

Career Barriers in Freshman Orientation: What are first year students worried about?

Allison R. Stegman
Jared F. Edwards
Southwestern Oklahoma State
University



Abstract

- The goal of this study was to identify the career barriers facing college students in their first semester with the possibility of addressing those concerns through campus programming or freshman orientation.

Introduction

- Freshman orientation and first year experience classes serve as an introduction to college and are intended to prepare students to succeed while increasing commitment and retention.
- Many students see college as primarily a path to career development, and according to Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) identified goals increase persistence and performance.



Introduction Cont.

- goals are based on
 - self-efficacy
 - outcome expectations
 - Interests
- goals can be stopped from becoming actions, or actions can be performed with less persistence, due to career barriers.
- Career barriers may be internal or external and real or perceived (Swanson, Daniels, & Tokar, 1996), .



Methods

- Participants were recruited through the freshman orientation course at a small southwestern university.
- All students in freshman orientation were encouraged to complete the questionnaires, and individual results and resources were made available to all students who completed the questionnaire.
- Only those students who consented to participation in research were included in the analyses.

Methods Cont.

- The final group of participants consisted of 742 first semester students.
 - The sample was mostly European American (70%) with multiracial (10%) and African American (6.7%) being the next largest groups.
 - The sample was 55% female, and 85% of the sample reported having a chosen major.

Instruments

- Career Barriers Inventory-Revised (CBI-R; Swanson, Daniels, & Tokar, 1996).
 - The CBI-R is a 70 item Likert scale instrument that produces 13 scales and one total score for career barriers.
 - During feedback participants were presented with their CBI-R results and resources on campus related to each of the 13 areas of career barriers.

Analyses

- Due to the small numbers in all racial/ethnic groups other than European American, race and ethnicity were collapsed to European American and Non-European American.
- A MANOVA was run with sex, race/ethnicity, and decided vs. undecided status as predictor variables and the 13 scales and the total score of the CBI-R as outcome variables.
- The alpha level was set at .05.



Results

- Significant main-effects were found for sex on 10 of the 13 scales and on the total score.
- Significant main-effects were found for race/ethnicity on 4 of the scales.
- Significant main-effects for decided/undecided status were found on 5 scales and the total score.

Results for Gender

- Women are more concerned about ($p < .05$)
 - Children
 - Decision-making difficulties
 - Networking/Socializing
 - Disapproval by Significant Others
 - Dissatisfaction
 - Preparation
 - Job-market
 - Confidence
 - Role Conflict
 - Sex Discrimination
 - Total Barriers

Results for Decided vs. Undecided

- Undecided Students are more concerned about ($p < .05$)
 - Decision-making difficulties
 - Networking/Socializing
 - Disapproval by Significant Others
 - Dissatisfaction
 - Job-market
 - Total Barriers

Results for Race/Ethnicity

- Non-European American Students are more concerned about ($p < .05$)
 - Networking/Socializing
 - Dissatisfaction
 - Confidence
 - Racial Discrimination

Interaction Effects

- Significant 2-Way Interactions ($p < .05$)
 - Sex X Race/Ethnicity
 - Networking/Socializing
 - Race/Ethnicity X Undecided
 - Confidence

Results Cont.

- One significant two-way interaction for sex X race/ethnicity was found, and an additional two-way interaction was found for decided/undecided status X race/ethnicity.
- There were no significant 3-way interactions.



Discussion

- This study provides more information about the views of and perceived challenges facing entering college students.
- Hopefully this can lead to more effective interventions so that students can address these concerns early in their academic careers.