

Intragroup Differences Between Black Native and Transfer Students at a Predominantly White University: Implications for Advising

Judith C. Rodriguez, Deborah Kaye, Norma Stice, Karen Reedy, Josephine Frazier,
& Barbara Brice, University of North Florida

This research project identified demographic, academic, and social differences between Black native (entering, first-year) and Black transfer students at a predominantly White, urban, public university. A questionnaire mailed to all Black students (N = 735) elicited 172 responses (23%). Most students from both groups felt that the university promoted a positive race attitude. They also expected their advisors to be accessible and to know academic programs and policies. The researchers found significant differences in age, marital status, and who had been most influential in a student's having remained in school. Native students used the Career Development Center and Minority Student Alliance at a greater rate, and a larger percentage of them participated in the African American Student Union, the Student Government Association, the International Student Organization, and sororities and fraternities.

Most studies of Black college students have concentrated on academic needs, retention, or freshmen. Carroll (1988) and Trippi and Cheatham (1989) addressed the needs and most effective advising strategies for incoming Black freshmen. Bender and Richardson (1987) identified demographic differences between Black transfer and native students. Two studies (Donovan, 1983; Leatherman, 1989) addressed the transfer from urban community colleges to four-year universities.

Baum (1983) concluded that Black students' perceptions of the university environment differed from those of White students, but our review of National Clearinghouse for Academic Advising bibliographies on retention and on advising African American students [Ed. Note: *Information on the Clearinghouse is published at the back of this issue.*], which included over 100 studies, revealed none that specifically dealt with intragroup diversity or differences in the counseling needs of Black native and Black transfer students.

Despite similar ancestry, sociodemographic differences among individuals impact their perceptions, behaviors, and needs (Jerome, 1980;

Pounds, 1987). Student persistence may be influenced by an advisor's awareness of advisees' sociodemographic differences and perceptions. An advisor's use of this information can promote effective counseling (Pedersen, 1988) and facilitate entry into college life.

The holistic, developmental advising framework identifies the personal (interpersonal), social (sociopolitical), and vocational (career) needs of the individual (Gordon, 1992; Hughes, 1987). The personal approach examines how the student feels about the community and its members. The social approach examines the variables that impact student progress. The vocational approach examines the expressed career advising needs of the student.

Using the frameworks of intragroup diversity (Jerome, 1980; Pounds, 1987) and holistic counseling (Hughes, 1987), this study identified the sociodemographic and perceptual differences and expressed advising needs of Black native (entering, first-year) and Black transfer students at a predominantly White, urban, public university. The data were evaluated for their implications for advising. Specifically, the study sought to determine (a) differences in demographics, (b) differences in perceptions of advising and other institutional roles in a predominantly White institution, (c) differences in perceptions of advising needs (e.g., academic, personal, professional), and (d) the implications of these findings for advising.

Methodology

A questionnaire was developed and tested on a sample of Black undergraduates. After testing, the questionnaire was mailed to all Black native ($n = 122$) and transfer students ($n = 613$). The original mailing resulted in 133 returned surveys (18%). Nonrespondents received follow-up letters ($n = 568$) and/or telephone calls ($n = 524$), resulting in the return of 47 additional surveys. Eight of the surveys were unusable. All responses were analyzed using the SAS® statistical software sys-

tem that calculated frequencies, percentages, means, and chi-square.

Results

Of the 735 questionnaires mailed, 23% ($n = 172$) were returned and analyzed. Of the respondents, 63% ($n = 108$) were transfer students and 37% ($n = 64$) were native students.

Differences

Transfer students were older and married at higher rates (Table 1). Among the variables found to be proportionately higher among transfer students were (a) financial independence, (b) being head of a household, (c) sharing expenses, (d) dependence on a spouse, and (e) having dependents. As expected, a larger proportion of transfer students attended school part time (Table 2).

More native students had scholarships, and they used available services at greater rates than transfer students. Native students also participated in university clubs and governance at a significantly greater rate (Table 2).

Survey results showed differences in feelings about who had influenced retention. Academic advisors, friends, parents, family members, other students, and administrators all influenced the

retention of native students. Spouses most influenced the retention of transfer students (Table 3).

More native than transfer students felt like an integral part of the university community and felt that a Black student or faculty person could be a role model for them. Proportionately more transfer students had a particular advisor they preferred to see (Table 2).

Similarities

The two groups exhibited many similarities: (a) female students were predominant, (b) comparable income ranges and grade point averages were reported, and (c) the Financial Aid Office was used at a comparable rate.

Regarding the university's racial climate, 132 respondents (77%) indicated that race was not a factor in selecting an advisor.

And both groups expressed similar expectations concerning academic advisors. They expected advisors to (a) know academic programs, policies, and procedures; (b) know jobs in students' areas of interest; (c) help with scheduling classes; and (d) be accessible. Neither group expected the advisor to (a) serve as a resource person, (b) listen to personal problems, (c) take an interest in students' personal lives, (d) anticipate needs, or (e) be concerned about students' personal welfare.

TABLE 1
Demographics

		<i>Native</i> ($n = 63$)	<i>Transfer</i> ($n = 109$)	<i>Significant</i> <i>Difference?</i> ($p < .05$)
Gender	Male	24% ($n = 15$)	28% ($n = 31$)	No
	Female	76% ($n = 48$)	72% ($n = 78$)	No
Age*	17-21	71% ($n = 45$)	17% ($n = 19$)	Yes
	22-31	16% ($n = 10$)	50% ($n = 54$)	Yes
	32-41	8% ($n = 5$)	27% ($n = 30$)	Yes
Marital status	Single	87% ($n = 55$)	52% ($n = 57$)	Yes
	Married	6% ($n = 4$)	39% ($n = 42$)	Yes
	Divorce	3% ($n = 2$)	6% ($n = 7$)	No
	Widowed	2% ($n = 1$)	1% ($n = 1$)	No
	Other	2% ($n = 1$)	2% ($n = 2$)	No

*Age categories 42-51 and 52+ are not included; sample sizes were too small to determine significance

TABLE 2
Variables Showing Significant Difference Between Native and Transfer Students

<i>Variable</i>	χ^2	<i>p</i>	<i>Native</i>	<i>Transfer</i>
Live independently	39.792	0.000	Yes 29% (<i>n</i> = 24)	Yes 71% (<i>n</i> = 60)
Head of household	18.957	0.000	Yes 6% (<i>n</i> = 11) No 28% (<i>n</i> = 48) Other* 2% (<i>n</i> = 4)	Yes 23% (<i>n</i> = 40) No 27% (<i>n</i> = 46) Other 14% (<i>n</i> = 23)
Dependent on a spouse	39.792	0.000	Yes 0% (<i>n</i> = 0)	Yes 100% (<i>n</i> = 19)
Have dependents	18.050	0.000	None 31% (<i>n</i> = 53) One+ 6% (<i>n</i> = 9)	None 34% (<i>n</i> = 58) One+ 29% (<i>n</i> = 49)
Part-time study	8.903	0.012	FT 23% (<i>n</i> = 40) PT 8% (<i>n</i> = 13) Both 6% (<i>n</i> = 10)	FT 28% (<i>n</i> = 49) PT 27% (<i>n</i> = 47) Both 8% (<i>n</i> = 13)
On scholarships	31.979	0.000	Yes 14% (<i>n</i> = 24) No 23% (<i>n</i> = 39)	Yes 3% (<i>n</i> = 5) No 60% (<i>n</i> = 104)
Use the Career Development Center	8.051	0.005	Yes 19% (<i>n</i> = 33) No 17% (<i>n</i> = 29)	Yes 20% (<i>n</i> = 34) No 44% (<i>n</i> = 75)
Use the Minority Student Alliance	7.579	0.006	Yes 13% (<i>n</i> = 22) No 24% (<i>n</i> = 41)	Yes 10% (<i>n</i> = 18) No 53% (<i>n</i> = 91)
Participate in the African American Student Union	23.555	0.000	Yes 15% (<i>n</i> = 25) No 22% (<i>n</i> = 37)	Yes 6% (<i>n</i> = 10) No 58% (<i>n</i> = 99)
Feel like an integral part of the University	8.388	0.015	Yes 19% (<i>n</i> = 32) No 11% (<i>n</i> = 19) Other 6% (<i>n</i> = 10)	Yes 21% (<i>n</i> = 35) No 34% (<i>n</i> = 58) Other 9% (<i>n</i> = 16)
Have a preferred advisor	4.552	0.033	Yes 28% (<i>n</i> = 46) No 10% (<i>n</i> = 17)	Yes 36% (<i>n</i> = 60) No 27% (<i>n</i> = 46)
Have a Black student role model	12.833	0.000	Yes 12% (<i>n</i> = 21) No 24% (<i>n</i> = 42)	Yes 7% (<i>n</i> = 12) No 56% (<i>n</i> = 97)
Have a Black faculty role model	4.850	0.028	Yes 17% (<i>n</i> = 29) No 20% (<i>n</i> = 34)	Yes 19% (<i>n</i> = 32) No 45% (<i>n</i> = 77)
Advisors should be willing to discuss academic concerns	5.144	0.023	Yes 35% (<i>n</i> = 60) No 2% (<i>n</i> = 3)	Yes 53% (<i>n</i> = 91) No 10% (<i>n</i> = 18)

*Shared Expenses

TABLE 3
Retention Influences Showing Significant Difference*
Between Native and Transfer Students

<i>Influence</i>	<i>Native</i> (<i>n</i> = 63)		<i>Transfer</i> (<i>n</i> = 109)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Administrators	8% (<i>n</i> = 13)	30% (<i>n</i> = 50)	3% (<i>n</i> = 5)	60% (<i>n</i> = 106)
Parents/family	23% (<i>n</i> = 40)	13% (<i>n</i> = 23)	27% (<i>n</i> = 46)	37% (<i>n</i> = 63)
Other students	12% (<i>n</i> = 20)	25% (<i>n</i> = 43)	7% (<i>n</i> = 12)	56% (<i>n</i> = 97)
Spouse	5% (<i>n</i> = 8)	32% (<i>n</i> = 55)	22% (<i>n</i> = 38)	41% (<i>n</i> = 71)
Academic advisors	16% (<i>n</i> = 28)	20% (<i>n</i> = 35)	17% (<i>n</i> = 30)	46% (<i>n</i> = 79)
Friends	18% (<i>n</i> = 31)	19% (<i>n</i> = 32)	22% (<i>n</i> = 37)	42% (<i>n</i> = 72)

**p* < .05

Discussion and Implications

The results indicate three areas of interest for advisors: (a) demographic differences, (b) student's perceptions concerning retention and support systems, and (c) differing levels of integration into the university community.

From a developmental perspective the demographic data confirmed our intuitive sense that native and transfer students differ significantly in their life-cycle stages. For example, marital issues and such family responsibilities as child care are much more significant for transfer students.

The survey's response rate closely parallels the ratio of transfer to native students attending the university. (There are usually about twice as many transfer as native students. However, there is a significant overrepresentation of native students among respondents. In the total Black population, transfer students outnumber natives 5:1, whereas in the study the ratio is about 1.6:1.) The ratio of females to males was approximately 3:1 among both groups, which parallels the university's usual gender profile for Black students and has implications that are not limited to university socialization or advising-related issues (Gordon, 1992).

From a social perspective, native students identified a broad range of retention networks, but transfer students named their spouse as an important influencer. This indicates that native and transfer students may have different perceptions about their influencers or that some transfer students may have a narrower, or more focused

range of influencers than native students. The impact of these stated influencers needs analysis.

Transfer students have more financial responsibilities, time constraints, and lower levels of financial assistance than native students. Approximately one third of all students had a self-reported household income level below \$12,248. Although full-time students will probably always receive more financial assistance, our data indicated expressed similar financial needs among both groups. However, at this institution the current financial aid structure is biased toward providing more systematically supportive services for native full-time students, despite transfer students' larger numbers.

Among both groups, most students felt that the university promoted a positive race attitude "sometimes," but more native students felt part of the university community. The multiple variables that impact an individual's feeling of belonging need identification, as do differences in student perceptions and expectations of the advisor's role.

This study did not identify major vocational or academic differences between groups. Although significantly more transfer students wanted advisors to listen to their academic concerns, both groups had similar expectations concerning academic information and services from advisors. Neither group had a large expectation that an advisor be interested in a student's personal life.

More native than transfer students participated in student activities. Although it is not surprising that full-time native students use university ser-

vices and participate in student activities more than transfer students, these data raise questions:

1. Are institutions providing sufficient and diverse alternatives to maximize transfer student participation and incorporation into the mainstream?
2. Are institutions providing adequate support services, as well as advisor recommendations and referrals to these services?
3. How are the answers to these first two questions related to transfer students feeling less "like an integral part of the university"?
4. Does status (native vs. transfer) or time (part vs. full-time) have a greater impact on sense of belonging?

We assume that a student's comfort is a function of, or is influenced by, the amount of time spent on campus. However, the existence—and the use—of other variables (e.g., clubs or organizations for part-time students, support systems for married students, and so on) to improve comfort level and interpersonal relations needs testing. The impact of these forces on a student's ability to access or use the university's resources and become active in organizations needs analysis.

Transfer students comprised the larger number of Black students on campus but appeared less integrated into the university community. However, we need to determine whether, and how much, this lack of integration is voluntary, a function of ethnicity, environment, status, or time spent on campus.

The modal demographic profile for the transfer student favors an older female who attends classes part time and is head of a household. She most likely shares finances or is dependent on a spouse and has little or no academic financial assistance. The modal demographic profile for the native student indicates a younger female who is single and living with the family in which she was raised. She attends school full time and is more likely to have financial assistance than the transfer student. However, these are not the sole patterns and intragroup diversity and individual needs must be kept in mind.

Limitations

This research was exploratory and limited in that it focused on one minority group in a predominantly White institution. The findings may not apply to (a) nonrespondents, (b) situations where Black students are not a minority, or (c) other groups. The underrepresentation of trans-

fer students among respondents limits the conclusions that can be drawn about this group and would seem to indicate the need to explore a variety of methods to obtain more transfer student responses.

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Judith Rodriguez is Assistant Professor of Health Science. Deborah Kaye is Director of the Division of Student Services in the College of Education and Human Services. Norma Slice, Karen Reedy, and Josephine Frazier are academic advisors, and Barbara Brice is a graduate student. This research project was conducted between January and December 1992 and supported by a NACADA grant. Address correspondence concerning this article to Judith Rodriguez at the College of Health, University of North Florida, 4567 St. Johns Bluff Road South, Jacksonville, FL 32224.