2017

An Analysis of the Impact of Hall Council on the Acquisition of Transferable Skills

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Eastern Illinois University

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An Analysis of the Impact of Hall Council on the Acquisition

of Transferable Skills

(TITLE)

BY

Madeline Smart

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Masters of Science in College Student Affairs

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2017

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An Analysis of the Impact of Hall Council Executive Board Experience on the
Acquisition of Transferable Skills

Eastern Illinois University

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between hall council executive board experience and the acquisition of transferable skills. The researcher hypothesized that hall council members would acquire transferable skills through their involvement in hall council and that men and women would differ in the acquisition of transferable skills. A quantitative study was conducted that surveyed hall council members who attended a mid-sized, Midwestern, 4-year public institution from 2005-2015. The researcher used a Hall Council Involvement Questionnaire and Learning Outcomes Assessment to determine if involvement in hall council led to the acquisition of transferable skills. Out of the 141 surveys completed, 92 were able to be used for analysis. Correlational analysis found that there was not a relationship between hall council executive board experience and the acquisition of transferable skills. However, there was a significant difference in the acquisition of transferable skills between male and female hall council executive board members. Implications for future research and professional application are discussed.
DEDICATION

This thesis could not have been completed without my motivation dream team. This thesis, in its entirety, is owed to them. To the love of my life, Michael Jarmola.

Thank you for always pushing me to be better. Thank you for being flexible- for the late night phone calls that would get cut short so I could work on my thesis, for the homework session at the Jac where you read a book and I typed away. Thank you for actually caring about my work- I vented about it, cried about it and celebrated it and you were right there with me. I cannot thank you enough for that.

To my dad, Jon Smart. Every phone call we had would include the question “How is your thesis coming?” in some variation. You always kept me in check and without you constantly telling me to “get it done already” I do not know if it would have gotten done. The coach in you came out in full force as you would encourage me, challenge me and drive me a little bit nuts. Thank you for having my back since day one.

And lastly, to Julia Awalt. You are my EIU mom. You were always willing to lend an ear and listen to my stories. You helped me feel constantly connected to Eastern and I have felt valued by you from the first time I met you. Thank you for always asking me “How’s that thesis coming?” and texting me to make sure I finished a chapter. You held me accountable and it means a lot to know that you would take time out of our life for me and this project.

These cheerleaders got me through it- without them this thesis would just be words on a page. But, because of them it is so much more.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I could write another book just about the people that have made this graduate school journey possible. But to save time, and thesis paper, I’ll keep it short. To my incredible family, thank you! Mom, Dad and Claire- I could not have finished graduate school without your continuous love and support. Mom, thank you for always answering the phone even if I called 8 times a day. Dad, thank you for making sure Mom had her phone when she was upstairs watching TV. Claire, thank you for the random texts, the cute posts and the general love you show me everyday.

To my thesis committee- thank you for putting me to work. You challenged me every step of the way and I am grateful for that. A thesis is not easy, but you were there, each supporting me in your own way. Thank you for giving me the autonomy I needed to succeed, but also making sure that I did it the right way. This book is as much mine as it is yours.

To my cohort- I cannot imagine graduate school without each and every one of you. You made going to class enjoyable. You made library work and homework something to look forward to because I got to do it with you. We laughed, we cried, we became comfortable being uncomfortable and we finished! I am so proud to have been a part of each of your journeys. I look forward to the next 50 years and seeing where time takes each of you.

To Laura and Cayla- my girls. Thank you for letting me cry on your living room floors. For letting me laugh so hard I could not breath and for always being down for a girl’s night. The support and love the two of you gave me was and continues to be
unconditional. I know that our friendships with withstand the test of time and for that I am forever grateful. EIU brought us together but our bonds are forever.

To Booth Library, Jackson Avenue Café and County Market, thank you for the late night hours, the reliable outlets, the caffeine and the space to do what I needed to do!

Lastly, thank you to Michael. You are my rock. You keep me sane and bring me back down to earth when I am having a Maddie moment. We have spent the last two years hours apart but I knew you had my back the entire time. Thank you for loving me regardless of my insane schedule, my love of podcasts and the fact that I never wanted to go workout with you. If I hadn’t had your support, I would not have been able to finish this program. You got me through. Now, its onto our next adventure!
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In 2015, the *Washington Post* published an article criticizing colleges and universities for graduating students who were unprepared and ill equipped for the working world (Selingo, 2015). Selingo (2015) cited two surveys conducted by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) which stated that while graduates felt prepared for the working world, employers felt the opposite and indicated that recent college graduates had not gained the skills necessary to succeed in the workforce (AACU, 2015). In recent years, college students have been trained to “ace” the test, follow the syllabus and do what universities tell them (AACU, 2015). They are not trained to make quick decisions, communicate effectively or work towards a bigger goal (AACU, 2015). Employers have become frustrated that college graduates lack the skills needed to succeed (Robles, 2012). Employers want to know that their employees will be respectful, punctual, motivated and confident in their decisions (Finch, Hamilton, Baldwin & Zehner, 2013; Kinash et al., 2015; Robles, 2012).

In light of these concerns, universities need to focus on equipping their students with the transferable skills needed to succeed post-graduation. Bridges (1993) defined transferable skills as an aptitude and knowledge acquired through personal experience such as schooling, jobs, classes, hobbies, sports etc. These skills include any talent developed and able to be used in future employment (Bridges, 1993). These transferable skills are what universities need to be instilling in their students.

One way universities can enhance the acquisition of transferable skills is to get students engaged in activities outside of the classroom. Students who are involved in
extracurricular activities, that is, activities outside of the classroom and the structured
learning environment, experience higher levels of satisfaction with their university
experience and are more likely to be retained for a second year (Arboleda, Wang, Shelley
& Whalen, 2003; Thompson, 2006). Likewise, students who are involved in
extracurricular activities are more likely to acquire transferable skills than non-involved
students and are thus more likely to find employment (Tchibozo, 2007; Robles, 2012).

One way for students to get involved is to become a part of hall council. Hall
council is a type of student governing body that operates within on-campus housing at a
university or college (Tucker, 2006). According to the mission statement of National
Association of College and University Residence Halls Inc. (NACURH), the goal of hall
council is to empower, motivate and equip students with skills and resources for them to
excel and positively impact their campus communities (NACURH, 2015). NACURH’s
goal is to educate leaders who are serving in residence halls across the nation. What
NACURH seeks to do is something that all student affairs professionals should seek to
do: aid their students in acquiring transferable skills that they will be able to use later in
life.

Hall council organizations allow students to take ownership over their living
space. These organizations encourage the acquisition of leadership skills, time
management skills and confidence (Finch et al., 2013). Students who are involved in hall
council organizations are more likely than others to acquire transferable skills early on in
their college career (Finch et al., 2013). Students involved in hall council are also more
likely to comprehend the skills they have acquired and be able to apply them in different
settings (Finch et al., 2013).
At the institution where the study was conducted, hall council is an integral part of the campus culture. All students living in the residence halls are encouraged to join hall council as a way to get to know other students as well as acquire new sets of skills. Hall councils at the institution plan programs, advocate for social justice issues, and work with the department of housing to ensure that student needs are being met. Students who were involved in hall council are invested in the success of their hall and often feel a sense of pride for their hall. The students who get involved in hall council often go on to be orientation leaders, resident assistants or leaders in the National Residence Hall Honorary (NRHH) or the Residence Hall Association (RHA). These involved students graduate with a skill set that may exceed their uninvolved counterparts. This makes them more prepared candidates when they enter the work force. The skill set that is developed through involvement in hall council is a skill set that employers are seeking. Thus, it should be the desire of all hall councils to equip their leaders with transferable skills and it should be the desire of the students to recognize those skills and market them accordingly.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to determine if involvement in hall council leads to the acquisition of transferable skills. This was done through an examination of the perceptions of individuals who were involved in hall council executive board at the time of data collection and over the ten years immediately preceding data collection. At the institution where the study took place, there is an emphasis on student involvement. The institution has set forth a residential curriculum that focuses on “intentional interactions between students and the various campus resources available to aid in their success”
The residential curriculum seeks to promote meaningful interactions between students and staff at the institution, assist students in becoming involved with campus life, encourage engagement within the campus and local community, and increase student satisfaction and retention. The institution seeks to do this through well trained institutional staff and a well-developed hall council program. It is for this reason that it became important to examine the relationship that hall council involvement has with the acquisition of transferable skills. The researcher wanted to know whether or not the residential curriculum meets the goals outlined in its purpose, and if it is, promote it as a way to encourage students to live on-campus.

Assuming a positive relationship, Student Affairs professionals at this institution and others will be able encourage students to get involved in hall council as a means of acquiring skills valued by employers. Likewise, Student Affairs professionals will be able to develop learning outcomes that assist hall council executive board members in their skill acquisition. In order to examine the relationship between hall council executive board member involvement and the acquisition of transferable skills, the researcher used the Hall Council Involvement Questionnaire (HCIQ) developed by the researcher and a modified Learning Outcomes Assessment (LOA) developed by McCluskey-Titus (2003).

Research Questions

The researcher examined the relationship between hall council executive board level of involvement and the acquisition of transferable skills. The following research questions will be utilized for the purposes of this research.

RQ1. Does involvement in hall council have an effect on the acquisition of transferable skills?
RQ2. Is there a relationship between level of involvement in hall council executive board and the acquisition of transferable skills?

RQ3. Is there a difference between male and female hall council executive board members' acquisition of transferable skills?

Hypotheses

When looking at the purpose of this study, it was important to formulate hypothesis that would allow the researcher to effectively analyze results. The following hypotheses, correspond numerically to the research questions.

Ha1: Involvement in hall council has an effect on the acquisition of transferable skills.

Ho1: Involvement in hall council has no effect on the acquisition of transferable skills.

Ha2: There is a relationship between hall council executive board level of involvement and the acquisition of transferable skills.

Ho2: There is no relationship between hall council executive board level of involvement and the acquisition of transferable skills.

Ha3: There is a difference between male and female hall council leaders acquisition of transferable skills.

Ho3: There is no difference between male and female hall council leaders acquisition of transferable skills.

Significance of the Study

Employers are looking for college graduates to leave their institutions with a set of skills that will allow them to be successful in the corporate world (Selingo, 2015;
AACU, 2015). Employers want students who are able to do the job but also have the soft skills necessary to succeed in the workplace (Robles, 2012). Thus, it is in the students’ best interest to acquire a wide variety of transferable skills before graduating from their institution. The acquisition of transferable skills was shown to come out of involvement in extracurricular activities (van der Meer, Jansen, & Torenbeek, 2010). This was also true of hall council involvement. Students who participated in hall council are likely to acquire skills that will assist them in their future careers (Levine, 1994). This study sought to determine what skills students acquired through their involvement in hall council. It allowed the researcher to see if the skills acquired by hall council leaders are the skills that employers desire. Additionally, by identifying a set of skills students who are engaged acquire, student affairs professionals were better able promote involvement within student organizations.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

In doing this type of quantitative research, this study was subject to a certain degree of error. This study was conducted using hall council executive board members from 2005 to the present. All students and graduates had experienced hall council at the same institution and were involved in a similar way. Thus the outcomes had limited generalizability when it came to the student acquisition of transferable skills based on hall council involvement as a whole. Furthermore, the students who were surveyed were for the most part very similar. The range of involvement was minimal meaning that the sample was homogenous. Correlational studies by their nature require some level of variability which was not entirely present in this study. This study assumed that hall council at the institution of interest had not changed over the course of ten years. This
assumption may have skewed the data as different hall councils have had different advisors at different times. This was not accounted for as the focus was not on advisor impact, though it may be present.

Additionally, this study limited the participants to only hall council members. Previous research indicated that several types of involvement could lead to the acquisition of transferable skills. Thus limiting it to hall council executive boards, while good for the research at hand, limits the ability to expressly say these skills were acquired through hall council. The experience of hall council leaders may have differed from the experience of leaders in other student government organizations on the same campus. This study took place at a predominately white institution in the rural Midwest and as such may not have expressed the experience of students at a large, public institutions or other universities of varying size.

Definition of Terms

In order to conduct the research presented, it was important to have clear definitions so that the researcher would be able to accurately analyze any results. The following terms were important in considering the results of the researcher presented in chapter 4.

Extracurricular involvement. Activities that do not fall within the scope of a regular curriculum: specifically, of or relating to official or semi officially approved and usually organized student activities connected with the school and carrying no academic credit (Knight, 2004).

Hall council. A housing student governing body that operates within on-campus housing at a university or college (Tucker, 2006).
Transferrable skills. An aptitude and knowledge acquired through personal experience such as schooling, jobs, classes, hobbies, sports etc. Any talent developed and able to be used in future employment (Bridges, 1993).

Summary

This study sought to determine whether or not students who participated in residence hall councils are acquiring skills that will later aid them in their transition to the workforce. These skills were labeled as transferable skills. Determining if hall council leaders acquired transferable skills allowed the research to assess the residential curriculum that is present at the institution of interest. The limitations placed on this study include location and sample size and a lack of generalizability.
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This chapter explored the existing research on topics of extracurricular activities, hall council, and transferable skills. The researcher reviewed several notable theories on involvement and engagement, how involvement in extracurricular activities impacts college students, how hall council involvement impacts college students and the acquisition of transferable skills in order to develop a context for the study.

Theoretical Framework

University related research over the last several decades has focused on a multitude of issues (Evans, 2010). Researchers have sought to determine how college students develop during their time at an institution and what that developmental process looks like (Evans, 2010). Researchers have found that the rate at which a student develops can be impacted by a variety of factors (Evans, 2010). The background from which a student comes plays a role in their development, as does their coursework and involvement in activities that take place outside of the classroom. Several researchers have focused their work on determining why students chose to participate in extracurricular activities—extracurricular activities being defined as an involvement outside of the classroom (Astin, 1984; Kuh, 2006; Kuh, 2009). When examining college students, it has been important to determine if and how extracurricular involvement impacts student’s development. When looking at the collegiate setting and involvement in college, two theories stand out: Astin’s (1984) theory of student involvement and Kuh’s (2009) theory of student engagement. Astin (1984) proposed a theory of college student development that focused on involvement. Later, Kuh (2009) used Astin’s (1984)
theory of involvement to look at student engagement. Both theories apply to the study as engagement and involvement often go hand in hand.

Astin (1984) defined involvement as the amount of physical and psychological energy students devote to the academic experience. The theory of involvement focused on student’s actions and behaviors instead of on their intrinsic motivations or everyday thoughts. It was stated that to provide a true college experience, universities need to make students active in the learning process and allow them to engage with material in a variety of ways (Astin, 1984). The focus of Astin’s research was on the environmental aspects of the student experiences that led to a student’s persistence in college. Astin (1984) looked at environmental factors that were effecting the student’s retention as well as their perceived satisfaction with the university. What Astin found was that students who were involved in activities outside of the classroom were more likely to be retained and persist to graduation. Astin (1984) looked at a variety of involvements outside of the realm of the classroom. It was determined that living on-campus was one of the most positive factors in a student’s decision to remain enrolled at the university. Astin (1984) also found that being involved in Greek life increased student retention as did participation in intercollegiate athletics. Interestingly enough, Astin (1984) also found that having a part-time job affected retention positively. Students who held on-campus jobs felt more connected to the university due to spending an increased amount of time on-campus and conversely remained at the university until graduation.

After examining student involvement on a variety of levels, Astin (1984) was able to determine that students who were involved interact more freely with their peers and in general have a more positive collegiate experience. Astin (1984) also formulated that
student time is a resource and as such should be valued by college professionals (Astin, 1984). Fundamentally the theory of involvement encourages students to get involved early as a way to increase their motivation to complete their degree. Engagement in one area, be it academics, athletics or student groups, will not only support a student in persisting to graduation, but may lead to involvement in other collegiate activities (Kuh 2009).

Kuh (2009) developed his theory of student engagement on the idea that involvement in one area relates to involvement in others, “Student engagement represents both the time and energy students invest in educationally purposeful activities and the effort institutions devote to using effective educational practices,” (Kuh, 2009, p. 541). It was implied that effective educational interventions are those that happen both inside and outside the classroom (Kuh, 2009). The measures taken inside the classroom tend to affect students with lower level academic performance at the start of college (Kuh, 2009). However, as the academic performance gap narrows, it is the interventions outside of the classroom that create more well-rounded students (Kuh, 2009). Kuh (2009) stated that various college experiences should be taken into account when looking at the engagement of students. The experiences that should be considered included living on-campus in university provided facilities, working on-campus, volunteering in the campus community, and getting involved in student organizations. The experiences that Kuh (2009) considered crucial in the collegiate experience are mirror images of the experiences that Astin (1984) identified as factors leading to student satisfaction with the university and student retention and graduation rates.
Considering the theories of both Astin (1984) and Kuh (2009), it can be determined that all of the components of the collegiate experience affect student’s engagement and thus affect the time and energy they devote to their experience. Considering that, it is crucial that universities seek to provide opportunities for students to learn and grow in a variety of different ways. While there are many ways for students to get engaged and involved, the focus of this research is student involvement in extracurricular activities.

**Extracurricular Involvement**

Engagement theory has shown that students who are engaged in their campus community saw tangible outcomes (Kuh, 2008). The same can be said for students involved in extracurricular activities. Students who participate in extracurricular activities during their collegiate experience saw increased levels of satisfaction with their university, higher rates of retention, and tangible transferable skills (Kuh, 2009).

**Increased satisfaction.** Research has found that students who are involved in extracurricular activities are more likely to be satisfied with the undergraduate experience (Thompson, 2006). Interactions with faculty, staff and involvement in student organizations has been shown to increase institutional enjoyment (Thompson, 2006). Additionally, it has been found that students who are involved in extracurricular activities feel as though they are more connected to their college campus (Arboleda, Wang, Shelley & Whalen, 2003). Students felt as though their colleges have presented them with more opportunities for growth and development through their extracurricular activities. This led to increased satisfaction because they did not feel limited in the choices that they could make (Arboleda, Wang, Shelley & Whalen, 2003).
Extracurricular involvement also led to increased connectedness within the campus community. Increased connectedness, in turn, led to higher levels of satisfaction (Coates, 2005). Students who were interacting with the campus community felt a sense of pride towards their university and tended to think their quality of education was higher than that of their peers at other institutions (Coates, 2005). Their engagement within the campus community led to increased satisfaction and then to higher retention rates.

Retention rates. It has been found that being involved on a college campus increases the likelihood of a first year student staying on-campus for a second year (Kraus, 2008). Students who were actively engaged in extracurricular activities were more likely to seek out help when they are struggling mentally or academically (Fredericks & Eccles, 2006). When students used the resources, like the counseling center or academic advising center, they were more likely to feel supported by their university and thus stay at the institution (Fredericks & Eccles, 2006; Gaier, 2005). Extracurricular involvement also created emotional connections to an institution. Students who felt attached to their institution were more likely to be retained (Kraus, 2008). Lastly, students who were involved tended to believe that they were getting something from their institution, which made their desire to stay stronger (Kraus, 2008).

Gender differences. Research has found that extracurricular involvement can vary based on gender. It has been found that men and women operate under a different set of rules when it comes to social capital and thus get involved in different ways (White, & Gager, 2007). There is also a difference in the types of activities men and women prefer to participate in. Men are more likely to be involved in sports and athletic activities whereas females are more likely to be involved with dance and choral music.
Alternatively, there seems to be no difference in involvement within academic clubs. It has been found that women were more involved in activities that they are directed to whereas men were given more choice in their activities (Newman, et al., 2007, Boeren, 2011).

Overall though, it has been shown that females are more involved than males (Bucknavage, & Worrell, 2005). This is true at both the high school and collegiate level (Newman, et al. (2007). Additionally, women were more likely to continue their involvement where as men were more likely to stop their involvement over the course of time (Newman, et al., 2007).

Transferable skills. It has been found that students who were involved in extracurricular activities gained more transferable skills than their non-involved counterparts (Tchibozo, 2007). Students who were actively engaged outside of the classroom saw positive outcomes in terms of skill acquisition. Involved students tended to take on more leadership roles as well as participate in more than one organization (Thompson, 2006). Additionally, students involved in extra-curricular activites have noted a better sense of time management and better organizational skills (van der Meer, Jansen & Torenbeek, 2010). These skills become crucial when it comes to post graduate employment.

Hall Council Involvement

Early intervention is imperative in developing well-rounded students (Kuh, 2001). Thus to get students engaged right away, student affairs professionals need to be active in providing opportunities for students during the first few weeks of the fall semester. For
many students, this engagement may happen in the classrooms. It may also mean getting involved outside the classroom, through student organizations, recreational sports, or Greek organizations. For campuses with a first year residency requirement, getting involved in their residence halls is a great first step and being involved in hall government initiates their engagement with the campus community.

Benefits of living on-campus. There are many benefits to living on-campus during a student’s tenure at an institution. Studies have found that students who live in the residence halls are more likely to persist to graduation and graduate at significantly higher rates than students who were lacking the residential experience (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993; Li, Sheely, & Whalen, 2005). It was also found that students who live in residence halls were more satisfied overall with their college experience than those who lived off campus (Blimling, 1993; Li, Sheely, & Whalen, 2005). Students who lived in residence halls during their time on-campus also identified socialization as one of the benefits. Students who lived on-campus felt like they had an increased ability to socially interact with other students on a more personal level. They also disclosed that living on-campus helped them get involved in additional campus activities (Li, Sheeley, & Whalen, 2005). Lastly, students who lived in on-campus housing feel as though they have more leadership opportunities than their off-campus counterparts (Li, Sheely, & Whalen, 2005). They not only listed hall council as a place where they were able to get involved, but also listed residence halls as the way they found out about other leadership opportunities across campus.

Hall council. Residence hall government, also known as hall council, has been defined as the governing body that operates within an on-campus housing facility at a
The nature of hall council is unique in that it not only encompasses the involvement of students, but also provides them with leadership roles and the power to make decisions (Tucker, 2006). Levine (1994) found that there are four areas that students become proficient in when they are part of a hall government. These areas include learning outside of the classroom, interpersonal relationship development, respect for different cultures and respect for student differences. These four areas that Levine (1994) identified were further supported by research done by Li, Sheely, & Whalen (2005) that stated residence hall involvement increased a student’s ability to navigate interpersonal relationships, work with a team and communicate effectively. The skill areas students are developing during the time they are involved with hall council can then be applied in other academic or extracurricular involvements (Levine, 1994; Faerman, 2009).

In addition to the four areas of competency that Levine (1994) identified, there are many real life, tangible skills that students acquire through their involvement in hall council. It has been found that students who engage in their residence hall community find that they have increased organizational skills, administrative skills, and a better understanding of time management (Rosch & Laurie, 2011). Additional benefits included reflection skills, problem solving and an increased ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds (Rosch & Laure, 2011; Warner & Noftsinger, 1993; Levine, 1994). These skills are imperative when it comes to post-graduate life. Many companies have expressed the desire for transferable skills and students are developing said skills through their involvement in hall council.
Transferable Skills

Bridges (1993) defined transferable skills as knowledge or talents that are acquired and can be developed and employed in multiple settings. The following section examines transferable skills and the employment of transferable skills by college graduates.

Definitions. Based on research that has been done on the topic of transferable skills, there seem to be two distinct ways to parse it: transferable skills and soft skills. The first definition that could apply to this research is the definition of transferable skills. Bridges (1993) stated that transferable skills are those that can be applied across a variety of social contexts and employment settings. The skills include interpersonal communication, collaborative group working skills, management skills, and time management skills. These skills allow students to work effectively with coworkers. They enable students to become creative problem solvers and help them understand a wide variety of social situations. These skills are higher order thinking skills in that they take longer to develop. College age students acquire these skills throughout their time at an institution but also through their first jobs after graduation. The more honed the skills are, the easier they are to apply (Bridges, 1993).

The second definition considered was the definition of soft skills. Clark, Marsden, Whyatt, Thompson and Walker (2015) defined soft skills as those that relate to a person’s character but are used in the working environment. Soft skills include respect, integrity, self-awareness, self-confidence, and courtesy (Clark et al., 2015; Robles, 2012). These soft skills are imperative when it comes to interpersonal business relationships and necessary for entry-level professionals (Clark et al., 2015). For the purposes of this
research both the soft skills definition and the transferable skills definition will be utilized.

**Employers.** The concept of transferable skills has become critical because employers have stated that new employees must not only understand the job, but also must be able to work in a professional environment (Kantane et al, 2015; AACU, 2015). Employers value professionals who can perform the job but also have a significant amount of general knowledge and skills (Kantane et al., 2015). Research has been conducted to determine what skills employers find valuable and the results echoed the definitions of transferable skills and soft skills.

For the most part, the transferable skills that employers desire are similar across the board. The skills employers want are the same whether it’s in a business field, a medical field or a customer service field. Robles (2012) found that, in general, employers want their new employees to exhibit integrity above all else. Employers also valued courtesy and respect (Robles, 2012). Robles (2012) research supports the work done by Kemp and Seagraves (1995) who found that excellent interpersonal skills were necessary for new employees. Additional skills that employers require of their new employees were excellent written and verbal communication, problem solving and self-management (Kemp, & Seagraves, 1995; Bennet, 2002). Research also found that computer skills, driving skills and the ability cooperate, lead and control a team were desirable (Kantane et al, 2015; McMurray, Dutton, McQuiad, & Richard, 2016). Research supports the idea that skills desired by employers fall into the categories of soft skills and transferable skills which makes the acquisition of them that much more important.
**Skill development.** The last point to consider in terms of transferable skills is where they are best acquired—inside the classroom or outside of the classroom or both. Tchibozo (2007) found that students who were involved in extracurricular activities outside the classroom during their undergraduate experience were more likely to have a successful transition process to the work world. Graduates who were involved during undergrad were more likely to get better jobs faster than their counterparts who had not been involved (Tchibozo, 2007). Students who were involved in leadership organizations and civic engagement organizations were more likely to get a higher first salary than students who were not involved in campus activities (Tchibozo, 2007).

That being said, Burke, Jones and Doherty (2005) found that students were not able to identify the skills they acquired through their extracurricular involvement. However, students were able to identify certain skills they acquired while in the classroom. Chief among the skills acquired in classrooms was group work. It was determined that while students may not enjoy group work, they were able to recognize the benefits of it in acquiring personal transferable skills (Shah, 2013; Humphreys, Greenan, & McIlveen, 1997). The skill of being able to work in a group is imperative in terms of collaboration and communication skills (Shah, 2013). Other transferable skills that graduates identified as being gained in the classroom include intergroup understanding, critical thinking skills, self-confidence and intercultural competence (Denson, & Zhang, 2010).

The research done by Burke et al. (2005) emphasized the need for the current study. Students who may have acquired transferable skills inside or outside of the classroom are having a hard time articulating it. This led employers to believe that
students were not well suited for the position (Burke, Jones, & Doherty, 2005). Research supports that students are acquiring skills that employers desire through their extracurricular involvement (Kemp, & Seagraves, 1995; Bennet, 2002; Tchibozo, 2007; Robles, 2012). The concern is that students are not aware of these skills or are not able to explicitly identify them to future employers.

Summary

According to Astin (1984) and Kuh (2009), involvement and engagement are crucial in terms of college student’s development. Students who are engaged in their campus community and are involved in extracurricular activities see higher retention rates and increased levels of satisfaction (Thompson, 2006; Fredericks, & Eccles, 2006; Gaier, 2005). Hall council is one way to get involved at the institution being studied. Residents who are involved in hall council have acquired key transferable skills that help them throughout the duration of their time in college (Levine, 1994). These transferable skills- defined by said skills ability to be adapted under multiple contexts, help students once they graduate. This study sought to determine if students are acquiring transferable skills as the research suggests and if level of involvement effected said transferable skill acquisition.
CHAPTER III

Methods

This chapter outlines the participants of the study, the site at which the research took place, the instruments used in the research, data collection methods, treatment of data and the data analysis performed in this study.

Design of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine if involvement in hall council led to the acquisition of transferable skills. This was done through an examination of the individual’s perception who were involved in hall council executive board at the time of data collection and the ten years immediately preceding data collection. The researcher investigated the relationship between hall council level of involvement and the acquisition of transferable skills. The researcher also investigated the gender differences in acquisition of transferable skills through extracurricular involvement.

Participants

There was a total of 141 respondents to the survey. Incomplete surveys and unusable data was removed. With a 65% completion rate, this left 92 participants who took the survey in full whose results were used to determine whether or not students involved in hall council acquired transferable skills and whether or not there was a difference in the development of transferable skills based on gender. The demographics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Of the survey participants, 66 (71.7%) were female and 26 (28.3%) were male. Seventy-nine (85.9%) respondents identified as White, 6 (6.5%) identified as Black, 1 (1.1%) identified as Asian, 5 (5.4%) identified as Hispanic or Latino and 1 (1.1%)
participant identified as other. The average age of participants was 24.7 ($SD=4.45$) years old with a range of 22 years. Overall, participants indicated that they were very involved (78.3%) had been involved for more than 2 semesters (59.8%).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Information of Participants Length and Perceived Level of Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More and 2 semesters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived level of involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very involved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Site

The research took place at a rural, mid-sized, public institution with approximately 8,500 enrolled students located in the Midwest region of the United States. At the time of the survey the institution consisted of 96% in-state students and 4% out-of-state students. Approximately 59% of the student population identified as female and 41% identified as male. The student population was 68% white. There were 50 undergraduate degree programs, 29 graduate degree programs and 10 certifications. The institution of interest had a one year live on requirement meaning that students must reside in an on-campus residence hall for at least one year. The hall council sizes varied from residence hall to residence hall and ranged from 5% of the building population to 50% of the building population.
**Instruments**

This study used two instruments. The first was the hall council involvement questionnaire and the second was the Learning Outcomes Assessment. There was also a demographics section present at the beginning of the survey (Appendix A) as well as an informed consent (Appendix E).

**Hall Council Involvement Questionnaire (HCIQ).** The HCIQ was an instrument that was developed by the researcher for the purposes of this study (Appendix B). The researcher designed the instrument to focus on a variety of hall council experiences typical of a hall council executive board member. The instrument asked a total of three questions. The first question asked participants to indicate their length of involvement in terms of semesters. The second question asked them to rate their level of involvement. This question was measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (not involved in hall council at all) to 4 (very involved in hall council). Question 3 was a multiple-selection question where participants were asked to choose from a variety of activities and indicate which ones they participated in while serving as an executive board member on hall council. The activities included were: attended executive board meetings; attended general body meetings; attended hall council programs; planning hall council programs; chaired a committee; interacted with hall council members outside of hall council time; met regularly with hall council advisor; attended RHA meetings; assisted in the publicity of programs; and encouraged others to get involved in hall council. The purpose of question three was to determine the actual level of involvement of executive board members. The assumptions were that the more activities they were involved in, the more involved they were and thus, the more transferable skills they would gain. Question
three differed from question two in that two was a perceived level of involvement where three was a concrete definition of things they were involved in. The instrument was developed for the purpose of this study and was not tested for reliability as it was more indicative of demographics and used to separate students into groups and subgroups.

**Learning Outcomes Assessment (LOA).** The LOA was developed by McCluskey-Titus (2003) and was modified for the purposes of this study (Appendix C). The modification was minimal and only occurred in the title of the instrument and the initial question. The LOA seeks to determine what skills students acquired during their experience in hall council. There were 25 skills that were measured through this instrument. They included skills such as leadership, substantive knowledge, wisdom, adaptability, spiritual interest, consumer efficiency and health. Each skills was rated on a Likert scale from 0-4, a score of a 0 indicated that hall council had no impact on their acquisition of transferable skills and a score of a 4 indicated that hall council had a strong positive impact on their development of transferable skills. There was a section in the original instrument where participants could add an “other” and write in a skill they felt that they acquired. For the purpose of this study, the “other” option was removed. In order to effectively measure the acquisition of skills through hall council, scores for all skills were summed to create a total transferable skill score. The total transferable skill score had a possible range of 0 – 100. This score was used to determine the acquisition of transferable skills. A lower score indicated that transferable skills were not acquired through hall council whereas a higher score meant that participants acquired transferable skills through their involvement. This instrument had been previously assessed for
reliability using the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient (.70) and the test-retest method at three months.

**Data Collection**

Participants were identified using a database of all hall council executive board members from 2003 to the present. Students listed on this database were involved in hall council for at least one semester and were either current students or recent graduates. The survey was administered electronically.

The first distribution of the survey took place on a social media site. The link to the survey was posted with a note saying that a graduate student from the institution was looking for information on students involved in hall council and encouraged all followers to take the survey. In the post with the survey link there was information about the survey as well as an incentive to encourage people to take the survey. This post and subsequent link was posted twice, both times by the institution. An email containing a link to the survey was sent to 351 students or former students who had participated in hall council. The email contained a link to the survey as well as a brief explanation about the reasons behind the survey and the incentive (Appendix D). The survey was closed after four weeks. The survey was opened in the middle of September and closed in the middle of October. There were 141 participants who attempted the survey, 92 of which completed the survey in its entirety for a 65% completion rate. After all results were collected the data was then imported into an Excel document and then analyzed though Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).
Data Analysis

Once the data was in Excel, it was prepared for analysis. In order to do this, participants who failed to complete all questions on the instruments were removed from further analysis. The data was then imported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) system and each question was properly labeled. Descriptive statistics were conducted to gain insight into the demographic information of the participants. Once demographic data was analyzed, the researcher with the help of a thesis committee member conducted several tests to analyze the results.

Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were run for each of the transferable skills that could have been acquired by each participant. These transferable skills were listed in the Learning Outcomes Assessment tool. The scores were sorted into descending order for analysis of which skills students had acquired and which they had not. This allowed the researcher to answer research question one. Following the descriptive statistics, each of the transferable skill scores listed in the Learning Outcomes Assessment were summed together to create a total transferable skill score for each participant.

A correlational analysis was conducted to determine if there was a relationship between student's involvement in hall council executive boards and their acquisition of transferable skills. Hall council executive board involvement was measured by the indicated level of involvement in the Hall Council Involvement Questionnaire. The correlation analysis looked at the involvement score as it related to the total transferable skill score in order to determine if students were acquiring transferable skills through
their involvement. The correlation was then used to answer research question two regarding the acquisition of transferable skills.

Finally, an independent samples t-test was conducted to determine if there was a difference in hall council executive board members acquisition of transferable skills based on gender. This was done using each individual transferable skill as the sample and gender as the groups they were split into. The results of the t-test were then used to answer research questions three regarding the gender difference in the acquisition of transferable skills.

**Treatment of Data**

In order to maintain confidentiality of data several steps were taken. All data collected was kept in a secure file on the researcher’s personal computer. The researcher performed data analysis in a secure location with the help of a professional who specializes in data analysis. The data was also kept on a “cloud” device that was password protected. After the completion of the study, data will be stored for three years and then be destroyed.

**Summary**

The study utilized a quantitative approach with an online questionnaire. The research used two questionnaires- one designed specifically for this study and a second modified specifically for this study. The survey was posted on social media and emailed to past hall council executive board members using current university email accounts. Demographics of participants were identified, incentives were described and the process of data collection and analysis was discussed. Statistics and results from the survey responses will be presented in Chapter IV.
CHAPTER IV

Results

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not students who were involved in hall council executive boards acquired transferable skills. The research questions stated in chapter one were based on the notion that being involved in hall council would allow students to acquire transferable skills. The research questions sought to determine if, one, students acquired transferable skills through their involvement on hall council executive boards and two, if there was a difference in the acquisition of transferable skills based on gender. The data was collected using an online survey tool, Qualtrics. The survey was developed using a demographics questionnaire, a hall council involvement scale and a transferable skills assessment. The following presents the results of the study used to answer both research questions.

RQ #1. Does involvement in hall council have an effect on the acquisition of transferable skills?

The results of this study showed that hall council did assist in the acquisition of transferable skills. In looking at the results the researcher sought to determine if there was a difference in the type of transferable skills that hall council executive board members acquired. In order to determine this the researcher ran descriptive statistics and found that a majority of participants identified the following as skills that they had acquired: verbal skills, intellectual tolerance, creativeness, personal self-discovery, need for achievement, future orientation, adaptability and leadership (see Table 2). The mean of these scores was over a 3.5 meaning that on average participants ranked their involvement in hall council as having a positive or extremely positive impact of this skill.
The descriptive statistics also revealed that there were some skills that hall council executive board members stated were not acquired. Those skills included: Consumer Efficiency, Sound family life, Qualitative skills, and spiritual interest. A majority of the participants indicated that hall council either had a positive impact or a negative impact on their acquisition of those skills. A full list of skills and their means and standard deviations can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics for the Acquisition of Transferable Skills through Hall Council*

*Executive Board Involvement (N = 92)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transferable Skills</th>
<th>All participants</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Tolerance</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Self Discovery</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativeness</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Orientation</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Skills</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for Achievement</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Understanding</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong Learning</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>3.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values and Morals</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Productivity</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationality</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Integrity</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Well Being</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruitful Leisure</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esthetic Sensibility</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantive Knowledge</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RQ #2: Is there a relationship between level of involvement in hall council executive board and the acquisition of transferable skills?

A correlational analysis was conducted to determine if there was a relationship between student's involvement in hall council executive boards and their acquisition of transferable skills. The researcher hypothesized that there would be a relationship between hall council executive board level of involvement, as measured by their self-indicated involvement score, and the acquisition of transferable skills, as measured by the total transferable skills score. Hall council executive board level of involvement was measured by the hall council involvement questionnaire in which participants indicated their level of involvement. Results were not significant, $r (92) = .163, p = .122$. Therefore, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis, concluding there was not a relationship between hall council involvement and the acquisition of transferable skills.

RQ #3: Is there a difference between male and female hall council leaders acquisition of transferable skills?

An independent samples $t$-test was conducted to determine if there was a difference in the hall council executive board members acquisition of transferable skills based on gender. The research hypothesis was there is a difference. The null hypothesis was there is no difference.

Results suggest there was a significant difference between male and female hall council leaders and their acquisition of transferable skills, $t (90) = -2.248, p = .027$. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>2.92</th>
<th>0.80</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consumer Efficiency</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Skills</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>2.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound Family Life</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Interest</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the analysis, female hall council leaders acquire more transferable skills, as measured by the total transferable skill score, \( M = 85.78, \ SD = 8.8, \ n = 66 \) than their male counterparts \( M = 81.03, \ SD = 9.85, \ n = 26 \) (Table 2). The results of the t test confirmed the hypothesis that there was a difference in self reported skill acquisition based on gender.

Summary

The preceding analyses assisted in answering the research questions stated in chapter one. These research questions included whether or not hall council executive board members acquired transferable skills through their involvement in hall council, if there was a difference in skill acquisition based on gender and if there were certain skills that hall council assisted executive board members in acquiring over others.
CHAPTER V

Conclusion

This study looked at overall skill acquisition as well as the difference in skill acquisition between male and female hall council executive board members. Transferable skills scores were measured by combining all of the transferable skills and the ratings of their acquisition and taking an average. These skills included cognitive, affective and interpersonal skills and focused on the job skills that employers wanted graduates to have when leaving the collegiate realm. This chapter discusses the results of the study and how it related to the literature discussed in chapter II, limitations associated with the study and suggestions for student affairs professionals as well as for future research.

Discussion

Findings of this study are discussed in connection with previous research on this topic. This study provides results that support several of the findings stated in the literature review.

Overall this study provides insight into the experiences of hall council executive board members and their acquisition of the skills needed to be successful in future careers.

Transferable skills. The present study used the literature discussed in chapter II to guide its formation of the study as well as analyze results related to the acquisition of transferable skills. Focusing on the literature, it was apparent that employers want to see graduates equipped with skills that would help them in the work place. These skills included time management, communication skills, leadership skills and the ability to cooperate (Bridges, 1993; Kantane et al, 2015; McMurray, Dutton, McQuaid, & Richard, 2016). Employers wanted theses skills to be acquired inside the classroom but also valued
skills acquired outside of the classroom (Tchibozo, 2007). This study focused on skill acquisition outside of the classroom and found that students are acquiring the skills that employers want.

Employers placed high value on integrity (Robles, 2012). This study found that students who were involved in hall council executive boards felt that hall council had a very positive impact on the acquisition of intellectual integrity ($M=3.65, SD=.56$). Employers also found leadership skills to be valuable when entering the work force. This study found that hall council executive board members felt that hall council executive board membership had a very positive impact on their acquisition of leadership skills ($M=3.74, SD=.466$). Employers also valued communication skills according to multiple sources (Bridges, 1993; Kantane et al, 2015; McMurray, Dutton, McQuaide, & Richard, 2016). Students involved in hall council acquired verbal ($M=3.55, SD=.521$) skills which were defined as the ability to speak, write, comprehend and organize one’s thoughts into writing and discussion as well as some acquaintance with a second language. This indicated that involvement with hall council assists in the acquisition of communication skills. Lastly, employers valued cooperativeness and the ability to work within a team. Students involved in hall council executive boards felt that hall council had a strong positive impact on their acquisition of human understanding ($M=3.47, SD=.619$) which was defined as humane, empathetic, thoughtful, respectful, tolerant, democratic and cooperative. Similarly, they ranked high in adaptability ($M=3.59, SD=.517$) which is defined as tolerance of new ideas, acceptance of change, can cope with problems and crises, can negotiate, compromise and learns from experiences (McCluksey Titus, 2003).
All of these skills mentioned above seem to indicate that being a member of the hall council executive board assists in the acquisition of transferable skills that employers are stating they want. Students who are involved in hall council are able to acquire skills that will then help them later in life, whether it be in their education or their future careers.

**Extracurricular activity.** Previous research indicated involvement in extracurricular activities aides in the acquisition of transferable skills. An extracurricular activity is defined as an activity that does not fall within the scope of curriculum: specifically, of or relation to officially or semi officially approved and usually organized student activity connected with the school and carrying no academic credit (Knight, 2004). By its definition, hall council at the institution of research is an extracurricular activity. Students are not receiving class credit for their involvement, and it is an officially approved organization that is run by students and assisted by advisors.

Using this definition of extracurricular activity and the understanding that hall council falls under Knight’s (2004) definition, the research seems to support the literature. Being involved in hall council has a strong positive impact on the acquisition of transferable skills. Students who are involved are gaining skills that they may not normally develop through the course of their academic curriculum. While there is no definitive proof that these students have not gained these skills in a classroom setting or by participating in a different extracurricular activity, there is support that these skills have been acquired through hall council executive board involvement.

The transferable skills scores were combined in order to be analyzed in comparison to their level of involvement. While the results were statistically
insignificant, there is evidence that suggests when students perceived themselves as very involved or were determined to be very involved, they acquired transferable skills ($r = .163, p = .122$). The results may be statistically insignificant because there was not a large amount of variability among participants ($M = 84.44, SD = 9.32, range = 0-100$). Most participants indicated that they were very involved which explains why there was not a statistical difference because everyone felt as though hall council did have a positive or strong positive impact on their acquisition of transferable skills.

**Hall council.** The literature discussed in chapter II focuses on hall council as a way to get involved and succeed at the college level. Research found that students who reside in on-campus housing feel that they are better able to socialize, they are more satisfied with their overall college experience and that they feel as though they have more leadership opportunities that then their off campus counterparts (Li, Sheeley, & Whalen, 2005). This examination of hall council was supported by the study conducted here. Hall council executive board members were asked to indicate which activities they participated in on a weekly basis in regards to their hall council experience. They had 10 choices which included: attending executive board meetings, attended general body meetings, attended hall council programs, planned programs, chaired a committee, interacted with hall council members outside of hall council times, met regularly with hall council advisor, attended RGA meetings, assisted with publicity of programs and encouraged others to get involved in hall council. Looking at the activities that students could have participated in, there are several that stand out.

As previously mentioned the literature suggests that social interaction is a benefit that students gain by living on-campus. Looking at the activities that students can
participate in while serving on hall council, it seems that interacting with hall council
members outside of hall council time and encouraging others to get involved in hall
council would assist in fostering that social development. Overall, 79 participants
indicated that they interacted with hall council members outside of hall council time and
83 participants indicated that they encouraged others to get involved in hall council. This
would suggest that approximately 88% of participants where interacting with their peers
in a social manner outside of the classroom. This supports the previous research that
living in a residence hall and being involved in hall council supports the acquisition of
social skills.

The literature also suggests that living on-campus and being involved in hall
council supports the acquisition of leadership skills and affords students more leadership
opportunities (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993; Li, Sheely, & Whalen, 2005).
Looking at the activities that hall council executive board members could participate in,
chairing a committee and planning programs seem to focus especially on the acquisition
of leadership skills. The results show that of the 92 participants, 48 participants chaired a
committee. That suggests that 52% of participants had the opportunity to lead a group of
their peers and that opportunity was afforded to them by living in the residence hall.
Additionally, 85 participants indicated that they had assisted in planning a program while
being on hall council. This suggests that 92% of hall council executive board members
were able to acquire the skills needed to put on large scale events and benefit their
community. Both chairing a committee and planning a program are leadership skills that
are specific to hall council and are skills that have clearly been acquired by both living
on-campus and participating in hall council.
The research also affirmed previous research that found that overall women were more involved than men. In this study, there was a larger amount of female participants. The male participants indicated that they were not acquiring as many transferable skills as their female counterpart. This may be due to lack of male participation or because, as research has shown, females are more involved than males in activities such as student government or hall council and instead are more involved in sports related activities (Bucknavage, & Worrell, 2005; Elder, & Parker, 1987; Gadbois, & Bowker, 2007).

Limitations

During the implementation of the present study, limitations arose that inhibited the potential of significant findings of the relationship between hall council executive board membership and the acquisition of transferable skills. The first limitation was that demographics revealed that most of the participants were current students. Although the researcher reached out to alumni services, participation was low.

Another limitation was the incompletion of surveys. As stated in chapter IV, 141 people attempted the survey and moved past question one. However, only 92 people completed the survey overall. This means that only 65% of the people who attempted the survey completed it. This is a common issue in quantitative research called attrition, meaning that people start the study but are either incapable or no longer want to complete the study (Capaldi, & Patterson, 1987). Looking at the survey it seemed as though surveyors often completed the first question and then stopped when they arrived at the demographics portion. If they made it through the demographics section, they would then drop off when they saw the length of the questions that focused on the acquisition of transferable skills. This could have been remedied by making the questions more succinct...
or allowing people to select from a list of skills instead of forcing them to rate every skill on the survey.

Another limitation that this study faced was that the participants who were surveyed were too homogenous. The people who were surveyed were predominately white. There was a significant lack of racial diversity which means that the results have limited generalizability. This also indicates a potential lack of involvement of racially diverse students on hall council executive boards. There was also a sizeable gender gap. Of the 92 participants in the study almost three quarters were women. While both men and women acquired transferable skills, more women took part in the study.

The main issue facing this survey and perhaps the reason behind the insignificance of results was the lack of diversity in subjects as it related to their experience. The participants who were surveyed, in theory, had very similar experiences. Almost every participant indicated that they acquired transferable skills through their involvement in hall council executive boards. This may be because serving on an executive board is a specific group that is more likely to acquire transferable skills than a general hall council member. There was also a lack of age diversity with most of the participants either still in school at the institution or recently having graduated. This means that the participants experienced similar advising styles as well as being similar in experiences. Additionally, this survey did not look at other groups of student leaders. It only focused on hall council executive boards and not at other governing councils. These issues and the many others and their solutions will be discussed in the suggestions for future research portion.
While there were limitations present in this study, there is still support that being involved in hall council assists in the acquisition of transferable skills. There is a need for future research and a desire to see how graduates are acquiring transferable skills.

**Future Research**

Considering the findings of the present study and the research that was found on the need for college graduates to obtain transferable skills, recommendations for future research on this topic have been developed that would allow institutions, including the one studied, to better understand the importance of extracurricular involvement and the acquisition of transferable skills.

As mentioned earlier, the survey could be adapted so that participants are allowed to indicate the transferable skills they feel that they are obtaining through their involvement in extracurricular activities. This could be a drop down list and would focus on a list of skills developed by the researcher that employers want in college graduates. This redesigned study may help with attrition rates and the generalizability of the findings.

This research could be adapted to look at a variety of student groups instead of just hall council. Future research could look at other student government organizations such as a student council or a black student union and see if the development of transferable skills differed between group. This would allow the institutions to focus on specific groups that may need more intentional development.

In relation to the current study and its dynamics, future research could survey both executive board members as well as hall council general members. This would allow them to determine if it is hall council in general that assists in the acquisition of
transferable skills or if it is being on the executive board that aids in said acquisition. This would require that the hall council involvement questionnaire be modified to indicate their position and may be more open ended but would result in possible differentiation between groups.

Lastly, future research could focus on how transferable skills are being acquired throughout college, both inside and outside of the classroom. The purpose of this survey was to look at one specific avenue in which students may be acquiring these skills but it is not the only area in which these skills could be acquired. Future research could look at the experiences that students are having inside the classroom, in the dining centers, in the residence halls as well as in extracurricular activities and see if there is one specific area that promoted the development of transferable skills over another area. Researchers could work to determine if classroom discussion facilitates communication skills effectively or if instead it is regular human discourse happening outside of the classroom that is facilitating the growth of these skills.

This research was done as a starting point and could be taken in a variety of directions in order to determine how and where students are gaining these transferable skills and how universities can support participation. If universities support the acquisition of transferable skills both inside and outside of the classroom, they will graduate students who are more equipped for the working world.

**Recommendations for Student Affairs Professionals**

The results of this study support the need for student affairs professionals to better support students in their acquisition of transferable skills. First and foremost, student affairs professionals can provide opportunities for students to get involved. Whether this
is through advising a student organization or supporting students when they want to create a student group, student affairs professionals have the ability to assist in the acquisition of transferable skills through their support of the students.

Second, student affairs professionals can implement more reflection in their daily work with students. It is possible that this is the first time that students have been asked to consider whether or not they are gaining something by being involved in hall council. Adding reflection as a part of regular conversation will allow students to think more often on the skills they are obtaining through their involvement in a variety of activities. Additionally, this may allow students to seek out more skills and encourage them to get involved in other activities. Through reflection students may find that they need more experience in written communication and thus join the student paper. If they are reflecting they can grow more as a future professional.

Lastly, student affairs professionals can implement a curriculum that allows students to garner these skills in a safe and healthy environment. The institution studied has clear cut residential curriculum goals that focused on the development of the student. This may not be true of every department or every institution. It is important that student affairs professionals outline what a student will learn by being involved outside of the classroom. Learning outcomes are not just for the syllabus, they can be implemented as a way to challenge the student and support their learning. If student affairs professionals really want to see their students grow they need a scale by which to judge them. If there is not scale, there is no way to determine if a student has benefitted from their experience.
Overall Conclusion

Chapter V presented the discussion of the quantitative results of a research study that looked at the acquisition of transferable skills by students who were on hall council executive boards. Using the researcher designed Hall Council Involvement Questionnaire and the modified Learning Outcomes scale developed by McCluskey-Titus, the researcher was able to collect data on the acquisition of transferable skills based on the level of involvement on hall council executive boards. The results of the study answered three research questions. The first research question answered was whether or not students were acquiring transferable skills. The second research questions discussed gender difference in skill acquisition. The third research question looked at the types of skills acquired. The results of this study provide avenues for future research as well as recommendations for student’s affairs professionals who are working with student leaders and hoping to provide their students with transferable skills upon graduation.
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Appendix A

Demographics Questionnaire
What is your gender?

□ Male □ Female □ Other

How many semesters were you involved in hall council?


Which years were you involved in hall council? (Select all that apply)

□ 2005 □ 2006 □ 2007 □ 2008 □ 2009 □ 2010
□ 2011 □ 2012 □ 2013 □ 2014 □ 2015

What year will you/did you graduate from EIU? ____________

What is your race?

□ White
□ Hispanic or Latino
□ Black or African American
□ Native American or American Indian
□ Asian/Pacific Islander
□ Other

What is your age?

___________
Appendix B

Hall Council Involvement Questionnaire
Hall Council Involvement Questionnaire

This instrument will describe the types of involvement you have had within the realm of hall council while attending Eastern Illinois University. Please respond to the following questions as accurately as possible.

1. Please indicate your length of involvement while serving on Hall Council

   ____ 1 month  ____ 2 months  ____ 3 months  ____ 4 months  ____ More than a semester

2. Please indicate your level of involvement within hall council

   5- I was very involved
   4- I was somewhat involved
   3- I was neither involved nor uninvolved
   2- I was rarely involved
   1- I was not at all involved.

3. Please indicate which activities you participated in while on hall council:

   - Attending executive board meetings
   - Attended general body meetings
   - Attended hall council programs
   - Planned programs
   - Chaired a committee
   - Interacted with hall council members outside of hall council time
   - Met regularly with hall council advisor
   - Attended RHA meetings
   - Assisted with publicity of programs
   - Encouraged others to get involved in hall council
   - Other ________________________________
Appendix C

An Assessment of Learning Outcomes Gained Through the Hall Council Executive Board Experience
Considering your hall council involvement, please rate each of the following characteristics using this scale:

4- My hall council involvement had a **strongly positive impact** on my acquisition of this characteristic
3- My hall council involvement had a **positive impact** on my acquisition of this characteristic
2- My hall council involvement had a **negative impact** on my acquisition of this characteristic
1- My hall council involvement had a **strongly negative impact** on my acquisition of this characteristic
0- My involvement in hall council had **no impact, positive or negative**, on my acquisition of this characteristic.

___ **Verbal skills** (speaking, writing, comprehension, organization of thought in writing and in discussion, some acquaintance with a second language)

___ **Quantitative skills** (understand elementary math, statistical data, statistical reasoning, budgeting, use of computers)

___ **Substantive knowledge** (Western and other cultures, philosophy, natural science, art/literature, world events, vocabulary, ideas in one or more academic areas)

___ **Rationality** (logical and objective thinking, distinguishing fact from emotion, evaluation of facts, analysis and synthesis of information)

___ **Intellectual tolerance** (open to ideas, intellectual curiosity, ability to deal with ambiguity and complex information, appreciation of diversity)

___ **Esthetic sensibility** (respect for literature, fine acts, natural beauty)

___ **Creativeness** (imagination, originality, formulating new ideas and products)

___ **Intellectual integrity** (understanding the concept of "truth," speaking and seeking the truth, integrity and accuracy in reporting)

___ **Wisdom** (balanced perspective, judgment, prudence)

___ **Lifelong learning** (love of learning, knowing how to learn, continual pursuit of knowledge)

___ **Personal self-discovery** (knowing own talents, interests, values, strengths, weaknesses, uniqueness)
Psychological well-being (sensitivity to emotions, stability, appropriate expression of emotions, assertiveness, self-confidence, decisiveness, acceptance of self and others)

Human understanding (humane, empathetic, thoughtful, respectful, tolerant, democratic, cooperative)

Values and morals (internalized set of principles, social consciousness, social responsibility)

Spiritual interest (exploration of purpose, value, meaning of life)

Need for achievement (motivation to accomplish, initiative, persistence, self-discipline)

Future orientation (planning ahead, taking risks, making realistic plans for future)

Adaptability (tolerance of new ideas, acceptance of change, can cope with problems and crises, can negotiate, compromise, learns from experience)

Leadership (win confidence of others, assumes responsibility, organized, decisive)

Citizenship (commitment to democracy, understand how government works, aware of social issues, willing to participate in community/civic work, ability to deal with bureaucracy, law abiding)

Economic productivity (skills to be successful in work world, adaptability, workplace values and ethics)

Sound family life (personal qualities needed for stable family, knowledge of child development)

Consumer efficiency (understands money management, recognized high pressure sales tactics and deceptive sales practices, sound values about money)

Fruitful leisure (uses good judgment in how time is spend, develops interests in leisure activities, can overcome boredom, know how to relax)

Health (understands basic principles of good health, use of health care providers)
(Outcomes framework developed by Howard Bowen, 1977 and adapted by McCluskey-Titus, 1996).
Appendix D

Email to Participants
Good morning!

My name is Maddie Smart and I am an Associate Resident Director in Greek Court!

I am currently working on my thesis and am reaching out to you for help!

According to my records you were involved in hall council between 2005-2015. I am wondering if you can take my survey! The link is below and it would really help my research if you took it! The survey takes about 5 minutes to complete and if you finish it you are entered to win a free weekend stay in Charleston! (For those of you that live on-campus we can work something out that may be more fun).

Thank you for your time!

Maddie
Appendix E

Informed Consent
Dear Participant,

Thank you for choosing to participate in my study. The survey you are about to take typically takes about 5 minutes to complete. All of your answers and information will be kept confidential and will be used solely for educational and research purposes.

Choosing "I agree to participate below" allows you to being the survey. For a more thorough informed consent please click here. (See expanded informed consent, Appendix F.)
Appendix F

Expanded Informed Consent
Dear Participant,

My name is Madeline Smart and I am a graduate student in the College Student Affairs program at Eastern Illinois University. First, I would like to thank you in advance for agreeing to help enrich my research by taking this survey. Please remember that your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and if you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to ask me.

For my study, you will be answering questions that take roughly 5-8 minutes to answer and can potentially help you grow professionally, academically and socially. This study is looking at the development of skills through involvement on hall council executive board and is they are transferable to careers. Your responses will be collected and remain anonymous, meaning your name will not be attached to the results of the survey. The data will only be shared with my faculty advisor the benefits obtained from your results will benefit future hall council executive board members.

By clicking on the link below, you are allowing me to view your anonymous results and analyze your responses. You are also allowing me to publish your anonymous results in my thesis that will be accessible at Booth Library. If you wish to withdraw from the study, you can do so at anytime with no penalties. Your decision to participate, decline, or withdraw from the study will not effect your relationship with the university.

If you have any questions, you can reach me via email at mjsmart@eiu.edu or you can contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Richard Roberts, at rlroberts@eiu.edu.

If you have any questions about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write: Institutional Review Board, Eastern Illinois University, 600 Lincoln Ave., Charleston, IL 61920, telephone: (217) 581-8576, email: eiuirb@eiu.edu

Thank you again in advance and have a great day!

Maddie Smart