Institutional Natural Mentors:
Exploring Predictors and Outcomes Among Underrepresented Students
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INTRODUCTION
- Underrepresented Students:
  - First-generation students graduate at one-third the rate of students whose parents have college degrees (US Dept. of Edu., 2005)
  - Less than 25% of low-income students graduate, compared to 73% of high-income students and 55% of middle-income students (US Dept. of Edu, 2005)
  - Minority student graduation rates lag 16% to 25% points below the rates of European Americans (US Dept. of Edu., 2005)

- Natural Mentors:
  - Predictors:
    - Students who are extraverted have been reported to seek more social support (Sticker, Nittner, & Foster, 2010)
  - Having secure attachment with parents has been linked to seeking social support (Myrick, Green & Crenshaw, 2013)
  - Outcomes:
    - Non-parental adult from a youth's pre-existing social network provides support and guidance (Cooper, et al., 2013)
  - Relationship with university faculty has been linked to student success (McGann & Thompson, 2008)

  Hypotheses:
  - H1: Secure attachment style will predict students to seek institutional natural mentors
  - H2: Extraversion will predict students to seek institutional natural mentors
  - H3: Students who have more institutional natural mentors will have higher GPAs
  - H4: Students who have more institutional natural mentors will show higher levels of school membership

METHOD
- Participants:
  - 340 participants from a Southeastern University
  - Male: 30.1% (n = 105), Female: 66.8% (n = 233)
  - Age Range: 17 – 20 years old (Mean = 18.11, SD = .37)
  - Ethnicities: 28.4% Black, 22.9% White, 19.5% Multiracial, 15.8% Asian, 9.7% Hispanic, 2% Native American

- Materials and Procedure:
  - Research assistants administered a self-reported questionnaire on iPads to participants. Study personnel explained that the goal of the study was to learn more about first year students and their journey through college. Participants were told that participation was anonymous and voluntary. Participants were surveyed at two times: once in their first fall semester (Wave1) and once in their first spring semester (Wave2).

Measures:
- Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA):
  - IPPA (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987) was developed specifically for use with adolescents to measure the degree of attachment security in the different relationships of mother, father and a selected peer. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability was 0.88.
- Big Five Inventory (BFI):
  - The BFI (John and Benet-Martinez, 1998) is a 44-item assessment of five primary personality traits – Openness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientious-ness, and Neuroticism. For the current study only the Extraversion subscale was used. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability was 0.89.
- Institutional Natural Mentors (INM):
  - In order to measure the presence of an INM, participants were asked how they know their INM. Those participants who reported knowing their NM from the university were considered to have a INM.
- Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM):
  - PSSM (Goodenow, 1993) was designed to measure three specific factors: belonging, rejection, and acceptance. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability was 0.91.

RESULTS
- Logistic Regression Analysis of Institutional Natural Mentor:

![Logistic Regression Analysis of Institutional Natural Mentor](image1)

- Regression Analysis of GPA:

![Regression Analysis of GPA](image2)

- Regression Analysis of PSSM:

![Regression Analysis of PSSM](image3)

DISCUSSION
- Results suggest that personality factors may help explain why certain students have INM. Results also indicate that students who have relationships with INM may feel a greater sense of belonging at a university. However, attachment was not found to predict presence of INM nor was GPA predicted by presence of INM.

Limitations:
- Impacts of having an INM may not be detectable so soon.
- Students may not develop relationships with INM so early on in college.

Implications:
- Intervention programs that focus on retention rates of underrepresented students may want create programs to help faculty take note of students who are introverted so that those students may potentially benefit from having a INM.

Further Directions:
- Continue to look at future waves of the data to examine the long term effects of having a INM.
- Examine if there are factors that may mediate the relationship between presence of INM and GPA.

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