College Belonging and Homesickness

Background

- Transitioning to college can be difficult, especially considering the lack of effective social supports in the academic world (Giddan, 1988). Research shows that students have a need to feel like they belong (Schlossberg, 1989; Berger, 1997; Nora, 2004).
- Homesickness in new students is related to lower academic performance and higher scores of anxiety and depression (Burt, 1993). It is important that students from diverse backgrounds are provided with the same opportunity to succeed.
- The present study evaluated the extent to which ethnicity and gender are associated with reports of college belonging and feelings of homesickness.

Method

- Participants were from part of a larger project where 288 college students were recruited to provide information regarding their feelings of homesickness and belonging in college.
 - 224 students were women (78.3%) and 62 were men (21.7%),
 - 240 students (82.5%) identified as majority-ethnicity and 51 (17.5%) identified as minority-ethnicity
 - 221 students (75.9%) were continuing-generation students and 64 (22.5%) were first-generation students
- Participants reported on college belonging and homesickness during the Fall 2018 semester:
 - Psychological Sense of School Membership (Goodenow, 1993; [1-5]; $\omega = .94$)
 - College Adjustment Test (Homesickness subscale; Pennebaker, Colder, & Sharp, 1990; [1-7]; $\omega = .85$)
- Demographic binaries were used for biological sex, ethnicity, and generational status attending college. One-way ANOVAs considered differences in baseline and two-month follow-up adjustment by each demographic binary variable.

Results

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Belonging	3.84	.68	1.33	5.00
Homesickness	4.44	1.16	1.50	7.00

One-Way ANOVAs tested for possible between-group differences in student adjustment, given sex, ethnic background, and generational status.

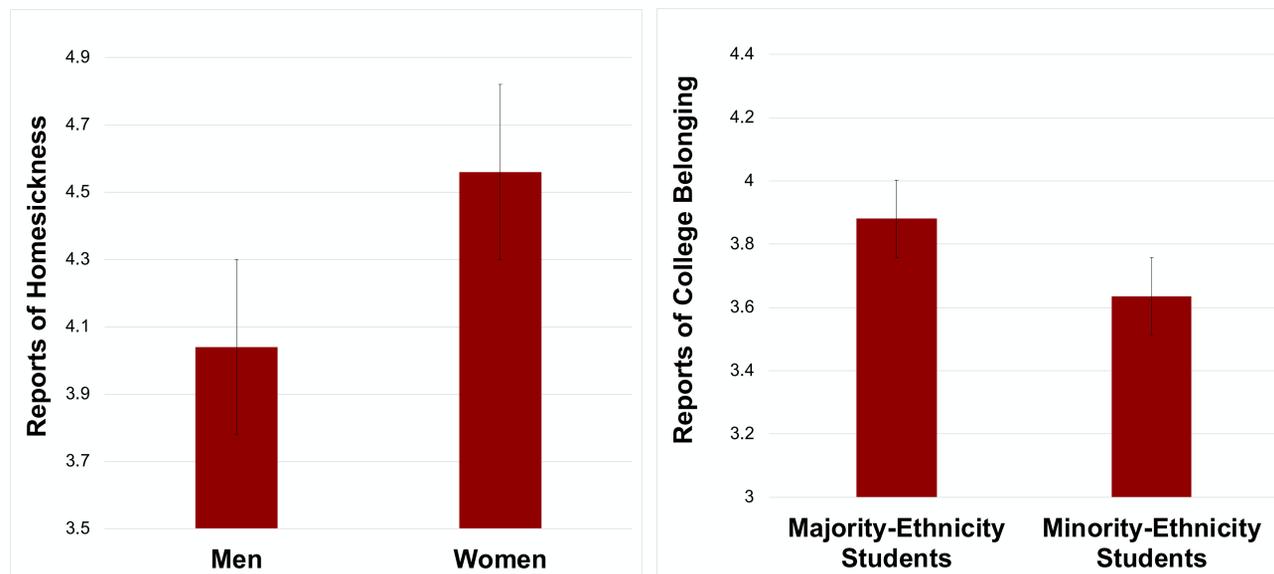
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One-Way ANOVA Results

Women reported greater homesickness than men. Minority-ethnicity students reported lower college belonging. Significant differences were not supported given students' first- or continuing-generation status.

	College Belonging					Homesickness					
	SS	df	MS	F	p	SS	df	MS	F	p	
Sex											
Between Groups	.21	1	.21	.45	.501	12.61	1	12.61	9.83	.002	
Within Groups	130.76	284	.46			362.89	283	1.28			
Total	130.97	285				375.50	284				
Majority-Minority Status											
Between Groups	2.39	1	2.39	5.25	.023	1.67	1	1.67	1.25	.265	
Within Groups	129.61	285	.46			380.63	284	1.34			
Total	131.99	286				382.31	285				
First-Generation Status											
Between Groups	.20	1	.20	.43	.512	.07	1	.07	.05	.823	
Within Groups	131.36	283	.46			379.47	282	1.35			
Total	131.56	284				379.54	283				

Figures 1 and 2 of Significant ANOVA Results



Discussion

Students from certain backgrounds face additional pressures that impact their adjustment at college. In particular, women and minority-ethnicity individuals—who may be visibly underrepresented within some departments and at the college-level—could face additional challenges in adjusting to the college environment.

These results suggest it is important to continue studying demographic differences within college adjustment in order to find areas of vulnerability and understand why students may be at risk with college adjustment. To what extent are students' stresses and challenges issues of representation, marginalization, resource availability, etc.?

Future research that directly considers the impacts of close relationships and social climate factors as buffers of marginalization would be promising.