

Understanding Undergraduate Student Engagement: Motivations and Experiences

by

Mannix Chan

B.Sc, University of Ontario Institute of Technology, 2014

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Abstract

An undergraduate student's level of engagement in non-academic activities has demonstrated to be a robust predictor of their success in higher education. Previous research indicates positive outcomes associated with student engagement including social benefits and sense of community gained by the students. Little is known about what motivates millennial students to join these activities and what students gain through these types of experiences. This study explores motivations and experiences of 11 undergraduate millennial students involved with student-run organizations at the University Of Victoria. The findings of the study suggest that today's students are motivated to become engaged in non-academic activities due to professional and social benefits, encouragement from others, and personal interests. Additionally, through their participation, students have a better experience in university and learn about ideas of leadership and leadership skills. The findings from this study provide insight on how universities can create programs and policies to foster student engagement and student success.

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Dedication

To Jack Chan: my father, my mentor and for reminding me to always keep smiling

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Research Journey

High school students progress through education with the premise they will be attending university after graduation. Teachers would explain to the students that teachers' priority is to prepare students for the academic rigor of university programs. Moreover, parents would remind their children a university degree is crucial if they are hoping to secure a professional career with a respectable salary. With these messages, high school students are convinced that getting a university degree is the most natural progression and a mandatory step in their educational and professional journey. I also had similar experience and perception when I was a high school student and while applying for my undergraduate education.

In a knowledge-based society, students are being pressured to attend university and are expected to succeed. However, some may not understand the specific challenges of being a university student. Aside from the academic demand faced by newly admitted students, they are also required to quickly adapt to a new learning environment and integrate themselves into a new social community. During the first year of my university education, balancing my social and academic responsibilities was difficult. I found myself focusing all my attention on the academic aspects of my university education and, as a result, I found myself disconnected from the student community. My eagerness to succeed academically caused me to neglect the importance of being engaged with my peers and my new community. To find a balance between academic and social activities, I began to seek out clubs and extracurricular activities of personal interest. After becoming more involved with the university community, I discovered a community of supportive peers that provided me with the confidence to excel in my academics.

Through my involvement on campus, I was introduced to the various Student Affairs staff members who were responsible in providing the resources and support to help students succeed. Through connecting with these staff members, I had the opportunity to work as a student staff with the Student Affairs office. I gained a better understanding of how the university was meeting the needs of the students. I discovered the Student Affairs office plays a crucial role in assisting and encouraging students to engage with the university community. Examples of these programs include new student orientation, leadership education initiatives, mentoring programs, residence life and extracurricular activities. By assisting these programs, I learned that the social aspects of the student experience are just as valuable and important as the academic aspects of higher education.

In recent years, the body of research on student engagement has significantly increased because various authors have concluded the level of on campus engagement demonstrated by a student is a robust predictor of their success in university. These studies have obliged university leaders and administration to shift their focus onto the work of student affairs professionals and to acknowledge the importance of social engagement of the institution. At the same time, little is known about what motivates university students to become engaged with their university community or how their involvement with social activities affects their overall experience (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991; Handy et al., 2010; Jones & Hill, 2003)

As a young student affairs professional, my portfolio included leadership training and education, orientation programming and student involvement in extracurricular activities. My understanding of student engagement theory has been the foundation on which I used to build my programs and to justify program improvements when meeting with institutional leaders. I believe that examining student engagement and characteristics and needs of millennial students

will allow us to design extracurricular activities and leadership education programs in order to motivate and engage today's student to enhance their university experience and give them the tools necessary to succeed.

Student Affairs professionals are interested in learning more about millennials as university lecture halls are being filled by this generational cohort. It comes as no surprise researchers are also interested in learning more about this group of students. Understanding the needs and types of support millennials require is important for student affairs professionals in order to better assist these students. Through my research, I want to learn more about this group of students and the types of support they are seeking from the university. This will assist me and my colleagues in student affairs to design programs that will improve the student experience. Finally, by exploring the questions of what motivates today's students to become engaged and learning about their experience through being involved, programs promoting student engagement can be improved to encourage students to participate and therefore increasing their chances of success in university.

Research Background

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE, 2016) has defined student engagement as the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other educationally purposeful activities. It also describes student engagement as a method in which institution deploys its resources and organizes the curriculum and other learning opportunities to get students to participate in activities that contribute to student learning. Common examples of student engagement include: joining an on-campus club, being a school athlete, volunteering with a university affiliated group, being part of the residence community, having a conversation with a professor or instructor and many others (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie & Gonyea, 2008;

NSSE, 2016). From this definition and the above examples, student engagement can be defined as a purposeful interaction between a student and the university.

Research suggests student engagement or student involvement play an important role in determining student success. To clarify, the traditional definition of student success has been described by the degree completion and graduation rates (Kuh et al., 2008). The link between student engagement and student success is an idea that was first proposed by Tinto (1975) and supported by Austin and Sax (1998) and NSSE (2016). When students are engaging with their peers and professors, they are developing their new social identity and are socially integrating into their new environment (Tinto, 1975). Higher levels of social integration have been proven to increase students' level of commitment to the institution and therefore their success (Tinto, 1975). Universities are beginning to recognize students' level of engagement as a more robust predictor of their success (Kuh, Kenzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek, 2006). Moreover, engaged students develop their social identity and foster connections with their peers. In turn, this provides students with confidence and the support to overcome academic and social challenges arising during their university education and thus contributes to student success (Kuh et al., 2006). Recognizing the impact of student engagement, institutions are shifting their focus on increasing opportunities for students to become engaged.

Research Problem

Throughout university education, students' level of engagement plays a crucial role because it suggests students are able to successfully integrate in their social environment, receive support and succeed (Tinto, 1975; Kuh et al., 2006). Studies have shown students who demonstrate high levels of engagement are more likely to succeed. Thus, student engagement is a predictor in determining student success (Kuh et al., 2006). Despite the benefits of students'

engagement with the university, researchers have a limited understanding of the motivations of today's students to become engaged or more involved with the university. Furthermore, the majority of student engagement research has focused on the results of being involved while minimal research has been done to learn about student experience during their involvement. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of student engagement, researchers should focus their studies on the initial motivation and the experience throughout student involvement rather than on examining the outcome of being engaged. In other words, researchers should ask *how do today's engaged student describe their experience?*

Purpose of Research

The main purpose of this study is to explore the motivations of today's students, specifically millennials, to become engaged with extracurricular activities in university. Moreover, as recommended by Handy and colleagues (2000), this study will attempt to delve into the decision process students use to decide to get involved. Secondly, I want to learn how these students describe their involvement with their university's community. At this stage in the research, the idea of student engagement will be defined as student participation in a social activity that includes an interaction between peers on a university campus (Rhoades, 1998; NSSE, 2016).

Research Questions

This qualitative study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What motivates millennials to become involved in extracurricular university activities?
2. How does being engaged in extracurricular activities affect students' experience in university?

Definition of Terms

A list of definition of terms has been provided to help the reader better understand and specify the ideas in this research:

Extracurricular Activities – a term used to describe a multitude of voluntary involvement activities beyond the classroom within the university environment which are organized by students (Shulurf, 2010; Stuart, Lido, Morgan, Solomon & May, 2011)

Helicopter Parents – a term used to describe the over bearing parenting styles exercised by today’s parents (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014).

Millennial – a cohort of individuals who are born between the years of 1982 and 2000, inclusive (Balda & Morra, 2001; Howe & Strauss, 2000).

Student Affairs – “...the delivery of services enhancing educational experiences of college students and defines the context of student affairs work in terms of institutional and societal values” (NASPA, 2010)

Student Engagement –

Student engagement represents two critical features of collegiate quality. The first is the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other educationally purposeful activities. The second is how the institution deploys its resources and organizes the curriculum and other learning opportunities to get students to participate in activities that decades of research studies show are linked to student learning. (NSSE, 2016)

Student Involvement – refers to the physical and psychological energy devoted to the academic experience (Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 2001).

Significance of Research

Through my research I want to add to the growing body of literature regarding student engagement while gaining a better understanding of the culture of millennials. Millennials are particularly interesting to me because they make up majority of university campuses and I am keen to understand how this generation's attitudes and behaviours effect their engagement with extracurricular activities in university. More specifically, I am interested in exploring the motivations that encourages millennials to become engaged and the learning that occurs while a millennial student is engaged.

This study will provide valuable information to university services and administration on how to better support millennial students. In addition, student affairs professionals specifically leadership educators and those who design purposeful programming for undergraduate students can use this research to enhance their programs and the student experience.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The idea of student engagement was initially introduced by Tinto (1975) through his work linking the importance of student social integration with student retention and persistence in higher education. Based on Tinto's work, other authors and researchers have become curious about the idea of students becoming engaged or becoming involved with their university. In the 1980s, Chickering and Gamson (1987) introduced the *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education* which outlined the different facets of student engagement with the university and provided specific examples of student engagement. Finally, Astin (1999) popularized the idea of student involvement and discussed its implications and the impact of student engagement or involvement on the student experience. However, over the years, student engagement grew to include a number of different ideas. In this section, I will discuss (1) the current context of higher education in Canada, (2) the principles of student engagement and their impact on student experience and (3) characteristics of millennials.

Current Context of Higher Education

In the recent decades, higher education policies have been driven by the notion of a knowledge-based economy with the emphasis on employment and skills. The growing economic competitiveness in today's society put additional pressure on modern students (Kuh et al., 2006). A high school diploma is no longer enough to acquire a career or a well paying job (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Kuh et al., 2006). In order to attain better employment students are pressured to

attend universities which are expected to provide students with the academic and technical skills for the jobs in their field of study (Côté & Allahar, 2007; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Kuh et al., 2006;). However, attending university today is a much more complex decision because students face a number of challenges previous generations of university students did not have to consider. For example, university tuition has increased significantly, and many students are not in a financial position to attend university (Kuh et al., 2006). As a result, many university students are forced to seek part time employment which leaves less time for their academics. In turn, this jeopardizes the student's academic successes and their ability to graduate, thus impacting their employability. Despite the challenges inhibiting a student's academic success, university professors continue to have high expectations (Côté & Allahar, 2007; Kuh et al., 2006). Making matters worse, researchers have identified a growing trend of high school students receiving inflated grades; as much as 42% of US high school graduates complete high school with an A average. (Côté & Allahar, 2007; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). These grade inflations are suggesting to newly admitted university students minimal effort is required in order to achieve high letter grade. As a result, students feel disconnected from their academic expectations of university and actual rigour of university education.

A growing perception of society that universities are institutions that train students to be ready for the work place means universities are expected to help students master their academic discipline. However, these expectations are changing, and today's universities are also assumed to teach students how to be better citizens and the importance of civic engagement (Brungardt, 1996; Cress et al., 2001; Eich, 2008; Kuh et al. 2006; Rhodes, 1998). The idea that higher education is shaping today's students' academic, social and professional success suggests that universities need to prioritize the inclusion of leadership development as a major learning

outcome of undergraduate students (Cress et al., 2001; Eich, 2008). Some authors argue that leadership skills are best developed outside of the classroom experiences and through programs such as experiential learning, service learning, community volunteering and extracurricular activities (Brungardt, 1996; Eich, 2008; Rhodes, 1998;).

It is clear that the university is no longer an institution that only challenges students to think critically and to understand ideas of higher learning; rather, universities are places for students to become successful and effective citizens (Eich, 2008; Rhoades, 1998;).

Student Engagement and Student Success

Student engagement is an overarching term used to include a number of university practices. The National Student Survey and Engagement (NSSE, 2016) defines student engagement to include two main features: first, the amount of time and effort a student invests in educationally purposeful activities, and second, how the institution deploys its resources and how a university organizes its curriculum to encourage students to participate in programming linked to student learning. Based on these features, student engagement can include a diverse range of student activities and aspects of a student's life. For instance, studying at the library, talking to faculty members on campus or joining an on-campus club are all considered examples of student engagement. Rhoades (1998) adds that student engagement includes a variety of interactions between the student and university and it does not only include students participating in on-campus activities.

Student success according to university standards is defined by students' ability to complete their degree; graduation rate has been used to measure student success because it implies the university has the ability to provide a satisfactory student experience with an appropriate academic rigour and adequate support through its current policies and staff members

(Braxton & McClendon, 2001; Kuh et al., 2006; Kuh et al., 2008). Universities have traditionally used student success to evaluate their performance and to identify areas to be improved, in order to provide a better educational experience. In recent years, student engagement has demonstrated to have a strong link with student success; engaged university students are more likely to persist in their studies and therefore are more likely to graduate (Astin, 1999; Berger & Milem 1999; Braxton & McClendon, 2001; Kuh et al., 2008; Kuh et al., 2006; Tinto, 1975). When students are engaged with the university, they are creating relationships with their peers and members of their university community; in turn, this develops a new social identity in their new environment and thus provides the self-confidence to succeed (Berger & Milem. 1999; Kuh et al., 2006). Furthermore, Tinto (1975) describes student engagement as a form of social integration which improves student's persistence and academic success. Finally, Astin (1999) adds students who are engaged have a more positive attitude towards their university and feel much more committed to their university community; as a result, students perform better academically and have the confidence to succeed.

Although, interacting with faculty members and instructors is considered a form of student engagement, studies have shown student engagement activities involving peer-to-peer interactions have a greater impact on predicting student success (Kuh et al., 2006). This type of interaction occurs more naturally when student participate in extracurricular activities, join a sports team, take part in student government and volunteer in an on-campus organizations (Astin, 1999; Eich, 2008; Kuh et al., 2006). Unlike the relationship between a student and a professor, the relationship with peers establishes a support system for students. As a result, when students are in distress they can rely on their peers for help rather than dropping out and discontinuing their studies (Kuh et al., 2006). Berger and Milem (1999) emphasizes the importance of peer

support by encouraging students to form these relationship during their first years of university because it strengthens their perceptions of institutional and social support. This allows students to socially integrate into their university community, and they are more likely to persist in university. The key aspect of student engagement relating to student success is the opportunities for social integration and for students to create a sense of identity in their new environment. Researchers argue social integration plays a much bigger role in student success than any other aspect of university life (Berger & Milem, 1999; Kuh et al., 2006). Braxton and McClendon (2001) maintain that the lack of social integration and institutional commitment is the reason is for student departure from universities. Student engagement links the opportunities for social integration with student success.

In contemporary discourse student engagement has become synonymous with student involvement (Astin, Sax & Avalos, 1999). Student activities such as service learning (Rhoades, 1998), service participation (Astin & Sax, 1998), community service (Astin et al., 1999; Cres et al., 2001), volunteer service (Astin et al., 1999; Cress et al., 2001), leadership education (Eich, 2008), co-curricular activities (Kuh et al., 2006) and experiential learning (Eich, 2008) have also been used interchangeably to describe types of student engagement or involvement. Although each of these activities are considered different opportunities for students to become engaged, each of these activities are named according to their specific learning outcomes, and how the institution develops and deploys these programs and the type of recognition and credit the students receive. For example, service learning is a form of volunteering that university students participate in as part of the requirements for obtaining a credit in a specific course which can be a mandatory component required by their faculty (Rhoades, 1998). Service learning programs are designed with specific learning outcomes and one of their goals is to teach civic responsibility.

Finally, a reflection component is always included in a service learning program which allows students to reflect on the importance of the work they completed and how it impacted those involved (Rhoades, 1998).

In contrast to service learning, volunteer service is considered a non-mandatory activity (Astin et al., 1999). Students can volunteer in on and off campus organizations and unlike service learning no specific learning outcomes are explicitly included in volunteering service. At some institutions, volunteer hours can be recorded with the university and students are able to request a document that displays all of the student's participation. Considering various types of activities available to students it is important to distinguish them based on intended learning outcomes. Students who participate in either of these activities are considered to be engaged.

A growing body of research supports the benefits of student engagement and importance of social integration. For instance, Kuh and colleagues (2006) have suggested that a student's level of social integration is a more robust approach in predicting student success because it provides students with the confidence necessary to succeed academically. Astin (1999) adds that students who are engaged have a more positive experience during the university education. This assumption is based on a perception that universities want their students to succeed, and a network of peers exists to support them.

With reports of a more positive experience and discovery of the connection between student experience and student success, universities are now considering the importance of assessing their students' overall experiences rather than simply analyzing the data produced through graduation rates as a means of institutional success (Kuh et al., 2006). Universities are changing their focus and investing in activities that encourage student engagement and foster social integration. Universities have become more intentional in developing and assessing these

activities through their student affairs departments (Astin & Sax, 1998). Programs are designed with intentional learning outcomes and are assessed by asking students to comment on the type of learning they achieved (Astin, 1999). This type of assessment allows student affairs professionals to determine the success of their program because they are able to measure the learning outcomes. For example, in the study conducted by Astin and Sax (1998), the researchers surveyed over 2000 university students. Their results demonstrated students involved in service participation were able to strengthen their understanding of civic responsibility, educational attainment or academic development and life skills, thus concluding the impact and the effectiveness of the program (Astin & Sax, 1998). In contrast to the aforementioned quantitative study, Rhoades (1998) used a qualitative research approach. Rhoades interviewed participants and evaluated their learning. The key learning outcomes were: self-exploration, understanding others and the social good. This type of assessment allowed the author to capture genuine student's experience. .

Although universities are intentionally creating an institutional culture promoting student engagement through implementing service learning components in their curriculum and supporting student affairs professionals, universities also promote student engagement activities without specific learning outcomes. These activities which are often operated by students include non-academic student engagement which is not explicitly organized or assessed by the university (Astin & Sax, 1998; Rhoades, 1998; Shulurf, 2010; Stuart et al., 2011). These activities include extracurricular activities and volunteering contributing to social integration and peer-to-peer interaction. Even without established learning outcomes, students who participate in these activities have learned a variety of leadership skills including organizational, communication, and community participation skills (Brungardt, 1996; Cress et al., 2001; Shulurf, 2010; Stuart et

al., 2011). Moreover, volunteer participation helps students gain self-confidence, develop critical thinking skills and practice conflict resolution. Astin and Sax (1998) have concluded volunteer participation, in general, allows students to gain a better understanding of civic responsibility and social awareness, students have a better sense of racial understanding and are more likely to work for a non-profit or continue volunteer after graduating. Students who engaged in this type of non-academic student engagement had a better student experience and were more successful in their academic endeavours (Astin et al., 1999; Astin & Sax, 1998). Even without declared learning outcomes, students develop various skills and gain an experience similar to activities with intentional learning outcomes (Cress et al., 2001).

Student engagement activities have proven to increase the likelihood of a student's success while providing valuable lessons that cannot be taught in a traditional classroom. However, in today's university climate, not all students are able to become engaged with their university. In comparison to the previous generation of university students, many students are working part time to pay for their tuition because of the increase in university fees (Kuh et al., 2006; NSSE, 2016). As a result, many students prioritize working over engaging with their university, and these students are not able to socially integrate as easily as other students, and therefore are at risk of dropping out. In addition to financial obstacles, some students are facing academic challenges encountered at the university level. Many of today's students are not prepared for the academic rigour of higher education and are struggling to maintain an acceptable grade average and are investing a greater amount of their time in studying and preparing for classes (Kuh et al., 2006; NSSE, 2016). If students have less time to become engaged, they will struggle to build a support network to overcome the emotional stress of their studies which can lead to dropping out of university (Kuh et al., 2006). Some researchers

recommend that universities create a university culture that encourages engagement and promotes service participation to help convince today's students of the importance of being more involved. University professors can play a major role in this by sharing with their students the importance of being involved or by implementing a service learning component to their curriculum to help promote this university culture (Astin, 1999).

The importance of student engagement has been well documented and a number of publications examined the impact and outcomes of students who are engaged in university (Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin et al. 1999; Braxton & McClendon, 2001; Kuh et al., 2006). However, few studies address questions of student motivation to get involved. Majority of research attempting to identify why students get involved or engaged has focused on high school students and has specifically examined their motivations to volunteer (Astin, 1999; Astin & Sax, 1998; Brungardt, 1996; Jones, 2000; Marks & Jones, 2004;). Moreover, authors are still unclear on student decision process to take the initial step to be involved (Handy et al., 2010). As Brungardt (1996) admits many researchers are unsure of the type of experience gained by students during their involvement or engagement. Current research surrounding student engagement has emphasized student's learning and experience after their involvement. Thus, our understanding of why students become involved is limited. Discovering these motives and exploring the engaged student's experience will help universities better understand how to improve the overall student experience.

Overview of Millennials

The term "millennial" was first coined by Howe and Strauss (2000) in their book titled *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* who identified millennials as anyone born between the years of 1982 and 2000. However, in the literature, the specific bracket of birth

years used to classify millennials is inconsistent and will depend based on the author (DiLullo, McGee & Kribel, 2011). For this study, Howe and Straus' (2000) definition of millennials, or, individuals born between the years of 1982 and 2000, will be used.

One unique characteristic of this generational cohort that differentiates it from other generations is their apparent innate use of and reliance on technology (Gentry, Griggs, Deal & Mondore, 2011; Jones & Shao, 2011). In contrast to previous generations, millennials were not formally introduced to the internet, which has greatly impacted the way they socialize, interact with information and their idea of community (Gentry et al., 2011). Their technology fluency made millennials known as *digital natives* (Jones & Shao, 2011). Moreover, technology has greatly impacted the way millennials behave on and offline. For instance, millennials have adapted technology as their main method of socializing which has caused the emergence of online communities in the past few years (Holt, Marques & Way, 2012; Jones & Shao., 2011; Wisneiswki, 2010). With the vast reach that the internet allows, millennials have the opportunity to connect with individuals from all around the world (Holt et al., 2012). For millennials, community is no longer limited by the physical constraints; rather, millennials have the opportunity to participate in the global community and contribute to a community beyond their own homes (Arendorf & Andenoro, 2009; Bland et al., 2012 DeBard, 2004; DiLullo et al., 2011; Gesell, 2010; Holt et al., 2012; Thompson & Gregory, 2012). This specific social context resulting from their use of technology, have made millennials the most social generation who have learned to value working with peers and collaborating with others (Gentry et al., 2011; Holt et al., 2012).

Furthermore, technology has allowed millennials to access information instantly and receive prompt replies. These online expectations of millennials have transferred into off-line

expectations. In other words, they expect to receive feedback or reply immediately after sending emails or online messages via various internet applications (Arensdorf & Andenoro, 2009; Jones & Shao., 2011). This attitude makes it challenging for millennials to wait for replies from employers, teachers, colleagues or their peers (Arensdorf & Andenoro, 2009). Authors have argued that technology and its use are the most distinguishing characteristics of the millennial generation. As a result, research surrounding millennials have focused on their use of technology by constantly attempting to link their findings with millennials use of technology (Balda & Mora, 2011; Jones & Shao, 2011).

Thompson and Gregory (2012) have suggested the concerns of today's parents and family culture have greatly changed over the generations. Parents are significantly more concerned with their children's safety and are taking extreme precaution to protect their children; this type of parenting has resulted in the term "helicopter parents" to emerge; metaphorically, illustrating parents hovering or their obsession over their children (Bland, Melton, Welle, & Brigham, 2012; Thompson & Gregory, 2012). This upbringing could explain why millennials are stereotypically depicted as being sheltered because they have relied on their parents to make decisions and therefore are unwilling to take risks as young adults (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). Debard (2004) also argues that parents more readily praise their children and reward them for the invested effort as opposed for the completion of the task. DiLullo (2011) adds parents are constantly validating their children with positive remarks and avoiding any negative comments. This constant positive encouragement has made millennials develop a strong sense of self-confidence and become more ambitious. On the other hand, this type of parenting has caused millennials to become entitled and narcissistic (Debard, 2004; Thompson & Gregory, 2012; DiLullo, 2011). In addition, authors have observed millennials are unaware of the actual amount

of work that needs to be invested to complete their grandiose ambitions and expect to be praised for minimal effort (Debard, 2004). Moreover, the family unit has significantly changed in the past few decades because families are getting smaller, with an average family size of one or two children. More parents are holding a university degree which allows both spouses to be working full time. In turn, this has increased the average income of families allowing parents to spend more time and money on their children (Bland et al., 2012). This significant socioeconomic shift has allowed more parents to afford extracurricular activities inside and outside of school, and millennials are growing up with a scheduled routine devised by their parents. As a result, millennials expect structures and guidelines to be in place at school and at work (Bland et al., 2012). Due to the structured lifestyle millennials have been accustomed to they are more likely to succeed when they are given explicit expectations and guidelines on how they can succeed.

Institutions, including schools and the works place, are changing their physical spaces to promote the idea of group work emphasizing collegial collaboration. Students are seated in groups rather than in rows to promote team work starting at an earlier age (Arendsorf & Andenoro 2009; Lowery, 2004). In the workforce, this idea of team work remains by removing individual cubicles and embracing the idea of colleagues facing each other or sitting next to one another (Holt et al., 2012). Research suggests that the changes in the classroom and in the work place have created a generation that embraces collaboration and understands the importance of cooperation.

At the same time, in the media and in popular culture, millennials are negatively stereotyped as a generation that is self-centered, narcissistic, entitled and irresponsible (DiLullo et al., 2011; Holt, et al., 2012; Thompson & Gregory, 2012). However, unlike other generations, millennials are also described as collaborative, ambitious, structured and determined.

Millennials in Higher Education

Since the first publication discussing millennials, researchers have been interested in understanding the generation filling today's lecture halls on university campuses. With the admittance of millennials into bachelor degree programs, universities are trying to understand how this impacts university curriculum by exploring the effectiveness of existing teaching philosophies and assessing institutional student policies (Lowery, 2004). It is clear, millennials students greatly differ in how they learn and have a different university experience from those of previous generations. This requires universities to adapt in order to better support their students (DaBard, 2004)

A number of authors including Dabard (2004), Côté and Allahar (2007), Arendsdorf and Adrenoro (2009), Pizzalota and Hicklen, (2011), Thompson and Gregory (2012), and Holt, Marques and Way (2012) have detailed the way millennials learn in university, provided suggestions to improve university pedagogy to accommodate millennials, and described millennials' attitudes towards university education. However, few research studies examine the relationship between attitudes and behaviours of millennials and effects of student university engagement.

With the growing enrollment of students in higher education and new expectations brought by this generation of students, universities are faced with the challenges of changing their policies and strategies to meet the needs of today's students. As an attempt to address some of these issues, Chickering and Gamson (1987) developed seven principles that served as a guideline in creating a learning community that best suited current students. These guidelines were written with the intention of creating a better social environment for students which has been reported as a major factor influencing student success (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Tinto,

1975). These publications formed the foundations of student engagement and guided universities in creating an environment encouraging and promoting student engagement and success.

A growing body of literature suggests that simply improving the academic support is not enough to help today's students succeed. Institutions must focus on increasing opportunities for students to engage with their community and shift their attention to the social aspects of the student experience (Astin, 1999; Berger & Milem 1999; Braxton & McClendon, 2001; Kuh et al., 2006; Kuh et al., 2008 Lowery, 2004). However, little is known about what motivates millennials to become involved with extracurricular activities at universities. DeBard (2004) and Shkuro (2011) argue that today's students have a willingness to help their communities and have altruistic motives. Similar results were found in a study conducted by Handy and colleagues (2010) where they asked a group of university students to rank a series of questions surrounding their motivations to volunteer. Their study concluded students expressed the strongest reason for altruistic and value-driven reasons to become involved. They concluded students' decisions to become involved with their communities through volunteering was most influenced by altruistic reasons. A similar conclusion was made by Jones and Hill (2003) who reported 80% of student respondents cited personal satisfaction as the main motivation for their involvement. Finally, Astin and Sax (1998) reported the primary reason their participants become involved was to help others, and this motivation was rated as very important. On the other hand, a number of authors have made contradicting arguments and have suggested students are driven by utilitarian motivations to become involved (Friedland & Mariomoto, 2005; Jones, 2000; Stevenson & Clegg, 2011; Stuart et al., 2011). Day and Devlin (1998) explain this trend by suggesting students are seeking volunteering and involvement opportunities to "pad their resume" in order to stand out amongst their peers when applying for jobs. Graduates who include volunteering and

other involvement experiences in their resumes are assumed to have strong leadership skills, and this makes them more competitive in the job market (Day & Devlin, 1998). With these differing conclusions, it makes it difficult to draw conclusions on why students become involved and what motivates students to join extracurricular activities. Conducting research to make this connection is important because the surveys conducted by the NSSE (2016) have demonstrated students entering university are eager to be involved in extracurricular activities.

For my study, I have decided to examine non-academic student engagement activities. The learning acquired from these programs occurs more organically because no learning outcomes guide the students in the program, and yet evidence suggests that students are able to gain new skills during their participation. Moreover, I am interested in the experience of millennial students because little is known about what motivates them to become engaged and what they experience during this engagement. I am interested in exploring the connection between millennials' attitudes and expectations and the current use of the idea of student engagement as a framework when designing programs for today's students a bit wordy.

Summary

A considerable body of literature addresses student engagement and its implications for student success and how universities are attempting to provide more opportunities for students. Researchers have explored millennials in the work place and in the classroom, their attitudes, behaviors, and their impact on today's social world. Although millennials constitute the largest group on university campuses, limited research directly and explicitly connects our understanding of millennial students with the social aspects of student engagement. If universities want to create programs and policies supporting students and are designed to increase student success, we must understand the culture of today's students in order to help

them grow and develop as students and effective members of their communities. Moreover, the current research has focused on the impact of student engagement and the outcomes of engaged students, but there is limited understanding in regards to their motivations of being engaged and their narratives while being involved with their university community. In the next chapter, I will describe the methodology and the methods used to explore the motivations and experience of university students who are engaged in extracurricular activities.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Overall Approach and Rationale

Qualitative research is used to explore a social phenomenon and to better understand the complexity of interactions that occur in the natural world. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), qualitative research typically takes place in the natural world, draws on multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic, focuses on context, is emergent rather than tightly prefigured and is fundamentally interpretive. Qualitative research allows the researcher to explore a phenomenon allowing the conclusions to emerge from the research rather than by testing the validity of a hypothesis that commonly takes place in quantitative research. The researcher plays a major role in qualitative research because the data is interpreted by the researcher and therefore creates a level of subjectivity not found in quantitative research (Lithcman, 2013, p. 14). Researchers must describe their context and perspective to help the readers understand the rationale and conclusions that have been made. Finally, qualitative research adds a humanistic element to the research and provides a richness to our understanding of the social world.

Much of previous research on student engagement employed a quantitative approach (Astin, 1999; Astin & Sax, 1998; Handy et al., 2010; Jones, 2000; Jones & Hill, 2003; Marks & Jones; 2004; Stevenson & Clegg, 2011). Jones and Hill (2003) have suggested the use of qualitative methodologies would result in a far greater depth of understanding of what motivates students become involved and admittance of millennials into bachelor degree programs, universities are trying to understand how this impacts university curriculum by exploring the effectiveness of existing teaching philosophies and assessing institutional student policies

experience through their involvement. Based on the reviewed studies and my research problem, a qualitative approach was chosen to respond to the following research questions:

1. What motivates millennials to become involved in extracurricular university activities?
2. How does being engaged in extracurricular activities affect students' experience in university?

The qualitative approach was appropriate for answering the above research questions. I conducted qualitative interviews with current undergraduate students to find out what they thought about student engagement and to hear about their extracurricular experience on a university campus.

Data Collection Methods

The purpose of this research is to identify key factors that motivate millennials students in higher education to become involved with extracurricular activities and to explore the impact this involvement has on the student experience. The nature of this research suggested that semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate method of data collection. Marshall and Rossman (2016, p. 150) and Litchman (2013, p. 191) describe the advantages of using semi-structure interviews with guided questions as an opportunity for researchers to prompt the participants with intentional questions and still allowing the researcher to pose new questions necessary to achieve the goal of the study. This method of data collection also allows the researcher to immediately pose follow-up questions or ask for clarification which was necessary as follow up interviews were not intended for this study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 150).

All data was collected between January 16, 2017 and March 6, 2017. The data was collected through semi-structured face-to-face interviews because it allowed participants to provide in-depth responses regarding the subject matter. Interview questions (see Appendix B) were generated based on the information collected from the literature review and personal experiences of the researcher. These questions were designed as a means to guide the interviews and to focus on the research topic.

I decided to use a pilot study as a primary assessment of the quality of the questions, the structure of the interviews and other aspects of the interviewing process (Litchman, 2013, p. 105). The pilot study involved an interview with of one participant. The outcomes of this study were used to assess the participant's comprehension of the questions and the quality of the questions. This assessment was used to help refine the interview questions and provide feedback on the structure of the interview. Ultimately, the pilot study helped identify existing problems with interview questions, process and possible barriers to data collection (Litchman, 2013, p. 105).

Participant Selection and Recruitment

In this study, I chose to use a purposeful sampling to locate information-rich participants - the University of Victoria undergraduate students involved in extra curricular activities. A list of extracurricular activities, including course unions and student run on-campus organizations, available at the University of Victoria was compiled after searching through the University of Victoria's website. The website also listed the contact information of the organization's primary contact. A recruitment email (see Appendix C) outlining the purpose of this research and the intention of recruiting participants was sent to the identified students. A copy of the email and a consent letter was sent to the University of Victoria HREB for approval prior to contacting

participants. The recruitment email described the requirements of eligibility to participate in this research; participants had to be millennials and, therefore, born between the years 1982 and 2000 inclusive (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Students of all genders were eligible to participate in this study because gender was not a parameter that was focused on.

Litchman (2013, p. 193) has argued that 10 participants present an adequate sample size to be used when conducting semi-structure interviews. Therefore, the goal of the research was to recruit 10 participants. Based on the criteria participants had to be involved in an extracurricular activity at the University of Victoria. An extracurricular activity is defined by a student-operated organization and is not moderated by a university staff. For screening purposes, potential participants were asked to inform the primary researcher about their year of birth and to include all their extracurricular activities associated with the University of Victoria. Participants who met research requirements were sent an email to invite and confirm their participation. During this time, participants were reminded they had the option to withdraw from the study at any point during the research process with no consequences.

Participants of this study were students attending the University of Victoria. To minimize inconvenience, interviews took place in a booked private room on-campus. Prior to commencing the interviews, participants were asked to sign a consent form and authorization to use the collected data for future publications. The participants signed two sets of these documents; one set I kept for my records and the second set was given to the participants to keep for their own personal records. In addition, the participants were verbally informed about the items on the consent form, the purpose of the study and were reminded they had an option to withdraw from the study at any point with no consequences. Participants were also asked for their consent for the use of a tape recorder during the interviews. I also assured the participants that their identity

would be protected, and all the data collected via written documents and the recording would be kept in a locked storage only the primary researcher would have access to. Finally, after informing the participant about how the research would be conducted, how the information would be used, and obtaining her/his consent, the interview commenced. Each interview lasted approximately one hour.

Participant Demographics

A total of 11 participants were interviewed for this study, and all participants were millennials born between 1992 and 1998. Both male and female students participated in this study; they attended undergraduate programs in different faculties. They were enrolled in the second year, third, fourth and fifth year of their undergraduate studies. Participants were involved in extracurricular activities and held executive positions within their organizations.

Data Analysis

This main objective of this study was to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experience of millennial students who are involved in extracurricular activities in higher education. During the data analysis I focused on the two main questions:

1. What motivates millennials to become involved in extracurricular university activities?
2. How does being engaged in extracurricular activities affect students' experience in university?

From the tape recordings, the interviews were transcribed *per vadum* initially to capture a general understanding of the ideas and potential themes discussed by the participants. Latter,

major portions of the interviews were transcribed to help me identify and refine the themes and interesting discussions.

During the coding process, the two research questions were kept at the forefront and only relevant codes were kept for analysis. Codes with similar ideas or phrases were categorized together as subthemes. The subthemes were examined more closely and subsequently categorized into two key themes: 1) motivation and reasons for the participant's involvement in extracurricular activities, and 2) experiences and lessons learned from being involved in extracurricular activities. Table 1 lists the initial codes which were used to create the two key themes and the reoccurring codes for the various subthemes.

Table 1: Initial Codes

Motivation for being involved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing skills and experiences to add to resume - Networking with professionals and potential employers - Connecting with professors for a better reference letter - Using formal title within the group to highlight skills - The importance of listing extracurricular activities on resumes - Creating and finding a community with peers - Seeking connections with classmates and other students - Meeting new people and wanting to feel less isolated - Joining extracurricular activities out of interest or curiosity - Seeking more engagement outside the classroom - Being asked to join by a peer
Experience from being involved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning new skills and gaining experience outside the classroom - Feeling more connected and committed with the university - Overall more positive student experience - Gaining more self-confidence - Redefining and applying understanding of leadership - Being able to achieve the social and professional goals there were set

Table 2: Illustrating the research question and the associated themes and data codes

Research Question	Themes	Data Codes
<p>1. What motivates millennials to become involved in extracurricular university activities?</p>	<p>a) Professional Aspects</p> <p>b) Social Aspects</p> <p>c) Encouragement from Others</p> <p>d) Personal Interests</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gaining experience and skills to increase employability - Making connections - Networking - Resume Building - Finding a community - Making new friends - Meeting new people - Being asked to be involved - Getting support from peer or teacher to be involved - Joining a group out of interest - Wanting to be engaged outside of academics
<p>2. How does being engaged in extracurricular activities affect students' experience in university?</p>	<p>a) Improved Student Experience</p> <p>b) Understanding Leadership</p> <p>c) Social Rewards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning new skills outside of the classroom - Greater self-confidence - Making a positive impact to the community - New perspective on hierarchies - Learning how to be a positive leader - Ideas of leadership - Being able to find a community

	d) Professional Rewards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building support - Connecting with professors - Learning specific skills
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Ethical Considerations

The three moral principles guiding all researchers are: respect for others, beneficence and justice with the fundamental principle of *primum non nocere*, first, do no harm (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 52). This reminds researchers that they are responsible for the safety and well-being of the participants and must create and conduct their research while satisfying these ethical principles.

This study received an approval by the HREB (Human Research Ethics Board) at the University of Victoria on January 4, 2017 (see Appendix A). To ensure these guidelines are followed, consent must first be explicitly given by the participants before the research starts. This was done by requesting the participants to sign documents authorizing their consent to participate. In addition, the participants were reminded they have the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any point during the research process without any consequences. The participants' privacy and anonymity was respected by using strategies preventing their identity and information from being revealed. Participants were given alias names allowing them to remain anonymous. All the data collected and documents generated from the interview were kept private in a locked storage which can only be accessed by the researcher.

Issues of Validity

To enhance the research's accuracy, minimize bias and threats to research validity, scholars suggested a number of strategies. First, researchers must provide a detailed account of the data collection and accurately transcribe the interview data and the environment of the research site. These notes will be useful when presenting and interpreting the data (Lewis, 2009). Researchers need to make sure their questions do not misguide the participants or direct the participants to a particular response. Instead, questions should be open-ended and allow the participants to elaborate on their responses; this will minimize the risk of compromising interpretation validity. It is important for researchers to remember they need to allow ideas from the research to emerge naturally and should not force the results to align with a specific theory or a personal bias. Finally, researchers need to remember that their presence may affect how the participants react and acknowledge its effects on the results (Lewis, 2009).

To address some of the limitations associated with qualitative methods, a research journal was used to document thoughts and considerations to justify specific research decisions. The journal also contained descriptions of the setting and the participants. A tape recorder was used to ensure the interviews were rerecorded in their entirety. Finally, the journal was used as a form of self-reflection to explicitly describe beliefs, values and bias overlooked or formed by the primary researcher. These notes served as an audit trail and were used to review the accuracy and validity of my research (Lewis, 2009).

When discussing the results, this research utilized a triangulation method described by methodology scholars (Cresswell, 2014; Golafshani, 2003; Lewis, 2009). The themes which emerged in the research were identified, and the notes collected in the journal were used to make specific decisions. These ideas were then compared to available contemporary research

literature. However, if disconfirming evidence emerges from the research, Lewis (2009) suggests that researchers should consider modifying their themes or simply report the data. This is important in addressing issues of validity because the research is responsible for alerting the audience of this discrepancy.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

In this chapter, I present the main findings of the study. With examples of participants' quotes used to support the findings. All names in this study are pseudonyms given to each of the participant.

Motivation for Getting Involved in Extracurricular Activities

In the course of the study, participants discussed several reasons for participation in extracurricular activities. They often mention the following reasons: professional aspects, social aspects, encouragement from others and personal interests.

Professional Aspects

All the participants mentioned that they considered extracurricular involvement useful for professional development. This professional development aspect motivated them to get involved in extracurricular activities. This experience provided them with new skills that they thought future employers would expect. However, they felt that these skills could not be learned in a traditional classroom. For example, Liberty explained "I think there was learning and opportunities...as in...I'm not going to know that these different sectors of university unless I get involved with them." For some of the participants, the professional aspects were their main motivation for becoming involved. These participants admitted their initial involvement was prompted by a lack of experience on their resumes and their fear of not having the experience and skills employers are looking for aside from their educational background. Felix described extracurricular activities as an opportunity to gain professional skills in non-professional environments. He explained that he was motivated by the experience he would gain through his participation in this organization. Moreover, he thought that job candidates with leadership

experience listed in their resume would have a greater chance for gaining employment because these roles are associated with expectations of specific experiences and skills important for any professional career:

“... and that was actually a big motivation to get involved with SOGS [The Society for Geogrpahy Students; a student run organization aimed to create social, professional and academic oppotunities for geography students at UVic] to be completely honest...I want some volunteering experience for my resume and at this point it’s a really pillar of my resume...I think it’s the biggest thing on my resume right now because a lot of my job experience has been concession based or tree planting where for the direction I want to go those aren’t particularly relevant so they professional ethic....I’m really relying on SOGS as my pillar there....that’s why the co-chair position was so appealing to me...I feel the prestige of a co-chair title is greatly more significant than treasurer or director at large just because it shows that you’re un-ubiquitous involved.” (Felix)

In addition, participants described the networking opportunities with employers and professors they had during their involvement. Participants explained the importance of networking with professors because they could provide reference letters for potential employers and for graduate programs. Through networking with employers, potential candidates were able to present themselves and express their interest in a particular company. For example, Zac commented:

“I like talking to employers because it’s a big thing...it’s what gets me involved in employers and gets my name out there a little bit and it’s a good little volunteering experience for your resume...that was one of the biggest pushes for me.” (Zac)

Another participant, Corbin, recognized that all her peers were graduating with similar academic credentials. To set her resume apart from others job applicants and to emphasize unique skills she developed, she intended to include her invovelment in extra curricular activities This is how she described this.

“I got my bachelor degree in anthropology along with one hundred fifty people but I was this much more involved and this much more engaged with the field with the department you know...I got to know professors things like this...so...ya...there’s always that other drive to that...how else am I...my grades are average like...I’m a good student but I’m

not an exceptional student and...so you know...what else can I get there to make myself stand out among all the other.” (Corbin)

Social Aspects

All participants explained they were seeking a community and were interested in meeting new people. The participants reflected on their first-year experience and shared feelings of alienation and their struggle to connect with other students in large classes. Participants also discussed some of the challenges of transitioning from secondary school to university. Many of the participants were living on their own for the first time and were learning how to take care of themselves without their parents. They commented on the loss of their support network from high school and a new environment without any social connections. Marlin and Rachel described their experience during her first year in university:

“University in a first year is a weird purgatory of existence for some reason there’s this loss of identity because you have left high school and now you have all these weird responsibilities and you’re on your own and I think it’s just weird transitional period in everyone’s life.” (Marlin)

Despite these transitional challenges, the participants realized they were responsible for creating their new social network; they sought out involvement in extracurricular activities because they were aware of the social aspects of their involvement. Lindy and Adelaide recognized it was important to make a conscious effort to become involved:

“...it was conscious decision not to be in residence so realizing that maybe I’m losing social aspects in my education because of that decision I needed to supplement it in other ways so it was a very active conscious thought that I need people...I’m a people person...” (Adelaide)

“...so I was lacking that first year resident connection that a lot of students get so I was really trying to find a club.” (Lindy)

Many of the participants stated that they had joined extracurricular activities to find a smaller community within a big community; extracurricular involvement was one way they knew they could make connections.

“...having girls come up to us and be like hey it’s really cool to see other women in Engineering and Computer Science because you feel very alone in your classes you look around and you’ll be one of three one of four so to be able to have a community is really nice.” (Rachel)

“...I was feeling a little lonely and a little isolated.” (Lindy)

“...also just to make friends in the area you’re studying...make the university less alienating because it’s so large and try to build a smaller community within that.” (Felix)

In addition, student recognized involvement with extracurricular activities fostered connections and encouraged socialization. Lindy and Adelaide explained they were motivated to join extracurricular activities because they wanted to make new connections and were hoping to have the opportunity to socialize with other students:

“I feel more connected and I also think just joining a club and meeting new people helps you learn to make friends a little bit better and you get better at developing relationships with other people.” (Lindy)

“pretty much the big thing with our association is just building community among the Art History students because it can be isolating because in Art History.” (Adelaide)

Moreover, some of the participants consciously decided not to reside in on-campus housing but felt this decision added more challenges to their transition. These participants explained they were socially disadvantaged because living in residence would have facilitated social connections. As a result of, these participants decided to join extracurricular activities as a way of meeting new people and building their social network. Adelaide and Lindy explain their experience as a first year student not living in residence and their motivation to become involved with extracurricular activities to meet new people:

“I didn’t stay in residence and I stayed in an apartment so...I would just go to class...not talk to anybody because you didn’t have to...you just go lecture and then go to the library and then go home...I was like this isn’t what university is supposed to be...you’re supposed to have fun and do all these things and so a group of us got together and said enough is enough...” (Adelaide)

“I couldn’t get into residence in first year so .I was lacking that first year resident connection that a lot of students get so I was really trying to find a club...and it sounded really cool and the person at the clubs day event at the time was like ya...one of my favourite parts of HER Campus is the group of girls that are working here...” (Lindy)

Finally, participants joined extracurricular activities because they wanted to become more involved with the university community. For example, Rachel stated that “... maybe this is something I could do, maybe this would be a good way for me expand my horizon and really become involved with the UVic community”.

Encouragement from Others

Many participants stated that they were approached by classmates, friends or other current members of the organizations who asked them to participate in extra curricular activities. This is how Corbin and Osbourne described their interactions with a classmate regarding getting involved with extracurricular activities:

“the...ya...the only guy I’ve been in class with bugged me all summer....he was like you have to join you have join...we need members...join join join join join...I was like okay...if will get you off my back okay...and then it turned out to be actually a lot of fun so...” (Corbin)

“...basically a friend of mine who was the president of...that year...he...needed people around to help him with organizing events and so...you know...I felt like...that’s something I could do to help and had time on my hand...” (Osbourne)

In addition to peers and colleagues’ influence, many of the participants mentioned specific role models during their up bringing who encouraged and motivated them to become more involved with extracurricular activities. These individuals included teachers and family members who emphasized the importance of being involved with their communities and

informed the participants about skills and experience they could gain from being involved. This is how Rachel described the motivation she received from her parents and teachers:

“They were excellent teachers who really enjoyed it...they wanted to see what the students could do and they were willing to see what the students wanted to do rather than direct them and this applied to both academics which was highly effective.... I grew up in a family where they were all doing...they were on boards and doing volunteering work and you see...okay you sort just take on responsibilities and if it's something you're interested and passionate about you get involved with it...you don't just stand back and let proceed without you getting yourself involved.” (Rachel)

Personal Interests

Another key motivation for participants to become involved with extracurricular activities was being able to be part of group which allowed them to enjoy activities of their personal interests. For example, Hale is a member of an organization called *Her Campus*, an online magazine published by North American female university students which aimed to empower and educate other female university students. She described motivation to join *Her Campus* because of her interest in writing and the writing opportunities this group provided her:

“I didn't know if I was any good but I got there and it was just really fun articles there wasn't a lot of pressure like they were always really encouraged about what we were writing and they're there to help you out so it was always very positive to me...I have different groups that fit different interest of mine which is super nice so they can really...relate to...the writing and the girly stuff that I like where as my room mate aren't quite into that as much...so that's been amazing...” (Hale)

Rachel commented on her interest in teaching the review sessions to students in her program and appreciates her organization has provided her with the opportunity to pursue this interest: “...people get involved in the initiatives they're really interested in...I will coordinate the initiatives but I'm really interested in teaching the review session so I'll take that on more...”

Finally, Liberty explains she was looking for something fun and she decided to join *Her Campus* because she thought it would give her the opportunity to explore her non-academic interests:

“.....that first semester I wasn’t doing anything...I was just doing classes...and....I was like...this is boring....I decided to join a few things, and then it was summer...I had more time...HER Campus has always been something fun...to keep me grounded and not so academically minded all the time and to keep me doing something that is more for fun ... it’s enjoyable because I get all the creative freedom; I get to do whatever I want but it also motivates me to do the best job possible.” (Liberty)

Experiences from Being Involved in Extracurricular Activities

The second research question in this study aimed to explore the experience of millennial students who are involved in extracurricular activities in university. Unlike other studies which have examined the success of student engagement after graduation, this question focused on student engagement while students are still pursuing their studies. Examining students’ extracurricular experience will help us understand why student engagement is important to students. The participants discussed meaningful learning which occurred during their involvement in extracurricular activities. This is particularly interesting because there lacks a clear understanding of what is happening during a student’s involvement and therefore making it difficult to identify ways to better support students. Two main categories emerged from participants interviews: improved student experience and leadership experience.

Improved Student Experience

In response to the question about students’ overall experience with extracurricular activities all participations stated that they generally had positive experience; in fact, their general university student experience improved after they had joined an extracurricular activity. The participants attributed this improvement to the expansion of their social and support network

and gaining a better sense of community and belonging. Moreover, through their involvement in extracurricular activities, the participants described their commitment to the university; they felt they were contributing to the success of the institution. Felix and Rachel both shared their ideas: “feeling I have been more involved with what’s going around school...it’s made my experience a lot better.” (Felix)

“...if [you] join a club if you’re not forced not to hover around the edges and that you’re level of commitment would go up I would say...as far as student experience...it’s certainly given me a bit more confidence... and yes certainly become more involved in the community...there are more people in the halls to say hi to...there are more people who...you just sort of know and there are more people who there willing to support you through whether it be academic or whether it be WECS [Women in Engineering and Computer Science; an student-led organization aimed in supporting female students enrolled in a engineering or computer science program at UVic] related things just support in general because I know who you are and they know you care the university....more of a social attachment to the university.” (Rachel)

According to the participants, this sense of community, commitment and their contribution to the university made them feel self confident, appreciate their student life, and succeed in different areas of their student career. For example, as a result of extracurricular involvement, Marlin and Corbin developed a more optimistic view regarding completing their university education; they were having a better academic experience:

“I probably would have dropped out...when I met the people in BOSS [Beareua of Sociology Students; a student-led course union which aims in supporting and creating academic, social and professional opportunities for sociology students at UVic] I was so incredibly inspired by everyone because everyone was talking about their classes...creating studying groups...talking bout these profs and which classes not to take...and I thought this is amazing...I finally feel like I can talk to people about the things I’ve been feeling and I started to do way better in my classes...I started attend more classes because in first year I was skipping classes...not I don’t miss a class...I’m at a point where I love going to class...I love seeing my friends and I think I attributed literally all to being in BOSS.” (Marlin)

“My grades have gone up....but....it’s become...less of a task...school...I like school ...you know over the summer I’m always itching to get back and stuff...but I’m also very much feeling the end....but...no it’s just...knowing that I’m part of something more than

just my own...studies...my own degree...all this...ya...making friends having people you know that you know...interact outside of work and outside of class always helps...it's ...it provides that social need.” (Corbin)

Finally, involvement in extracurricular activities allowed the participants to gain new perspectives, make new connections, and discover the importance of gaining experiences outside of their academic classes. Liberty added: “[*Her Campus* is] also teaching me so many valuable things I wouldn’t be able to learn in a classroom setting.”

Leadership Experience

All the participants mentioned that through their involvement in extracurricular activities they gained a greater understanding of leadership and being a good leader. Their comments related to leadership included discussions about organizational hierarchies and roles of the leader within organizations. They acknowledged that their ideas of leadership were informed and influenced by their current involvement; extracurricular activities helped them think about what it meant to be a good leader.

Ideas of Leadership. All participants reported gaining leadership skills and agreed that an outcome of their extracurricular involvement was a better understanding of leadership. When the participants were asked to discuss qualities of a good leader they offered a wide variety of attributes and qualities that a good leader should possess. They believe good leaders to be emphatic, charismatic, great public speakers who encourage and inspire others. In addition, participants discussed the importance for leaders to focus on building relationships, understanding the needs of their followers and supporting their aspirations. Good leader were also described as knowledgeable about the organization, honest, respectful towards their followers, and able to help navigate the group through obstacles. The main attributes discussed by the participants are summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 3: A summary of common attributes and qualities

• Encourages others	• Inspires others to do more
• Inclusive of others and their ideas	• Great communication skills
• Charismatic	• Extroverted
• Knows when to step back	• Mentors
• Confident	• Strong sense of integrity and morality
• Adaptable	• Empathetic
• Experienced/expert in discipline	• Passionate
• Selflessness	• Team player

When the participants were discussing the qualities of a good leader, they all used words such as “caring,” “encouraging,” “helping others reach their personal goals” and “inclusive.” For example, Adelaide stated that leaders should think of others and how their actions would impacting them: “Being a leader to me is actively thinking of other people and the collective, and how your action can benefit other people and improve their life, which is a good big thing for a leader”. Rachel explained leaders had the ability to empower those around them and should be able to help others achieve their goals:

“...actively trying to get other people involved...and a student leader is someone who does that successfully...and who...finds people who have that spark of the passion they need for the type of initiative and fosters and strokes the fire of it...they don’t need to be the person who does everything...that’s not helpful for the leader you need someone who is going encourage everyone around them.” (Rachel)

Some of the qualities of a good leader were similar to those of a mentor as suggested by

Rachel: “Ya...a leader is a mentor with qualities that allow them to...be outgoing and be organized...and I know the mentorship is different than leadership for certain...but I feel like they have huge intersections.”

All of participants held leadership positions or played specific leadership roles in their extracurricular organizations. However, none of them identified themselves a leader:

“It’s a leadership position, certainly, but I think I still have a long way to go as a leader...learning how to that effectively because I’ve seen it exceptionally effectively...” (Rachel)

“I never thought of being a leader before so that’s new to me.” (Sal)

“I think other people would consider that I am but I don’t think I would...I think there are people who are doing more and I think there are people who are doing more to actively be leaders on campus.” (Liberty)

The participants also expressed a balance of differing characteristics in a good leader.

For example, some participants would describe good leaders being extroverted and charismatic but would also add that leaders should be great listeners. In another example of the importance of combining various characteristics the participants stated that good leaders needed to be inclusive and open to other ideas, at the same time they should recognize instances where they must exercise their power and make a decision on behalf of the team. Marlin pointed out this complexity of leadership and the unrealistic expectations of becoming an ideal leader:

“...leadership is so many different things and to be a great leader to me is one of the most difficult things to foster because you’re supposed to be this ideal people pleaser but that’s an impossible thing to achieve.” (Marlin)

The participants also made a clear distinction between leaders and employers or managers. They characterized leaders as individuals who were personally invested in the growth and success of their followers whereas bosses were those who demand their followers to complete tasks for the success of the organization. Zac echoed this sentiment:

“Showing and helping people get through situations so a big thing for me is the difference between a boss and a leader...Different traits depending how people handle situation...the ability to handle criticism differently...the ability to effectively communicate a task...the ability to be competent that you’re telling other people to do...a leader is more of a mentor so you’re mentoring while you’re bossing people around.” (Zac)

When participants were asked to describe the characteristics of a true leader, they emphasized their description was meant for leaders involved in an extracurricular activity including course unions and clubs. Participants commented on the importance of the situation in which a leader was placed because the context may demand specific qualities of a leader to be successful. For example, Felix recognized a good leader in a corporate setting would have different characteristics of a good leader in a course union: “in a professional setting where the objective is to make money that’s a different leadership discourse than a course union.” He also described leadership in an emergency situation:

“...if there’s ever a situation when you’re on the street and someone is having a seizure and to be able to analyze the situation and take charge is important because for systems to function there needs to be organization and there needs to be leadership in that organization...” (Felix)

Zac also communicated his experience with leadership in the military explaining how it differed from his leadership experience as a president of a course union:

“I try as a leader in the course union trying to mentor these guys so when I leave they can take over and have a good time doing it as well so the course union can continue to operate...where being a leader in the military where I’m not a leader myself but being a leader in the military is more....you want to distill authority in your position because you have the authority and it’s your word above all else.” (Zac)

It is evident from these participants' quotes that involvement in extracurricular activities greatly influenced their perceptions of good leadership. The participants were eager to talk about leadership and characteristics of a good leader.

Education and Influence of Leadership Styles. When participants were asked to describe their ideas of leadership, they did not mention formal education as the source of their influence.

Rather, the participants reported that their leadership education stemmed from their involvement with extracurricular activities and influences from their role models including family members and employers. Some of the participants were involved with extracurricular activities before entering university; these experiences had also influenced their understanding of leadership.

Liberty stated that her understanding of leadership in university changed after her initial experiences with extracurricular activities in high school which built the foundation of her leadership knowledge:

“so in high school there was this preliminary layer that was started and each interaction I feel like built new layer so it's constantly changing into this forever molding style and it's never stagnant it's always altering and it alters depending on my role in what ever I'm doing.” (Liberty)

Corbin reflected on her experience with learning about how to be leader; she recalled the exemplary leadership demonstrated by her coaches and teachers:

“... I had a couple of really great coaches that you know...would explain why...why these people where being put into leadership roles...it's because they were showing they were being a leader by...leading by example by having a good game the game before...and...but also encouraging everybody else and...couple of really great teachers too...so I think it's just kind of...taking piece by piece throughout...throughout life I suppose...and but also...I led a couple of groups in high school...I was the...I was the founder of the green committee in my high school...” (Corbin)

Osbourne described how the media had impacted his understanding of leadership and suggested that leadership portrayed by the media was the epitome of good leadership:

“...media plays a huge role in that way like if you watch movies you see like the oh this brilliant commander or whatever you know...you watch Lord of Arabia you see T.E Lawrence going around Arabian...leading a bunch of guys around as well...I think media show an idealized form of leadership...this image of an ideal leader I think takes charge...has ideas of what to do...they have to have responsibility and leadership involves...how should I put it...involves taking care of your people as well.” (Osbourne)

Adelaide discussed how her leadership style was influenced by many of her female role models and she exemplified their leadership qualities in her organization:

“All the people I look up to have these qualities and so growing up I had so many strong female influences in my childhood and in my life and so looking at these people...they all are just so amazing and they have the qualities that I just spoke of.” (Adelaide)

For other participants, including Zac and Sal, it was through observation of formal leaders and taking note of how they reacted and felt as followers to different styles of leadership. Zac’s formal experience with leadership was through his military service.

“When I was in cadets you can see how people differ leadership styles or the style develop from what they’re 12 years old to 19-year-old...you go through the program and you can slowly see leadership styles developing.... each leadership is good for certain situation and bad in other situation so you see it and you start recognize....I used to reflect what I liked and what I didn’t like and I try to continue my leadership that way.” (Zac)

Sal reflected on his experience from the type of leadership used at his work:

“...so I ended up working for him in a co-op a year and half ago....just cold called him and say hey I know you own this company can I work for me...and he said absolutely...and then I think like...absolutely everything he was doing I was observing and changing myself to be more like him...like...even then something as trivial as an e-mail to like...the way he would sit down and talk to people.” (Sal)

Other participants found themselves in leadership roles for the first time when they got involved in extracurricular activities at the university. They viewed their first leadership experience as an opportunity to learn about and practice being a good leader. This was the case for Felix: “I’m the youngest child in my family, so I was never in that leadership position but I’m really coming into now.”

Implications of Hierarchy on Leadership. The participants were asked to describe the structure of their organizations and to comment on their position within this structure. It was interesting to note participants described their hierarchal structure as a flat hierarchy and did not support the use of a top-down hierarchy or the idea of the leader holding all the power. For example, out of the 11 participants who were interviewed, 7 of them belonged to an organization which had co-presidents and 6 of these 7 participants held a co-president role. The other 4 participants did not belong to an organization with co-presidents but they described their leadership role as a facilitator or a mentor. They emphasized their role as a supporter to their members rather than an authoritative leader who made all the decisions based on their own individual merits. Adelaide explains a flat hierarchy allows more collaboration within the organization and for a better experience for everyone: "...it's great having a president but we didn't want just one person having...not the power...but we wanted it to be more a collaborative effort". Rachel also supports this notion: "...so it's a loose hierarchy...I do make the final decision and have signing authority for cheques but mostly people got involved with what they're interested in and it's very collaborative". When the participants were asked to comment on their decision to elect two presidents and the impact of this type of hierarchy, the participants replied by explaining the welcoming and supporting environment it creates. Members are encouraged to share their ideas and thoughts which allows all members to contribute to organization. Felix explained a flat hierarchy has allowed members in his organization to feel more comfortable in sharing their ideas and it ensures everyone in the group has the opportunity to benefit from the learning and the experience and not just members holding executive titles:

"It comes from that idea of being more of a center piece than a top of the pyramid because I want students take what they understand their roles an executive and have their own idea of how they can do that and do that as much as they want to." (Felix)

Hale further reinforces the advantages of using this hierarchical structure by explaining there is less fear in the members when there is smaller hierarchical gap between members:

“I always appreciate even so much more when people are like they don’t feel they’re above or I don’t think there’s huge gap...and I feel like...when there isn’t a huge gap...people are more...willing to express their ideas and they’re not as scared.” (Hale)

Although Marlin is the president of her organization, she uses her leadership title to facilitate the group and emphasizes her role to support her members. Marlin’s description provides evidence to the shift from a rigid top-down hierarchy to a more flexible hierarchy or the idea of a flat hierarchy:

“I’m more of a facilitator than anything...facilitating using leadership encouraging other people to participate in events and follow their own inspirations and work to create a community....more of a neutral facilitator rather than trying to take on my own projects.” (Marlin)

Summary

The findings in this study suggest that millennial students in university are motivated to join extracurricular activities because of professional aspects, opportunities to connect and socialize with peers, encouragement from others and personal interests. Extracurricular activities had a positive impact on students’ experience. They gained valuable skills and had opportunities to be leaders. Not only did they learn about what being a good leader entailed, they were also able to practice and develop their own leadership skills and understanding of leadership.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Overview

This study aimed to identify the motivations for today's students to become involved with extracurricular activities in higher education and to explore their experiences during the involvement. I wanted to learn about specific learning outcomes and the impact of student involvement on their overall experience. The findings of this study suggest that students are motivated to become involved by a number of factors including professional and social aspects, their interest to engage with the university community, encouragement from others, and personal interests. Students' involvement in extracurricular activities seemed to improve their overall university experience and provided students with an opportunity to gain a better understanding of leadership. These ideas will be discussed in greater details in the following paragraphs. Further, I consider implications of student engagement in universities and its impact on their overall experience and success.

What motivates students to get involved?

All the participants were motivated by the professional outcomes and positive impact of their involvement on their professional prospects. These professional motivations included such aspects as developing skills employers are seeking, networking with professors and professionals to help students with future employment, and enhancing their resumes. Their responses are consistent with the previous studies related to utilitarian motivations described by students who volunteer and get involved in various extracurricular activities in their community (Handy et al., 2000; Jones, 2000; Stevenson & Clegg, 2011; Stuart et al., 2011). Friedland and Mariomoto (2005) described the trend of "resume padding" and explained that many young people were becoming more involved in order to build their resumes. This trend is becoming more popular

because of the competitive nature of employment in current economic climate in North America. New graduates use volunteering and extracurricular experience to make themselves attractive to prospective employers and to stand out amongst other graduates (Handy et al., 2000; Jones, 2000; Stevenson & Clegg, 2011). Day and Devlin (1998) assert that volunteering or joining an extracurricular activity is one way to enhance a resume, and employers are seeking candidates with these experiences. Candidates who voluntarily get involved with extracurricular activities or actively volunteer are perceived as better citizens; they are regarded as more desirable to a company (Friendland & Morimoto, 2005; Handy et al., 2000). These extracurricular activities are also associated with certain assumed leadership competencies, developed skills and unobservable abilities. Resumes of students involved in extra curricular activities to stand out during the initial screening process, which may increase their employment potential (Day & Devlin, 1998).

A number of authors (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010; Stevenson & Clegg, 2011; Stuart et al., 2011) explain employers are actively screening candidates with valuable involvement experience and often use this experience to distinguish between competing candidates. Employers are aware a student's education does not always teach all skills necessary for a specific job. As a response to this, students recognize the importance of participating in extracurricular activities to demonstrate they possess professional skills developed in addition to their academic studies (Stuart et al., 2011).

Besides the skills developed through extracurricular activities, employers are also noting specific responsibilities and tasks the candidates had during their involvement (Jones, 2000). Employers want to ensure candidates are entering the company with meaningful experiences and valuable skills. As a result, students are more selective towards their participation in specific extracurricular activities. For example, students choose to join more reputable organizations

instead of joining intermural sports because this can provide a more valuable experience to add to their resume. They know employers are seeking candidates who have had a bigger impact on their community (Jones, 2000). Finally, employers are seeking employees who are able to demonstrate high level of loyalty towards the organizations (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). As a response to this, students are demonstrating their commitment by remaining with one extracurricular activity and taking on leadership role in the organization.

The participants also described the importance of social aspects of extracurricular activities. During the interviews, many of the participants reflected on their first year of university and shared the feelings of alienation and being overwhelmed by the large class sizes. Realizing the importance of a social community and relationships with their new peers, the participants became involved with extracurricular activities. This is a particularly interesting finding as the literature discusses the socialization components associated with being involved as an outcome rather than a primary motivation for student involvement. When ideas of student engagement were being formed, it was Tinto (1975) who first described the importance for university students to socially integrate with their communities in order for students to persist and succeed in their university education. These social components were further explored by a number of other authors who linked levels of student involvement and student success and concluded the social rewards of connecting with other peers, forming new networks and gaining a sense of community allowed university students to complete their education (Astin, 1999; Astin et al., 1999; Berger & Milem, 1999; Brasxton & McClendon, 2001; Kuh et al., 2008; Kuh et al, 2006). This led Kuh and colleagues (2006) to suggest a student's level of engagement or involvement can be used to predict student success and specifically describes peer-to-peer interaction as the most robust tool on making this prediction. Astin (1999) explained successful

social integration allows students to gain a strong sense of community which in turns provides students with greater self confidence; students are more committed to their universities and, thus, persist through their education and successfully complete their studies.

Currently, a limited number studies have specially explored the emotional and psychological impact associated with the social aspects of extracurricular activities of university students. Instead, studies exploring students' motivation to become involved are claiming they are motivated by the human capital and networking opportunities their involvement facilitates. For example, Handy and colleagues (2000) suggested university students regard the socialization of their involvement as social capital rather than forming new friends for emotional support and reducing feelings of isolation. Instead, they argued students are using their social networks to assist them with future employment and careers (Handy et al., 2000). However, Mark and Jones (2004) maintained that there is little evidence to support that student involvement is driven by personal values, they suggested it was driven by professional gains.

In these studies, while the authors explained the importance of social aspects to a student's success the social aspects of student involvement are discussed in general terms, as one of the outcomes. However, it is unclear if these social rewards motivated students to initially become involved. The findings of this study suggest that university students are motivated to become involved in extracurricular activities because of the comradery and emotional support gained through their involvement. Additional studies exploring specific social motivations associated with student extracurricular involvement should be conducted in order to validate this claim.

The findings of this study confirm conclusions of the previous studies that demonstrated how various external factors including encouragement from peers, teachers and other individuals

motivate university students to become involved with extracurricular activities (Jones, 2000; Jones & Hill, 2003; Komives, Owen, Longerman, Mainella & Osteen, 2005). In Jones and Hill's study (2003), the participants admitted encouragement from their peers convinced them to become involved. Komives and colleagues (2005) also noted that external factors including encouragement from peers who are already involved with an extracurricular activity played a crucial role in motivating their peers to become involved. Moreover, high school teachers who emphasize the importance of engagement and promote the benefits from being involved with extracurricular are able to positively shape a student's attitude towards volunteering, thus, leading more students to join extracurricular activities in university (Jones, 2000; Jones & Hill, 2003; Komives et al, 2005). Finally, family influence documented in this study and in other research literature is as a major motivation for students to become involved later in their own lives (Jones & Hill, 2003; Komives et al., 2005; Marks & Jones, 2004). Komives and colleagues (2005) explained how positive adult role models including parents and older siblings help shape a student's understanding and confidence in getting involved in extracurricular activities. Furthermore, Jones and Hill (2003) study of high school student involvement found that family member participation in the community heavily influenced students to become involved in extracurricular activities. Through the initial experience with their community, students learned early on that they were able to positively impact their community through service; they discovered the intrinsic rewards at an early age.

University students' understanding of service and community involvement is formed by the individuals in the institutions they belong to including their social groups, family units, religious community, and school environment. These groups teach students about the impact and personal growth they can gain through leadership and other experiences. This can foster their

understanding of altruism, bring specific social benefits and enhance their resumes. The high school education system attempts to demonstrate positive impacts of community involvement through implementing mandatory community service or involvement requirements (Marks & Jones, 2004). Studies have shown that exposing students to service and community involvement at a younger age could encourage them to be involved with their community beyond high school because they can understand its importance and experience the impact of their involvement through personal and social gains (Jones & Hill, 2003). However, when students enter a university, their level of involvement significantly declines (Marks & Jones, 2004). It is also interesting to note the participants in this study did not mention any influence or encouragement from the university as a source of motivation to become involved in extracurricular activities. This does not suggest that post-secondary institutions do not implement mandatory volunteering or involvement requirements for their students; however, Mark and Jones (2004) recommended that college and university administrators improve their means of promoting extracurricular involvement to their students. For example, institutions can make involvement opportunities more visible and easily accessible for students. Furthermore, Roberts and McNeese (2010) added a collaborative action should be taken between university administrators, professors and student support services to encourage student involvement through curriculum implementation, creating support centers for involved students and to help establish a university culture which fosters personal growth among students.

From the responses collected in this study, other individuals play a crucial role in motivating university students to become involved in extracurricular activities; they help shape their attitude towards community involvement. Therefore, individuals who interact with university students including, professors, teaching assistants, academic advisors and campus

support staff are in a position to encourage and motivate students to become more involved in extracurricular activities.

Experience from Getting Involved

The findings of this study suggest that university students get many benefits from being involved in extracurricular activities. The benefits discussed by the participants in this study are similar to those described in previous studies (Astin et al., 1999; Astin & Sax, 1998; Braxton & McClendon, 2001; Kuh et al., 2006). Students who are involved in extracurricular activities report having a better sense of personal growth and positive effects of these activities on other aspects of their student life. More specifically, they mention improved self-confidence, sense of belonging, meaningful connections with their peers and feeling more committed to the university. Finally, students suggested their involvement helped improve their academic scores which encouraged them to complete their university programs (Astin et al., 1999; Astin & Sax, 1998; Braxton & McClendon, 2001; Kuh et al., 2006).

When Tinto (1975) initially introduced the idea of student engagement, he emphasized the connection of social integration and peer group formation with student persistence in university. Kuh and colleagues (2006) explained this phenomenon by asserting students feel more connected with their peers and gain a stronger sense of belonging in their university and, thus, are more likely to remain in their studies. Joining extracurricular activities is an avenue for university students to develop these relationships and connections (Astin et al., 1999). Student run organizations on campus are able to organically facilitate relationship building between peers, and students gain a stronger sense of connection through a common interest or goal. This notion is supported by the results of this study. Majority of the participants have been involved with their organization for a couple of years and, at present, are reaching the end of their

undergraduate studies. Moreover, the participants expressed a strong sense of belonging to the community and an overall satisfaction with their student experience.

The participants recognized their involvement with their extracurricular activities had provided them with the opportunity to develop and challenge their leadership capabilities. A phenomenon of university students practicing leadership and learning how to lead through extracurricular activities and other involvement opportunities is well documented in the current literature (Brungardt 1996; Cress et al., 2001; Komives et al., 2005). Unfortunately, a limited number of studies explain how students develop ideas about leadership and skills; most authors focused on the outcome of being involved in extracurricular activities and how leadership skills developed as a result impact students after graduation (Brungardt, 1996; Komives et al., 2005). There is a dearth of literature on how students acquire knowledge of leadership. Few studies only examined leadership education in higher education through assessing short term programs (Komives, 2005). However, this study suggests that practicing leadership skills during involvement in extracurricular activities is paramount to the student development as leaders. The participants' involvement during their university education has been essential to their leadership development. However, leadership education has often been regarded as a secondary priority in higher education (Cress et al., 2001) Moreover, universities are not implementing direct leadership learning outcomes for their students and are not always involved in this learning process (Brungardt, 1996). University mission statements often declare institutions' commitment to creating future leaders and meeting the needs of today's society. Universities have been criticised for failing to provide evidence of preparing student-leaders (Cress et al., 2001). Universities should provide leadership education because they have a great opportunity to shape new generations of leaders (Eich, 2008; Rhodes, 1998). University students graduating

with high levels of involvement have been reported to continue their education in graduate programs, to display a strong sense of civic responsibility, to be willing to engage with their communities, and to earn above average incomes (Astin et al., 1999; Day & Devlin, 1998; Handy et al., 2010; Jones & Hill, 2003; Kuh et al., 2006; Marks & Jones, 2004; Sax, 2004; Stevenson & Clegg, 2011; Rhoades, 1998). When universities play an active and intentional role in students' leadership education, they are graduating students with the theoretical knowledge in their academic disciplines and life and social skills necessary to succeed beyond university education (Rhoades, 1998).

The study participants were asked to specifically describe the learning outcomes of their involvement and the impact their involvement had on their knowledge of leadership. Some of the specific skills they learned during their involvement included communication skills, event planning, problem solving skills, interpersonal skills and how to effectively work with others. These skills are documented consistently in the literature; students who participate in volunteering opportunities, service learning and extracurricular activities display specific learning outcomes (Cress et al., 2001; Day & Devlin, 1998; Eich, 2008; Handy et al., 2010; Jones, 2000; Komives et al., 2005; Kuh et al., 2006; Stevenson & Clegg, 2011; Stuart et al., 2011). Research emphasize the importance of learning leadership skills which foster students' academic, professional and personal growth. Students who are able to demonstrate these skills have a better overall student experience, are more likely to continue their education after graduation and perform better during professional interviews and in their jobs (Eich, 2008; Handy et al., 2010; Jones, 2000; Kuh et al., 2006). Authors have also suggested when students recognize they possess these leadership skills they gain more self confidence which increases their self-esteem (Stevenson & Clegg, 2011; Stuart et al., 2011). It is evident students who are

involved in extracurricular activities are able to gain a number of valuable skills. This should make universities focus on improving and increasing opportunities for student extracurricular involvement.

Participation in extracurricular activities provides a safe environment for students to learn, develop and apply their leadership skills. Perhaps, examining how millennials work in corporate settings organizations may provide an answer to the question of whether their university leadership experience benefits them in the work place. Moreover, understanding how today's students interpret leadership is crucial because corporate organizations now employ individuals from different generations, including baby boomers, Generation X and millennials; managers are faced with the challenge of leading a diverse group of employees (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Each of these generations have their own preferences of how they would like to be led; they have their own expectations about an organization. As more millennials enter the work force, learning about preferred leadership styles and perspectives on good leadership becomes important. This study and previous research suggest that millennials may be adopting and showing preference towards servant leadership; a leadership philosophy first introduced by Greenleaf in 1970 that emphasizes leaders prioritizing the needs of others. (Balda & Mora, 2011). As a result, millennials entering organizations expect their managers and superiors to exemplify characteristics of servant leadership (Balda & Mora, 2011). Millennials are seeking leaders willing to create personal relationships with them and support their personal goals (Balda & Mora, 2011; Myers & Sadaghiani; 2010). This is especially important considering millennials have been documented as the most ambitious generations, and they need know their superiors support their aspirations (Friedland & Morimoto, 2005). The participants shared similar views on leadership and most likely they expect to be led this way. Millennials have been shown to favour

organizations or leaders who do not prioritize hierarchical structures and allow their employees to have more freedom and encourage respectful and frequent bidirectional communication, regardless of seniority (Balda & Mora, 2011; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Millennials expect high levels of autonomy within their organizations and are looking for organizations encouraging collaboration within and outside of the organization (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Balda and Mora (2011) warn this new attitude towards hierarchy may cause potential problems in an organization where older generations are accustomed to and are more comfortable with a more structured hierarchy. However, this is only one example of potential tensions between generations in an organization. It is evident millennials are seeking job opportunities prioritizing connection, innovation, and collaboration; their preferences differ vastly from the attitudes of older generations who prioritized income and salary (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). It is important for organizational leaders to understand millennials' ideas and expectations regarding leadership in order to create an environment in which they can thrive. However, the bigger challenge is adapting a leadership style that would satisfy the emerging millennial culture and culture of the older generations that forms for the foundation of the organization.

Summary

A student's level of engagement in extracurricular activities plays a major part in their success at a university. The findings of this study, supported by previous studies, demonstrate that today's university students are motivated to participate in extracurricular activities as they pursue professional benefits, social opportunities with peers, and personal interests. Students re involved in extracurricular activities report a more positive student experience; they learn about and practice a variety of leadership skills.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Student engagement encompasses many activities pursued by university students during their education. Student's level of engagement has been heavily used by universities as a robust indicator of student success. The research literature on student engagement has concluded that students' level of engagement is directly related to their persistence in completing university education. However, most research has focused on results of student engagement linking these outcomes to student success. Student engagement is often discussed in general terms by grouping together various activities, including service learning, volunteering or interactions with university personnel etc.

In order to add to the current literature on student engagement, this study explored student motivations to participate in extracurricular activities focusing on their experience. This study argues that students participate in extracurricular activities for a variety of reasons. Students have different expectations and personal goals. The findings in this study suggest that students participate in extracurricular activities as they pursue potential professional opportunities, the social reward of connecting with peers, and personal interests. They are motivated by many complex factors.

Extracurricular activities are mostly led by students themselves with limited universities involvement. Yet, the findings of this study indicate that students gain valuable experience from engaging in these activities which also contribute to their academic success. The participants of this study attributed their overall positive university experience to their involvement with peers and opportunities to become a part of the university community; many gained self-confidence

and were positive about their student life. In addition, students gained a better understanding of good leadership and developed their own personal leadership philosophy.

Based on the findings, a number of recommendations were made to universities, organizations employing millennials and millennial students. In general, these recommendations were made to suggest ways to harmonize the foundational culture of an organization while adapting new attitudes to welcome millennials.

A number of negative stereotypes about the millennials circulate in the media. Millennials are often presented as lazy, entitled, narcissistic and self-centred. When the participants in this study were asked to comment on these stereotypes, their tone and body language suggested they were offended by these claims. They considered these attributes to be stereotypes stating that it would be unfair to make generalizations about the entire generation. In contrast to these stereotypes, the participants described their busy schedules, organizations they volunteered in and their aspirations after graduation. My conversations with the participants show that the millennials are very hard working people with altruistic motivations. They greatly value connections they make with others. As individuals belonging to a certain generational cohort they have unique social values and cultural ideas which may clash with those of earlier generations. Sometimes older generations may not fully understand values of younger generations. For example, when Friedland and Morimoto (2005) recruited millennial participants for their research, they acknowledged the challenges senior researchers faced when interviewing a group of much younger students. Unfortunately this lack of awareness of generational cultural differences may create tension between different generations, making some people accept existing stereotypes as true. Moreover, society is drawing their understanding and ideas of millennials from opinion pieces found in popular press and popular publications. As a result,

conclusions are made without empirical support which perpetuates these negative stereotypes (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). In response to these stereotypes, academics might want to recruit millennial researchers as part of their research teams. Their perspectives may be valuable when examining the millennials, their attitudes and values. Finally, research regarding millennials should be objective; researchers should consider personal biases when analyzing results of their studies. The literature contains a large number of studies reinforcing mostly negative stereotypes about the millennials. However, limited research provides suggestions and recommendations to those working with the millennials on how to better understand their needs and their positive contribution to society. This generation of students have a lot to offer; however, they need champions to support their aspirations while facing a shift in society's political, economic and cultural changes. If given the opportunity, millennials can demonstrate their resilience and their willingness to make a positive impact on society.

Recommendations

Considering the influence universities have in shaping students' life and their attitudes towards extracurricular involvement during and beyond university education, I propose the following recommendations.

1. Universities should consider student motivations and use them in their strategies to encourage student to participate in campus activities. When designing student engagement programs, universities need to be mindful of their students' needs and types of experience they are seeking. For example, participants of this study were looking to develop their leadership skills; they wanted to make meaningful connections with their

peers through their extracurricular activities. Using this information, universities can develop programs with specific learning outcomes to support their students.

2. Universities should focus on creating high quality programs while considering elements such as learning assessment, challenge and support (Eich, 2008; Komives, 2005).

University services should consider ways to support students during high school-to-university transition and educate them about how to manage their time efficiently. Today's students experience two major obstacles: challenges of transitioning from high school to postsecondary setting and time constraints due to their schedules. The participants described difficulties associated with this transition; they had to learn to take on new responsibilities completed before by their parents while trying to navigate different learning environment. In addition, many Canadian students are required to work part time in order to pay for tuition and living. They also need to keep up with rigorous academic demands and stay connected with their social groups.

Recommendations for Future Research

Majority of the previous studies examining student motivation to participate in various extracurricular activities used quantitative research methods. Some reported altruism as key factor motivating students in higher education to get involved (Austin & Sax, 1998; Handy et al., 2010; Jones & Hill, 2003). However, this qualitative research did not explicitly examine altruism. Future qualitative researchers should consider exploring the idea of altruism among students involved in extracurricular activities to better understand its role in student involvement.

During the discussion surrounding leadership styles, the participants emphasized the importance of certain leadership traits; they wanted leaders to be empathetic, inspiring, and focused on the needs of their followers. Research focusing on millennial leadership styles and their ideas about leadership is needed to understand if traditional leadership styles fit values of

today's generations. Leadership traits described by the participants would suggest that millennials are subscribing to the philosophies of servant leadership (Balda & Mora, 2011; Greenleaf, 1970). However, more research exploring millennial's perspective on leadership would contribute to this understanding and possibly suggest if a new form of leadership is emerging.

It would be also beneficial for future research to examine experiences of students who are not engaged in extracurricular activities in order to better understand barriers and challenges preventing them from participating in campus life. Results from this type of research will help universities gain a more comprehensive understanding of a student body and ways to engage some of their at-risk students.

Limitations of Research

One of the major limitations of this study stems from the chosen qualitative methodology. The participants in this research represented a small group of undergraduate students from the University of Victoria which means that the research findings cannot be generalized to all millennial students in all universities.

In this study, I did not consider ethnicity, socioeconomic backgrounds, gender and religious backgrounds of the participants. Some researchers claimed that a student's level of involvement is associated with these factors because they play a major role in student motivation or decision to become involved with extracurricular activities (Astin & Sax., 1998; Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991; Friedland & Morimoto, 2005; Handy et al., 2010; Kahu, 2013; Kuh et al., 2006; Roberts & McNeese, 2010; Stevenson & Clegg, 2011; Stuart et al., 2011).

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Appendix A: Approval for Human Participant Research – University of Victoria



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 Administrative Services Building Rm B202 PO Box 1700 STN CSC Victoria BC V8W 2Y2 Canada
 T 250-472-4545 | F 250-721-8960 | uvic.ca/research | ethics@uvic.ca

Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Mannix Chan	ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER 16-429
UVic STATUS: Master's Student	Minimal Risk Review - Delegated
UVic DEPARTMENT: EPLS	ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE: 03-Jan-17
SUPERVISOR: Dr. Tatiana Gounko	APPROVED ON: 03-Jan-17
	APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE: 02-Jan-18
PROJECT TITLE: The Implications of Student Engagement of Millennial Students in Higher Education	
RESEARCH TEAM MEMBER None	
DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING: None	
CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL	
<p>This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.</p> <p>Modifications To make any changes to the approved research procedures in your study, please submit a "Request for Modification" form. You must receive ethics approval before proceeding with your modified protocol.</p> <p>Renewals Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date.</p> <p>Project Closures When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion" form.</p>	
Certification	
<p>This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.</p>	
<p>_____ Dr. Rachael Scarth Associate Vice-President Research Operations</p>	

Certificate Issued On: 04-Jan-17

16-429 Chan, Mannix

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What year were you born in?
2. What is/are the extracurricular activities you are part of?
3. What is your role in the organization?
4. Can you walk me through your journey in the organization?
5. What were the motivating factors encouraging you to get involved?
6. Could you talk about your student experience since being involved with this extracurricular activity?
7. What are some of the things you learned after being involved with this organization?
8. Would you consider yourself a student leader?
9. How do you define the term “leader” or “leadership”?
10. What are some things that make a good leader?
11. Where do you draw your understandings of leadership?
12. What or what are some things that have influenced your leadership?
13. If a first year student was hesitant about getting involved with an extracurricular activity, what would you tell them?
14. Is there anything the university could be doing to better support your student experience?
15. When I mention the word “millennial”, what are some thing that come to mind?
16. What are some things you would want people to know about being a millennial
17. Do you have anything relating student engagement, leadership, being a university student or millennials you would like to add or talk more about before we end the interview?

Appendix C: Recruitment Email

Dear [Insert Name],

I, Mannix Chan, a Graduate Student in the Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies Department at the University of Victoria, am contacting you regarding my thesis research for the completion of Master's Degree "The Implication of Student Engagement on Millennial Students in Higher Education."

The objective of my research is to discover the motivations which encourage today's university students to become engaged and explore the experience of students who are involved with on campus extracurricular activities including participation in student-run organization and volunteering opportunities. Considering majority of a university's student population consists of millennials, individuals born between 1980 and 2000 (Howe and Strauss, 2000), I am focusing my research on this population and have decided to conduct in-depth interviews with undergraduate millennial students who are only involved with non-academic student engagement activities.

Student engagement is defined by the amount of time and effort students invest in studies and educationally purposeful activities. These activities include participating in various organizations on campus, interacting with instructors and fellow students and volunteer for the university. Student engagement has been used as a framework by universities when creating programs for students, developing new policies and implementing new learning strategies. A number of studies have shown students who are engaged have a greater chance of persisting through their university degree and completing their university education. More specifically, peer-to-peer interactions has the greatest impact on student success among the different types of student engagement activities. This type of interaction occurs most naturally when a student is involved with extracurricular activities and volunteering opportunities on campus.

Despite the benefits of students being engaged with the university, researchers have a limited understanding of the motivations of today's students to become engaged with the university. Furthermore, the majority of student engagement research has focused on the results of being involved and minimal research has been done to learn about the experience of a student who is currently engaged. To gain a better understanding of the motivations and the experience of today's students who are engaged, I will conduct in-depth interview with millennial undergraduate students who only involved with non-academic student engagement activities.

I am extending an invitation to you to participate in this study. On the UVSS website, your email address was available and I believe your experience as the [name of role] in [name of organization/group] will provide great insight to this study. The interviews will be scheduled for a duration no longer than sixty minutes and will take place at UVic during a time that is convenient for the participant.

This study has been reviewed and has received ethics approval by University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board.

If you are interested in participating in this research, please contact me by email or via phone. Your involvement with my research will be greatly appreciated and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kindest regards,

Mannix Chan