Researching Student Engagement With Clubs and Groups on Campus

Includes:

Final Report

By: Ngoc Bui

Completed for: Journal of Undergraduate Studies at Trent

Supervising Professor: Joshua Synenco

Trent Community Research Centre Project Coordinator: Ryan Sisson

Course Code: MDST 4901H

Course Name: Community-Based Research Project

Completion Date: April 1, 2024

Project ID: 6060

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

In his famous theory of involvement, Astin (1985) asserted that "students learn by becoming involved." Student clubs and groups are a crucial part of post-secondary education. Student clubs can forge personal development, helping students improve their social skills and expand their interests (Culic & Pavelea, 2016). Certain types of clubs such as cultural and ethnicity-based can bring ethnic students a sense of belonging, a space for identity expression and cross-cultural learning. In addition, there are clubs (e.g. Enactus) that focus on giving students professional skills and entrepreneurial knowledge (Pittaway et al., 2015). Besides including literature on student groups in general, this paper also places an emphasis on cultural and ethnicity-based clubs and their effects on international and racialized students. Most studies reviewed in this paper look at student clubs at post-secondary institutions located in North America and the U.S. This paper consists of four parts. The first part discusses some terminologies, definitions and two important theories: Astin's theory of involvement and Cross's racial identity development model. The second part delves into possible reasons why post-secondary students choose to participate or not participate in clubs and clubs' activities. Next, the paper examines whether involvement in student clubs benefits students. The last section reviews and assesses the limitations of previous studies on students' engagement.

TERMINOLOGIES, DEFINITIONS, AND THEORIES

1. Terminologies

This section will clarify some of the terms that will be used throughout this paper. I will use verbs such as "engage," "participate," "join," and "involve" interchangeably with one another. Also, "extracurricular activities" will mainly be used as an umbrella term for club and group activities. "Clubs," "groups," and "organizations" will also be used interchangeably.

2. Definitions: Clubs, Engagement, and Community

Pittaway et al. (2015) define *student clubs* as autonomous student groups who meet regularly with an aim to expand knowledge on a given topic or theme. Most clubs are organized and run by students, but some clubs are sponsored and run by outside organizations (Culic & Pavelea, 2016). At Trent University, 75 clubs under the Trent Central Student Association (TCSA) are student-run. There are many types of clubs which serve various areas of interest: program-specific clubs, professional groups, and special interests (Pittaway et al., 2015). For example, at Trent, student clubs can be broken down into sports clubs (*Trent Hockey*, *Trent Baseball*), program-specific clubs (*Trent Accounting*, *Trent History*), hobby clubs (*Chess Club*, *Badminton Club*), etc. Club activities can include guest lectures, seminars, panel discussions, networking meetings, contests, or community-based projects. (Pittaway et al., 2015)

In most universities in Canada, there are cultural clubs or ethnicity-focused clubs. Surtees and Balyasnikova (2016) define cultural clubs as student unions that contain some forms of linguistic, national, or ethnic label. The labels can refer to a geographical region, nationality, ethnicity, or linguistic group (e.g. *Afro Students' Association*, *Persian*

Club) (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016). The labels can also be a combination of cultures and interests (e.g. *Canadianized Asian Club*, *Bangladeshi Engineering Students' Association*) (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016). Cultural clubs aim to provide a space for people sharing similar cultural backgrounds to connect and educate the public about the characteristics, beliefs, traditions, history, or language of different ethnic groups (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016). This type of club usually does not limit its members to people from one specific culture. For example, the *Chinese Varsity Club* at University of British Columbia welcomes everyone to join, not exclusively Chinese students (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016).

Engagement can be described as the extent to which students take part in academic and non-academic school activities (Willms, 2003) This paper will mainly examine students' engagement in non-academic activities (i.e. clubs and groups) rather than academic activities (i.e. lectures, seminars). Engagement can be viewed in both psychological and behavioral senses (Culic & Pavelea, 2016). From the psychological viewpoint, engagement calls up the feeling of belongingness and attachment that come from peers' acceptance (Culic & Pavelea, 2016). From the behavioral viewpoint, engagement refers to the action of preparing for and participating in an activity (Willms, 2003).

A *community* can be seen as a social organization whose members share common goals, support each other, commit, and contribute to the group (Solomon et al., 1996). A student tends to identify with and commit to a community when she feels accepted and supported by that community (Battistich et al., 1995). When more than one member shares that feeling about being a part of the group, they have developed a *sense of*

community. The sense of community points to the psychological sense that fulfills members' needs for belonging and meaning (Battistich et al., 1995).

Quite similar to the *sense of community* is the *sense of belonging*. The sense of belonging is defined by Hausmann et al. (2009) as the "identification and affiliation with the campus community." Bollen and Hoyle (1990) state that an individual develops a sense of belonging to a community when they share common purposes with the group. All students seek to build relationships with other people that can make them feel important, validated, and supported on campus (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990).

3. Astin's Theory of Involvement

The foundation of many works about students' engagement is Astin's theory of involvement. Although Astin's theory was published back in 1985, Case (2011) states that Astin's theory of involvement has been a guiding theoretical framework for research that explores the learning and developmental potential of collegiate co-curricular programs.

Astin (1985) defined the term *student involvement* as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience."[1] A highly involved student is someone who devotes lots of effort to studying, spends substantial amount of time on campus, actively engages with student groups, and builds connections with faculty members and other students (Astin, 1985). In contrast, an uninvolved student does not pay attention to studying, spends little time on campus, barely participates in extracurricular activities, and has limited contact with faculty members and other students (Astin, 1985).

---

[1] "Academic experience" does not limit to what belongs to the curriculum (e.g. classes; lectures, seminars, etc.). "Academic experience" also involves out-of-class activities.

There are many ways students can get involved as there are various forms of involvement (Astin, 1985). In 1996, Astin discovered the three most powerful forms of involvement: academic involvement, involvement with faculty, and involvement with student peer groups (Foubert & Urbanski, 2006). Astin asserted that involvement in student peer groups (i.e. student clubs and groups) has a strong influence on a student's cognitive and affective development (Foubert & Urbanski, 2006). In a peer group, people are more likely to encourage each other to involve more intensely in experiences (Foubert & Urbanski, 2006). He concludes that "the greater the interaction with peers, the more favorable the outcome" (Foubert & Urbanski, 2006).

The theory of involvement is considered to share many similarities with Freud's concept of cathexis (Astin, 1999). The Freudian concept asserts that "people invest psychological energy in objects and persons outside of themselves." (Astin, 1999) In other terms, people cathect on their friends, family, schoolwork, and extracurricular activities (Astin, 1999). Similar to Freud's concept, Astin's theory also emphasizes the psychological devotion to something outside of oneself such as things contributing to one's academic experience.

Astin's (1999) theory of involvement consists of five basic points:
(1) involvement is the physical and psychological investment in objects - from highly generalized (the student experience) to highly specific (preparing for a chemistry test).
(2) involvement occurs along a continuum: different students show different levels of involvement in activities at different times.
(3) involvement has a quantitative aspect (how much time a student spends on an activity) and a qualitative aspect (what a student gains from that activity).

(4) the amount of knowledge and personal development gained through an educational program is directly proportional to the quantity and quality of the student's involvement in that program.

(5) the effectiveness of any educational policy, practice, or program is directly determined by the capacity of that policy, practice, or program to boost student involvement.

4. Cross's Racial Identity Development Model

Cross's racial identity development model was originally developed based on the African American community's experiences. However, the model can also be useful when applied to other racialized groups. *African American identity development* is defined by Cross (1991) as "a process of moving from negative or external determination to positive or internal determination" through five stages. The five stages are Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, Internalization, and Internalization-Commitment (Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995).

During the Pre-encounter stage, an individual's identity and belief system are largely influenced by hegemonic Euro-American ideas about ethnicity (Cross, 1991). At this stage, a person is more likely to be involved in campus groups and activities that have few people of color (Mitchell & Dell, 1992). The Encounter stage is when an anti-Black belief system is switched to a pro-Black belief system (Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995). This stage marks a cognitive and behavioral change where the change is usually caused by racially shocking experiences that make an individual question their previous ideas and beliefs (Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995). In the third stage, Immersion-Emersion, the individual radically immerses in the African American culture

and rejects the Euro-American culture (Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995). The fourth

stage, known as Internalization, is illustrated by the individual's capability to assess

selectively the values and behaviors from both cultures (Taylor & Howard-Hamilton,

1995). The final stage, Internalization-Commitment, is described as a phase in which the

individual desires to move from belief to action— by empowering others to embrace

African American values (Cross, 1991).

REASONS STUDENTS PARTICIPATE/NOT PARTICIPATE IN CLUBS AND GROUPS

1. What Motivates Students to Join Clubs?

1.1. Leisure - Personal and Interpersonal Development

1.1.1. The Concept of Leisure and The Leisure Motivation Scale

Eccles and Barber distinguished the two terms *relaxed leisure* and *constructive leisure* (Culic & Pavelea, 2016). While relaxed leisure can be achieved through undemanding and enjoyable activities such as watching TV, constructive leisure requires effort (Culic & Pavelea, 2016). Participating in extracurricular activities can be considered constructive leisure and helps an individual develop their personality, identity, and passions (Culic & Pavelea, 2016). Thus, leisure is a main source of pleasure obtained from an activity (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Leisure is directly connected to motivation, confidence, dedication to an activity, and satisfaction (Chen et al., 2013). Satisfying leisure gained through an activity can motivate a person to engage more with that activity (Beggs & Elkins, 2010). Leisure can be threefold: "leisure as any *free time*, leisure as a *specific activity*, such as school club or organized sports, and leisure as a *subjective experience* of an individual." (Ryan & Deci, 2000) In this section, the word "leisure" is mainly used to refer to the experience(s) an individual gains through engaging in an activity.

The Leisure Motivation Scale (LMS) was originally developed by Beard and Regheb (Culic & Pavelea, 2016). According to Ryan and Deci (2000), the scale contains four sub-scales, which represent four aspects of an individual's experience:

(1) Intellectual (a mental stimulation such as cognitive learning or the opportunity to use

one's imagination)

(2) Social (the need for building connections and interpersonal relationships)

(3) Competence-mastery (the desire for competition and challenge)

(4) Stimulus-avoidance (the sense of escape and restoration one seeks in their leisure activities).

<u>1.1.2. Four Types of Leisure Motivating Students to Join Clubs</u>

Culic and Pavelea (2016) conducted a survey of six student clubs to find out why students chose to be involved. They had a total of 42 respondents, divided equally by gender. Most of them were first and second-year students while some were masters students. The majority of the respondents (83%) said that they were part of a student club and 71% wanted to become part of a student club in the future.

The clubs with the most student members were *Anime and Japanese Culture Club*, *Photoshop Club*, and *Alpine Club*. When asked what clubs they may want to join in the future, students expressed interest in underrepresented clubs such as *Board Games Night Club*, *Video Production Club*, *Debate Club*, and *Library Club*. According to this survey, student members were informed of their clubs through social media— Facebook (45%), their peers (33%), and professors (26%). Less than half of the students (40%)partake in their clubs' activities on a weekly basis, and 36% participate occasionally.

The Leisure Motivation Scale (LMS) has four components: intellectual, social, competence/mastery, and stimulus/avoidance (Culic and Pavelea, 2016). Each component represents an aspect of learning a student has experienced (or wants to experience) by joining clubs. Upon analyzing students' responses based on the Leisure Motivation Scale,

there are four clear types of leisure that motivate students to participate in clubs:

(1) Intellectual leisure: The survey found that students joined clubs to achieve intellectual leisure from discovering new elements, gain knowledge of new things, and… using their imagination, creativity, curiosity (Culic & Pavelea, 2016).

(2) Social leisure: Students joined clubs to obtain social leisure mainly from socializing and building new relationships with others. By joining clubs, a small number of students gained social leisure from getting others' respect and influencing others (Culic & Pavelea, 2016).

(3) Competence/Mastery leisure: The study found that many students wanted to join clubs to challenge their abilities, know their abilities, and master things. A few students joined clubs to compete against others (Culic & Pavelea, 2016).

(4) Stimulus/Avoidance leisure: Students tend to join clubs to "get away from routine, escape, and get a change of pace." Besides, some students participated in clubs as a form of stress relief, recreation, mental and physical relaxation (Culic & Pavelea, 2016).

These four categories of leisure are not limited to Culic and Pavelea's study but can be applied to other research on why students participate in clubs and groups. Most reasons for participating in clubs and groups can be categorized in one of the four categories listed above.

1.2. Minoritized Groups: Identity Expression, Sense of Belonging, Cross-cultural Learning, and Pursuit of Social Justice

1.2.1. African American Students

1.2.1.1. An Overview of Harper and Quaye's Study

Harper and Quaye (2007) conducted a qualitative study on the experiences of African American undergraduate male students at six predominantly white institutions (PWIs). These students were actively engaged and held leadership positions in different clubs and organizations at those institutions. The study sought to find out "what it is like to be a high-achieving African American male student leader at a large PWI" (Harper & Quaye, 2007). The students were asked questions regarding their choices of groups, their motivation for active engagement in those groups, and the experiences that influenced their development of racial identities (Harper & Quaye, 2007).

The six universities where the study was conducted were University of Illinois, Indiana University, University of Michigan, Michigan State University, The Ohio State University, and Purdue University (Harper & Quaye, 2007). These institutions were quite similar in size, age, reputation, and selectivity (Harper & Quaye, 2007). At the time the study was carried out, African American students constituted 6.3% of the students at the institutions with 33.8% of those students being male (Harper & Quaye, 2007). The enrollment rate for African American undergraduate students ranged 3.1% to 8.8% (Harper & Quaye, 2007). The graduation rate for African American males was 50.7%, while that of White males was 74.2% and African American females was 58.8% (Harper & Quaye, 2007).

1.2.1.2. Two Reasons African American Male Students are Actively Involved in Student Organizations

(1) For the advancement of the African American community

Though some participants were part of mainstream campus student groups, the majority of them held leadership positions and membership in Black and minority student

14

organizations (Harper & Quaye, 2007). Regardless of the organizations they were in, all African American student leaders stated that they participated in student organizations to give back to the African American community (Harper and Quaye, 2007). Each student leader voiced their desire to deconstruct stereotypes, remove barriers, and create new opportunities for other African American students on his campus (Harper and Quaye, 2007).

Many leaders were aware of the academic issues that the African American community faced— i.e. the low retention and graduation rates (Harper & Quaye, 2007). Therefore, they arranged club events and programs to assist African American students and other marginalized students on campus. Being aware that African American students' GPAs were lower than the university's average GPA, two leaders at the University of Illinois created the *4.0 Club* as a space for these students to study together and support each other academically (Harper & Quaye, 2007). Besides the occasional study sessions, the club gave recognition incentives to any members who achieved 4.0 GPAs at the end of each semester (Harper & Quaye, 2007).

There was also an observed difference between participants involved in predominantly Black organizations and those involved in predominantly White organizations. On the one hand, leaders exclusively involved in predominantly Black student groups assisted African American students because their groups were responsible for responding directly to those students' needs and issues (Harper & Quaye, 2007). On the other hand, leaders participating in predominantly White organizations mostly chose to assist African American students because they felt the community was underrepresented (Harper & Quaye, 2007). Furthermore, they were aware that these

mainstream organizations had more resources and funds, which they could access to facilitate events for African American students (Harper & Quaye, 2007) Although leaders chose to join different organizations, they all shared the same goal of "advancing the African American student communities on their campuses." (Harper & Quaye, 2007)

(2) For Cross-Cultural Engagement and Advocacy for Oppressed People

Cross-cultural communication skills were frequently brought up by leaders during the interviews (Harper & Quaye, 2007). By participating in student organizations, the student leaders had successfully collaborated with people coming from different backgrounds (i.e. race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, ability, social status, and religion) (Harper & Quaye, 2007). The participants expressed their genuine interest in meeting students who could offer different perspectives (Harper & Quaye, 2007). The student leaders knew their universities were "microcosms of the larger society"; therefore, to be successful, they had to learn how to communicate and cooperate with people different from them (Harper & Quaye, 2007). They believed that cross-cultural communication skills would not only help them at university but also in the future (Harper & Quaye, 2007).

An important emphasis was put on the ability to deal with White people (Harper & Quaye, 2007). The participants viewed this as "a gift" that many African American counterparts did not possess but something that would be crucial for future success (Harper & Quaye, 2007). Noticeably, the student leaders used phrases such as "interact with" when talking about communicating with other students from different cultural/ethnic/racial backgrounds; however, they used "deal with" when describing their interactions with White people (Harper & Quaye, 2007).

Moreover, some student leaders saw involvement in student organizations as a way to advocate for marginalized groups. Edwin, who was aware of the victimization of women on campus, organized the University of Michigan's Victory Over Violence Week, whose purpose was to put an end to rape and other forms of assault against women (Harper & Quaye, 2007). Bryant at the University of Illinois worked as a Resident Assistant. He expressed the desire to support LGBTQ+ students and students with disabilities through his position (Harper & Quaye, 2007).

1.2.2. International Asian Students

1.2.2.1. On-Campus Participation

Malette and Ismailzai (2020) carried out a qualitative study at Western University (Canada). They found that international Asian students were more likely to join ethnicity-focused clubs than domestic Asian students and domestic White students. The percentage of international Asian students participating in ethnicity-based clubs was 38%, while those of domestic White students and domestic Asian students were respectively 8% and 18% (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020).

Regarding on-campus activities outside of formal student clubs, 52% of international students were recorded to be involved in those activities (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020). International Asian students were more engaged in on-campus activities than domestic students (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020). Only a small proportion (6%) of domestic students said they participated in on-campus activities (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020). Although a large number of international Asian students participated in on-campus activities, only a small proportion took part in sports (26%), fraternities and sororities (2%), and drinking activities (4%) (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020). The high rates of

17

international Asian students participating in clubs and activities at Western University debunked the common belief that international students were not socially engaged on campus (Findlay & Köhler, 2010).

1.2.2.2. Two Reasons International Asian Students Participate in Student Clubs

(1) Making cross-cultural friends:

Almost all participants said joining student clubs helped them make friends and expand their connections (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020). Trevor, an international student from Thailand commented, "[T]he clubs give us lots of opportunities to meet people. I find it was helpful being part of a lot of clubs." (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020) However, most international Asian students tend to make friends with other international students rather than Canadian students (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020). Carol, a member of the Chinese Students Association, mentioned that 80% of her friends were international students (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020).

Most participants noted that talking to Canadian students was not difficult, but they did not share much in common with domestic students (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020). As they could relate more to other international students, it was easier to build connections with other international students (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020). Tina, a student from Vietnam said, "It's not really difficult [to talk to domestic students], but there will be a distance, compared to [making friends with] international students" (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020). Building relationships with other students from the same social and ethnic backgrounds created "ontological security," the safe feeling derived from the connection with people sharing the same backgrounds (especially while living abroad) (Yeh & Edwards, 2017). This sense of security helps international students feel more

comfortable on campus (Yeh & Edwards, 2017).

(2) Identity expression/enhancement and sense of belonging

Student clubs are venues for international students to express and enhance their Asian identities. Rebecca from China shared, "[T]he clubs are good because I can celebrate the holidays and things we have back home. In Canada, we don't do these things, and it makes me feel homesick sometimes." (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020) While studying abroad could make international students feel disconnected from their cultures, ethnicity-based clubs help them feel more connected to their Asian identities (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020).

Besides contributing to international students' identity expression and enhancement, student clubs helped them develop a sense of belonging to the campus community. Stacey from China said "Campus clubs helped me make friends here. When I miss people back home, I talk to them. I know they know what that feels like. We go through the same things." (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020) Therefore, clubs allowed international students to build emotional bonds with each other and support each other through homesickness (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020).

1.2.3. Immigrant Students

1.2.3.1. Cultural Clubs in Canadian Higher Education

At the time Surtees and Balyasnikova (2016) did their research, culture clubs constituted 8% to 24% of student clubs at the 10 largest English-speaking universities in Canada. Among the universities studied, University of British Columbia (UBC) had the most cultural clubs (24.9%), followed by University of Toronto (21.6%), McGill University (21.6%), and University of Waterloo (18.8%) (Surtees & Balyasnikova,

2016). Meanwhile, University of Calgary and York University (YorkU) had the lowest percentages of cultural clubs (10.1% and 8.4%) (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016). All 10 universities studied had cultural clubs for students from diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016). For instance, at University of Waterloo, 35 cultural clubs on the Student Federation Website consisted of around 30 distinct cultural labels, from African, Caribbean, Jewish, Vietnamese, Muslim, and Latin (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016).

Cultural clubs usually had as few as 10 and up to 100s of members (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016). For example, the *Chinese Varsity Club* at UBC served over 500 members (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016). YorkU's *Afghan Association* had 161 members while its *Tamil Club* and *Guyanese Social Club* only listed around 90 members (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016).

1.2.3.2. Russian-speaking Students Joining Russian Circle (RC) for Identity Enhancement

Surtees and Balyanikova (2016) focused on a cultural club that they named Russian Circle (RC) at a large Canadian university. They chose to study RC because they wanted to raise awareness of less represented cultural group but one which was still relatively common across Canadian institutions. RC was run by students originally from Russian-speaking countries but immigrated to Canada at a young age (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016). RC's members came from diverse backgrounds including Russian, Ukrainian, Serbian, Kazakh, Chinese, Polish, and Mongolian (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016). Although the club welcomed all students to join, the main criterion for membership was Russian language proficiency (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016).

According to Sidanius et al. (2004), ethnic students usually participate in cultural clubs for identity enhancement. Most student members joined RC for identity expression and enhancement. Block's poststructuralist model of identity views an individual's identity as "multiple, contingent, and formed and reformed through constant negotiation of difference" (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016). In other words, an individual does not have a single identity but rather "multiple and fluid nature of identity." (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016) This could be seen in the case of RC's student members. The students interviewed not only joined RC to reclaim their Russian identity but also other intersectional identities.

Dianne, who was born in Russia and moved to Canada in 2013, joined RC to advocate for Russian cultural activities (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016). However, she also put an emphasis on her identity as Tatar and a non-orthodox Muslim outside the club (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016). Besides Dianne, another student named Sasha was also an example of the fluidity and multiplicity of identities. Sasha was born in Mongolia, but she also came to Canada in 2013. She wanted to join RC to reclaim her mixed identity as Asian, Mongolian, and Russian (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016). However, her desire to be part of the group was often hindered by stereotypes. Her mixed identity usually created an ambivalent feeling (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016). There was an incident where Sasha was discouraged from participating in an RC event until she showed her fluency in Russian (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016). Sasha's case proved that an individual's identity was "constantly negotiated and constrained by contextual factors and societal expectations." (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016)

2. What Discourages Students from Joining Clubs?

2.1. Involvement in Other Activities

There can be many factors hindering students from participating in clubs and groups. For example, some students do not join clubs because they live off-campus or they are not interested in any clubs. However, one of the most common reasons students are not engaged on campus is their involvement in other types of activities. In McCannon and Bennett's survey (1996), many students mentioned that they could not join a student organization because they had a job. Also, McCannon and Bennett suggested that working off-campus could potentially discourage students from joining clubs and groups (Case, 2011). This was because students spend less time on campus and have less contact with staff and faculty that organized on-campus activities (Case, 2011). Aside from job responsibilities, a lot of students may want to focus on studying since there is a widely held assumption that participation in student groups can distract students from academic responsibilities (Black, 2002).

2.1.1. A Gendered Perspective: Why Fewer Men Get Involved Than Women

An emerging body of literature emphasizes the lack of male in on-campus activities (Case, 2011). At many post-secondary institutions, fewer men participated in programs such as study abroad, service projects, volunteer work, and student clubs than women (Kellom, 2004; Wilson, 2007).

Astin's theory of involvement (1985) suggests that time management is important for post-secondary students because time and energy are finite resources. Additionally, Astin notes that passive activities such as watching television can take students' time away from other meaningful activities that encourage development and learning (Case, 2011). Pryor and colleagues (2006) found that first-year college men spend more hours

22

than women watching television and playing video games. As these passive activities take a lot of male students' time, it is one possible explanation of men's low level of involvement in student clubs and groups.

Additionally, some research points out that participation in intercollegiate athletics can hinder students from joining clubs and groups because this activity consumes a significant amount of time (Case, 2011). Some educators attribute male students' low level of involvement to their participation in athletic activities (Case, 2011). However, Valentin (1997) challenges this idea because lots of female students are also involved in athletic activities.

Further, Chee et al. (2005) found that women are less likely to be involved in drinking and partying than men. In addition, Pryor et al. (2006) pointed out that 18.9% of women and 25.6% of men said they partied during their senior year of high school. Sax (2008) noted that men spend more time than women to "let loose" and join activities revolving around having fun while in college. As a result, male students' activity of partying can negatively influence their level of engagement in club activities.

2.2. Ignorance and Prejudices

2.2.1. White Students' Attitudes towards Ethnicity-based Clubs

In Malette and Ismailzai's study at Western University (2020), White domestic students viewed ethnicity-focused clubs as a kind of "social exclusion" rather than campus integration. For example, Jason, a domestic student, commented "I wonder, what is that Chinese Varsity Club like? Like, what's THAT like?! [laughs] That's what I want to know. Yeah [laughs], I don't know, do I have to be Chinese to be a part of that group? I wish it was a more united student body." (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020) Although ethnicity-

based clubs at Western University welcome members from all backgrounds, domestic students do not think the clubs are open to their participation (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020). Mark, a domestic student, shared an incident when he saw members from Asian societies handing out flyers, but they did not even look at him (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020). As White students felt that ethnicity-based clubs were not for them, they were less likely to join the clubs (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020).

Some domestic students showed prejudices towards international students who were members of ethnicity-based clubs. They criticized international students for not speaking English fluently and not making an effort to merge into the host society (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020). Stephanie, a domestic student, said "It's common courtesy, you know when you come into another society, another culture. You try and immerse yourself a little bit more…they don't even try. Well, obviously, they are here for school, but they don't even try to speak English well." (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020) Besides Stephanie, Jason and Mark believed that international students' participation in ethnicity-based clubs showed their unwillingness to integrate into Canadian society (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020). Domestic students' prejudices towards international students and ethnicity-based clubs could be another reason why they were less likely to join ethnicity-based clubs.

DOES JOINING CLUBS BENEFIT STUDENTS?

1. Skepticism

1.1. Does Joining Clubs Affect Academic Performance?

There are two opposing hypotheses considering the relationship between academic performance and out-of-class involvement (Huang & Chang, 2004). The first hypothesis states that academic performance and out-of-class activities are negatively correlated (Huang & Chang, 2004). Students spending lots of time on extracurricular activities do not have much time and energy left for academic work (Huang & Chang, 2004). Harnett (1965) noted that extracurricular activities are sometimes connected to poor academic performance. Also, those who devote a lot of time and energy to studying cannot be involved in out-of-class activities (Huang & Chang, 2004). Astin (1977) found that students who are extremely focused on studying are isolated from their peers and are less likely to join extracurricular activities. The negative correlation between involvement in student clubs and academic achievement is attributed to a student's finite time and energy (Huang & Chang, 2004).

In contrast, the other hypothesis claims that academic performance and involvement in extracurricular activities are positively correlated (Huang & Chang, 2004). Student clubs and groups can support students' academic achievement by providing them with opportunities to create study groups, find study partners, and get advice from upper-year students (Huang & Chang, 2004). Cooper et al. (1994) found that students participating in clubs had better academic results in the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Inventory than those who did not join clubs in their freshman and junior years. Furthermore, many studies have shown that participation in extracurricular

activities has a positive impact on college persistence, degree attainment, educational

goals, and graduate school attendance (Huang & Chang, 2004).

1.2. Do Cultural Clubs Create Segregation?

There are many challenges to culture clubs. Ortiz and Santos (2009) point out that

culture clubs can "create a climate of competition for educational resources and the

perception of ethnic separateness". Student members of cultural clubs shared that they

were often victimized and "locked in a zero-sum conflict with other student groups."

(Sidanius et al., 2008). One incident happened at Ryerson University wherein the

organizers from the *Racialized Student Collective* requested two White student journalists

to leave the room (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016). According to a report by Ansari, the

organizers felt justified in asking the students to leave for a safe space for minority

students while the student journalists viewed the action as motivating racial tension

(Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016).

Although many cultural clubs show themselves as a welcoming space for

everyone regardless of background, some ethnic students' desire to participate may be

rejected as some members can act as gatekeepers by judging whether a person is "ethnic

enough" to be part of the cultural group (Ortiz & Santos, 2009). These members usually

judge a person based on their appearance or their fluency in a language. Therefore, the

gatekeepers in cultural clubs can create segregation among ethnic students themselves.

2. Proved Benefits of Student Clubs

One of the most important benefits that participation in clubs and groups brings to

students is psychological development. According to Martin (2000), club involvement

helps students establish a sense of purpose. Specifically, in Cooper and colleagues' study

(1994), students who participated in clubs and groups scored higher than non-members in educational involvement, career and lifestyle planning, cultural involvement, and academic independence.

In his book *What Matters in College?* Astin stated that involvement in clubs and organizations can have a positive impact on students' public speaking skills, leadership skills, and other interpersonal skills (Foubert & Urbanski, 2006). Guido-DiBrito and Batchelor (1988) noted that participating student organizations can result in *leadership development* because in these organizations, students learn by being tested. Moreover, student clubs create a space for socialization and networking. Clubs and groups give students opportunities to explore new ideas, share academic resources, and find emotional support from other students (Glass & Gesing, 2018).

Participation in clubs and groups is closely linked to academic excellence and job placement. In terms of academic performance, Hanks and Ecklund (1976) stated that for both men and women, joining clubs can help achieve one's academic attainment. Similarly, Stoecker et al. (1988) reported a positive correlation between involvement in clubs and the completion of the undergraduate degree, enrollment in graduate school, and educational attainment through graduate school. Furthermore, job placement is also considered in relation to engagement in student clubs. Many studies, such as Astin and Dunkel, Bray, & Wofford, showed that club activities helped students develop crucial skills (i.e. leadership skills and interpersonal skills) to succeed after college (Moore et al., 1998). In addition, a study carried out by Albrecht et al. (1994) showed that recruiters in education and engineering preferred students with medium grades and high levels of involvement over those having high grades but barely getting involved.

Regarding international students and racialized students, ethnicity-based clubs create a sense of belonging for them. Doan (2011) found that students of ethnicity tend to feel more welcomed and connected to an institution when it "reflects their own personal experiences and promotes acceptance and tolerance". Student clubs allow them to connect with others coming from the same backgrounds and having similar experiences (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020). In Guiffrida's interviews in 2003, students said they felt less alienated as the club environment is free from negative stereotypes and discrimination (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016). For example, ethnicity-based clubs allow Black students to share their stories of discrimination and return to the community by supporting new incoming Black students (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016). As ethnicity-based clubs provide racialized and international students with a sense of acceptance and belonging, students can experience better academic integration. Saylor and Aries (1999) asserted that members of ethnicity-based clubs are more likely to join other non-ethnic student clubs, attend more diversity-related workshops, and network with diverse students as a result of their involvement. Additionally, Sidanius et al. (2004) noted that membership in a cultural club is closely correlated with higher levels of affiliation to the university. Similarly, Baker also found a correlation between grade point average and participation in cultural clubs for Latina students (Surtees & Balyasnikova, 2016).

ASSESSING THE LIMITATIONS OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

There is limited literature examining how racialized students' engagement in clubs influences their identity development. Although Cross's racial identity development model can generally be applied to ethnic and racialized people, the model is mainly directed toward the African American community. Also, Cross's model does not draw a direct connection to students and their participation in clubs and groups. Thus, it is essential for a new theory to be developed— a theory that includes people of different ethnicities and directly connects student engagement to identity development.

Furthermore, supplementary research on the involvement of students from underrepresented groups is needed. For example, LGBTQ+ students and Indigenous students have an important role in student organizations in many Canadian universities. It is imperative to examine why students from these underrepresented groups choose to participate or not participate in student clubs and groups. From there, researchers can assess whether the support services at Canadian universities are sufficient for the students and determine what needs improvement. Although Malette and Ismailzai (2020) researched international students' perspectives on clubs and groups, their study was only limited to international Asian students. Similarly, Surtees and Balyasnikova (2016) paid attention to immigrant students (those who were born in other countries and moved to Canada later in their lives), but their study only focused on Russian-speaking students. Therefore, perspectives on other international student groups or other immigrant student groups are needed. Although, Case (2011) did widen the scope to first-generation students and students of color. She cited some studies finding that first-generation and students of color barely participate in student clubs unless there is intervention enacted.

Although Case has considered a broader range of ethnic groups, her research does not go into the reasons why these two groups have noticeably low rates of participation. Therefore, besides looking at the participation levels, a study also needs to examine the reasons behind the participation levels.

Lastly, most studies discuss the reasons why students join clubs, but not many of them discuss the factors discouraging students from participating. Similarly, many studies have proved the benefits of involvement in clubs from different aspects (i.e. academic performance, interpersonal skills, sense of belonging, etc). However, little literature has looked into the potential disadvantages of joining clubs and groups.

CONCLUSION

The literature found has generally covered reasons students choose to participate or not participate in clubs and whether participation in clubs can benefit them. Many scholars have pointed out that the concept of leisure plays an important role in determining students' engagement in clubs and organizations. Furthermore, different student groups have different reasons for joining clubs, but most of them emphasize identity expression and building connections cross-culturally. Regarding factors hindering students from joining university clubs, male students are believed to be less engaged than female students due to their involvement in other activities. Moreover, some domestic students tend to have prejudices over ethnic clubs, which makes it less likely for them to be part of these clubs. Besides some literature that are skeptical about the benefits of university clubs, lots of research asserts the benefits these clubs have brought to students.

REFERENCES

Albrecht, D., Carpenter, D., & Sivo, S. (1994). The effect of college activities and grades on job placement potential. *NASPA Journal, 31*(4), 290-296.

Astin, A. W. (1977). *Four critical years*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Astin, A. W. (1985). Involvement: the Cornerstone of Excellence. In *Change (New Rochelle, N.Y.)* (Vol. 17, Issue 4, pp. 35–39). Taylor & Francis Group. https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.1985.9940532

Astin, A. W. (1999). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development, 40*(5), 518–529.

Battistich, Solomon, D., Kim, D., Watson, M., & Schaps, E. (1995). Schools as Communities, Poverty Levels of Student Populations, and Students' Attitudes, Motives, and Performance: A Multilevel Analysis. *American Educational Research Journal, 32*(3), 627–658. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312032003627

Beggs, B. A., & Elkins, D. J. (2010). The influence of leisure motivation on leisure satisfaction. *LARNet-The Cyber Journal of Applied Leisure and Recreation Research*, (July).

Black, S. (2002). The Well-Rounded Student. *American School Board Journal, 189*(6), 33–35.

Bollen, K. A., & Hoyle, R. H. (1990). Perceived cohesion: A conceptual and empirical examination. *Social Forces, 69*(2), 479–504. https://doi.org/10.2307/2579670

Case, K. (2011). A Gendered Perspective on Student Involvement in Collegiate Clubs and Organizations in Christian Higher Education. *Christian Higher Education (London, UK), 10*(3-4), 166–195. https://doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2011.576208

Chee, K. H., Pino, N. W., & Smith, W. L. (2005). Gender differences in the academic

    ethic and academic achievement. *College Student Journal, 39*, 604–618.

    Retrieved from http://www.projectinnovation.biz/csj.html

Chen Y.-C., Li, R.-H., & Chen, S.-H. (2013). Relationships Among Adolescents' Leisure

    Motivation, Leisure Involvement, and Leisure Satisfaction: A Structural Equation

    Model. *Social Indicators Research, 110*(3), 1187–1199.

    https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-011-9979-2

Cooper, D.L., Healy, M.A., & Simpson, J. (1994). Student development through

    involvement: Specific changes over time. *Journal of College Student*

    Development, 35, 98-102.

Cross, W. E. (1991). *Shades of Black*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Culic, Iancu, I. R., & Pavelea, A. (2016). Why Should I Join A Students' Club? The

    Motivation Behind Participating in Students' Clubs. *Professional Communication*

    and Translation Studies, *9*(9), 187–198. https://doi.org/10.59168/VLAB1197

Doan, J. (2011). The impact of campus climate and student involvement on students of

    colour. *The Vermont Connection, 32*(1), 32–39.

Findlay, S., & Köhler, N. (2010, November 10). The enrollment controversy. *Maclean's,*

    123(45), 76–81. https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/too-asian/ (Originally

    published as "Too Asian?")

Foubert, J. D., & Urbanski, L. A. (2006). Effects of involvement in clubs and

    organizations on the psychosocial development of first-year and senior college

    students. *NASPA Journal*, *43*(1), 166-182.

Glass, C. R., & Gesing, P. (2018). The development of social capital through

international students' involvement in campus organizations. *Journal of*

International Students, 8(3), 1274–1292. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1254580

Guido-DiBrito, F., & Batchelor, S. W. (1988). Developing leadership potential through

student activities and organizations. *New Directions for Student Services, 44*, 51-

62.

Haines. (2019). *Student Perspectives on Joining Student Organizations*.

https://doi.org/info:doi/

Hanks, M., & Ecklund, B. (1976). Athletics and social participation in the educational

attainment process. *Sociology of Education, 49*, 271-294.

Harnett, R. T. (1965). Involvement in co-curricular activities as a factor in academic

performance. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 6*, 272-274.

Harper, & Quaye, S. J. (2007). Student Organizations as Venues for Black Identity

Expression and Development among African American Male Student Leaders.

Journal of College Student Development, 48(2), 127–144.

https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2007.0012

Hausmann, L. R., Ye, F., Schofield, J. W., & Woods, R. L. (2009). Sense of belonging

and persistence in White and African American first-year students. *Research in*

Higher Education, 50(7), 649–669. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-009-9137-8

Huang, Y.-R. & Chang, S.-M. (2004). Academic and Cocurricular Involvement: Their

Relationship and the Best Combinations for Student Growth. *Journal of College*

Student Development, 45(4), 391–406. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2004.0049

Kellom. (2004). *Developing effective programs and services for college men*. Jossey-

    Bass.

Malette, N. & Ismailzai, E. (2020). Building Bridges to Better Bonds? Bridging and

    Bonding Capital Development Through On-Campus Club Participation among

    International and Domestic Students. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*

    (1975), 50(4), 72–86. https://doi.org/10.47678/cjhe.vi0.188817

Martin, L. M. (2000). The relationship of college experiences to psychosocial outcomes

    in students. *Journal of College Student Development, 41*, 294–303.

McCannon, M. & Bennett, P. (1996). Choosing to Participate or Not: A Study of College

    Students' Involvement in Student Organizations. *College Student Journal, 30*(3),

    312–315.

Mitchell, S. L., & Dell, D. M. (1992). The relationship between students' racial identity

    attitude and participation in campus organizations. *Journal of College Student*

    Development, 33, 39-43.

Moore, Lovell, C. D., McGann, T., & Wyrick, J. (1998). Why Involvement Matters: A

    Review of Research on Student Involvement in the Collegiate Setting. *The*

    College Student Affairs Journal, 17(2), 4–17.

Ortiz, A. M., & Santos, S. J. (2009). *Ethnicity in college: Advancing theory and*

    improving on diversity practices on campus. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus.

Pittaway, Gazzard, J., Shore, A., & Williamson, T. (2015). Student clubs: experiences in

    entrepreneurial learning. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, *27*(3-4),

    127–153. https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2015.1014865

Pryor, J. H., Hurtado, S., Saenz, V. B., Korn, J. S., Santos, J. L., & Korn,W. S. (2006).

    The American freshman: National norms for fall 2006. Los Angeles, CA: Higher

    Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles.

Ryan, R. M. & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of

    Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being. *The American*

    Psychologist, 55(1), 68–78. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68

Sax, L. J. (2008). *The gender gap in college: Maximizing the developmental potential of*

    women and men. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Saylor, E. S., & Aries, E. (1999). Ethnic identity and change in social context. *Journal of*

    Social Psychology, 139(5), 549–566.

Sidanius, J., Van Laar, C., Levin, S., & Sinclair, S. (2004). Ethnic enclaves and the

    dynamics of social identity on the college campus: The good, the bad, and the

    ugly. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 87*(1), 96–110.

    https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.87.1.96

Sidanius, J., Levin, S., Van Laar, C., & Sears, D. O. (2008). *The diversity challenge:*

    Social identity and intergroup relations on the college campus. New York:

    Russell Sage.

Solomon, D., Watson, M., Battistich, V., Schaps, E., & Delucchi, K. (1996). Creating

    Classrooms that Students Experience as Communities. *American Journal of*

    Community Psychology, 24(6), 719–748. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02511032

Stoecker, J., Pascarella, E., & Wolfe, L. (1988). Persistence in higher education: A nine-

    year test of a theoretical model. *Journal of College Student Development, 29*, 196-

    209.

Surtees, V., & Balyasnikova, N. (2016). Culture clubs in Canadian Higher Education: Examining membership diversity. *Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education*, *7*(1).

Taylor, C. M., & Howard-Hamilton, M. F. (1995). Student Involvement and Racial Identity Attitudes among African American Males. *Journal of College Student Development*, *36*, 330-336.

Willms, J. D. (2003). *Student Engagement at School: a Sense of Belonging and Participation Results from PISA 2000*. OECD.

Wilson. (2007). The New Gender Divide. *The Chronicle of Higher Education, 53*(21), A.36–.

Valentin, I. (1997). *Title IX: A Brief History* [Electronic version]. Retrieved from http://www2.edc.org/WomensEquity/pdffiles/t9digest.pdf

Yeh, L., & Edwards, V. (2017). A narrative inquiry into the identity formation of Chinese doctoral students in relation to study abroad. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 20*(6), 865–876. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2017.1294570