

UNDERSTANDING THE COLLEGE COMMUNITY:
FOSTERING FEMALE STUDENT SUCCESS
AT A CANADIAN TECHNICAL COLLEGE IN QATAR
by © Fleur H. Kenward (Thesis) submitted to the
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ABSTRACT

Female students at a Canadian technical college in Qatar are minimally accessing co-curricular activities. As a result, they were limited in their ability to develop transferrable skills. This quantitative and qualitative study investigated whether correlations existed between grade point average, participation in co-curricular activities and overall perceptions of the college experience. The study took place at this mixed-gender technical college. By applying critical feminist theory, it also investigated barriers to, and developed recommendations for, increasing engagement. It consisted of two phases: an online survey and one-on-one interviews. With a survey sample size of $n=30$, positive correlations were identified between GPA and both rate of engagement and perception of college experience. The study found that positive perceptions of experience and engagement were not correlated. It was noted that time constraints and feeling self-conscious were barriers and participants recommended that co-curricular engagement be more accessible and linked to the curriculum.

Key Words: GPA, co-curricular engagement, female student success, Middle East.

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*Understanding College Community: Fostering Female Student Success
at the Canadian Technical College in Qatar*

Chapter 1 Introduction

“I had learnt the satisfaction which comes from the hardship and the pleasure which derives from abstinence; the contentment of a full belly; the richness of meat and taste of clean water...” Wilfred Thesiger

Thesiger’s journey took him across thousands of miles of desert and introduced him to the resiliency of the Middle Eastern Bedouin tribes. A little more than half a century later, many countries in this region such as Qatar faced an entirely different way of life, but their resilience remains the same. Qatar is a small oil-wealthy peninsula in the Arabian Gulf, which gained its independence in 1971. Bordering Saudi Arabia, it shares the cultural and religious philosophies of the predominantly conservative Wahhabi Islam (Stasz, 20007). Prior to the discovery of oil in 1939, Qatar was made up of Bedouin tribes who made a living off the sea by fishing and pearl diving. They had little to no formal education. The only form of education that did exist was memorizing the Quran or learning the practical mercantile skills passed from one generation to the next (Al Ansari, 2014; Sonbol, 2012; Stasz 2007).

Today’s Qatar is very different. The discovery of oil and gas resulted in extensive infrastructure development. This was followed by the need for education and self-governance to better situate the country on the global market.

It was under the guidance of the Al Thani tribe, who later became the ruling family in Qatar, that for the first time primary and secondary schools were established. This early education was free and mandatory for Qatari students. As early education was gaining momentum, the government recognized the need for higher education. This recognition led to the establishment of Qatar University (QU), the first post-secondary institution to open its doors. Over the next two decades, alliances with other educationally developed countries were formed and satellite campuses of major were established. These Qatari commissioned institutions were chosen for their unique programs such as the arts programs available at Victoria Commonwealth University and the agricultural programs at Texas A & M.

With the support of these institutions, Qatar has worked hard to establish itself on the global economy with its investment in infrastructure, education and innovation. Although it was considered one of the wealthiest countries in the world, it struggled to develop a coordinated system of education. The then current system of primary, elementary and secondary education was an ad hoc system of public and private schools that offer a number of different curricula. As a result, Qatar has ranked among the lowest of the developed countries in Math, Science and Reading on the Program of International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD, 2014). Although it was working toward increasing these results, it was a country in transition and these transitions resulted in uncertainty. It was faced with the question of ‘how do we improve this and maintain our identity?’ (Guarino & Tanner, 2012). And although, it had vast wealth, which was increasingly invested in education and training, it could be another generation before the results of these investments were to be seen.

In the meantime, it was attempting to address the challenges it faced. Some of these challenges included predominantly unmotivated Qataris who were then the minority in their own country. This was compounded by the fact that the available jobs were being filled by the increased influx of skilled and unskilled labour (Williams, Bhanugopan & Fish, 2011). As a country with the more than 2.5 million people, only 280,000 of them held Qatari citizenship. Qataris constituted less than 20% of the country's total population (bqdoha.com, 2012). The other 80% consisted of immigrant workers, some of who have been here for several generations. This small local population could not support the expedited rate of infrastructure development. In order to compensate for this, the country imported skilled and unskilled employees to meet the demands of the labour market. There were simply too many jobs and not enough workers. Not only was there a need for general labourers but also for professionals including teachers, engineers, and consultants. This was further compounded by the fact that locals were uninterested in jobs that were not high paying or prestigious. For locals, employment statistics indicated that 86% of the Qataris in the workforce were employed in high-paid government jobs while low-paid private sector jobs employed cheap foreign workers. Locals were not filling the demands of the job market.

There were numerous challenges that compound the shortage of labour. The small Qatari population meant that there were not enough people to fill the jobs. Not only were there not enough people to work, but those who were employable because of the lack of skills. This also extended to women who were further limited in their access to employment due to cultural barriers. To complicate this, the extensive wealth of the population reduced the motivation to find employment based on monetary needs. Further

still, women were encouraged to seek education and jobs in areas where there were few job opportunities such as in the arts and humanities (*Permanent Population Committee*, 2012). The available human resources were not meeting the market demands. In order to maintain this pace of development and meet these demands, Qatar was forced to recruit highly skilled managers, engineers and technicians and educators from other regions such as Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Europe.

The benefit of external recruiting was the immediate availability of expertise. This however did not support the country's vision of a sustainable future. To address this, the Qatari government committed to the long-term goal of establishing strategies for sustainability and self-reliance. They recognized that education was the key to achieving this goal (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2011). One of the strategies for supporting the vision for a sustainable future was through increased funding opportunities for nationals to study locally or abroad (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2011). In addition, many companies such as Qatar Petroleum and Ras Gas frequently sponsored their employees to upgrade skills or in pursuing other career options (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2011).

This new focus on education was evident with increased enrollment and graduation rates among the Qataris. Enrollment data existed but other education related research was limited. There was clearly a deficit of available research on student participation, student success and successful transitioning. To address this, the government's *Qatarization Strategy* (2000) was developed to promote and improve access to education and employment for nationals and to promote research. Universities, colleges and the government were beginning to gather data on education and

employment. Examples of these included reports by *The Permanent Population Committee* (2012), *The National Development Strategy* (2011) and the *Qatar 2030 Vision* (2013). These documents outlined the need for increased emphasis on education as a strategy for creating sustainability. They also discuss the link between education and employment. They have noted that both Qatari males and females, although educated, faced unemployment rates that were higher than the national average. For females, there was an even greater divide. With 64% of the post-secondary population being female, one would assume that more women would be entering the workforce. This was not the case. Although Qatar boasted the lowest global unemployment rate at 0.6%, this was not the situation faced by Qataris. Qatari females faced an 8% unemployment compared to the 1.7% faced by males. The looming question was: Why were Qatari females have difficulty making the transition from education to employment and what can be done to close this divide? While this study did not investigate the specific reasons for the deficit of women in the work force, it did explored what can be done to increase the transferrable skills female students can acquire during their time in post-secondary.

Research indicated that students who participated in college life and utilized college supports were academically more successful and exhibited a more positive perception of themselves as students (Zafft, Kallenbach & Spohn, 2006). The underlying notion was that females who engaged in college activities acquired transferrable skills, which could support the development of post-graduation plans and goals. Williams, Bhanugopan and Fish (2011) argued that although Qatari women had increased aspirations, qualifications and were supported by government policies, which ‘guaranteed’ equal employment opportunities, they still faced higher unemployment rates.

They also noted that these cultural and social barriers that inhibited them from successful transitioning could take several generations to overcome.

Purpose of the Study

This study was conducted at the mixed gender Canadian technical college in Doha, Qatar. The college had been offering two and three-year technical diploma programs for the past ten years to approximately 2500 students per year. As a satellite campus, it offered a Canadian curriculum with English language instruction.

Qatar's commitment to education, research and development was very new. It was a virtual *tabula rasa*, a blank slate for researchers. This study sought to contribute to the body of existing knowledge and reducing the deficit in research. The purpose of this study was to explore the connection between participation in the college community events, student academic and perceived success and the development of future post-graduation plans.

It addressed the fact that female students were less likely to participate in co-curricular activities or in college life generally and were missing out on the opportunity to develop transferrable skills (Williams, Bhanugopan & Fish, 2011). For the current study, the research sought to identify barriers to college engagement and strategies to overcome them, in order to increase the possibility of encouraging female participation. This increased engagement was intended to help build self-confidence, and to increase academic success through the development of transferrable skills. To accomplish this, the project investigated the following research questions:

1. Is there a positive correlation between female participation in the college community and student academic success?
2. Is there a positive correlation between female participation in college community and student's positive attitude toward college experience?
3. Why do, or don't, female students participate in college co-curricular activities and supports?
4. What can be done to improve female student engagement in the college community?
5. Are female students who are engaged in college community more likely to have clearly defined post-graduate plans for further education or employment?

Significance of the Study

The college was the earliest mixed-gender post-secondary institution in Qatar, which rendered the campus a unique opportunity for female students. This study intended to explore the relationship between student engagement and success and to develop recommendations for improving female student participation. From a gender-focused perspective, this research recognized the inequity faced by women in this region and planned to utilize female student perspective to empower them (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

As a mixed method study, the goal was to identify whether correlations existed between the variables and to gain a deeper understanding of these, the barriers to engagement and the solutions for reducing them in the context of the college. Existing research indicated, that student co-curricular engagement was linked with student

academic success and resulted in transferrable skill development (Guarino & Tanner, 2012; Servellen & Baas, 2013; Williams, Bhanugopan & Fish, 2011). This project intended to build upon the existing knowledge base and to explore female experience in the context of a mixed-gender Canadian college in Qatar. The unique nature of a mixed gender post-secondary institution provided the setting from which data could be collected to identify strategies for increasing student success for women.

With women's increased presence in higher education, the government noted their commitment to supporting women in developing the necessary skills to find jobs. . With this in mind, a gender-focused perspective was applied to “focus on issues of power and oppression in terms of gender; the politicizing of women's experience” (Merriam, 2009, p. 36). Crotty (as cited in Merriam, 2009) noted that it could be as simple as recognizing that the inequality exists. The research explored the reasons for and against college engagement where the goal was to reduce or challenge the barriers faced by women in accessing college programming and co-curricular activities, to support students in developing transferrable skills, which could improve their overall college experience. These were used to inform recommendations for improving access to co-curricular activities.

The following chapter will review the existing literature by defining key concepts, the context of Qatar and women's experience in the country. Chapter Three will discuss the details of the study. It will provide information on the general paradigm, design, recruitment, ethics, delivery and analysis of the data. Chapters four and five will present the qualitative and quantitative data results that were collected from the surveys and interviews. These chapters will present the demographics, correlations between variables

and identify key themes and concepts that arose out of the constant comparison method.

The final chapter will offer an analysis of and conclusions about the findings. It will outline the limitations of the study, and make recommendations for the further studies and for increasing student engagement.

Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

“Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and right doing there is a field.

I’ll meet you there...” Rumi

Chapter One introduced the topic, provided an overview of the purpose, significance and context of the study. This chapter will present a review of the literature on the key concepts of student development, success, transferrable skills and education in Qatar for women.

Introduction

What does it mean to be educated? Foshay (1991) stated that education was intended

“to bring people to as full a realization as possible of what it is to be a human being.... [and] to develop the intellect, to serve social needs, to contribute to the economy, to create an effective work force, to prepare students for a job or career and to promote a particular social or political system.”

Education was more than learning to read, write and calculate figures. It supports individuals in developing the personal, social and intellectual skills necessary for the transition from being a student to being a contributing member of society. It was a long-term way to improve the overall quality of life for individuals and their families. It has also been recognized as the most effective strategy for combatting poverty (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2006; UNESCO, 2012; Rao & Gupta, 2006; Zafft,

Kallenbach & Spohn; 2006). Education also strengthens the family and builds a community by empowering its citizens. It was noted that educated women educate their children. Although women were increasingly being recognized for their role in and contributions to any number of fields from the arts and humanities, to science and medicine, access to education and employment for women was not a global phenomenon. UNESCO (2012) indicated that in 2010 of the “775 million illiterate adults.... two-thirds were women” (p. 5). Many of these uneducated women lived in African countries or poor and oppressed regions in the Middle East. This daunting figure suggested that society has a long way to go before equality and universal access to education were a global reality.

This chapter will present a review of the literature on key findings and research on student development, engagement and success and it will discuss the role of Student Affairs. It will also provide the history and current context of education in Qatar. Finally it will discuss female experience in the country and in the college.

Context

Many regions of the world reflect a dated view of women’s ability, potential and inadequate recognition of the value of their contributions to the family and society. For cultural reasons, many countries in the Middle East and North Africa impose limitations on women’s access to education, employment and participation in the public sphere, Qatar being one of these countries (Rostron, 2009). This tiny, oil-rich Arabian, peninsula was a relatively new and conservative predominantly Islamic country, which has been experiencing progress and development at an unprecedented pace. This progress was

reflected in the country's investment in post-secondary education. Within this context, women have surpassed men in their academic achievements by nearly one hundred percent (Stasz, 2007; Williams, Bhanugopan & Fish, 2011).

Al-Malki, Kaufer, Ishizaki and Dreher (2012) indicated that there were many complex reasons why these increases in education have not translated into more women in the work force. With a significant focus on Qatari capacity building in business and leadership, nationals were increasingly encouraged to pursue educational or employment endeavors. To address this from a government perspective, the *Qatar National Vision 2030* was subdivided into pillars or areas of focus which emphasized social, human and infrastructural development. This and other documents emphasized the valuable role women will continue to play in the development of Qatar (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008). These documents also acknowledged that although women were highly educated, they faced significant barriers to gaining employment. Employers have noted that Qatari employees, although educated, lack the transferrable skills necessary for success in a work environment (Williams, Bhanugopan & Fish, 2011; UNESCO, 2012; Ludgate, 2012).

As previously noted, Qatar was very eagerly developing in terms of education, research and innovation. It was a country with a vested interest in capacity building. This was evident in the political and social pressure on institutions and industries to engage nationals to participate in the country's development (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2011). Encouraging this engagement required increased focus on education, training and skill development for both males and females.

Although a great deal of resources and funding existed to support Qataris in returning to higher education or transitioning to employment, they were minimally accessing these resources. Much of the research outlined the general view or discussed the findings based on a western perspective and were related to degree granting four-year colleges or universities (Bailey, Alfonso, Cacagno, Jenkins, Kienzl & Leinbach, 2004). This study reviewed the literature to define many of key concepts such as: student development, student success, co-curricular activities, student engagement, student affairs and campus community.

Student Development

Student development was defined as the change and development that occurs as a result of an individual participating in the college environment (Schuh, Jones, Harper and Associates, 2011). The college has adopted a holistic view of how to best support student development. This was reflective of the shift toward a multi-faceted view of human development and was based on the work of many 20th century scholars who emphasized the value of a “holistic model of the process of learning from experience” (Kolb & Kolb, 2008; Chickering & Reiser, 1993). In order to measure these factors on learning, they were divided into separate categories. These were delineated based on: behavior, cognition, emotion, environment/social or gender influences (MacKeracher, 2004; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Modern educational and developmental researchers recognized the valuable contributions of each of the early theorists (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Today, researchers have embraced a multi-theory approach to understanding learning and development (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges &

Hayek, 2006). Researchers, governments, institutions and educators recognized the benefit of a holistic or integrative approach on supporting learning and development to promote success (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2006; Keeling, 2006; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007; Swail, 2004). These holistic supports recognized the influence of: prior learning, environment, cognition, emotions, social and financial support on the type and degree of learning that took place (MacKerarcher, 2004). Many developed countries were adopting this philosophy through the support of their government's social and educational policies. Although few reflect a harmonious view of development, the trend was definitively toward a holistic approach.

Many writers and thinkers have discussed what it means to learn or develop and how this occurs. Martin Luther King (1947) stated that "...intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character – that is the true goal of education" (para 5). Developmental theorists Gilligan (1999) and Kohlberg (as cited in Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2004) also drew attention to the influence that relationships had on moral development. Although they disagreed about the extent to which gender-influenced decision-making in males and females, they both concluded that indeed social interactions and relationships did influence decision-making. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (as cited in Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2004) supported Gilligan in stating that women and men come to 'know things differently' through social experience. In recognition of this and the diversity of learning student needs, governments have supported this view and recognized that getting students enrolled in school was not enough. They have begun to value and support diverse learning needs, students with families, fitness and recreation, second language learning, and career and personal counselors within institutions or the

community (General Secretariat of Development and Planning, 2011; Government of Alberta, 2014; Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2006; Murphy Centre, 2014; Stanistreet, 2010; Stella Burry, 2014).

This holistic approach grew out of the recognition that retention was becoming a greater barrier to educational attainment than access. New strategies for supporting success include increasing partnership between institutions, government and industry. These strategies included: increasing developmental supports, fostering partnerships with agencies specializing in employment or family support, increasing funding for non-educational supports such as child care, developing consistent, effective policies at all levels of education and they focused on student learning outside the classroom (Government of Newfoundland & Labrador, 2006; Keeling, 2006; National Partnership Guide, 2011; *Permanent Population Committee*, 2012; Scott-Jackson, 2012; Swail, 2004; Zafft, Kallenbach & Spohn; 2006). In support of this, Miriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner (2007) suggested that development and learning were fostered through learning style recognition and application; and that learners and facilitators needed to be viewed as social beings. Interviews conducted by Gilligan (1993) on the impact of relationships on female moral development supported the notion that female development and decision-making was profoundly influenced by their relationships with others. These findings suggested that valuing the social nature of learning. Relationships were how connections were created and engaging in activities that encouraged social interaction through participation in non-credit courses or activities, increased the likelihood of transferrable skill development. Swail (2004) noted that persistence and success were

difficult to achieve without social integration, support from parents and peers and without identifying of career and educational goals (Cressy, 2011).

Student Success

Setting goals and defining student success were keys to understanding how students could find success and how institutions could support them. With post-secondary institutions increased focus on student retention and success, a definition was essential. Williams, Bhanugopan and Fish's (2011) review of human resources practices and policies in Qatar affirmed that Qatari women were being supported by the "new Qatari constitution" which guaranteed equality for women in education and employment (p. 197). Strange (2010) stated that success "is most often reflected in successful enrolment numbers, program retention rates and degree completion figures" (p. 18). However, both Strange (2010) and James (2010) discussed the paradigm shift where the "focus on student success broadened from concentration of the attrition of *some* students to documenting the achievements of *all* ..." were a means of evaluating an institution's ability to support the successful post-secondary completion and transition to employment (p. 202).

It was no longer enough to get students to school and assume they will be successful. It was important to recognize that although high schools begin preparing their students for an independent, self-directed, adult learning environment, very few arrive with many of the skills necessary for success (Hayek & Kuh, 2004; MacKeracher, 2004). These skills were not acquired solely through academic learning but also through co-curricular engagement. This transition from high school to post-secondary requires

that a student learn where and how to utilize available resources. The simple navigation between classes, buildings, schedules and higher expectations could be overwhelming. This newly acquired independence and expectations often resulted in lower than expected grades. MacKinnon (2012) and Mackeracher (2004) noted that students finished high school with a sense of academic self. This often negatively impacted their self-efficacy when the increased responsibility and independence of college resulted in lower than expected grades.

The impact of this transition from high school to college was reduced when students became engaged in the college community and developed social connections, possibly through co-curricular participation. MacKinnon's (2012) study revealed that students' self-esteem was less negatively impacted when they perceived themselves as having lots of social support. This perception alone was found to foster student academic success. To address this, many institutions offer orientation programs to create awareness of what their schools offers. Clark and Caffarella (1999) noted that the positive or negative experience of a life event or transition influenced the extent to which learning occurred. They also noted that relational models proposed by Gilligan (1993) and Jordan (1997 as cited in Gilligan, 1993) represented the extent to which these transitions resulted in learning within a social context. They also encouraged students to become acquainted with the campus, faculty, academic and non-academic resources and to develop social networks with other students. In many colleges and universities, the orientation was coordinated through the Department of Student Affairs. Cressy (2011), however noted that supporting student engagement should be a college-wide, shared responsibility. Kuh (2005) noted that "[s]tudent success is everybody's business" (p. 2). Student success has

been the primary goal of education and it requires academic, institutional and social support (Government of Newfoundland, 2006; Keeling, 2006; Magolda, 2009; Swail, 2004). Although the research indicated that students benefit from the availability of non-academic supports, Dietsche's (2012) longitudinal study of student experience, behavior, attitudes and perceptions in Qatar noted that too few students were actually accessing the services that were available. Students were surveyed to assess their level of integration in a college and it was found that students who were accessing college supports reflected upon their experiences more positively and were more successfully academically.

Student Affairs

Although it was said to be a shared responsibility, the coordination of student co-curricular activities, student engagement and student success, outside the academic sphere, generally falls to the department of Student Affairs. As a department, it was considered a relatively new division of Student Services, but which "has existed on American college campuses since 1636" (Schuh & Gansemer-Topf, 2010, p. 5). It was responsible for offering an array of academic and non-academic supports. Student Affairs was responsible for organizing and coordinating non-academic, learning activities. These included, but were not limited to: health and wellness, art, service learning, debate, special interest clubs, spiritual and travel experiences (College of the North Atlantic, 2014; Schuh & Gansemer-Topf, 2010).

Schuh, Jones, Harper and Associates (2011), indicated that in many American states the department of Student Affairs originated out of an "urgent responsibility for providing experiences" and for coordinating them for effective and efficient delivery to

students (p. 65; Strange & Cox, 2010). Previously, programs were coordinated through any number of departments or individuals based on the interest or expertise of coaches, faculty and volunteers, rather than reflecting student needs or interests and these often occurred in isolation. Keeling (2006) and Swail (2004) emphasized the valuable role played by Student Affairs in its coordination of human and financial resources as a means of offering programs that address student needs, encouraging engagement and supporting development.

Co-curricular Engagement

Cressy (2011) defined student engagement as the “interaction that takes place between the student and the institution” and his research indicated that as engagement increases so does student success (p. 2; Tinto, 1998). Otto (1977) was among the early educational researchers to investigate the link between participation in co-curricular activities and student success. His work not only recognized this correlation, but it also provided evidence that linked participation in recreational activities to higher graduation rates. This link was explained in terms of the benefit of developing transferrable skills such as “initiative” and “practical knowledge” (Otto, 1977, p. 43). Dickinson (2000) also indicated more recently that this increased engagement helps to prepare students for employment through the acquisition of the practical and transferrable skills.

A decade after Otto’s findings, Alexander Astin (1984) reinforced that “student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that a student devotes to the academic experience” (p. 518). Strange and Cox (2010), in their models of practice, also indicated that there was a direct link between student success and those who

immerse themselves in the post-secondary experience. To support this from a gender-based perspective, Hayes (2001) noted that because women typically held less powerful positions, they developed a heightened awareness of others perspectives which was defined as connectedness. Others in the field such as Vermeulen and Schmidt (2008) identified the reciprocal nature of the following four aspects of student engagement: the motivation for learning, involvement in extra-curricular activities, increase in transferrable knowledge and increase post-graduation employment rates. College research into student engagement, student success, retention and effective student transitioning has been gaining interest (College of the North Atlantic Qatar, 2014).

Until recently, the focus of educational research was on teaching, learning, development and curriculum as a means of improving access to education. Although universal access is not the reality, evidence suggested that global literacy rates have increased 12% between 1990 and 2010 and access to all levels of education in both the developing and wealthy nations have improved (UNESCO, 2012). Although there has been a equal emphasis on education for males and females, much of the current research emphasized the value of educating women and mothers to support subsequent generations of educated individuals (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2006; Rao & Gupta, 2006). The increased rate of global access has encouraged researchers to shift the focus from access to education to improving the quality of education, retention, graduation rates and supporting the whole student (Finnie & Qiu, 2008; Keeling, 2006; Savitz-Romer, Jager-Hyman & Coles, 2009; Swail, 2006). Tinto (1984) was among the pioneers to draw attention to student experience and the reciprocal relationship between student and institution.

Researchers and institutions have been fostering this link between student integration and social engagement. The goal has been to improve academic achievement, foster future goals of education or employment and improve self-efficacy (Bergen-Cico & Viscomi, 2012; Braxon, Sullivan & Johnson, 1997; Cressy, 2011; Kuh, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Martin and Dowson (2009) referred to this integration as social cohesion or the sense of belonging. Researchers have noted a multitude of co-curricular activities that support students in developing a sense of connectedness or belonging and increased overall student success (Astin, 1984; Frauman 2005; Vermeulen & Schmidt, 2008). The exact equation of how much was enough or too much and which specific activities were more effective in supporting, remained unclear (Bergen-Cico & Viscomi, 2013; Otto, 1977). Huang and Chang (2004) stated that the amount and type of engagement was influenced by differences in socioeconomic, cognitive development, personality differences, culture diversity and gender. The type and extent of engagement was impacted by what Hayes (2001) referred to as gender culture. She noted that within different environments feminine and masculine roles emerged and that although females or males had the opportunity to participate in any number of activities, there existed unwritten social norms about gender roles.

Bergen-Cico and Viscomi's (2013) research indicated that participation reflected a real commitment to engagement however participation alone was not enough. Rather, it was the extent to which they were committed to the activity or institution that impacted the feeling of success. They collected data from student swiped ID cards at college events and categorized their participants by low and high levels of engagement in college activities. The results indicated that those who participated in more than four activities

were more likely to have a higher GPA (Bergen-Cico & Viscomi, 2013). In order to understand how engagement impacts student success, it they noted that it was important to investigate how committed students felt toward the co-curricular activities they were engaged in, not simply the number of activities. This level of commitment created a sense of connectedness or belonging within a community. Findings from this study indicated that females out-performed males, in-terms of GPA, at all levels of participation. It further indicated that males who were viewed as highly engaged (participated in more than four college events) and females with low levels of engagement performed at a similar academic level (Bergen-Cico & Viscomi, 2013).

Creating Community

Astin (1984) followed by Clark, Andrews and Gorman (2013) suggested that the notion of ‘connectedness’ focused on creating a sense of campus community, improving the campus environment and promoting relationships among students and with faculty. Merriam (2005) noted that her research supported Thiessen and Looker’s (1999) view that there were “persistent gender differences” about community involvement and focus. She noted that females focused on multiple aspects of their present and future such as education, family, and work while men were more work focused. Quellette (2010) discussed the challenge of defining how this was established because it was often related to ‘the feel’. This ‘feel’ of the campus was considered organic in nature and reflective of the people on campus and the cultural norms. And, the extent to which this ‘feel’ was valued differed between males and females.

Whereas in the past, post-secondary institutions exhibited a distinct divide between students and faculty and an elitist air about the institution itself. By comparison, trades or skill-based industries were apprenticeships or job-training methods of instruction and therefore would not have required a campus and therefore campus environment was not present (James, 2010). Those who went to university were among the elite because most of those who could afford to attend were from wealthy families (Sonbol, 2012). Although the primary focus of these universities was academics, students and faculty showed a sense of pride toward them. Today, many students exhibit a sense of pride or loyalty. This was common among many American universities where there was a connection to the institution or sorority (Stateuniversity, 2014). Skolnick and Jones (1992) indicated that this also existed in Canada. Students have shown a sense of pride and loyalty toward their graduating institution.

Although university affiliation alone could not create a sense of belonging, this affiliation may or may not have impacted, student success. There was evidence to suggest that belonging to a community or being held accountable, does have a positive influence on reducing rates of attrition (Bailey et al., 2004). This sense of community stemmed from the feeling of belonging and could be developed in several ways. Bailey et al. (2004) determined that the feeling of belonging as a result of increased college engagement was more evident in students who were enrolled in residential campuses. Although many researchers indicated a reciprocal relationship between the rate of engagement, the sense of college community and student academic and social success, they also noted that increased engagement was the greater predictor of success than the

reverse for both males and females (Bergen-Cico & Viscomi, 2013; Jager-Hyman & Coles; Kuh, 2005; Savitz-Romer, 2009; Swail, 2004).

Acquiring Transferrable Skills

Participation in on-campus extracurricular activities helped to fulfill the social needs of students. It also offered them the opportunity to acquire ‘soft skills’ and to develop self-confidence. This could be even more valuable for females who faced a “cultural backlash that does not support the employment of women” (Williams, Bhanugopan & Fish, 2011, p. 200). Co-curricular activities were defined as activities in which students voluntarily participate, gave of their time, or competed in without receiving any direct academic credit. As previously noted, such activities can include, but were exclusive to: athletics clubs, sports or fitness participation, student government, skills competitions, volunteer trips or interest based types of clubs (chess, choir, and writing). Not only do students have the opportunity to develop their personal interests but they can also benefit from building connections with students and staff. Bergen-Cico & Viscomi (2012) stated that both male and female students benefited from fostering social and communication skills but women experienced even greater increases in their GPA. Research by Rhodes and Lounsbury (2013) stated that the development of leadership, organizational, time management, and communication and language skills was a direct result of participation. Keen and Hall (2009) indicated that an “appreciation for diversity” was another benefit (p. 76). Although some of these skills could be acquired through the curriculum, the absence of pressure for grades, promotes learning for learning

sake. This was said to help to support transferrable skill development and support student success in- and outside the classroom.

Education in Qatar

As previously discussed, formal education and the development of transferrable skills, required to compete in the global economy, were new pursuits for Qatari nationals. Although Middle Eastern researchers and inventors boast a multitude of early advancements in math, science and medicine, their history of formal education was very recent (Rostron, 2009).

Historical Context

This was especially true in Qatar, the small oil rich Arabian Peninsula with a population of nearly two million, of which less than 300,000 were Qatari. It was considered the richest country in the world (Stasz, Eide & Martorell, 2007). For centuries Qataris have lived as nomadic Bedouin tribes and survived on fishing, pearl diving and some merchant trade. Women were responsible for finding and collecting water, caring for the children and supporting the family. This harsh way of life instilled in the people strong ties to the family, which was built on trust and honour. This trust, respect and honour were evident in the value that Qataris hold for their families and for relationships. These familial bonds were cemented by their religious beliefs. Religion has had a profound influence on what was taught and how it was taught. Similar to other countries in this region, early education in Qatar was through the oral tradition, from the Quran and has only offered formal education for half a century (Sonbol, 2012). These early schools

offered Qatari boys and girls free primary and secondary education accompanied by the incentive of a stipend for attending (Stasz, Eide & Martorell, 2007).

With a rich history steeped in a culture of survival, education was not woven into the fabric of Qatar. The people were not only influenced by the harsh reality of the barren desert and their poverty but they were and continue to be influenced by Islam, which does not encourage critical questioning. Rostron (2009) reiterated that anyone who questioned his or her own personal faith could be charged with heresy. Open, critical thought and discussion were not fostered within Qatari culture. The result of this was acceptance of one's plight in life (Sonbol, 2012).

Post-Secondary

Because post-secondary education in Qatar was a relatively new undertaking with colleges and universities establishing themselves during the 1970's, it was expected that it would take several generations of education before critical thinking was culturally embraced. The Qatari businesswoman, Buthaina Al Ansari (2014) discussed the valuable impact that post-secondary education has had on this country. She noted that Qatar was increasingly beginning to focus on capacity building through the education of its people and that women had to claim their position. Oppression of women by keeping them out of the public eye and work force was a reflection of fear by the older generation, not a reflection of religious doctrine. In order to overcome this fear and to meet the demands for skilled, educated workers, post-secondary education was seen as the only long-term solution.

As mentioned earlier, Qatar University opened in 1977, while other institutions such as the College of the North Atlantic – Qatar followed several decades later (College

of the North Atlantic, 2014; Stasz, Eide & Martorell, 2007; Rostron, 2009). Because of Qatar's wealth, it had the means to import educational expertise by opening satellite campuses of several colleges and universities. This was the beginning of the system of post-secondary education in Qatar. Specialist teachers from around the world were hired to improve the level of English to compete on the global market and to fulfill the local demands for employees.

Although these institutions were commissioned for their best practices, the diverse student body made it necessary to adapt home practices to fit local culture (Wood, 2011). The primary challenge of replicating a campus and its culture was that cultures could not simply be transplanted. Both Wood (2011) and Lemke-Westcott and Johnson (2014) indicated the opening a satellite campus brought with it pre-established educational standards, a curriculum and best practice pedagogy. They also noted that it was important to adapt the campus culture to reflect cultural sensitivity and appropriateness. Lemke-Westcott and Johnson conducted workshops at a Qatari post-secondary institution to gather background and learning styles information about their students to assess whether these matched with the western-dominant teaching styles. Evidence of increased post-secondary enrollment indicated that campuses were successful in adapting to the culturally diverse needs of Qatar in spite of the notable differences between the teaching and learning styles. These differences were seen as a reflection of culture and existed across genders (Rostron, 2009; Williams, Bhanugopan & Fish, 2011). Adapting to local culture to support both genders was important but it was more urgent with the increased numbers of female Qatari nationals enrolled in colleges and universities. These increases required a focus on improving strategies for retention by supporting student engagement.

Women in Education

Recognizing the importance of campus community required colleges to consider the influence of gender. From a perspective of equality, the culturally accepted view of women in Qatar warranted a gender-based investigation into how best to promote female student success. Early research on human development and learning has presented different perspectives on female development. Writers and philosophers such as Plato and Daniel Defoe were two of the many great thinkers who emphasized the merits of educating women as a means of improving society. Plato's *Republic* written in 360 B.C.E., although acknowledging the physical differences in females and males, stated that both should receive equal education to encourage the development of society. He stated that the responsibility of raising a child lay not only with the parents, but also with the community. More than 2000 years later, Daniel Defoe concluded in his discussion *On Educating Women* (1719) that women have equal capacity for learning and that learned women make better companions. The debate over the value of educating women could be seen throughout history and continues today in certain regions of the world (Rao & Gupta, 2006). Guarino and Tanner (2012), stated that not only do women benefit, but so too does society. They noted that increased education resulted in the increased health of a community.

Women's Rights. Recognizing that education benefits society and that women in the Middle East did not have the same rights and freedoms as those in Western countries, one must be cautious not to pass judgment. Educators and researchers should be cautious when discussing the presence or absence of women's power and rights. Sheikha Mouza Bint Nasser (as cited in Sonbol, 2012) wrote, "[m]y own experiences and memories of the

women who have populated my own life-my childhood memories and the stories passed on to me by my grandmothers – were in complete contradiction to the stereotypes I often encountered regarding Gulf women” (p. 1). Muslim women of this region were assumed to be without rights or power to evoke change. Although, there was undeniable evidence to support this with arranged marriages among the young and women being forbidden certain rights and freedoms, there were sufficient examples of women wielding power and evoking change in Qatar and the Middle East. Al-Malki et al. (2012) cautioned critics who to pass judgment Arab culture, society and the place of its women, to not do so through the lens of a western worldview. They identified this lens as one through which women were viewed as passive recipients of fate.

Cultural Norms. From this non-judgmental lens, this researcher hoped to find strategies for supporting women’s progress. From a cultural perspective, girls were segregated during secondary school and were dissuaded from interacting with males at college or university (Sonbol, 2012; Stasz, Eide & Martorell, 2007). Those who choose to attend mixed-gender schools were strongly ‘encouraged’ to behave modestly and remained outside of the public eye (Williams, Bhanugopan & Fish, 2011). They were also frequently dissuaded from participating in sports because of the perception that sport was considered a masculine endeavor. Their absence from these activities limits their experiences and the development of transferrable skills. As a culture that has been profoundly impacted by extreme wealth, the citizens were afforded a great deal of luxury including drivers, housekeepers, nannies for their children and absence of financial motivation or the responsibility to work hard (Al Ansari, 2014). From a cultural

perspective, Qatari females were more likely to engage in stereotypically female activities.

Female Experience in Qatar. This was not true for all women, and it was changing with more women finding academic success in many areas of society. As mentioned earlier, female success was also evident with the increasing numbers of women completing undergraduate and graduate degrees. This shift of decreased numbers of males and increasing females in higher education was not only true in Qatar (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005; Qui, 2008). Research from Canada, the United States and Qatar indicated that an average of 65% of those attending colleges and universities were female (Case, 2011; Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005; *Permanent Population Committee*, 2012). And, although women faced limitations in terms of opportunities for study abroad, or working or studying with the opposite gender, evidence indicated that they work within the boundaries to achieve higher education (Stasz, Eide & Martorell, 2011). With the support of the Qatari government and advocates such as Sheikha Mouza (Office of Her Highness Sheikha Mouza bint Nasser State of Qatar, 2014) the focus was on women's capacity building through education. The goal was to subsequently increase the number of Qataris in industry leadership positions (Khatri, 2014; Scott-Jackson et al., 2012). As mentioned earlier, statistics indicated although there was an increase in employed nationals, Qatari females still faced an 8% unemployment rate compared to the national average of 0.6%. That placed females at a disadvantage (*Permanent Population Committee*, 2012). This was evidence of a disconnect between education and employment, especially for women. Stasz, Eide and Martorell (2011) indicated several possible gaps in services for women:

women were less likely to study abroad for higher degrees, they faced limited choices if they were higher-achievers or had learning difficulties, had less graduate options and graduate without the transferrable skills necessary for successful employment.

Education and Employment Disconnect

As a means of supporting women in their future goals, this research project investigated strategies for enhancing students' transferrable skills. The *Permanent Population Committee* (2010) and UNICEF (2011) indicated that there was a discrepancy between graduation and employment rates for women. Females, although educated, were not successfully transitioning from higher education to employment. Research suggested that factors such as a lack of social, leadership and transferrable skills, cultural and social inhibitors such as the absence of family support for future aspirations, limit their capacity for gaining employment (Stasz, Eide & Martorell, 2007).

The boundaries faced by women extended beyond rules of social interaction. They also limited their options for the future. Although gender-based socialization existed around the world and began at a very young age with girls or boys 'colors or toys,' it was more inhibiting in the Gulf region where it openly dictated female behavior. Women were less likely to be awarded leadership positions, as these require what Gilligan describes as 'voice' (1993). Within this culture and within society in general, voicing strong opinions has been viewed as masculine. Opportunities for asserting leadership skills were not aligned with what Hayes (2001) terms as the "gender culture" (p.39). This reflected the gender-based cultural norms.

In spite of these norms, women in Qatar were moving to positions of power and leadership, albeit slowly. Al-Malki, Kaufer, Ishizaki and Dreher (2012) identified Chalou's (2004) notion of the *MENA Middle Eastern Paradox*. The premise being that education equated to economic empowerment especially for women. However, this equation posed a challenge in the economically empowered country of Qatar for the following reasons: the influx of foreign workers, family pressure not to work, no intention of working and educational pursuits in areas that were in lesser demand. There was also the issue of excessive wealth, which was seen to decrease the motivation to work, get good grades or to be engaged. In addition, employers have expressed disappointment in the shortcomings of Qataris in not possessing "soft-skills, such as good work attitude and a willingness to learn" (Stasz, Eide & Martorell, 2007, p. 16). These skills could be derived from community engagement, volunteer work or service learning. There was evidence that these skills could be linked not only to academic success for students with such experiences but also to the increased potential for employment (Balatti & Falk, 2002; Bremer et al., 2011; Case, 2011; Clark, Andrews & Gorman, 2013; Dickinson, 2000; Fowler & Boylan, 2010; Hughes, Karp, Fermin & Bailey, 2006; Smith, 2008; Tinto, 1998; Wood, 2011; Zaft, 2008). In spite of this, women were not taking advantage of these opportunities to gain valuable transferrable life and job skills that employers demand. This gap could help to explain the divide between education and employment rates (Clark & Caffarella, 1999).

Research proposed that college engagement supported social-well-being by fostering a sense of belonging (Baker, Boland & Laffey, 2006). At the college, students also benefitted from the cultural diversity of this social interaction. The research was not

definitive about whether women and men develop differently or whether they were products of social norms and expectations. Thiessen and Looker (as cited in Merriam, 2005) argued that when comparing male and female development, women “appear to live in a more multidimensional world” and were thereby profoundly influenced by their social interactions (p. 7). Although the debate around gender-based differences in learning remains, Gilligan (1993) posited that “[t]he quality of embeddedness in social interaction and personal relationships that characterizes women’s lives...” (p.9). Others suggested that women were social learners and their learning was influenced by their relationships (Hayes, 2001; Stanistreet, 2012). Morsi (as cited in Ursula, 2012) an Egyptian female university student reflected on the notion that there were “very old fashioned gender roles” which inhibited many forms of participation in the social sphere. For this and other reasons, women were limited in their ability or desire to engage in college community and co-curricular activities.

Conclusion

With women surpassing men in terms of educational achievement in Qatar, there was evidence to suggest that gender roles have changed. Traditionally women have been less educated and their role has been to care for the home and family. But with increased numbers of women graduating the focus has shifted from encouraging access to education toward supporting women in gaining employment. One strategy to improve this could be by encouraging college engagement. Two things needed to happen for this to occur: students needed to recognize the value of participation and real and perceived barriers to engagement needed to overcome.

This chapter provided an overview of the key concepts relevant to student success, community building, co-curricular engagement and female experience in Qatar. The following chapter will discuss the methodology used to gather the data. It will outline the procedures, the context of the study and how the participants were self-selected.

Chapter 3 Methodology

*“Sometimes the questions are complicated
and the answers are simple.” Dr. Suess*

A review of literature was discussed in Chapter Two by outlining the context, the concepts necessary for understanding the study as they related to female student experience. Chapter Three will discuss the methodology by outlining the research paradigm, the sample population, and the process of recruiting, data collection and analysis.

Introduction

Understanding a College Community: Fostering Female Student Success at the Canadian Technical College Qatar was a research project that used mixed methods. As noted in Chapter One, this study investigated whether relationships existed between academic achievements, student engagement in co-curricular activities and perceptions of college experience in female students at the technical college. The goal of this study was to investigate whether students recognized that co-curricular involvement helped them to develop transferrable skills as a means of increasing academic and future success. This chapter will provide a detailed description of the methodology used to conduct this study. It will offer an explanation and justification for the general paradigm of the study, details

about how participants were recruited, how the survey and interview were developed and delivered and the data were analyzed.

General Paradigm

This mixed methods research project applied a critical feminist perspective to allow for a deeper understanding into the complex nature of the socio-economic, cultural and religious influences on the participants. As an Arabic-speaking predominantly Islamic country, with a small population of very wealthy Qatari nationals, it would be neglectful to ignore the culture, social structure and diversity of this region and country. From a cultural perspective, Qatar was embryonic in terms of formal education with compulsory education that was mandated in the 1950's (Stasz, Eide & Martorell, 2007). As a country, it was still in its developmental stage, there was generally a deficit of existing research. There was an even greater deficit of available literature on post-secondary education and the female experience. To address this unique cultural context and the lack of literature, this study utilized the explanatory value of qualitative research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2012; Lichtman, 2013; Merriam 2009). This contextual data was used not only to gain a deeper understand of female experience but to develop strategies for success.

In order to support student success, real and perceived barriers were identified. From these barriers, suggested strategies were developed with the goal of improving the quality of life for female students (Creswell, 2012). As indicated, data for this study was gathered using an online survey to collect quantitative data and general knowledge about

student experience. Interviews were later conducted to give value to the context of the female experience (Gilligan, 1999).

Recruiting

Participants for the study were self-selected from the entire female student population of approximately 800, via the internal email server and students self-selected or voluntarily participated by clicking on the survey link attached to the email (see Appendix E). An online survey tool was used to connect with the greatest number of potential participants. It was also the most frequently used form of communication for students.

As a mixed gender satellite campus of a Canadian technical college in the Doha Qatar, this population represents a unique context for a study. As will be discussed in Chapter Three, the Qatari context was what makes this study unique. Women in this region faced limitations in terms of access to education and employment and as a method for addressing this inequality, the population was chosen. This population was also chosen for convenience and as it met the criteria for the study.

Ethics

Ethics approval was granted prior to the start of the study. Approval was granted from Memorial University's Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) (see Appendix F) and the college Institutional Review Board (IREB) (See Appendix H). Details of the research were fully disclosed to the participants. Students were informed about the voluntary nature of their participation. The informed consent disclosed the purpose, process, confidentiality and the ethical implications of the study.

This was made available during both phases of the research: informed consent and confidentiality were offered to the fullest extent possible.

Informed Consent. For the survey, informed consent was indicated when students clicked the survey link (see Appendix B). The informed consent document was attached to the recruitment email for students to review. Once students completed the survey and clicked to close, their data could not be removed from the study, as the data were anonymous. Formal written consent was obtained for the interview and a copy of the consent form was provided to the participant with the opportunity to withdraw their participation within 48 hours of the completion of the interview (see Appendix D). Participants were given the opportunity to review, agreed with and to sign their interview transcripts.

The potential harm of this study related to participants experiencing feelings of inadequacy for not participating in co-curricular activities. Confidentiality and a sense of inadequacy were the only possible ethical concerns. Participant names were not recorded on either the survey or interview data. Survey and interview results were stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home and interviews took place in an external office on campus, late in the day on the last day of the week to ensure students were less likely to be seen interviewing. To the extent possible, precautions were taken to ensure confidentiality and to reassure participants of the value of their contribution to improving female experience. Participants could withdraw from the study at any point until the data was compiled. From that point, the interview data were detailed in the study's findings anonymously. Interview participants were presented with a certificate of appreciation to acknowledge the value of their participation and as an incentive for volunteering.

Researcher Bias. Reducing researcher bias was imperative to supporting internal and external validity and to ensuring the reliability of the results (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). This was addressed by asking all participants the same questions in the same order. Inter-rater reliability was established, as all interviews were conducted by one interviewer (the researcher). Open-ended questions were used to help reduce reactivity bias or the interviewer's reaction indicating the right or wrong answer was minimized (Creswell, 2012). Further to this, the questions were not invasive nor were they sensitive in nature. The interviewer's background and experience with the regional nuances and sensitivities allowed for the adoption of a non-judgmental approach to questioning, the development of a positive rapport through respect and appreciation for their participation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2012).

According to Cho and Trent (2006), validity is the assurance that the knowledge gained through research, corresponds with reality. As a means of ensuring descriptive validity, interviews were recorded and transcribed directly from digital recordings. The interview transcripts were completed within 24 hours of the interviews being conducted to ensure that the recount was reliable, and participants were given the opportunity to review their interview transcripts prior to data being collated (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

By using mixed methods, triangulation of the data was possible, whereby the study used "different methods on the same object of study" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 196). This study triangulated its finding by gathering quantitative research data from the surveys and from qualitative data from the interview. Although the sample of

$n=30$ was representative of a normal distribution, external validity, or the ability to generalize, was limited due to the small sample size. The ability to generalize was also cautioned because the study was unique in terms of socio-culturally context (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). The design was intended to increase reliability and validity by triangulating existing data on female student participation in college extra-curricular activities, survey and a qualitative interview.

The following questions guided the research, participant selection and recruitment, the data collection tools and the data analysis:

1. Is there a positive correlation between female participation in the college community and student academic success?
2. Is there are positive correlation between female participation in college community and student's positive attitude toward college experience?
3. Why do or don't female students participate in college co-curricular activities and supports; do they recognize the value of engagement?
4. What can be done to improve female student engagement in the college community?
5. Are female students who are engaged in college community college more likely to have clearly defined post-graduate plans for further education or employment?

The procedure for answering these questions will be discussed throughout this chapter.

Participants

This study intended to gain a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural experiences and restraints on women within the context of a mixed-gender, technical college in the predominantly Muslim country of Qatar. It also intended to make recommendations for engaging female students in co-curricular activities to promote student success. Participants for the study were self-selected from the female student body. This study was conducted in a medium sized, satellite campus of a Canadian technical college, which has been in operation for ten years and served approximately 2,500 students per semester. The college offered two and three-year diploma programs based on the demands of industry. It emphasized practical skill acquisition through a work-term component that each student is required to complete prior to graduation.

Participants were attending a program of study within the five program departments. These could include: Medical Radiography, Business Administration or Engineering Technologist. The student population of the college was diverse in terms of ethnicity, socioeconomics, program and program year and they ranged in age from 16 to 40 years old. Although the total student body represented diverse religions, the country consisted of predominantly Muslim students who were not queried about their religious preferences. Participation in the study was voluntary for both phases of the study.

Participants interested in partaking in a follow-up interview were self-selected when they entered their email address on the survey. This indicated consent for further contact from the interviewer.

Data Collection

The data collection process consisted of two-phases and gathered two types of data: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative data was collected through an online survey. The qualitative data was collected through the follow-up interviews that were conducted with survey volunteers. Data collection took place over two-months during the fall of 2014. The process and procedure for the study will be discussed in the following sections.

Survey

The first phase of the study was the online survey. These sections will discuss its development and delivery procedure.

Development. The online survey was developed to gather quantitative data as part of a mixed methods study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). An online survey was more effective for this generation and population who were constantly connected. The online tool also ensured ease of access (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Eastmond, 1998). This survey was developed by the researcher using the Canadian website Fluid Surveys. The survey consisted of ten questions of which two were further divided into 8-10 subsections (see Appendix A). Some questions used a Likert scale while other question types included single and multiple selected response or dropdown options. The final question requested volunteers for participation in the interview. Those interested were asked to include their email address for further contact.

The survey gathered demographic data and explored whether relationships exist between the variables and influenced by the study's research questions. The survey

examined the female demographic in terms of age, nationality, GPA, family status and program of study and it was available in both English and Arabic. The survey investigated the rate of engagement in a range of co-curricular college activities (i.e. leadership programs, peer mentoring, fitness and recreation, skills and or health competitions etc.). It also questioned students about how they felt about various aspects of their college experience, reasons for disengagement from the college community and their future plans.

The survey was developed in English with an attached Arabic version. Although the first language of the students was diverse, as a Canadian satellite institution, the language of instruction and of general communication was English. Students studying in their academic program were required to achieve a minimum level of English fluency. Because Arabic is the national language, a translated Arabic version was attached.

There were challenges with the translation process because Arabic is a phonetic language with numerous dialects that deviate from the standard written Arabic. There are different spellings and multiple words with the same meaning. Therefore, obtaining an accurate Arabic translation was difficult. The English version was translated into Arabic by a male Business Studies Graduate from Memorial University whose first language was Arabic, Lebanese dialect; this translated version was then translated back into English by a female, Arabic first-language speaking colleague. The Arabic to English translation was not an accurate reflection of the original English survey. To ensure that the students were responding to the exact question, the process was redone. The second English to Arabic translation was completed; this Arabic version was then translated back into English. After the second attempt, the translation was deemed to be an accurate reflection

of the original message. It was noted on the recruitment email that the Arabic version was as close as possible to the English. The Arabic version was used to clarify an unclear idea.

The survey was piloted by distributed to select participants known to the researcher and who were outside of the college. The survey questions were peer-reviewed by objective researchers and colleagues to ensure clarity and absence of biased or leading questions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009)

Delivery. The Department of Student Affairs distributed the survey recruitment email. The email contained a link to *Fluid Surveys*. It was first distributed on a Thursday (the last day of the week), prior to a week's vacation period, with a reminder email distributed the third day after the students returned to classes. An email, which requested participation in the study, was sent to the sample population ($N = 800$) on three occasions. The survey was then closed after four weeks and the data were analyzed to ensure that all questions were completed. The survey remained open for five weeks. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the survey data were conducted. It was used to investigate whether the results showed a statistically significant correlation between GPA and rate of engagement; GPA and perception of experience; and rate of engagement and perception of experience.

Interview

To contextualize the survey responses and to gain an in-depth understanding of the female experience at the college, one-on-one interviews were conducted. The interviews were the second phase of the research process.

Development. They were conducted to gain a contextualized, qualitative perspective of female student experience at the college. The interview questions were developed out of the survey data. They were intended to gain a deeper understanding of the survey responses and to contextualize them, gather information about underlying reasons for disengagement and identify whether students recognized the value of participation. The goal was to gather qualitative data on reasons for and against co-curricular participation, how this may or may not have impacted their GPA and their future plans. The questions assessed reasons for choice of program, plans for the future, how difficult it might be for women to find jobs and why they thought Qatari women experienced such a high rate of employment. Questions also related to participant's overall college experience, their level of engagement, what they learned from participating, why they thought people did not participate, whether the college had adequate activities of interest to students, whether information about these activities was easy to access and recommendations for encouraging participation. They were also questions about: why they felt women were attaining higher levels of education than men in Qatar; why Qatari women find it more difficult to find jobs; what the value of co-curricular engagement was; and what could be done to increase the number of people who participate in activities. See Appendix C for a full list of the interview questions. The interview questions were peer-reviewed by objective researchers and colleagues to ensure clarity and absence of bias or leading questions.

Delivery. The ten survey participants who agreed to be contacted ($n=10$) were emailed on three occasions to request a meeting time. Those who volunteered were informed that their survey responses would no longer be anonymous if they agreed to be

contacted by the interviewer. Following the completion of the survey, three ($n=3$) 40-minute interviews were conducted on the college campus over three weeks. They were conducted over three consecutive Thursdays (the final day of the week) at approximately 3:30pm. Interviews were conducted at this time as participants were finished classes for the weekend and therefore less rushed. Informed consent offered information about the interview procedure, the data collection and analysis (see Appendix D). Participants signed to indicate that they understood the purpose and implications of the study. They were reminded that they had the right to withdraw at any point during interview and up to seven days after its completion. They were provided with a copy for their records.

Permission to record the interview was requested and granted by all three participants (See Appendices G & I). Prior to recording, interview participants were made feel comfortable through informal introductions and small talk. They were also more relaxed as they were looking forward to the weekend and had time for the interview. The interviews were conducted over a short time frame to ensure reliability (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2013). The interview process and procedure were validated through consultations with other researchers and colleagues. As a mixed methods research project the interview was intended to triangulate and validate the survey results (Bapir, 2012; Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009)

The delay in administering the survey, as a result of college research processes, could have resulted in lower numbers of interview participants as the students were well into the semester and too busy with their studies to participate in the interview. They were also reminded of the value of their participation and that they would have the opportunity to review their transcripts to ensure reliability of transcription (Merriam,

2009). The interviews were then transcribed from the audio recording and the resulting documents equated to a total of 47 pages of transcribed interview text. Participants were contacted within seven days of their interview and a meeting was set to review their transcripts prior the data's inclusion within the study's findings and collect their certificates. This review helped to ensure accuracy and reliability of the transcript responses (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). All three students indicated that the interview data was accurate.

Data Analysis

The data analyzed used both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis. The quantitative survey results were analyzed to test the three hypotheses and to calculate whether the results showed statistically significant correlations. The qualitative results were analyzed by applying the constant comparison method to identify codes, concepts and themes.

Survey

Based on the research questions, the following hypotheses were tested to assess whether a statistically significant relationship existed between the following variables: student academics and perceived success and rate of student engagement.

H₀ 1 – There is no correlation between GPA and rate of college co-curricular engagement.

H₁ 1 - There is a correlation between GPA and rate of college co-curricular engagement.

H₀ 2 - There is no correlation between rate of college co-curricular engagement and rate of perception of college experience.

H_{1 2} - There is a correlation between rate of college co-curricular engagement and rate of perception of college experience.

H_{o 3} - There is no correlation between GPA and rate of perception of college experience.

H_{1 3} - There is no correlation between GPA and rate of perception of college experience.

The data were analyzed to identify whether correlations existed between the following variables: grade-point-average (GPA), college co-curricular engagement, perception of college experience and perceived barriers to college engagement. The data were analyzed to accept or reject the hypotheses. By cross-tabulating the variables, linear regression R^2 and r were calculated. Using the r -value Pearson Correlational Co-efficient was calculated to establish whether correlations between the variables were statistically significant. The survey data were later used to create the interview questions in order to gain a deeper understanding of the survey responses.

Interview

The interview transcripts were then analyzed using the Constant Comparison Method for qualitative research (Lichtman, 2013; Merriam, 2009). The raw data was coded for key ideas during a careful reading of the text. These initial codes were revisited and reduced by deleting repetitions. From the second coding, categories were created based on thematic groupings (see Appendix J). These categories were collapsed into five concepts or themes. This method was used for its “explanatory power” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 601). These collapsed codes were categorized into five themes and supported in the findings using quoted interview data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Lichtman, 2013). These themes were used to develop an in-depth understanding of

female student experience with co-curricular activities (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). These themes related to student participation in the college community, student awareness of the value of participation in the acquisition of transferrable skills and future success. The results were also used to generate recommendations on how to support student engagement. To answer the research questions: Why were female students at the college not participating in co-curricular activities or engaging in the college community? Were students who were engaged in co-curricular activities more likely to develop definitive plans for the future? And, do participants recognize the value of participation in college life? The interviews provided explanatory verification of the survey data.

Limitations

Limitations of this study included the need for a longitudinal study to follow students through the transition from college to the workforce, family life or further education. As a longitudinal study, it could also investigate the link between rates of college engagement and rate of employment. Had institutional data been available, it could have further verified the study's findings and provided additional quantitative data for correlational purposes.

As indicated above, the ability to generalize was limited because of the highly unique context of the college and because a limited amount of data. The small sample size made it difficult to generalize the finding of so the study. The respondents represented 4% of the female college population. Although the sample size was small, it was representative of a normal distribution. While the goal of the study was to identify

reasons for disengagement for all females, the small number of Qatari respondents limited the findings.

The purpose of this student was to evaluate female engagement as a means of increasing GPA, positive self-perception and development of transferrable skills to improve chances of employment; and this was the population less likely to respond to the survey or participate in the interview. The limited number of responses by Qataris female participants prevented the study from drawing conclusions about strategies to improve Qatari academic success or strategies for improving the acquisition of transferrable skills. As a study that took place in the only mixed-gender Canadian technical college in Qatar, the unique nature of social and cultural context of the study limited the ability to generalize the findings to other institutions.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the methodology used to conduct this study. This mixed methods, critical feminist research project investigated strategies for improving female student experience. By administering an online survey and one-on-one interviews, the data was collected and analyzed over a two-month period using both quantitative and qualitative analysis method. From this, themes were identified and explained and recommendations were discussed.

The following two chapters will present the findings of the online survey and the interviews. They will discuss the demographic of the participants; provide an analysis of whether relationships exist between the variable of GPA, engagement and experience. The chapters will also identify the barriers to engagement and present recommendations

by students on how to overcome these. Chapter Four will outline the results from the survey data.

Chapter 4 Survey Results

“Well-behaved women rarely make history.” Ulrich (2008)

Chapter Three outlined the methodology used to investigate the link between student success and co-curricular engagement for female students. It discussed the sampling procedure, the method for data collection, the process used for analyzing the data, limitations and ethical considerations of the study. Chapter Four will present and explain the results of the online survey by detailing demographic and variable trends, correlational findings and qualitative reasons for disengagement.

Introduction

The review of the literature indicated that student engagement and support for the whole student promoted student success and that student success was viewed as requiring more stimulation than just grades. The research indicated that higher enrollment in colleges and universities, coupled with the lower retention rates, required more emphasis on supporting the student once they were enrolled. The research also indicated that co-curricular engagement increased the potential for the acquisition of transferrable skills such as leadership, self-confidence, communication and social skills.

The online survey investigated these key concepts by evaluating the relationships between the variables of: student co-curricular engagement, GPA and perception of college experience, and to identify barriers to participation. The interview was later conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the barriers to engagement and to develop

possible solutions to improve student success. This chapter will briefly review the survey design, present data on participant demographics, variables of GPA, engagement and perception of experience. Following this, it will present the findings of the correlational tests that were conducted to test the hypotheses and will provide an overview of the data on reasons for disengagement.

Results

The survey results were collected and analyzed over the period of four weeks. The results were analyzed to identify demographic trends and correlations between the demographic and behavioral variables of: ethnicity, GPA, student perception, rate of engagement, reasons for disengagement and post-graduate future plans. The results were analyzed to identify whether statistically significant correlations existed.

Demographics.

Thirty-three participants responded to the survey. Three were incomplete and omitted from the data. From the total female population, thirty surveys were complete $N = 33$ with $n = 30$. The respondent sample size offered a normal distribution and allowed for statistical inference (Lind, Marchal & Wathen, 2012). This sample population represented 4% of the total female college population (College of the North Atlantic Qatar, 2014). Demographically, the survey participants represented a diverse sample of nationalities, programs, year of study, ages, GPA and levels of engagement. The survey respondents were representative of the student body in terms of ethnicity. As shown in Table 1, the highest responder rate was by nationality expatriate Arabs (Arabic speakers from other Middle Eastern countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine), which

constituted 33% of the respondents. Qatari participants constituted 7% of the survey respondents. College administrators have corroborated these findings but access to this information was not publicly available. Survey respondents ranged in age from 19 – 25 and were in a mix of students at various stages of their three-year programs.

Table 1

Number of survey respondents by nationality.

<u>Nationality</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>
Qatari	2
Expatriate Arab	10
Pakistani	6
Indian	7
Filipina	3
Other	2

Note: The ethnicity demographics were representative of the college (n =30). The survey demographic where n =30 was representative of many nationalities in the college except Qataris who represent 30% of the college population. [Source: Survey Data].

GPA

The data was analyzed to identify the percentage of participant responses per category of GPA to identify whether participants with a higher GPA were more inclined to respond. GPA was the overall mean grade which is reflective of a letter where 4.0 = A or Excellent, and 3.0 = B or Good. For the purpose of this study, GPA was delineated into 5 categories (below 2, 2.0 – 2.4, 2.5 – 2.9, 3.0 – 3.5, 3.6 – 4.0) because the study took

place mid-semester, student's precise GPA was not available until semester and program completion. Student on-going GPA was available for students to access on the college Student Self-Service system and was self-reported on the survey. Of the 30 respondents 47% of respondents held a GPA of 3.6 or higher and an additional 30% held a GPA between 3.0 – 3.5 which was considered 'good' or 'excellent' in terms of letter grades. Participating in the survey showed engagement in college activities. *Table 2* indicates that 77% of the survey participants exhibited an above average GPA (greater than 2.5), while the remaining 23% of the participants indicated having less than 3.0 GPA. Of the two Qatari participants, their GPA's were 2.5 and 3.6 - 4.0. Although Filipino students responded to the survey, they represented a far greater proportion of the student body.

Table 2

Number of survey respondents by GPA.

<u>GPA</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>
3.6 - 4.0	14
3.0 – 3.5	9
2.5 – 2.9	4
2.0 – 2.4	2
Below 2.0	1

Note: Of the respondents, n =30, 27 indicated a GPA of above average or average.

[Source: Survey Data].

Engagement

Rate of engagement assessed how frequently respondents accessed ten co-curricular college related activities. The level of engagement, as defined in Chapter Two, was assessed based on participant responses to 11 subsections to the question: “*How often do you access the following college programs or services?*” (see Appendix A). Each response was equated with a numerical value between one and five. The rating scale was based on personal assessment of how ‘often’ participated in co-curricular activities where one equaled ‘never’ and five equaled ‘very often.’ Out of a possible score of 5, the mean rate of engagement for $n = 30$ was 2.48 for all activities by all respondents (see Table 3). The numeric value of 2.48 was representative of ‘hardly ever’ and ‘sometimes.’ Across and within the participants, there was a diverse range of engagement scores between 1.0 and 4.55. The findings indicated that the top three activities students participated in included: volunteering (such as habitat for humanity or fundraising activities), fitness centre activities and the skills competition (competition of skills related to their field of study i.e. debate, computer troubleshooting). The activity that females were less likely to participate in was the Robotics club, which was a club for anyone interested in building robots. Findings indicated that the two Qatari participants self-reported engagement rates of 1.0 and 2.27 which was below the mean of 2.48/5.00.

Table 3

Mean rate of engagement for each co-curricular activity.

<u>Co-curricular Activity</u>	<u>Mean Rate of Engagement</u>
Career Counseling	2.40
Fitness Centre	2.83
Fitness Classes	2.27
Swimming Pool	2.40
Health Services	2.27
Student Clubs	2.57
Volunteering	3.00
Global Village	2.70
Student Council	2.27
Robotics	2.00
Skills Competition	2.63
Mean Rate of Engagement	2.48

Note: n = 30. The mean rate was calculated based on a Likert scale of 1 – 5. [Source: Survey Data].

Perception

The rate of perception reflected how students felt about their experiences with seven different domains within the college from instructors and students to overall college experience. For each domain students responded to the question: *“How would you rate*

your experience with the following?” Responses were gathered using a similar 5-point rating scale where one equaled ‘very negative’ and five equaled ‘very positive’. The mean rate of perception for each student and for the total sample population was calculated. Overall, the students indicated the most positive experiences related to: their department, their instructors and then the college in general. As can be seen in *Table 4*, student perception of their experiences with other students ranked the lowest at 3.72 but still reflects an overall positive experience. The mean perception rate for all activities out of a possible score of 5 was 4.10. This translated into a ‘positive’ experience for each of the seven aspects of college experience. Data indicated that overall student experience was positive.

Table 4

Mean rate of perception of college experience.

<u>Aspect of the College</u>	<u>Mean Rate of Perception</u>
Instructors	4.43
Department	4.43
Faculty	4.13
Students	3.72
Coaches	3.77
Volunteer Leaders	3.80
College Overall	4.40
Mean Rate of Perception	4.10

Note: Overall students indicated a positive perception for each aspect of college experience. n =30. [Source: Survey Data].

Correlational Analysis

As previously indicated, co-curricular engagement and perception of college experience data were collected using an ordinal Likert rating scale. Correlational tests were conducted to investigate whether the results indicated a relationship between the following three data sets: GPA and perception of college experience; GPA and rate of college co-curricular engagement; and perception of college experience and rate of college co-curricular engagement. Data sets were analyzed by calculating each participant's mean rate of engagement and perception; and because GPA is collected

categorically, the GPA raw data was used. A two-tailed test of statistical significance was conducted to test H_{01} , H_{02} and H_{03} , as outlined in Chapter Two. Pearson Correlational Coefficient test of statistical significance was calculated to test whether the hypotheses were accepted or rejected to identify whether relationships existed between the variables.

GPA and Engagement. Data on GPA and engagement were compared using a scatterplot and the linear regression R^2 was calculated. By calculating r , Pearson Correlation Coefficient was run to calculate the p -value. *Figure 1* indicated that $R^2 = 0.143$, $r = 0.38$ and the p -value = 0.03. Based on the two-tailed test of statistical significance H_{01} “*There is no correlation between GPA and rate of college co-curricular engagement*” was rejected ($p = 0.03 < 0.05$). The rejection of H_{01} indicated that a statistically significant positive relationship existed between GPA and rate of engagement.

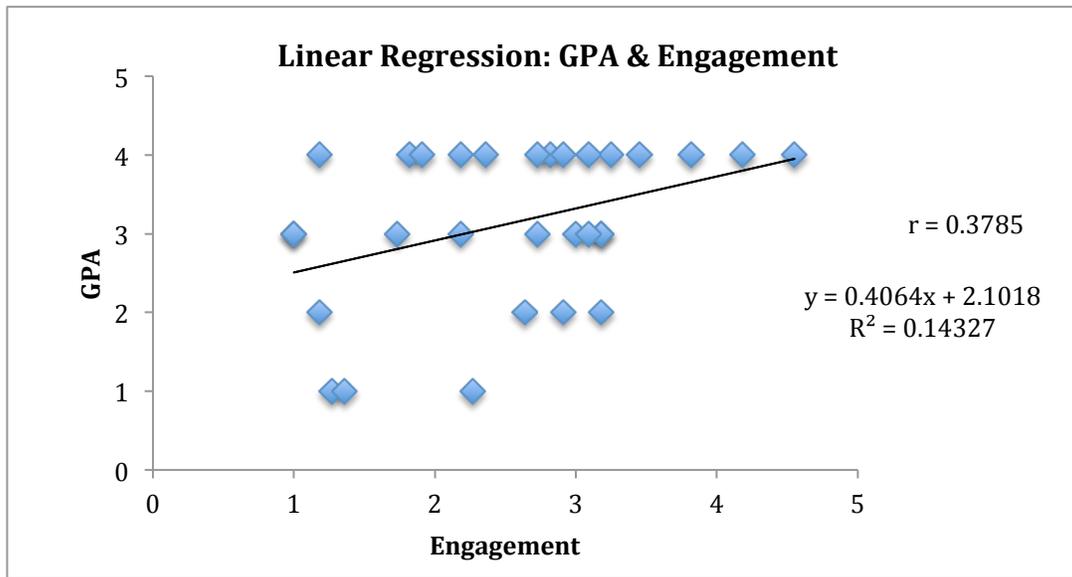


Figure 1. Scatterplot representing the linear regression of GPA and engagement. The sample size was $n = 30$ and it compared categories of GPA and mean rate of engagement on a rating scale of 1 – 5. [Source: Survey Data].

Engagement and Perception. Analysis of the data on perception and engagement for each participant was analyzed using the Pearson Correlational Coefficient test to establish the *p-value* and to assess whether a statistically significant relationship existed between these variables. *Figure 2* showed the linear regression of $R^2 = 0.07227$ with $r = 0.268$ and the *p-value* = 0.03. Based on the two-tailed test of statistical significance, H_0 “*There is no correlation between rate of college co-curricular engagement and perception of college experience*” was accepted ($p = 0.15 < 0.05$). The acceptance of H_0 indicates that a statistically significant relationship did not exist between participant mean rate of perception and mean rate of engagement.

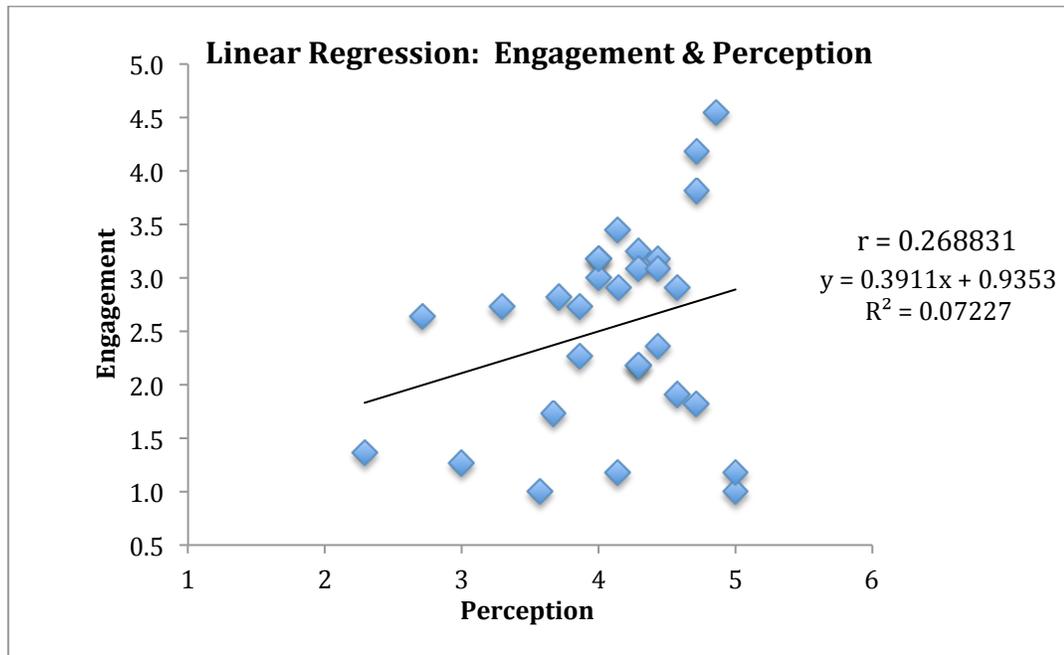


Figure 2. Scatterplot of linear regression of *engagement* and *perception*. The sample size was $n = 30$ and it compared rate of engagement and rate of perception on a rating scale of 1-5. [Source: Survey Data].

GPA and Perception. Statistical analysis comparing categorically based GPA and perception rates were presented in *Figure 2*. The linear regression R^2 and r -value were calculated. Pearson Correlational Coefficient test was used to calculate the p -value to determine whether the relationship between GPA and perception was statistically significant. *Figure 3* indicates $R^2 = 0.03873$ with $r = 0.6223$ and the p -value = 0.00024. Based on the two-tailed test of statistical significance H_0 “There is no correlation between GPA and perception of college experience” was rejected ($p = 0.00024 < 0.05$). The rejection of H_0 means that a statistically significant relationship did exist between participant GPA and mean rate of perception. The research indicated that female

students with a higher GPA were more likely to present positive perceptions of their college experience.

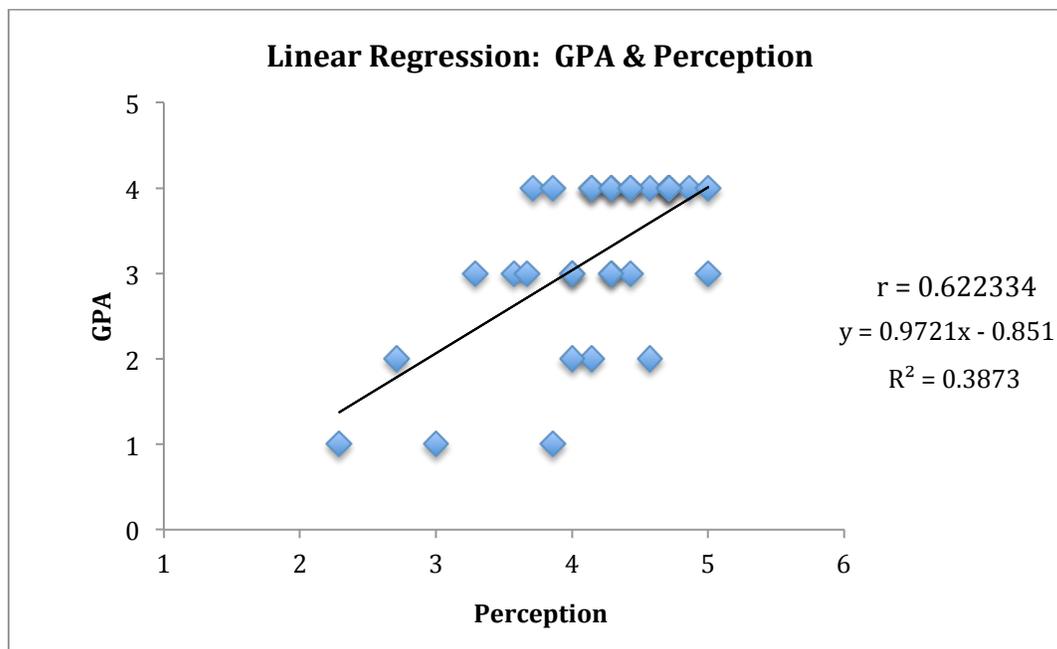


Figure 3. Scatterplot of linear regression of *GPA* and *perception*. The sample size was $n = 30$ and it compared categorically based GPA and mean perception rates for the sample. [Source: Survey Data].

Reasons for Non-Participation

In order to develop recommendations for improving student success through increased female co-curricular engagement, the first step was to identify the reasons for non-participation. Survey question #9 “Why do you not participate in co-curricular activities”, contained a checklist of ten options (see Appendix A) to identify possible reasons why females exhibited low rate of participation. Students were prompted to choose all applicable reasons. From the sample population $n=30$, 54 reasons were given. Of the responses, “Inconvenient times” was identified as the primary reason for non-

participation. Other commonly stated reasons included: “Do not know what is available”, “No time (family responsibility)”, and “Too self-conscious.” Only one participant indicated that the reason for non-participation was because it was “culturally inappropriate.

Table 5

Participant reasons for not participating.

<u>Reasons for Non-Participation</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>
Too much time studying	4
Culturally inappropriate	1
Mixed genders	3
My friends do not	4
Too self-conscious	8
No time (family responsibility)	8
Do not know what is available	9
Inconvenient times	11
I don't want to	5
Other	1
Total	54

Note: Of the top responses three categories were related to the lack of or inconvenience of time. Number of responses $x = 54$. [Source: Survey Data].

Table 5 indicated that cultural restrictions and restrictions based on mixed gender activities were not seen as barriers to engaging in co-curricular activities. These reasons

only constituted 2% and 6% retrospectively, of the perceived barriers to participation.

The barrier of being self-conscious could have reflected being self-conscious around the opposite gender or being unfamiliar with the activities. The 2%, who indicated 'other' as the reason for not participating, did not indicate what 'other' meant. Five of the 30 participants indicated that they were not interested in participating in co-curricular activities on campus.

To assess how students felt about the way they spent their time, they were asked about the amount of time they spent studying or participating in co-curricular activities. This question was intended to assess: whether students spent too much time studying and were students interested in participating. The majority of students were happy with the amount of time they spent studying with only 13% of the respondents indicating that they spent too much time studying (see Table 6). In contrast, equal numbers respondents indicated that they spend sufficient amounts of time or they wish they spent more time engaged in activities. The results indicated that 24 of the 30 respondents recognized that there was value in participation

Table 6

Responses regarding how effectively students feel they spend their time.

<u>Time spent</u>	<u>Studying</u>	<u>Co-curricular</u>
Too much	4	2
Sufficient	21	11
Neutral	2	4
Wish I spent more	2	11
Almost never	1	2

Note: n =30. Six of the thirty respondents were complacent about participating [Source: Survey Data].

Future Plans

Of these respondents, as seen in *Table 7*, all but one stated plans to work or continue their studies in the future. The data from this question revealed that the respondents were at various years of their programs (between one and three); with 87% of them being equally distributed between the second or third year of their program. It could be that students beyond their first year were more likely to develop plans for the future, as they were closer to graduation.

Table 7

Respondents' plans for the future (post-graduation).

<u>Future Plans</u>	<u>Responses</u>
Continue Studies	21
Start Working	18
Start a Family	1

Note: All students except one indicated future goals of employment or higher education (n =30). [Source: Survey Data].

Conclusion

The survey data indicated that statistically significant relationships exist between GPA and both rate of engagement and perception of experience. There did not appear to be a correlation between perception of experience and rate of engagement. Students, regardless of their level of engagement, exhibited an overall positive perception of their experience. There was also the indication that although the overall rate of engagement was low, participants recognized the value of college engagement and were interested in becoming more active in the college community. There were several reasons for disengagement but '*inconvenient times for activities*' and '*not knowing what is available*' were the most commonly noted. Of the student responses, there was an overall low response rate from Qatari females. These individuals also indicated a low level of engagement. Twenty-nine of the thirty survey respondents indicated future plans for employment or further education. This survey data was used to develop the interview questions. The interview was meant to gather qualitative results to explain the survey

findings. Participants were self-selected from the survey participants who agreed to be contacted.

The interviews results will be presented in the upcoming chapter. Chapter Five will present the qualitative results based on themes that arose from the interview transcripts. The data from these were analyzed using the Constant Comparison method. Five themes were identified and supported through quoted data. These themes will provide further evidence to suggest that there was a relationship between engagement and student success. The following chapter will discuss the themes of: development of self, importance of relationships, influence of society and culture, value of education and the importance of goal setting.

Chapter 5 Interview Results

“Color is the truth of grey.” Andre Gide

The survey results were presented in Chapter Four. They provided a detailed overview of the demographic data related to the variables and the findings of the statistical analysis. Chapter Five will give a detailed report on the results of the interview by offering a demographic and descriptive analysis of the interview themes.

Introduction

Chapter Four laid the foundation to develop questions about “why?” It outlined student demographics by defining: age, program, GPA, rate of engagement and rate of perception. The results indicated statistically significant relationships between: GPA and perception of college experience; GPA and rate of engagement; but not between student perception of college experience and rate of engagement. It also presented data on participant responses about the reasons for disengagement.

The second phase of this research process was the qualitative interview. Interviews with female students yielded colorful and rich data that established a contextualized narrative of their experience in the college. They provided women with the opportunity to voice their feelings about their experiences. In doing so, they investigated the extent to which women were inhibited by cultural or traditional norms and gained a perspective on how to overcome these real or perceived barriers. This

chapter will analyze the interview findings and contextualize the survey responses by developing a narrative around survey findings. A description of the participants and their individual and collective responses will be discussed. This chapter will also outline the theories about female student engagement, its connection to student success and how it can benefit the future educational or employment goals of women.

Demographics Analysis

The interview participants were demographically diverse in terms of nationality, program and year, GPA and rate of engagement. The participants consisted of Participant A on her work term in the third and final year of her program, Participant B in her first semester of her program and Participant C on her work-term in the final year of her three year program. Participants were between 20 – 24 years of age (see Table 8). Of the three participants, Participant C was known to the interviewer but was not a current student. Participant A was the friend of a former student, who encouraged her to participate. Only Participant B was unknown to the researcher. Noting their nationalities was important in order to assess the differences between Qatari and non-Qatari students. Although, participants were representative of a culturally diverse population, it was also important to note that many of the participants were born and lived most of their lives in Qatar. Of the three participants one indicated that she was Qatari. She also noted that her Filipino mother raised her alone because her father died when she was young. All three participants expressed a positive view of their college experience. Participants B and C had an above average rate of engagement while the Qatari student was below average. She was also the only student of the three with a low GPA (see Table 8).

Table 8

Interview participant demographics.

Participant	Age	GPA	Nationality	Year of Study	Rate of Engagement	Rate of Perception
A	24	2.5	Qatari	3/3	2.27	3.86
B	20	4.0	Indian	1/2	3.08	4.29
C	21	4.0	Pakistani	3/3	3.82	4.71

Note: Only three of the initial 10 volunteers were interviewed.

Thematic Analysis

Lichtman's (2013) rule of thumb dictated that using the Constant Comparison method for qualitative analysis was more effective when the key concepts were limited to between five and seven and that were well supported. This study narrowed the categories down to five themes. These themes included: development of self; perceived and real cultural barriers; value of education, new relationships, goal setting and importance of role models.

Development

The concept of *development* was representative of numerous aspects of individual change, which included but was not limited to: public speaking and leadership skills; self-confidence, self-efficacy, independence, desire to challenge the self and society, desire for self-determination, the commitment to an active healthy lifestyle and hard work. Throughout the interviews, students gave numerous examples about how important this type of development was to their success.

Personal Skills. They also indicated that participating in college activities could develop these skills. The three participants had different rates of engagement. Participant C indicated a high rate of engagement. She was involved in numerous activities. She stated that it “builds some kind of skill in you... and it will raise your level of confidence” and with each different activity she is “going to learn something new.” Thematically, all the three participants were quick to indicate any number of combinations of skills that were acquired.

Transferrable Skills. Although they did not reference the term *transferrable skills*, all three participants spoke about various aspects of personal, social and skill development that would benefit them in their futures. For instance, they indicated that activities “build some kind of skill in you” such as “creativity” where they can “create something from the skills they learned.” The interview participants, regardless of their GPA or level of engagement were definitive in their assertions about the value of participation. Although Participant A was new to the college and just developing a routine and knowledge about what was available, she was quick to indicate that “self-confidence” was a benefit of being involved. Participant B indicated that she “could have done more activities to refresh [my] mind maybe [she] would have done better”. She stated that she regretted not participating as she felt it could have improved her grades. She felt that participating could have afforded her the opportunity to learn something new that was fun and interesting. She expressed regret about not participating and noted that her lack of self-confidence and not knowing others were the main reasons she did not.

From the perspective of a highly engaged student, Participant C outlined the range of activities she was connected with. These included being chosen as *College*

Ambassador, participating in various sports and *Women in Leadership* and working as a paid employee at the Recreation Centre. All of these opportunities were a chance “to learn something new”. Evidence of her self-efficacy appeared when she stated that everyone faced opportunities, “you just have to go grab them.” The key to finding success was noted by Participant B was by participating in activities that were “interesting to you”. As a student who postponed starting post-secondary for several years for just this reason, she was very focused on choosing her program and activities based on her interests. As a first year student, she expressed uncertainty about her program choice and indicated that pursuing her interests was important to achieving success. However, she also indicated that there as a new student in college she had participated in activities that were of little interest to her, such as the “*Scavenger Hunt*” but that she did learn from them. She explained that she “didn’t know anything about the library” and “Scavenger Hunt” was, therefore, valuable. It was an opportunity for her “to change your attitude toward others.” Each of the three participants noted that developing various aspects of the self was one of the many benefits of engagement.

Relationships

Throughout the interviews, the participants discussed the value of relationships in their lives. They focused on existing relationships with their families, the development of new relationships and then relationships with college staff, coaches, instructors or role models.

Family. Each of the three interviewees immediately referenced the importance of their family on the decisions they made. They discussed the importance of family support

and its influence on career decisions, choice of schools, their behavior and the restrictions or pressure placed on them. One important theme was the value their families placed on education. The three participants referenced conversations with their fathers and families about the reasoning behind their career choices: “my parents were really concerned about me”, “my father said to change into Pharmacy.” “My mother said it [a medical degree] is too long” and “I was raised believing that you have to earn things.” They exhibited respect for the opinions of their family and noted how important family support was to their decisions.

In terms of the influence that familial relationships had on behavior or the restrictions they imposed, Participant B indicated that she was considering changing her program. She considered Medical Radiography. Her father discouraged her, saying it “could be hard for” her. The reason it would be too hard was because she would be required to x-ray male patients. She stated that she wanted to be a doctor. But being from India, her “mother said it’s too long because as a female we need to get married.” The impact of familial relations was different for each family and the socio-cultural influence of this will be discussed later. Both other participants indicated that their families supported them in whatever activities in which they were interested.

They perceived family as a positive influence on their involvement in educational activities. Participant C indicated that her family supported her through each of her ventures, which was evident from the extensive list of co-curricular activities in which she was involved. She noted that she was sick during the year and her father suggested that she reduce her level of engagement because it was also important that she “look good.” A short time later, she entered an arranged marriage. Although these women stated that

they possessed the freedom to choose, there was an underlying indication that decisions were strongly influenced by their family. Participant C discussed her freedom to travel with volunteer and athletics groups to “Singapore because [she] had a cricket tournament. And then I went to Nepal recently... working with Habitat for Humanity.” Although her father supported her, she also noted that her extended family thought her freedom would disrespect her family. Their freedom was influenced by the traditions of the family.

Socialization. While the influence of existing relationships was seen as important to their career choice and their academic success, there was a very specific indication that engaging in co-curricular activities developed a sense of self-determination. They stated “self-confidence” and “independence” were fostered through new relationships. New relationships resulted from engaging in the college community. By engaging in the college community, students had the opportunity to develop an appreciation for others. It was opportunity for “getting to know other people, learning about other cultures [and] respecting their cultures.” The three interviewees strongly agreed that developing open-mindedness was an outcome of attending the college. This was enhanced through the co-curricular offerings available to students who could “go out there and socialize” so they could “understand people a little better.” Participant B stated that engaging with both genders could help you meet the “right friend, you might feel comfortable talking with them.” They expressed the importance of socializing with both genders because it reflected society.

In Qatar many primary and secondary school students were gender segregated. As a result, students were reticent about a mixed gender environment. As previously mentioned, Participant B told a story of being “shy” and hesitant about participating in a

“Scavenger Hunt” as she was “not really interested in that kind of thing.” She participated in order to meet new people. She said it helped change her attitude toward others and that participating made her realize that “everyone is the same.” Had she not participated, she would have missed out on the library skills she learned but more importantly the people she met. The interviewees suggested that the ability to develop new relationships and socialize with others would benefit them in life and work.

Role Models. Primarily Participant C discussed the importance of instructors as positive role models for students. These role models could include: instructors, coaches, staff, and family and community members. The women noted that instructors could be influential to student participation and success. Participant C stated that instructors needed to take ownership of their students. She meant that students needed to feel like instructors care. Also, when they take ownership of their students by encouraging the becoming involved, students were more likely to. When asked what could be done to improve participation in college activities, her first thought was: “we need more help from our instructors” to encourage students. Instructors needed to be “in their faces” as they were the front line. They were “one of the best ways” to connect with students. If students feel that their instructors care, then they will feel more committed to participating. She stated that, “instructors play a really important part because most students don’t read notice boards. “Instructors are one of the best ways” to get the information to students. She also noted that through the support of her coaches and instructors, she pushed herself to achieve.

Socio-Cultural Influences

The interactions that occurred within a college environment were diverse in all capacities: gender, cultural, socio-economic, interest and academic-based. These interactions were what make a college a community. And, these interactions served a common purpose: learning. This learning occurred in and outside the classroom.

Participant B discussed her experience when she first attended a mixed school. She stated that when she moved “from female to mixed, I felt like I lost everything because of our society. When males and females were together, we need to be a bit more careful.” But within a few months she decided that “it’s ok”.

The learning that occurred related to the socio-cultural experiences with the opposite gender and with other cultures. In Qatar, students were influenced by the gender segregation in public primary and secondary schools. Although public education was available, most non-nationals attended schools that offered curriculum from their home country. This was the case as many students returned to their native countries to study, live or work (Sonbol, 2012). Even in such a multi-cultural environment, a student’s initial reaction was to socialize with those they already knew or those of the same nationality. Participant A discussed her reasons for coming to the college. These included that she “felt comfortable” and “welcomed” at the college. Although the classroom was a diverse mix of students, social interactions could be limited. Co-curricular activities provided a non-threatening environment where interaction was supported.

The impact of society and culture on student behaviors was referenced frequently throughout the interview. All participants referenced the social norms for female

behavior. Modesty was a common concept discussed by the participants. Participant B indicated that women “need to be a bit more careful” because “if males and females work together they might get mixed up and other[s] will think in a negative way and life (husbands/wives) might be affected.” Participants A and C indicated that although some families imposed limitations on their daughters or wives, they were less the norm and that things have and were continuing to change. Participant A was the only student to refer to religion. She indicated that some women were limited because of culture and religion. She stated that it was a commonly held belief that “women’s responsibilities are at home. Their job is to be at home...working with the kids.” The students stated that they themselves were not limited in their social interactions with the opposite gender or other cultures. Instead, they appreciated the chance to develop an understanding of cultural diversity. Participant C stated that religion was not what limited women, it was tradition. Participant B indicated that in the Muslim community in India, it was the norm for women to quit school, marry young and remain at home. She recounted the story of how her older “sister got married at 14.” She compared this to the current situation where girls were no longer permitted to marry until “after 18 and after the 12th grade.” She stated that many more were finishing school first. On numerous occasions, she suggested that interactions between genders could be ‘perceived’ as inappropriate so ‘caution’ must be taken when interacting with other genders.

When asked why she thought Qatari women had difficulty finding jobs, she gave the following reason. Her response indicated that the women may not be behaving inappropriately but it was the family’s fear that she could be. She also noted that when “women get hired in a company and they are working in the company and they get

pregnant” they “get fired from the company”. She recounted the story of “one of [her] cousins, she got fired from her company” and she was not be able to find employment after that. Participant A also suggested that women with more traditional families were likely to be prohibited from certain activities and that this impacted their ability to get jobs in the future. She stated that, “some men think it is not proper for women to work.” Participant C felt that things had changed and five years ago that was the case but today women have much more freedom.

Value of Education

There was an undeniable sentiment among the participants about the value of education in general and the value of educating women. Each of the participants indicated that the socio-cultural shift from the ‘traditional’ way of life to a society where women not only had access to education, but education was the norm. They stated that women today were encouraged to find jobs and pursue careers. All three participants indicated that life for women was “changing very much.”

For Families. The value of education was a clear theme throughout the interviews with numerous references, by all three participants. They spoke of the importance of high grades to their families, themselves and their future plans. Participant C suggested that it was cyclical. She noted that, “if you are staying at home, you don’t know what’s happening in the world” and not knowing about changes that were occurring in the world inhibits their development. Her suggestion was that by attending schools or jobs you learn skills that can be applied to life, transferrable skills. She stated that not only was this important but if women wanted their family to be “educated, the women

had to be educated.” There was the idea that it was the mothers who were responsible for educating their children.

Changing Attitudes. The participants indicated that both “males and females have to work outside” the home and they were both financially responsible for the family. They also noted that women who were given the opportunity to stay home, study or work, would choose study and work. Participant A stated that “the divorce rate is higher here in Qatar because women want to be independent” and the husbands were less accepting of this. She suggested that because Qatari men were less educated than Qatari women, they “cannot really provide” for their families as well as their educated wives. Each of the three participants noted that women’s roles were changing and that this was a “good thing”. Participant C stated that two changes were occurring: men wanted more educated wives; and that families were supporting the need to educate their daughters’ future aspirations. These points were common among the three but Participant B suggested that was true until it interfered with the prospects of marriage. Herself being 21, she was limited in the time she had left for education. She stated that women usually marry between 21 -23 years and beyond this they could be considered no longer marriage material.

With marriage remaining as a high priority during the early twenties, participants were questioned about whether marriage would hinder their chances of finding a job. Their responses were varied. Participant A and B believed that perhaps yes, but that this was changing; while participant C felt ‘no, if women wanted to work it was easy to find sponsorship for education or work’. Her philosophy was that perhaps five years ago this

was the case but not now. She later acknowledged that some Qatari families held more traditional views discouraging females from working outside the home.

Capacity Building. When questioned about why Qatari females faced such high rate of unemployment, all three responded immediately that gender discrimination was the reason for women's limited access to employment. Again, they reiterated that cultural and traditional beliefs could be an impediment for them finding jobs. They believed that the country should be doing more for women because these women were intelligent regardless of their limited English skills. They stated that women wanted to work and they were educated. Collectively they agreed that the government's focus should be on education and employment for locals. Participant C gave the analogy of providing for the hungry. She noted that if she had "one cupcake, first [I] will try to give it to my family before I would offer it to others; just as Qatar should be doing, providing for their own people first." She was suggesting that being non-Qatari she understood the importance of supporting the Qatari's first.

Work Ethic. The interviewees were adamant that women had a strong capacity and desire for hard work. They believed that women's success in education and employment could be attributed to their commitment to hard work. When questioned about why they believed more women than men were educated in Qatar; and why more women hold higher degrees such as Master's or Ph.D.'s, all three suggested that it was because views of women were changing and women were beginning to develop "self-confidence." They also noted that because women were discriminated against for "being women", they had the tendency to work harder. One participant proposed two opposing ideas: "women are more intelligent" (to which she laughed), then stated that, "God has

given more intelligence to males so there is a balance.” The balance, to which she referred, was that women worked harder to compensate for this. Her perspective was that because men were more intelligent, they cared less. Alternatively, it was because women work hard, that they were successful. She proposed that this was a universal truth and not culturally or regionally determined.

Access. Although there was collective agreement that women work hard to achieve; and that their success resulted from the opportunities they seek out, they also collectively noted that information about activities and the activities themselves needed to be easy to access. The information needed to be “in their faces”. There was collective agreement that posters and emails were not enough. Further still, they indicated that the number of emails was so immense and that emails were often directed to junk mail. Participant A stated that the information was out there and that Student Affairs was using all the right forms of communication such “SMS and Twitter”. Her suggestion, which was supported by Participant C, was to ‘push’ students into co-curricular activities. She believed that people were self-conscious and did not understand the value of participating. By making it a requirement and by offering “marks for participation”, students would develop an interest and recognize the value of engaging in these activities.

Goal Setting

Recognizing the value of co-curricular activities, they indicated, could encourage students to be more successful academically and in gaining employment. They collectively linked involvement with success in their future endeavors. When asked about their futures, they each indicated a career as their ultimate goal. Participant B and

C also indicated that completing their diploma at the college was not enough, they intended to get a “Bachelor’s if not a Master’s degree”. Participant C discussed numerous plans and alternative plans that hinged on where she would eventually live. Her future goal was to be “Lead Instructor of Medical Radiography” at the college. She indicated that every academic and co-curricular activity she was involved in supported her plans for the future. Her philosophy was that you have to define what you want: set “your aim and your goal” and plan a strategy to get there. The example she gave was her desire for student employment in the Recreation Centre. Once she decided that this was her goal, for “one year [she] worked on it.” Similarly, Participant B noted that she delayed attending post-secondary because her goal for the future was not clear. She stated she “wanted to be a doctor” but family pressure forced her to choose an alternative path. She stated on several occasions that the most important component of success was following your interests: ‘when you are interested in something, you will be successful.’ They noted that the path to success was to set goals and identify what you needed to do to achieve them.

Non-Participation

The survey data assessed the reasons why students did not participate in college activities and the interviews probed for a deeper understanding of this. The survey indicated that the top four reasons for non-participation were: inconvenient times for activities, did not know what was available, lack of time (family responsibilities) and too self-conscious. These were reaffirmed through the interview responses. This study noted the following reasons for not participating: self-conscious about lack of knowledge

or moving outside the comfort zone, not always easy to access specific knowledge about activities and not enough time, which was closely linked to pressure to study. Pressure to achieve was reiterated on numerous occasions by all three participants. They discussed the importance of “high grades” to their success, their family and their future aspirations. They expressed their concern with trying to find a balance between participating in college activities and “focusing on their studies”.

Participant Recommendations

Several student recommendations for increasing student engagement have already been introduced throughout the analysis of the concepts. Participants believed that the ease of access, influence of positive role models and offering incentives such as grades for participation were recommendations for increasing student engagement. They also collectively thought that “college orientation” would be a good time for participants to be introduced to the various clubs, activities, sports or other co-curricular activities that were available on campus. They suggested that it should offer more than a campus tour and academic information. And, that orientation should be accessible to all. They noted that it took place “during class time.” This limited the number of students who were able to attend.

A recommendation that were common across all three participants was the suggestion to “give them some marks because right now they don’t know how good it is” to be involved. It was suggested that a block of time should be allotted for students could “do activities like extracurricular activities.” They suggested that participation would

increase if these were linked to the curriculum. It would eliminate the barrier of 'lack of time' because these activities would be built into students' schedules.

Conclusion

The interview data was analyzed using the constant comparison method. This data was coded and grouped based on thematic categories (Lichtman, 2012; Merriam, 2009). Throughout the interviews the most predominant theme related to the changing views of women. Each of the three participants indicated that "things are changing" and that this was positive. These changes related to the increased freedoms for women to pursue education and careers. There was a consensus on what women needed to be successful and that co-curricular engagement had a positive influence on student's lives. There was also a consensus on the reasons for disengagement and strategies for increasing it. They suggested that the following factors had a significant influence on the lives of women: social and cultural norms, value and influence of relationships, the importance of ease of access, the value in developing all aspects of the self; the invaluable nature of education and goal setting on their futures. Across the interviews, there was the recognition that every experience was an opportunity to learn. Each learning experience worked toward developing skills the individual and enhancing the probability of success.

The final chapter will make sense of the survey and interview data. It will discuss what the data means, the implications of the research, reiterate limitations of the study, and outline recommendations for further research and next steps. The final chapter will also outline what the data means in the context of the study and in relation to existing research.

Chapter 6 Discussion

*“Nothing is more powerful
than an idea whose time has come.” Victor Hugo*

Chapter Five presented the interview data, which was analyzed using constant comparison to develop categories or themes. This chapter will make sense of the data. It will discuss trends in demographics, student experience, correlational findings and value of and barriers to engagement. It will outline the implications and limitations of these findings and recommendations for further research

Introduction

The following sections will outline the demographic trends and the findings about student perceptions, and discuss the link between the variables. It will discuss the themes that arose out of the interview data and provide possible explanations for the findings and discuss what they mean in the context of the college. This chapter will also discuss the limitations, and provide recommendations for further research. It will connect the findings of this study to existing research.

Demographic

Overall female students of various nationalities were represented in the survey data. Because of the small sample size of study, the possibility of drawing generalized conclusions about the relationships between nationality rate of engagement, GPA or

perception was limited. However, it was worthy to note that of the total respondents only 2 or 7% were Qatari. They also presented an overall lower than average rate of engagement and they indicated a low GPA. The limited response rate and the low rate of engagement in the college community reflected what Qatar faced in the country's job market. The challenge of getting Qataris involved in college was the same challenge faced by the government of getting Qataris into jobs (Al Ansari, 2014; *Permanent Population Committee*, 2008). Although Qatari's females were highly educated, they were faced with an 8% unemployment rate, which was extremely high when compared to the national rate of 0.6% (*Permanent Population Committee*, 2012). Qatari females were not successfully transitioning to employment. The development of the National Qatarization Strategy in 2008 was when the government began advocating for increasing Qatari employees in the work force. More than four years later *The Permanent Population report* (2012) reported that the number of Qatari nationals in the work force was still well below the national rate of employment. Little has changed in the number of Qatari women in the workforce. From the findings, which were limited due to the small sample size, the Qatari participants were not likely to participate in college activities.

Of the other respondents, demographic trends could not be drawn due to the small number of respondents. For instance, the number of Filipino respondents was not representative of the sample population. They made up a larger part of the overall student body of the college.

Student Perception

Overall students described their experiences with instructors, students and other staff positively. Regardless of GPA or rate of engagement that students expressed positive feelings about many aspects of the college and the college in general. They felt the college offered a non-threatening, inclusive environment that provided for the holistic needs of students, regardless of whether they chose to participate or not. Students noted that information was available to students when they needed it. The quantitative data did not indicate that a statistically significant relationship existed between perception of experience and GPA or Rate of Engagement. These findings suggested that student experience remained positive when academic or co-curricular activities were available, not necessarily when students participated in them. There was the suggestion that their experience was positive as a result of the open and accepting atmosphere of the college. As previously discussed, Quелlette (2010) stated that a student's positive perception of college or university was equally attributed to "the feel" of the campus. The key was that the college campus felt respectful and supportive of cultural and social norms. Other researchers such as Astin (1984) and later Clark, Andrews and Gorman (2013) discussed the idea that campus community was created based on whether a student felt connected. This 'feel' was influenced by a number of factors that were not considered in this study. This point was summarized in one of the interviews. A student discussed how quickly she became comfortable when she realized "we are all the same."

GPA and Perception

As previously mentioned, the survey data was used to establish whether relationships existed between the variables of GPA, student perception and co-curricular engagement. The two-tailed Pearson Correlation was used to identify whether a statistically significant relationship existed between the variables. These tests indicated that a positive relationship existed between students' GPA and their perceptions of experience. This suggested that with a positive view of the college environment, students were increasingly likely to work harder and achieve greater academic success, which increased retention rates. The reverse could also be true: students with higher grades felt more positively about their experience.

Student's perceptions of their experiences were influenced by numerous factors. The interview findings suggested students with a higher GPA viewed the college more positively. This was reflective of the educational paradigm shift toward supporting the whole student (Swail, 2004; Astin, 1984). Schools and governments were also beginning to provide increased funding for non-academic supports as a strategy to increase retention, student success and prepare students for life after college.

When other non-academic needs were supported, students were increasingly likely to find academic success (Keeling, 2006; Government of Newfoundland & Labrador, 2006; National Partnership Guide, 2011; *Permanent Population Committee*, 2012; Scott-Jackson, 2012; Swail, 2004; Zafft, Kallenbach & Spohn; 2006). MacKinnon (2012) and Mackerarcher (2004) discussed the importance of social support on the development of the academic self. The college, according to students, offered all the supports required to

support student success. These reasons were justification enough for creating a caring positive environment for students.

GPA and Engagement

Through the same data analysis procedure, the results indicated that there was a positive correlation between students' grades and their rate of participation in college co-curricular activities. The data on engagement indicated that female students were more likely to be engaged in activities such as fitness, volunteer opportunities and skills competitions, while activities such as robotics and student council had overall lower rates of engagement. Bergen-Cico and Viscomi (2013) also found that students who participated more presented with a higher GPA. Encouraging female students to participate could enhance their employability through increased GPA and through transferrable skills they develop.

The reason for lower engagement rates in robotics could have resulted from the fact that Robotics was linked with Engineering. Because only 21% of the student body were enrolled in Engineering Technology, they only represented a small portion of the student body with only a small portion of them being female (College of the North Atlantic-Qatar, 2014). In terms of student council gender representation, as an activity that 'in the public' eye, females would be reluctant, for reasons of modesty, to participate (Williams, Bhanugopan & Fish, 2011). In contrast, volunteering had the highest rate of engagement. The reason for this could be that it was either the social norm or that women were nurturing and giving of themselves (Gilligan, 1999). Thiessen and Looker (1999 as cited in Merriam, 2005) stated that males and females learn differently and that, females

were increasingly influenced by a social environment. The value that female students placed on the social component of their college experience clearly supported this notion of social learning. The correlation between the rate of engagement and increased GPA supported this idea.

As indicated in the results, the overall female engagement rate at the college was low. The mean response indicated that participants were *hardly ever to sometimes* engaged. Recognizing that students were relatively disengaged was less important than it was to identify the reasons for disengagement. According to Participant C, in order to encourage female students to participate, “you have to pinpoint why they are not coming.” What was increasingly important was that this study, supported by previous research findings indicated that more engaged students experienced greater academic and social success (MacKeracher, 2004; Hayek & Kuh, 2004). Based on this there was a justification for developing strategies that encouraged female co-curricular engagement.

Value of Engagement

Although the participants recognized the value of engaging in the college community, they were still somewhat disengaged (Dietsche, 2012). Because the results indicated a positive correlation between student success and engagement, more students needed to be aware of the value of student engagement. The respondents indicated that success was possible when they set goals. When they defined what they wanted to achieve, they indicated that they needed a plan to achieve it. This plan included strategies for personal development that resulted from being engaged.

Goal Setting. On numerous occasions, the interviewees indicated that in order to achieve success, you had first to identify your goal and follow steps to achieve it. The interviews elaborated on the value of participating in activities as one strategy for students to reach their goals. As second language students, they were less likely to recognize the term *transferrable skills* but they referred to building themselves to reach their goal. Vermeulen and Schmidt (2008) referenced a similar notion that students who were engaged were increasingly likely to be more motivated to achieve their goal. Further still they were increasingly likely to develop the skills necessary to support them in transitioning to employment. Of the respondents, all indicated their goal of higher education or employment, and those interviewed recognized that both academics and co-curricular activities were important to them achieving their goals. Success could not be achieved unless the students had clearly defined goals.

Personal Development. The interview participants noted that the benefits of co-curricular involvement were numerous and included developing self-confidence, independence, skills such as leadership and communication. Researchers such as Otto (1977), Astin (1984), Keeling (2006) and Strange and Cox (2010), all referenced the value of skill development that results from post-secondary engagement. The interview participants also recognized this. The interviewees indicated that establishing new relationships with students of other cultures and beliefs helped to break down any prejudices they held. Swail (2004) also suggested that the benefit of supporting student socialization through engagement in the college community increased the probability of student success. He stated that three aspects of the student must be supported: social, cognitive and institutional. All three held different value for each individual but each

needed to be supported. By supporting and women to develop a range of skills, it increased their academic success and beyond school with the transition to employment.

Perceived and Real Cultural Barriers

As a mixed gender college in a predominantly Muslim country, women's behavior was restricted to varying degrees. This depended on how conservative the family or husband was. These restrictions came in various forms from limiting interactions between genders to wearing more conservative forms of the traditional *abaya*, which included the *niqab* or face covering. It was important not to generalize these restrictions to all Muslim women because within the culturally diverse college environment there were different interpretations of how women should behave and the freedoms they had. The research indicated that limitations did exist for many college students. This was especially true for first year students who had studied in a gender segregated high school, which was frequently observed among Qatari students. Some female students were more hesitant working with males than others. There was the fear of the misconception that they were behaving immorally or that there was limited privacy when participating in female recreational activities. These were real limitations for women but the interview participants suggested the greater challenge was the misconception these barriers cannot be overcome. They suggested that these misconceptions were equally as inhibiting as the real barriers. As Williams, Bhanugopan and Fish (2011) discussed, in the more conservative Muslim families women were discouraged from being in the public eye. There was also the fear of being immodest. Women were encouraged to be cautious about 'being seen' while participating in activities. These impediments were both real and

perceived. Although many college activities were public, for those students who were reluctant to be in the public eye, there were numerous other activities for them to partake in. Al Malki et al. (2012) suggested that it was not the public, private issue but rather it was the family's fear of women gaining their independence that was the real inhibitor. Many families were reluctant to let go of traditional beliefs. There was the perception that many activities exposed women in ways that could be viewed as culturally inappropriate. Reassuring female students that their privacy would remain intact could have encouraged them to become involved. There were also examples of participants who were in the public eye, in leadership roles, and who played sports in their hijab. Buthaina Al Ansari, a Qatari businesswoman stated that, "religion is not a barrier" (Al Ansari, 2014). She believed that archaic views of women and their abilities and the fear of change were the real barriers to women's success.

Some of these barriers appeared less real to students as the women became more comfortable in the college and interacting with the opposite gender. Al Ansari (2014) discussed the importance of developing self-confidence. She noted that self-confidence increased with each new experience and that gender should not matter. Martin and Dowson (2009) noted that *social cohesion* or level of comfort within one's community was responsible for increased self-confidence. And this social cohesion was supported by social engagement and social support. They suggested that perceived barriers decreased with increased social connections. As students became more comfortable in their environment, they began to recognize that they could remain modest, true to their faith and participant in college community. This meant that the college needed to ensure there was a supportive environment where women could part of the community early in their

college career and without contradicting their beliefs. The interview participants indicated that studying in a mixed gender environment helped them in the future to be more comfortable and confident in the work environment.

Changing Views

There was also the reality of life for Muslim women in Qatar. There was no single definition for what this was or which freedoms or limitations women faced. There was a definitive sentiment that life has changed for women and that it would continue to do so. When asked whether culture limits women's choices, each of the interview participants said 'in the past, yes, but this has changed.' They acknowledged that limitations existed but that today woman have more freedom. They also had the common belief that changes in access to education, employment, and freedoms were positive. These improvements would only continue as Qatar and the Middle East continued to be supported by powerful women like Sheikha Mouza (Office of Her Highness Sheikha Mouza bint Nasser, 2011) and by the Qatari government (*Qatar National Development Strategy*, 2008).

There was no denying that education was the single most powerful tool in combatting poverty and oppression (UNESCO, 2010). Educating women strengthens the capacity of the family and the country (Sonobol, 2012). The value of this recognition was that women were increasingly playing an integral role in the further development of other women. Each of the women interviewed indicated future plans of employment and higher education. Of the women who responded to the survey, one hundred percent of them responded with education or employment as their goal after graduation.

Implications and Recommendations

The potential implications of this research were numerous. First as virtual blank slate of research on education in Qatar this study intended to contribute to the body of existing knowledge. The implications of this study included: building on the limited research within the college and establishing recommendations for improving delivery models by increasing female student access to co-curricular activities. From the critical feminist perspective, it was intended to encourage participation, which would increase the likelihood of acquiring transferrable skills. From the analysis of the survey and interview data, participants discussed the importance of capacity building, having a role model and improving accessibility as foundations for change.

Capacity Building. Implications of this study included developing strategies that could be employed to increase student engagement in co-curricular college activities by utilizing current students, their knowledge of college activities and their established relationships. Through capacity building, students would be the proponents of encouraging participation in college activities. To strengthen the current delivery model, the intent was to recommend strategies to improve information sharing to increase engagement. Interviewees indicated that the information was out there but for some reason, students were ‘not seeing it’ and that those who ‘want to participate do’. By developing a working group with students who were engaged, they could offer insight into strategies for increasing numbers. By garnering these student’s insights, they could serve as a tool to recruit new participants. They could also establish a new student ‘buddy’ system, where new students were connected to a second or third year student who kept them informed of activities in the college.

Role Models. The concept of role models was reflected through discussions about the positive impact families have on students' lives. They also discussed the importance of instructors, coaches and volunteers as positive role models. Instructors were seen as the frontline for information sharing to the students. Instructors had the opportunity to be positive role models through their actions and through their ability to share information. The implication of this understanding was that collaboration between instructors and Student Affairs could increase the flow of information and the potential for engagement.

Accessibility. To meet the needs of students in terms of convenient times, the college could work with the students to develop strategies for increasing participation by piloting a scheme that would build active participation into a course. This did already exist with one of the Health Science courses. One of their courses required class participation in a physical activity: swimming, the gym, a fitness class etc. They were then given a grade for this and were required to do another activity outside of the class time. Perhaps this could be done in other faculties. As part of a Communications course, students could be asked to participate in a leadership activity, in the debate club or toastmasters and their level of involvement would result in a grade for the course.

Limitations

While this study yielded rich results, there were limitations. These included: limited time constraints, limited sample and difficulty in achieving external validity. As a graduate research project, time constraints prevented the analysis of the long-term impact of student engagement on success in life and in gaining employment. Because of the unique context of the college as a technical institute, as a mixed-gender environment that

offers diploma programs and based on the limited amount of existing research, it was difficult to ensure the external validity of findings and recommendations. Although there were other mixed-gender institutions in Qatar, they were degree-granting universities with a different demographic.

As briefly indicated from the results, Qatari female students exhibited a low rate of college engagement, which translated into a low rate of participation in this study. Again, a longitudinal study, which would work on building trusting relationships, could increase the number of Qatari participants willing to share and take part in the study. With the goal of increasing overall female participation in college activities, a key motivation for the study was determining whether a connection between college engagement, academic success and positive self-participation for nationals exists. For further research, recruiting local females to take ownership of the study could increase access and information sharing from the local population.

Another significant limitation to female student participation in sport, leadership activities or those that were viewed as public (debate, exchanges etc.) was the cultural barrier to females being in the public eye. Assessing whether transferrable skills were acquired through engagement in such activities would be difficult because of the cultural barrier, which limited some women from participating in public activities. So, although some women had expressed their desire to participate in various co-curricular activities, some cultural and religious barriers remained. Therefore further research into developing strategies to increase participation within such parameters was both challenging and important.

Recommendations for Further Research

As a country that was the early stages of all aspects of development, the body of research was very limited. With a paucity of regional research in so many disciplines, contributions to the body of existing knowledge could enhance the understanding of education in Qatar. The country's commitment to innovation and development in post-secondary education created an environment where researchers were encouraged to investigate what was working and what was not (Al Ansari, 2012; Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2011). Researchers and government were encouraged to identify Qatar's successes and to develop strategies that could improve upon what exists. This commitment to educational research aligned the country with the *Qatar National Vision 2030* (2008) of creating a sustainable Qatar. In other words, it focused on developing Qatar by improving its skilled labour and by educating the population to ensure that its people could participate in running the country. With the extensive focus on oil, gas and infrastructure development, education and social science research was only beginning to establish itself. There were numerous possibilities for further research into female experience, co-curricular engagement, transferrable skill development, transitioning and post-secondary education that could be undertaken.

In order to assess the true value of co-curricular engagement on future success, successful transitioning to employment or higher education, a longitudinal study would need to be undertaken to compare rates of engagement and feelings of future success. Within the college, possibilities for further research included several possible studies. First year students could be followed from their initial orientation to the end of their final year to assess the whether those students within a one-year cohort had higher GPA if they

were more engaged. Next, as a longitudinal study, a small group entering college with a similar GPA at the same could be followed across the three years to assess the same variables. The sample could be from three levels (high, medium and low) of engagement and could compare academic results from year to year to identify any differences in success rates.

Conclusions

The goal of this research was to identify ways to support the strong educated women at the college in Qatar by understanding the reasons for disengagement and establishing recommendations to address them. The findings indicated that the GPA was higher for students who were engaged and had a positive perception of their experience. The findings also indicated that female students did not see their culture as limiting their behavior or their participation. And most respondents recognized the importance of being part of the college community or wished they were more connected. They noted that personal and social development that resulted in transferrable skills was a benefit of participating in co-curricular activities. They also indicated that barriers to participating could be overcome and these barriers related to students not being aware of what the activity was or how they could participate and remain private. The interview data revealed that female students valued the change in how women were viewed and of the freedoms and opportunities they had. They believed that opportunities were out there. And that woman just needed the confidence and support to seek them out. The changes that were occurring in Qatar were discussed. It was noted that Qatar was offering this support and that it was working hard to support education and employment for women.

For women who were limited in accessing these, religion was not seen as the impediment. It was culture, tradition and fear. They stated that there was value in embracing tradition and that it did not have to conflict with improving women's opportunity for success. The young women who made up the educated population of this country were examples of the possibility that both aims could exist in harmony. Time, education and government support were what they felt would help make this happen.

In order for these changes to happen several recommendations were made. The students indicated that more value needed to be placed on the influence of instructors on students. Students needed to feel like their instructors cared about them as a whole person and they needed encouragement to become involved. They also suggested that there needed to be closer link between co-curricular activities and college curriculum. It was suggested that courses could require that students participate in college activities. They indicated that this would encourage students to recognize how important it was to be part of a community.

Although further studies were needed, evidence existed to support the theory that increased female student engagement can support overall student success during their time in the college and post-graduation.

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Appendix A

Student Success Online Survey

1. Which nationality best describes you? (Choose one)

- Qatari
- Expat Arab
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Filipinas
- Other (please specify) _____

2. Which year were you born? _____

3. Identify your field of study:

- Business Administration
- Health Sciences
- Engineering
- Banking and Finance
- Information Technology
- English as a Foreign Language

4. What is your GPA?

- 3.6 - 4.0
- 3.0 - 3.5
- 2.5 - 2.9
- 2.0 - 2.4
- below 2.0

5. Which year of your program are you in?

- 1
- 2
- 3

6. How often do you access the following college programs or services?

(very often; often; sometimes; hardly ever; never)

- Career counseling services
- Fitness centre
- Fitness classes
- Swimming Pool
- Other health-related activities
- Student clubs
- Volunteer opportunities
- Global Village
- Student Council
- Robotics
- Skills Competition

7. How do you feel about your participation in college extra-curricular activities?

- I spend too much time on extra-curricular activities
- I spend a good amount of time on extra-curricular activities
- I have never thought about it
- I wish I spent more time on extra-curricular activities
- I do not participate in extra-curricular activities

8. How do you feel about the time you spend studying?

- I spend too much time studying
- I spend a good amount of time studying
- I have never thought about it
- I wish I spent more time studying
- I almost never study

9. Identify one or more reasons why you do not participate in extracurricular activities.

- I spend too much time studying
- It is not culturally appropriate
- I do not like participating in mixed gender activities
- My friends do not participate
- I am afraid I will look funny if I do not know what to do
- I have no time (family responsibilities)
- I do not know what is available
- The activity times are not convenient
- I just do not feel like it
- I don't think they are important

- Other, please specify... _____
9. What are your plans for after graduation? (Choose one or more)
- Continue my studies
 - Start working
 - Start a family
 - Other, please specify... _____

10. How would you rate your experience with the following?

Very positive; Positive; Neutral; Negative; Very negative

- Your instructors
- Your department/school
- Other faculty
- Other students
- Coaches/fitness instructors
- Volunteer group leaders
- The College

11. If you would like to participate in a 30-minute follow-up interview, please type your email address.

Appendix B

Online Student Survey Informed Consent Form

Date: September 2014

Title: Understanding College Community: Fostering Female Student Success at the College of the North Atlantic Qatar.

Researcher(s): *Fleur Kenward Graduate Student, Faculty of Education, Memorial University, 10 Field St., St. John's, NL A1C 4J2*

Supervisor(s): *Dr. Cecile Badenhorst, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, Memorial University, PO. Box St. John's, NL*

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled "Understanding College Community: Fostering Female Student Success at the College of the North Atlantic Qatar."

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. Please contact the researcher, *Fleur Kenward*, if you have any questions about the study or for more information, not included here, before you consent.

As part of the fulfillment for my Graduate studies at Memorial University in Post-secondary education, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Cecile Badenhorst.

This focuses on investigating the link between college involvement and student success. It seeks to investigate whether there is a link between student academic success and extra-curricular engagement. In addition, it will also seek to identify barriers that inhibit females from engaging in college life. This data will then guide programming in the future as a means of enhancing the college community.

The study will consist of an online survey and post-survey interview. Students who complete the survey, will be encouraged to but, are not required to participate in the interview. The survey will investigate demographics, participation in extra-curricular activities, barriers to participation and overall perception of various aspects of college life. The online survey will take approximately five minutes to complete and the

interview, if you choose to participate further, will consist of one 30-minute (approx.) meeting.

Students have the right to withdraw from the study at any point. However once the online survey data has been submitted, it can no longer be withdrawn as it is pooled anonymously. Furthermore, at any point prior or during the interview, the participant can withdraw and if any data has been collected from the interview it will be destroyed without any negative consequences. Once the interview data has been collected, participants have 24 hours to withdraw their interview forms after which point they the data will be with other data, none of which will contain any distinguishing characteristics.

Every measure will be taken to ensure anonymity with the online survey, interview and storage of data, as much as is possible (see below). Data gathered without any distinguishing characteristics, available only to the researcher, will be stored in a locked location in the researcher's home for five years, after which time will be shredded.

The survey will be conducted using the on-line survey tool *Fluid Surveys*. Rights to the data were retained by the researcher. If you choose to participate, every effort will be made to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Unless you decide to volunteer for the interview, personal identifying characteristics will not be gathered. For further information click the link: <http://fluidsurveys.com/about/privacy/>

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future. There are little to no possible risk of physical, emotional, social or financial harm associated with the study do not go beyond those similarly encountered in daily life such as embarrassment or self-consciousness over not meeting social norms of expected behavior.

Consent:

By completing this survey you agree that:

- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been able to ask questions about this study.
- You are satisfied with the answers to all your questions.
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw from the study, without having to give a reason, and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.
- You are 18 years of age or older
- Current students will be excluded from the interview to prevent any conflict of interest.

You can end your participation by simply closing your browser or closing this page. However, once you complete this survey and click submit, your data cannot be withdrawn as data is being collected without any identifying information and therefore individual

responses cannot be identified. By consenting to this online survey, you retain your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities. Please retain a copy of this consent information for your records.

Data will be kept for a minimum of five years, as required by Memorial University policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet accessible only by the researcher after which time will be destroyed.

Clicking *the survey link* below constitutes consent and implies your agreement to the above stipulations.

<http://fluidsurveys.com/surveys/fleur-6CW/student-success-survey-1/>

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in the study or if you have any ethical concerns during this research, please contact Bruce MacRae, CTC Institutional Review Board, either by telephone at (974) 4495-2600, or by email at bruce.macrae@CTCatar.edu.qa.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

Appendix C

Interview Questions

1. Which school/faculty are you in? Why did you choose this? Do you enjoy it?
2. Where are you from? Which school did you attend before CTC?
3. How do you feel about your experience at the college? What could be done to improve this?
4. How do you feel about the time you spend studying (not enough, too much)?
5. Do you participate activities other than regular classes? If yes, which activities?
6. What are some of the benefits of participating in co-curricular activities? (GPA, other skills?)
7. Why do you participate in certain activities?
8. Do any of these prevent you from participating in extra-curricular activities: family commitment, time constraints, outside activities, mixed gender environment, interests are not met, not culturally/socially acceptable?
9. What do you plan to do after you finish college? Do you plan to study abroad?
10. If you plan to work right away, where?
11. Any reasons why it might be difficult to find a job? What do you think of the fact that women have a much higher rate of education than men in Qatar? Why do you think this is the case?
12. Although women are more educated, they have a higher unemployment rate? Any idea why that might be the case?
13. Why do you think Qatari women have a much higher rate of unemployment?
14. In your opinion, what can be done to encourage female students to participate in college life?
15. How do you feel about your experience at the college? What could be done to improve this?
16. What can be done to help reduce to: increase awareness of available programs? Increase the amount of time available for students to participate?
17. Other question?

Appendix D

Student Interview Informed Consent Form

Date: October 2014

Title: Understanding College Community: Fostering Female Student Success at the College of the North Atlantic Qatar.

Researcher: *Fleur Kenward Graduate Student, Faculty of Education Memorial University, 10 Field St., St. John's, NL A1C 4J2*

Supervisor: *Dr. Cecile Badenhorst, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education Memorial University, cbadenhorst@mun.ca*

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled "Understanding College Community: Fostering Female Student Success at the College of the North Atlantic Qatar."

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. Please contact the researcher, *Fleur Kenward*, if you have any questions about the study or for more information not included here before you consent.

As part of the fulfillment for my Graduate studies at Memorial University in Post-secondary education, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Cecile Badenhorst. My thesis will be publicly available at Queen Elizabeth II Library of Memorial University.

This focuses on investigating the link between college involvement and female student success at the College of the North Atlantic Qatar. It seeks to investigate whether there is a link between student academic success and extra-curricular engagement. In addition, it will also seek to identify barriers that inhibit females from engaging in college life. This data will then guide programming in the future as a means of enhancing the college community.

The study will consist of an online survey and post-survey interview. Having completed the survey you are agreeing to participate in an interview, which will consist of one 30-

minute (approximately) meeting and you that you are not a current student of the interviewer. Participants have the right to withdraw their data within 24 hours of interview as it will be compiled without any identifying characteristics. Prior or during the interview, the participant can withdraw and any data will be destroyed without any negative consequences. Once the interview data has been collected, participants have 24 hours to withdraw their interview forms after which point the data will be compiled and will not contain any distinguishing characteristics; and therefore cannot be withdrawn. The participant, however, at any point maintains the right to end their participation in the project. Direct quoting will be used but with every effort to maintain anonymity. The data will be stored in a locked location in the investigator's home and destroyed after five years. There is minimal possible risk of physical, emotional, social or financial harm associated with the study do not go beyond those similarly encountered in daily life such as embarrassment or self-consciousness over not meeting social norms of expected behavior. Participants may feel their participation in current college life is inadequate resulting in questioning of self-worth. Participants have the right to skip any questions that they are not comfortable answering and will be given the opportunity to review their responses prior to the reporting on any findings and the thesis submission.

Data will be kept for a minimum of five years, as required by Memorial University policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet accessible only by the researcher after which time will be destroyed.

By consenting to this interview, you retain your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities. Please retain a copy of this consent information for your records.

My signature indicates that:

I have read what this study is about and understood the risks and benefits. I have had adequate time to think about this and had the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered.

I agree to participate in the research project understanding the risks and contributions of my participation, that my participation is voluntary, and that I may end my participation.

In order to participate in the study, I must be 18 years of age or older.

I acknowledge that I am not a current student of the interviewer

Yes No I agree to the anonymous use of quotations.

Yes No I agree to the recording of the interview for transcription purposes only.

A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Signature of participant

Date

Researcher's Signature:

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in the study or if you have any ethical concerns during this research, please contact Fleur Kenward at CTC fleur.kenward@CTCatar.edu.qa, Cecile Badenhorst MUN at cbadenhorst@mun.ca or Bruce MacRae, CTC Institutional Review Board, either by telephone at (974) 4495-2600, or by email at bruce.macrae@CTCatar.edu.qa.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

Appendix E

Recruitment Email

Interested in Student Success: I need you!

With a few minutes of your time you can help to discover whether female student success can be increased by through participation in college extracurricular activities.

If you are 18 years of age or older and are interested in supporting student success, then you can take part in an exciting two-part study by first completing the attached survey. The study, *Understanding College Community: Fostering Student Success at the College of the North Atlantic – Qatar*, will consist of a survey that will take less than five minutes but could help to encourage change at the College of the North Atlantic Qatar. Attached is a PDF of the Informed Consent form for you to download and read.

If you are interested in participating further, email fleur.kenward@CTCatar.edu.qa to schedule a short meeting/interview. The interview will require one 30-minute meeting, which will include questions will be about your participation and experiences at the College of the North Atlantic. Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any point and participants will receive a volunteer certificate and will be informed of the final study results.

Clicking on the survey link below indicates that you have read and understand the informed consent.

If you have any questions or would like to participate in the survey, please contact contact fleur.kenward@CTCatar.edu.qa

Researcher: Fleur Kenward Graduate Student, Faculty of Education
Memorial University, 10 Field St., St. John's, NL A1C 4J2

Supervisor: Dr. Cecile Badenhorst, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education
Memorial Univeristy, St. John's, NL A1C 5S7

This project has been reviewed and cleared by:
Memorial University of Newfoundland
ICEHR Bruneau Centre for Research and Innovation, Room 2010C
Memorial University, St. John's, NL A1C 5S7

College of the North Atlantic Research Ethics Board
P.O. Box 2449, Doha, Qatar, (974)495-2600

Appendix F Ethics Approval Letter Memorial University



Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

Office of Research – 1200B1
St. John's, NL, Canada A1B3X9
Tel: 709 864-2500 Fax: 709 864-4912
www.mun.ca/icehr/

ICEHR Number:	20150279-ED
Approval Period:	August 1, 2014 – August 31, 2015
Funding Source:	N/A
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Cecile Badenhorst Faculty of Education
Title of Project:	<i>Understanding College Community: Fostering Female Student Success at the College of the North Atlantic, Qatar</i>

August 1, 2014

Ms. Fleur Kenward
Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Ms. Kenward:

Thank you for your email correspondence of July 31, 2014 addressing the issues raised by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) concerning the above-named research project.

The ICEHR has re-examined the proposal with the clarification and revisions submitted, and is satisfied that the concerns raised by the Committee have been adequately addressed. In accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2)*, the project has been granted *full ethics clearance* to August 31, 2015.

If you need to make changes during the course of the project, which may raise ethical concerns, please forward an amendment request form with a description of these changes to icehr@mun.ca for the Committee's consideration.

The *TCPS2* requires that you submit an annual update form to the ICEHR before August 31, 2015. If you plan to continue the project, you need to request renewal of your ethics clearance, and include a brief summary on the progress of your research. When the project no longer requires contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you need to provide the annual update form with a final brief summary, and your file will be closed.

The annual update form and amendment request form are on the ICEHR website at <http://www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr/applications/>.

We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Cecil Wideman, Ph.D.
Vice Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research

GW:ch

copy: Supervisor – Dr. Cecile Badenhorst, Faculty of Education
Associate Dean, Graduate Programs, Faculty of Education

Appendix G

Ethics Amendment Letter Memorial University



Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

Office of Social Sciences
St. John's, Nfld. Canada A1B3X9
Tel: 709 664 2561 Fax: 709 664 4012
icehr@mun.ca/research

ICEHR Number:	20150279-ED
Approval Period:	July 16, 2014 – July 31, 2015
Funding Agency:	N/A
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Cecile Badenhorst Faculty of Education
Title of Project:	<i>Understanding College Closeness: Fostering Female Student Success at the College of the North Atlantic Qatar</i>
Amendment #:	01

October 22, 2014

Ms. Fleur Kenward
Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Ms. Kenward:

The Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) has reviewed the proposed modifications for the above referenced project, as outlined in your correspondence dated October 17, 2014, and is pleased to give approval to audio record interviews, with participants' permission, as requested, provided all previously approved protocols are followed.

If you need to make any other changes during the conduct of the research that may affect ethical relations with human participants, please forward an amendment request form with a description of these changes to icehr@mun.ca for further review by the Committee.

Your ethics clearance for this project expires July 31, 2015, before which time you must submit an annual update form to ICEHR. If you plan to continue the project, you need to request renewal of your ethics clearance, and include a brief summary on the progress of your research. When the project no longer requires contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you need to provide the annual update form with a final brief summary, and your file will be closed. The annual update form is on the ICEHR website at <http://www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr/applications/>.

The Committee would like to thank you for the update on your proposal and we wish you well with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Gail Wideman, Ph.D.
Vice-Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research

GW/lw

copy: Supervisor – Dr. Cecile Badenhorst, Faculty of Education

Appendix H

Ethics Approval Letter CNA-Q

Fleur Kenward
School of Language Studies and Academics



College of the North Atlantic-Qatar

June 26, 2014

Dear Fleur;

Thank you for submitting your request for ethical review of your planned research on **“Understanding College Community: Fostering Female Student Success at the College of the North Atlantic Qatar.”** Your request was considered on June 25, 2014. The following documents were reviewed:

1. CNA-Q Ethical Review Application
2. Appendix A- Student Success Survey
3. Appendix B- Sample Student Interview Questions
4. Appendix C- Online Student Survey Informed Consent Form
5. Appendix D- Student Interview Informed Consent Form
6. Appendix E- Interview Questions for HH Sheikha Mouza
7. Appendix F- Informed Consent Form- HH Sheikha Mouza
8. Appendix G- Student Survey and Interview Recruitment Email
9. Appendix H- Email/letter to representatives of HH Sheikha Mouza

The College of the North Atlantic-Qatar’s IRB approves this study for a one year period. **CNA-Q IRB Approval Number: 2014-003**

Please note that annual renewal of Ethical Approval with the CNA-Q IRB is required until the termination or completion of the proposed study. Renewal date for this research project is June 26th of each year.

Please inform the College’s IRB when the research has been completed. Any adverse events or significant change which occurs in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported immediately to the College’s IRB, and be accompanied by a description of those events and/changes. A determination on such a matter will be forthcoming within a two week period after notification of any events and/or changes.

Please provide to the CNA-Q IRB a copy of Ethical Approval from MUN once obtained.

Approval is given on the understanding that the guidelines for ethical research practice, as outlined by Canada’s Tri-Council and Qatar’s Supreme Council for Health, are adhered to. We wish you every success with your research program.

Sincerely,



Bruce MacRae
Chair, CNA-Q Institutional Review Board

Appendix I
Ethics Amendment Letter CNA-Q



Fleur Kenward
School of Language Studies and Academics
College of the North Atlantic-Qatar

October 20, 2014

Dear Fleur;

Thank you for submitting your protocol amendment to the interview portion of your planned research approval number 2014-003.

Your request was reviewed on October 19, 2014. The revised consent form was reviewed and based on the minor changes your application for amendment is approved.

Please note that annual renewal of Ethical Approval with the CNA-Q IRB is required until the termination or completion of the proposed study. Renewal date for this research project is June 26th of each year.

Please inform the College's IRB when the research has been completed. Any adverse events or significant change which occurs in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported immediately to the College's IRB, and be accompanied by a description of those events and/changes. A determination on such a matter will be forthcoming within a two week period after notification of any events and/or changes.

Please provide to the CNA-Q IRB a copy of Ethical Approval from MUN for the protocol amendment once obtained.

Approval is given on the understanding that the guidelines for ethical research practice, as outlined by Canada's Tri-Council and Qatar's Supreme Council for Health, are adhered to.

We wish you every success with your research program.

Sincerely,

Bruce MacRae
Chair, CNA-Q Institutional Review Board

Appendix J Sample of Interview Data Coding

Interviewee: Participant 3

Interviewer: Fleur Kenward

November 13, 2014; CNA-Q Campus; Room 7.2.46

Interviewer is indicated by I

Participant is indicated by P

value of Ed but also value Education

P: For me, where I'm studying and what I'm studying I think I can get a job easily because they have already offered us jobs. So for me it's easy. *many options*

I: Do you think it's more difficult for women to get jobs in Qatar?

P: No. I don't think so. No problem if you are qualified and if you are up the level, they will take you. *Education is key*

I: Thinking of the college or Qatar in general from what you have seen do you think that men and women are equally as educated?

P: If you look at three years ago, they weren't. But if you take the population of Asia, not just Qatar, there was a mentality, in few houses that for girls the first or second year of high school is enough and their life is at home. After this, they have to get married and their life is to cook and be at home but now it's changing. If you want your family educated, the women have to be educated. To work and for your children both male and female have to work outside. Males and females are both getting an education. *last 3-4 years change*
many regions in Asia
low level of education
impact on gender
neg way of thinking
women in the home
marriage
change in thinking
value of women's education
equal contribution of men and women

I: What do you think about the fact that Qatar University has about 65% of their campus female and 35% male?

P: Oh 65% female and 35% male? Females are more intelligent are males. *Females more intelligent laughed here*

I: Really though, any thoughts as to why this might be case.