Analysis of University Marketing Programs

The Honors Program
Senior Capstone Project
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Table of Contents

THE PROBLEM

As the high school senior sorted through the dozens of promotional materials sent to him from colleges everywhere, he got confused. Scanning through the hundreds of pictures in the pamphlets, more and more, every school began to look the same as the next. Every school seemed to show exactly the same type of scenarios; students in a majestic dining hall, an intimate laugh being shared by friends walking through the lush green quad, pupils listening intently to an animated professor. Diversity was everywhere in the photos, as the Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White students tossed a Frisbee, shared a meal, or participated in a study group.

This apparent echo of diversity rippling through the promotional materials of institutions of higher education everywhere has lead to the question addressing whether or not there is a match or mismatch in University marketing and recruitment materials relative to actual student populations. Diversity has many different definitions, but for purposes of this research, the areas of diversity that will be focused on are gender and race. The most important aspect of the promotional materials to be considered is the photographs being displayed. It is through pictures that the schools quickly and easily convey and distinguished themselves. Also, through photographs, it is convenient for a school to represent diversity, specifically gender and race, how ever they so choose.

Relevant factors of the schools being considered in this research are size, ownership, setting, and physical location to help determine if any of those characteristics have any relation to the match/mismatch. As shown later, five schools are looked at in-depth that have similar characteristics, with all having medium enrollment and being located in suburban areas of New England. Future research will include a more thorough investigation into various regions, sizes, and settings of schools.

In situations where a mismatch occurs it is possible that there could be an effect on the student body in terms of expectations and satisfaction. By surveying students at one school that has some occurrence of mismatch, generalizations can be made about other campuses with similar characteristics. Also, what will be important to

consider is whether this match/mismatch occurs intentionally, in a structural attempt to convey a specific message, or accidentally through a number of various reasons.

This is a relevant topic currently because of tensions that have occurred on many college campuses in the United States due to, in part, differences in race, religion, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. Some examples of such occurrences just this past semester include events at Bryant University, Tufts University, Quinnipiac University, and Trinity College.

At Bryant, as reported by the student newspaper The Archway[1], racist comments were posted on the social network www.facebook.com. A student, discontent in his living situation, put down athletes, specifically black athletes, for, in his opinion, not contributing to the academic performance of the school.

Similarly, at Tufts University, a racist poem was published in a conservative student journal, The Primary Source[2]. This poem, like the online posting at Bryant, demeaned black students by accusing them of taking enrollment spots away from "more qualified" white students.

This semester, at Quinnipiac University, an act of harassment occurred during an undergraduate admissions sponsored overnight event. Racist comments were written on the door of a black student who, at the time, was hosting a black prospective student, prompting a campus-wide e-mail to be sent denouncing such expressions and threatening possible expulsion for the culprit(s) if caught[3].

The event at Trinity College garnered national attention through The New York Times[4]. The occurrence came to light when the school's president, who happened to be white, was accused, by a black female student, for only sitting with the white

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[1] Cimino, Lauren. "Facebook triggers town meeting". *The Archway*. Bryant University. Dec 8, 2006. Vol. 74, Iss. 10, p1

[2] Cheroo, Pranai, Kat Schmidt, and Marc Raifman. "Campus debates Primary Source 'carol'". *The Tufts Daily*. Dec 11, 2006.

[3] Carreiro, Manuel (Vice President and Dean of Student Affairs). Email to all students, faculty, and staff. "Behavioral Incident". April 4, 2007.

[4] Hu, Winnie. "An Inward Look At Racial Tension At Trinity College". *New York Times (Late Edition (East Coast))*. New York. Dec 18, 2006. p B1

students in the cafeteria. The female student, before approaching the president, decided to conduct her own social experiment by one day crossing the lunch-time color barrier and sat with a table of white football players who in turn, as she reported, made her feel very uncomfortable and unwelcome.

Events of this sort can be assumed to be in response to discontent of some sort. A possible cause for discontent, given the environment common to American colleges, is unsatisfied expectations. Expectations established through marketing material may not be the only cause of tensions on campuses, with the assumption that they are an influencing factor at all. Other possible causes could be current national events, isolated events at a single school, or the general history within a school or region. However, with so many incidents occurring lately with perceived race being the apparent catalyst, it is necessary to look for some linkage between cause and effect.

This topic is also of interest because, as university enrollment begins to dip over the next 5-10 years, marketing and recruitment may become even more essential in keeping admission numbers at a stable rate. According to the United States Department of Education, the year 2014 will be the first year that enrollment numbers decrease rather than increase for traditional students 14 to 21 years old[5]. To prepare for this event schools must be careful to protect their reputations, and situations such as the ones mentioned above could be devastating in terms of recruitment if not addressed appropriately.

This occurrence is nothing new to higher education as a similar event took place in the early 1990s when there was a drop in overall attendance at tertiary institutions. This is when schools really started actively recruiting students rather than relying on a natural influx of enrollees. As it became more and more common for high school graduates to continue their educations, colleges began to reach out for, not just any student, but the best that they could get.

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[5] U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. 2006. *Digest of Education Statistics, 2005* (NCES 2006-030), Table 170.

As this anticipated drop in enrollment comes into fruition, the importance of word of mouth reputation and other means of publicity throughout the general population will become increasingly important. The messages being sent by the schools will matter and so will what people think and say about them.

THE HISTORY

There are many important variables to consider while discussing the marketing practices of universities. As overall enrollment continues to rise over the next few years there will be a struggle between the students pushing toward the best schools and the universities pulling on the best students. As Patricia McDonough argues in the article "Buying and Selling Higher Education: The Social Construction" [6], there are two types of students that attend college: the ones that are limited in choice so they enroll where they can, and those that have many options and choose to enroll where they feel will be most beneficial to them. It is in the second scenario that both reputation and marketing efforts play the biggest role. The more competitive a school is, the harder it will try to bring in the best available students. By nature less competitive schools, such as many state schools or community colleges, often attract less competitive students (those with lower scores, lower incomes, or disciplinary issues).

McDonough goes on to explain the importance for all schools to establish their own brand image in the marketplace by producing promotional material. This material combined with an already present reputation helps differentiate one school from another in the minds of prospective students. This idea of selling an image is not done only by schools. Students also try to present their most positive attributes to the more selective schools in order to gain admission. They do this by taking specialized classes to prepare for the SAT and ACT tests, hiring tutors to improve their GPAs, and some even go to the extent of hiring a personal consultant who will help them research and apply to schools.

This argument is supported in another article, "Higher Education Marketing Concerns: Factors Influence Students' Choice of College"[7] (Domino et al.) which discusses the main criteria students use to select which schools they apply to and

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[6] McDonough, Patricia. "Buying and Selling Higher Education: The Social Construction". *The Journal of Higher Education*. Columbus. 1994. Vol. 65, Iss. 4, p427
[7] Domino, Stefanie et al. "Higher Education Marketing Concerns: Factors Influence Students' Choice of Colleges". *The Business Review*. Hollywood. 2006. Vol. 6, Iss. 2, p101

eventually enroll in. This article claims that economics are the main consideration for students, but what it fails to mention is the power of schools to alter the amount of aid given to students as part of an admission decision. The cost of a school will change from one student to the next, depending on merit based scholarships and need-based funding. What Domino does add to the argument is that decision criteria differs from person to person based on age, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. This argument means that messages being sent by one school will be heard by different audiences and possibly interpreted in different ways depending on a receiver's demographics.

University practices have changed over the years as marketing and recruitment laws have been set to drive institutional policies. To help understand why schools do what they do, the 2003 Supreme Court ruling on admission practices of the University of Michigan should be examined. The University of Michigan had been practicing a method of decision making that included assigning various point values to the reported race of prospective students[8]. In an attempt to bring in more "minority" students, the University of Michigan assigned more points to black and Latino students than it had for whites and Asians. The result was that black students with relatively lower test scores and grades were being admitted before white and Asian students with higher grades.

The decision of the court was that schools could no longer practice admission policies that included assigning point values to an applicant's race or ethnicity. This case did not disallow the specific recruitment of minority students; it merely took race out of the final decision process for admission. Nedra Rhone notes that, while most everyone agrees on the need to maintain diversity in higher education, the changes have set off debate on exactly what constitutes diversity and how campuses will continue to attract minority students"[9].

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[8] Galuszka, Peter. "Turning Up the Heat on Affirmative Action Policies". *Diverse Issues in Higher Education.* Fairfax. 2006. Vol. 23, Iss. 22, p15
[9] Rhone, Nedra. "How Universities Are Keeping Diversity on Campus". The Crisis. Baltimore. May/June 2006. Vol. 113, Iss. 3, p10

As a change of practices in marketing efforts has occurred, so has changed the methods and mediums being used. The progressive nature of youth in the United States has forced schools to adapt their methods. Some schools are moving away from the traditional methods of printed materials, or at least they are diversifying their promotional efforts with the inclusion of alternative channels of communication. It is very rare now, if occurring at all, for a school to not operate some sort of ".edu" website. In addition to websites, schools are increasingly taking advantage of technological advancements with the production of CDs, DVDs, podcasts, and web logs (blogs).

What has yet to be examined is if there is a match or a mismatch between recruitment materials and student populations in American universities. It is important to determine why this match or mismatch occurs. It may be that publication material provides for an actual representation of the student population. It could be a top-down decision based on a schools vision or ideal population. It may be a politically correct attempt to show all aspects of a university's offerings. It may be considered standard operating practice, in an attempt to match what is expected of schools in today's culture. It may be as a response to the marketing efforts of a school's direct competition. While this topic will require further research beyond this current project, some possibilities will be explored when looking at the results to help explain why some mismatches occur.

Lastly, it is important to determine how a student population is impacted if a mismatch does occur in terms of overall collegiate experience and comfort on the given campus. This will be examined by a survey submitted to one school that has some occurrences of mismatch in its promotional materials.

THE START

To understand the issues at hand, it was important to acquire information in a manner similar to that of a high school junior or senior. The main source of statistical information has been www.collegeboard.com. The Collegeboard is focused on accumulating and reporting information in a very standardized method which allows for easy search and comparison. This is a very reputable source of information that is used by nearly all students as they conduct their college search.

Basic information that was collected about each school included the name, the search agent information, to be explained further down, the official website, a contact name or office, and the physical location.

Demographic information was collected including the total undergraduate enrollment. Also collected were percentages of men, women, Native American/Alaskan, Asian-American, black (non-Hispanic), white (non-Hispanic), Latino/Latina, non-resident (international), and Non-reporting students. The percentage of residential students was also considered to be important information.

Historical information was collected establishing if a school is historically black or Hispanic Serving, has a strong religious affiliation, or accepts only women. Lastly, the style of the school was noted differentiating four-year oriented universities from two year institutions such as community or junior colleges, schools with specific focuses on academic specialties, and reported acceptance rate. These considerations will be useful as research is continued beyond the five schools that are to be examined in this project. The information will be used to identify trends across various regions, sizes, or settings of schools.

The search agents that were used to identify all the main variations between schools are size, ownership, setting, and region. The size of a school is judged on its overall undergraduate enrollment. The three categories of size are small (less than 2,000), medium (between 2,000 and 15,000), and large (greater than 15,000) as defined by Collegeboard. The size of a school may have an effect on the general feeling of community on a campus. The smaller the school, the more likely individuals will be

to interact with the same people on an everyday basis. At a large school, students are much more likely to become a face in the crowd, and become, or at least feel like, more of a number rather than an individual.

The two different types of ownership are public and private institutions. The foundation of a school may play a role in how it is governed. It could be interesting to see if either is more likely to accurately depict their current populations or otherwise their ideal or perceived image.

Setting is the general environment surrounding the school. As defined by Collegeboard, the various settings are urban, suburban, and rural. Those settings also tie in with the more specific types of area (Rural Community, Small Town, Large Town, Small City, Large City, Very Large City) based on total population. The setting of the school is important because of the varied levels of interaction with the outside community based on the number of non-students on or around campus. A rural campus is much more likely to be completely isolated from the outside community due to the few residents in the area such as the University of Connecticut located in Storrs, CT or the University of New Hampshire located in Durham, NH. A campus located in the middle of a city or urban setting is more likely to have a high level of contact with the local community as seen with New York University or Georgetown University.

Region is the physical geographic location of the school. The regions considered were the Northeast, the Mid Atlantic, the Southeast, the Midwest, the Southwest, the Northwest, the West, and the South. Regional differences may be apparent as schools from various locations are examined. The population is diverse, by various definitions, throughout the US, so it was important to include every region in the search criteria. The highest level of Hispanic populations are concentrated in the southeast corner of the US, namely in Texas, Arizona, and California. The densest populations of Native Americans and Inuit are in the north central states, namely the Dakotas, and Alaska respectively. It could be worth while examining whether those

national trends stay true to the populations of the universities in those areas in future research.

PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

Acquisition

An e-mail was sent to schools that were selected based on the search agents listed above. Schools were selected semi-randomly to ensure that a balanced mix of the criteria would be met. Of the 395 schools contacted, 218 responded by sending published material such as view books, profiles, special event invitations, and course catalogs. Some schools sent an automatic response with an invitation to join their mailing list electronically which was not done considering the time frame of the research. A few schools revealed that they no longer use published material of any sort which shows that websites will be a valuable reference tool for future research.

Once the printed material was received, a standardized form was created for coding purposes. First, the type of publication was noted. This is so that in future research, similar materials, such as view books, fact sheets, and financial aid packets, can be compared to their specific counterparts, rather than just in the aggregate as was done for the purposes of this research. What was reported in the aggregate for each school, but compiled per unit of material, was the total number of pictures viewable in general as well as the total number of people present overall.

If people were present in a picture, the first thing reported was the size of the group and a break down of student and faculty interaction. The three different categories for items depicting only students were "single student", "small (intimate) group", and "large (non-intimate) group". The same three categories were used to code faculty, when applicable. The percentage of faculty presence in the photographs will later be used to help determine the level of academic focus per school. The information about the size of the groups will be used to report the social activity representation of a school.

To help further understand how a school was representing itself, coding was done of various activities taking place in the photographs. The activities that were being coded were under the labels of "academic", "athletic", "social", "arts and entertainment", "technology", and "global/study abroad". Academic pictures included

anything focused on studying, teaching, or sitting in a classroom setting. Athletics included pictures focused on any sort of recreational activity with examples being varsity sports, intramurals, or jogging in a small group. The most broadly defined group was social, which included any picture that focused on interactions amongst multiple people and had not been coded already for having an academic or athletic focus. Arts and entertainment (A&E) included any picture that focused on activities such as participation with theaters, choral groups, musical ensembles, or creative arts. Technology was coded when a picture blatantly displayed some sort of technological advantage, such as a laptop program, video editing equipment, a media wall, or a high-tech classroom.

Not all pictures were focused on humans and social activities. It was also important to consider the number of photographs depicting physical structures, scenes of nature or wilderness, or off-campus locations. The most common occurrence of these non-human pictures weas to show campus buildings or facilities such as an exercise room, a cafeteria, or a unique structural design. Nature scenes were prevalent most typically in schools within a rural, or at least suburban, area. Photos of off-campus destinations were commonly used to establish proximity to the closet major city such as Boston, New York, or Providence.

An interesting consideration for future research will be to look at the explicit words actually written in the promotional material to see how well it coincides with the photographs. This information will be most beneficial when a larger number of schools have been examined and comparisons can be made in regard to the relationship between photographic portrayal and explicit language.

An important note to add to the coding of promotional material is that it was done by a single judge. To further extend this research, multiple coding should be done by multiple judges to develop a standardized reviewing process. While this does leave some room for judgment error, the results accumulated are still interesting and worthy of consideration. To increase room for error, rather that reporting incorrect information, it was common to code a person as "unidentifiable" rather than to guess

their gender or race if they were not obviously discernable in the photograph.

Results

BABSON COLLEGE

Undergraduate Enrollment: 1,776

Pictures Viewed: 25

People Depicted: 148

Diversity

Gender diversity was reported to be 59% male and 41% female. What was found after the photographs had been examined was a gender ratio of 51% male and 44% female with an unknown rate of 7%. What this means is that men were under represented in the promotional material while the number of women was pretty close to be accurate. The 7% unknown rate leaves some room for error, but does not fully explain the absolute variance for men (8%) and women (3%).

Racial diversity was more interesting to consider than gender at Babson. It is important to note that a large portion of individuals were unidentifiable in the pictures (13%), and a large portion was unreported by the school (16%), which leaves a lot of room for error. But the room for error, like with gender, does not fully excuse the fact that no racial group was accurately represented by Babson. Black students were three times over represented (coded 9%, reported 3%). White students were a full 10% under represented in the pictures (55% to 45%). Latinos were three and a half times over represented in the pictures (7% to 2%). While the Asian population is the closest to being accurate (7% reported, 11% coded) it is still being over represented in the materials. It is apparent that multicultural students are generally over represented in the Babson promotional materials leaving white students well under represented.

Social/Academic

The next topic examined through the promotional materials is the type of environment being projected by a school. Acceptance rate was considered to show how selective a school is. It is being assumed that a lower acceptance rate will result in a higher focus on academic rather than social activities. Even in specialty schools, which have some of the lowest acceptance rates, such as Juilliard (5%) or any of the U.S. armed forces academies (14-26%), average SAT scores and high school GPAs are very high. To see if schools follow this logic, acceptance rates will be compared to the percentage of photographs showing academic activity. Also, the percentage of photographs showing technology, faculty, or arts and entertainment will be listed as well because those areas can arguably be connected to academic intentions.

Academic Focus- Babson reported an acceptance rate of 37% which makes them the most selective school examined in this study. The coded pictures revealed the following percentages: 16% academic, 0% technology, 8% with faculty present, 0% with A&E. These results show that there is not a high level of academic focus in the photographs. They also show that Babson possibly relies heavily on established reputation rather than promotional material to display academic prestige. This raises a question for future research to address the idea of highly reputable schools not having to prove their academic qualifications and still being able to attract competitive students.

Social Focus- Babson reports an 81% residency, students living in campus housing, meaning four out of every five students live on campus. This leads to the assumption that there could be a tight community feel because, "shared learning communities of small groups of students… help improve student satisfaction"[10]. Students have an increased chance to interact with one another outside the classroom by living in the same area, which should result in a higher percentage of photographs depicting human interaction on some level. After coding the photographs, the following

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[10] Waldron, Kathleen. "Access to College Means Access to Economic Mobility for America's Underserved". *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*. Fairfax. Mar 8, 2007. Vol. 24, Iss.2, p33

percentages were found: 28% social activity, 8% athletic. These numbers show that greater focus is put on social activities than on academics as seen earlier. Also 40% of the pictures featured small intimate groups of students and 8% in large groups. These numbers further support the idea that there is a great deal of focus put on social activities and human interaction rather than academics at Babson.

People/Non-People

To further understand messages being sent by the schools, it was interesting to consider how much emphasis was put on displaying humans versus non-human settings such as buildings, nature scenery, or off-campus locations.

People- To consider how much focus is put on human presence, the People per Picture Index (PPPI) was designed by dividing the number of people with the number of photographs made available. In Babson's material there were 148 people depicted through 25 pictures. This results in a PPPI of 5.9. What that means is that on average, there were nearly 6 people in any given picture throughout Babson's promotional material. This further supports the idea that Babson emphasizes the presence of interactions on the campus.

Non-People- Non-People is the term used to group all non-human displays. To represent this idea numerically, and allow for relative comparison with other schools, the Non-People per Picture Index (nPPPI) was created. This number is found by dividing the number of pictures focused on buildings, nature/scenery, or off-campus sites by the total number of photographs available. In those 25 pictures five were focused on something other than people which results in an nPPPI of .20. This number is fairly average, as can be seen when compared to the other schools, and it means that there is not an overly apparent focus on buildings and facilities. Once again this proves that Babson prefers to show who, rather than what, is on its campus.

BENTLEY COLLEGE

Undergraduate Enrollment: 4,195

Pictures Viewed: 74

People Depicted: 243

<u>Diversity</u>

The reported gender diversity at Bentley, equal to that of Babson and Bryant, is 59% male and 41% female. When coded, what was represented in the photographs was 50% male and 48% female with an unknown rate of 2%. This means that, like Babson, men are under represented and women are over represented. Bentley shows a situation alluding to an environment with a 50/50 gender ratio. With the low "unknown" percentage, the people in the photographs were easily identifiable as male or female resulting in a low opportunity for coding error.

The racial diversity at Bentley is also subject to some error because, similar to Babson, there is a large portion of unreported students (11%). What is found after coding is that black students were four and a half times over represented (coded 9%, reported 2%). White students were very near to being accurately represented (67% coded to 68% reported). Latinos were two and a half times over represented (5% to 2%). The Asian population was also close to being accurately depicted (9% reported, 8% coded). Bentley, like Babson, provided promotional material in which blacks and Latinos were over represented. But, unlike Babson, whites as well as Asians were almost exactly matched. This information leads to the idea that pictures are attempting to show a diverse atmosphere. Bentley's reported numbers suggest that such diversity could be present on campus, but not to the same extent as shown

in the material given that the amount of allowed error does not fully compensate for the mismatched populations.

Social/Academic

Academic Focus- Bentley reported an acceptance rate of 39% which means it is a very selective school. What was found by coding the pictures was 35% focused on academics, 8% on technology, 11% with faculty present, and 5% devoted to A&E. This shows that there is a high level of academic representation in the photographs. Bentley reinforces their reported acceptance rate by displaying a studious campus life. Many of the pictures examined featured a classroom environment or an interactive lab setting.

Social Focus-   Bentley reported an 80% residency, so like Babson, with 4 out of every 5 students living on campus, Bentley could also have a tight community feel. What the pictures revealed was an 18% focus on social activity and 3% on athletic activity. This echoes the idea that Bentley depicts academics to a greater extent than it does social activities. With 22% of the pictures featuring a small intimate group of students, and 18% featuring large groups, only two fifths of the pictures show groups of students together. This shows that there is not a huge amount of focus directed toward interactions, but rather attention is directed toward an academic/technological setting.

People/Non-People

People- In 74 pictures viewed, there were 243 people depicted resulting in a PPPI of 3.3. This is a relatively low number, and it shows again that focus is not put on human interaction as much as it is at other schools. This also supports the idea that Bentley shows more very small groups or pictures of single individuals, than it does large groups.

Non-People- Of the 74 pictures 13 displayed non-human scenes resulting in an nPPPI of .18. This number shows that there is not a great deal of attention paid to

buildings, facilities, or the like. Proving even further that Bentley actively displays individual people or those in very small groups over anything else.

QUINNIPIAC UNIVERSITY

Undergraduate Enrollment: 5,542

Pictures Viewed: 73

People Depicted: 363

<u>Diversity</u>

The gender split at Quinnipiac is reported to be 37% male and 63% female. Once the pictures were coded, the results revealed a situation of 37% male, 55% female, and an unknown rate of 8%. Men were very accurately displayed in their minority role on campus, while women were under represented but only to a small degree which arguably can being excused considering the unknown rate.

There is a little more room for error when considering racial diversity (10% unreported by the school, 7% unidentifiable in the pictures). Black students were two times over represented (coded 6%, reported 3%). White students were only a few percentage points under represented (78% to 72%). Latinos were six times over represented (6% to 1%). Again, like most other schools, the Asian population was portrayed accurately (2% reported, 2% coded). In general Quinnipiac fairly closely represented its actual population throughout its promotional material. With that considered it is interesting to note that racially driven offenses, as mentioned earlier, have taken place on the Quinnipiac campus. This hints at the idea that even when a school effectively portrays its environment, discontent can still be present.

<u>Social/Academic</u>

Academic Focus- Quinnipiac reported an acceptance rate of 53%, meaning it accepts just over half of its applicants. Results from the coded pictures show: 22% academic activity, 7% technology focus, 7% faculty presence, and 0% A&E focus. This shows that there is attention to academics, as well as the other academic areas such as

technology and faculty presence. But, it also leaves room for other areas of focus as well. Essentially there is not an over dominance of academic centered messages being sent.

Social Focus- Quinnipiac reported an on-campus residency of 70%. With this majority of students on campus there should be some sense of community evident. Quinnipiac does not allow seniors to live on campus, so this shows that, assuming seniors are roughly 25% of the student body, only approximately 75% of the students are eligible to be residents. So, while the school may not be as tight of a community as others, by not including its seniors in housing, there is still a very high percentage of underclassmen that live on campus. With the coded pictures revealing a 16% focus on social activities and another 14% on athletics, there appears to be a greater focus on social activities than on academics as shown earlier. With 30% of the pictures featuring a small intimate group of students and 20% showing large groups there is great amount of interaction displayed.

There is almost as much emphasis on athletics as there is on social interactions in the Quinnipiac material. Athletics are a form of social interaction with just a more specific focus. With half of the pictures showing either a small or large group of students, which means no individual pictures or pictures with faculty present, there is a great emphasis on people being active on campus. However, with only 16% social photos, those people might not necessarily be shown interacting with each other in a strictly social environment.

People/Non-People

People- In 73 pictures, there were 363 people present resulting in a PPPI of 5.0. This again shows that Quinnipiac does place emphasis on the people on its campus, but it does not mean that those people are necessarily interacting with one another in a socially active environment.

Non-People- Of those 73 pictures, 25 focused on non-human settings resulting in a very high nPPPI of .34. This reveals that there is a great deal of focus placed on

buildings, facilities, and/or off-campus sites. Rather than focusing on interactions as seen with a relatively low social picture percentage, Quinnipiac chooses to represent the environment and setting of the school.

RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

Undergraduate Enrollment: 7.097 (largest school examined)

Pictures Viewed: 12 (fewest pictures)

People Depicted: 53 (fewest people)

There is a great deal of room for error due to the low number of people and pictures that had been coded, but this school is still worth looking at just for consideration purposes. More evidence would be needed to fully make accurate judgments about its practices.

Diversity

The gender ratio was reported to be 31% male and 69% female. The coded information revealed a situation of 45% male and 53% female with 2% unknown. In the provided material men were well over represented and women were well under where they should have been. The pictures suggest a much more balanced gender environment than what is actually present on campus.

For racial diversity the room for error lies in the sample size of the materials examined. Rhode Island College (RIC) had the greatest amount of mismatch for both blacks and white students compared to the other schools. Black students were more than four times over represented (coded 17%, reported 4%). White students were very under represented (80% to 57%). Latinos and Asians were accurate (6% to 6%) in the materials provided. Essentially there were too few pictures examined to really make a strong case one way or another about RIC, but these early results show that the major variance occurs with the depiction of black and white students as well as with the gender ratio.

Social/Academic

Academic Focus- RIC reported the highest acceptance rate, 75%, making it the least selective school that was examined. The coded pictures resulted in focus on: 25% academic, 0% technology, 8% with faculty present, and 0% A&E. These numbers show that there is actually a high level of academic focus in the photographs. It is possible that RIC is trying to send the message that even though it is not very selective, it can still provide a highly academic environment.

Social Focus-   RIC reported an 11% residency which could mean there is not a very tight community present on campus. This low number is explained by the fact that RIC is mainly a commuter school that is welcoming to non-traditional students. The pictures, with results of 33% focus on social activity and 8% on athletics, might not match the expected events that might accompany low residency rates. Again, RIC may be trying to send a message that while it is a commuter school, it still maintains a sense of community. Four percent of the pictures featured a small intimate group of students and 25% featured large groups. While there is a lot of interaction amongst the individuals depicted, this shows that those interactions are likely taking place in a non-intimate setting.

People/Non-People

People- In the twelve pictures provided there were 53 people to be viewed, resulting in a PPPI of 4.4. This rate is a little below the average, but it does prove that there is some focus on the humans that are on campus. With a large percentage of large group pictures, coupled with the high PPPI, it can be assumed that the focus of any given picture is either on a larger crowd or on a single individual. With the same reasoning, it can be assumed that RIC has a diminutive focus on small group interactions.

Non-People- Three of the twelve pictures shown focused on non-human scenes resulting in an nPPPI of .25. This number is slightly higher than the average which further shows that emphasis is placed either on large groups of students or on no students at all rather than the students in small intimate groups. An interesting note

is that RIC devoted two of those twelve pictures to the city of Providence, which is where the school is located.

BRYANT UNIVERSITY

Undergraduate Enrollment: 3,177

Pictures Viewed: 117 (most pictures viewed)

People Depicted: 698 (most people viewed)

Bryant's situation is the opposite of Rhode Island College in that with such a large number of pictures and people available for viewing there should be a fairly accurate representation of the messages being sent by the school.

Diversity

The gender diversity reported, matching Bentley and Babson, was 59% male and 41% female. Once coded, Bryant was found to present a situation of 47% male, 47% female, and 6% unidentifiable. Men were well under represented, with women being close but still over represented. It is interesting to note that there was exactly the same number of clearly identifiable men as there were women, which shows that the projected gender diversity is much more balanced than the reported numbers would suggest.

There is some room for error with the examination of racial diversity due to a nine percent unidentifiable rate in the coding process. At Bryant, black students were three and a half times over represented (coded 7%, reported 2%). White students were greatly under represented (86% to 70%). Latinos were just slightly under represented (4% to 3%). And, like most other schools, the Asian population is perfectly portrayed (3% reported, 3% coded). Bryant, like most schools examined, under represented white students by a considerable amount, over represented black students to a lesser extent, and matched the Asian population perfectly.

Social/Academic

Academic Focus- As reported by Collegeboard, Bryant's acceptance rate is 58%. This number has gone down considerably to the point of being under 50%, but this information was not updated by the time the data was collected for this project. The results of the coded pictures are as follows: 32% academic, 6% technology, 19% faculty presence, and 10% A&E. These numbers show that Bryant places a huge emphasis on many of the areas connected with academic activity. This high number of academically focused pictures may play a role in why the acceptance rate recently has dropped significantly. Bryant may be trying to convey a message of being academically driven, and as a result it is attracting more scholarly students than it has in the past.

Social Focus- Bryant reported a 79% on-campus residency, which like most other schools examined, should provide for a strong sense of community. After coding the available pictures, the results show a 16% focus on social activities which is half the percentage focused on academics, and 15% focused on athletics. These numbers show that Bryant, compared to the other schools, places a greater focus on academics relative to social activities. An unmatched amount, 42%, of the pictures featured small intimate group of students, with an additional 17% portraying large groups. The sense that these results provide is that Bryant is an academically focused campus with a great deal of emphasis on small intimate groups of students.

People/Non-People

People- In the 117 pictures there were 698 people shown resulting in a PPPI of 6.0. This is the highest number of all the schools examined, which means that Bryant really puts a lot of emphasis on the people on its campus. This number could mean that there are a lot of large groups in photos, but as mentioned earlier, 42% of the pictures focus on small intimate groups. So with a PPPI of 6.0, a great deal of community sense can be assumed to be present as a lot of people are closely interacting with others in the photographs.

Non-People- Of the 117 pictures there were 25 that focused on non-human items equating to an nPPPI of .21. This number is relatively average compared to the other schools. While Bryant puts a great deal of emphasis on academics and intimate group settings, focus is not necessarily taken away from the external environment. Many of the pictures falling in this category are either of facilities unique to Bryant's campus or, like RIC, show scenes from Providence to demonstrate the school's close proximity to the major city.

SURVEY

Acquisition

After reviewing the promotional materials, the next step is to determine if a match/mismatch even matters in terms of comfort and performance of the student population. A survey was conducted of Bryant University students; Bryant being a school which has some degree of mismatch when comparing promotional material to reported demographics.

Methodology

The survey, entitled "Your Bryant Experience", was developed to address a few specific concerns. The main concerns addressed were expectations and satisfaction. In addition to the questions establishing expectations and satisfaction, demographic information was collected. This information will be important when considering similarities and differences between groups of students in addition to considering the responses in an aggregate form. Experience, as used in the survey title, encompasses the entire time a student has been involved with Bryant University community.

Deployment

The survey was created using the website www.QuestionPro.com. This is a resource which allows for writing and hosting of web-based surveys. To deploy the survey, a Facebook group was created with the name "Help Shawn!!!" in honor of this paper's author. People were invited to either join the group, which would provide them with updated information as the project progressed, or just to visit the group long enough to take the survey with no further communication. The first people to join, which is not a surprise, were friends of mine. The possible problem with this is that these individuals may be more inclined to have inflated pro-Bryant attitudes, although the group should be diverse enough in terms of grade level and community involvement that their expectations coming in, and especially their experiences since being at Bryant, should still vary enough to be viable responses. As part of taking the survey, participants were also asked to forward the link to their friends and peers. The goal

of this process was to attain at least a three degree separation between myself and participants and reduce the risk of response bias.

A second wave of invitations was sent out after the first initial push from Facebook. Mass e-mails were sent to members of groups on Bryant's campus, specifically the Resident Assistants and the Student Ambassadors. These two groups are also arguably pro-Bryant by nature. But, they are also the students most closely connected throughout the campus and are privy to more information than the average student. To overcome this issue, these participants were also asked to forward the survey to friends, peers, or residents to increase the degrees of separation between the respondents and myself. The last wave of solicitation for participation was an attempt to balance out some of the demographic variables of the respondents. The earlier waves prompted an over representation of senior (grade level) students, females, on-campus residents, and white students. The final push included special invitations sent to younger underclassmen, males, commuter students, and students with multicultural backgrounds. This push was done as randomly as possible while still trying to acquire more responses from those specific dimensions.

Variables for Consideration

Diversity is one of the easiest variables to discuss because it naturally connects with the first half of the project looking at promotional materials. Gender is the other consideration that fits nicely with the first half. The questions on the survey addressing the issue of diversity focus on expectations and satisfaction in regard to student diversity as well as faculty/staff diversity. These questions were intentionally left vague so that people could define diversity on their own. The common responses about student diversity were focused on racial differences, as well as geographic origin. Faculty/staff diversity was defined more commonly by the respondents as differences in educational backgrounds and experience rather than racially or by gender.

A large portion of the survey was focused on the topic of social campus environment. Specific questions for expectations and to the extent that those expectations were met were asked with the topics of school sponsored social events and non-school sponsored social events. Other questions asked on this point were about the school's level of openness and friendliness as well as the feeling of freedom to express oneself on campus. Another task of the survey was to consider the relativity of factors that influence how and why students initially chose to attend Bryant with a specific comparison to campus visits and promotional materials.

There were a few limitations to this method of collecting data. In addition to a possible response bias due to existing relationships, there is a natural bias that occurred as a result of the population that was available to take the survey. Responses are missing from people who: attended Bryant but then left (by transferring or dismissal), were accepted but did not enroll, applied but were not accepted, and researched Bryant and decided not to apply. Also, some surveys were incomplete because the respondents were unable to finish providing their answers. This happened possibly due to time constraints, a loss of interest or willingness to continue, or because of technical difficulties.

Results

Overall 341 people viewed the survey, 292 partially completed it, and 189 fully completed it. An anti-ballot box stuffing filter was put on the survey to deny multiple responses from one individual. The survey was allowed to be done anonymously to help ensure honest and complete responses.

Summary

The first few questions asked on the survey were to determine how students learned about Bryant. The basis of this research is that students' expectations are, at least to some extent, established by the promotional materials that they have received. This fact was confirmed by 90% of the respondents saying that they received some form of printed promotional materials from Bryant. Of those, 64% said they requested the materials from the school. That means that nearly two thirds of the respondents were

specifically interested in learning more about Bryant by viewing its printed materials. Also, less than 7% of respondents said that they never visited the website before enrolling at Bryant, that supports the idea the websites are valuable tools for promotional strategies and worthy of future research.

The next questions were used to establish the respondent's first experiences on campus. The importance of campus visits to help students in their decision process is very apparent when you consider 90% of the respondents said they visited campus on at least one occasion before enrolling at Bryant. The most commonly selected program, at 30%, that students said they took part in was a formal tour. This was slightly higher than the 25% who said that they attended an open house event. The lesson learned from these results is the true value of those specific programs and the student ambassadors that are present for both of them. To further support this point, when asked to rate the importance of their campus visit as part of the decision process relative to other factors such as school location, financial aid, academic programs, social environment, parents, guidance counselor, and friends respondents said, on average, that the visit was either equally important or more important than all of the other listed alternatives.

Expectations

In general it seems that Bryant students are having their expectations met. What is very interesting is that in all categories examined, the top two average responses were either "equals expectations" or "somewhat better than expectations". This shows that expectations are not exceedingly being met, but it does show that students are getting pretty much the experience that they expected on average. While students were allowed to define their own expectations, it can be assumed that regardless of their starting point, students will be more satisfied with the school if those expectations are being met. Future research will be done to look more closely as the open-ended reposes provided explaining those expectations, but for purposes of this report it is more important to look at the extent that they were met. The

following is a list of the topics that were asked about, and the top two average

response categories for each:

Academics-

44% Equal to expectations

37% Somewhat better than expectations

School Sponsored Social Events-

24% Equal to expectations

36% Somewhat better than expectations

Non-School Sponsored Social Events

41% Equal to expectations

32% Somewhat better than expectations

Buildings and Facilities-

37% Equal to expectations

30% Somewhat better than expectations

Campus Safety-

41% Equal to expectations

30% Somewhat better than expectations

Student Diversity-

51% Equal to expectations

16% Somewhat better than expectations

Faculty/Staff Diversity-

52% Equal to expectations

28% Somewhat better than expectations

Involvement in Athletics-

53% Equal to expectations

18% Somewhat better than expectations

Involvement in student clubs and organizations-

28% Equal to expectations

36% Somewhat better than expectations

The very first question on the survey asked if, in general, students were satisfied with their overall Bryant experience. This question was a late addition to the survey, which resulted in only half the respondents being able to provide their answer. The results were that students are generally satisfied with their experience. More than 80% of the respondents said that they either agreed with the statement (61%) or strongly agreed (21%). This number is higher than the 70% overall contentment rate reported four years ago in a honors capstone project completed by Aparna Paul, entitled "Bryant Student Contentment in the Age of Melancholy". At this time there is no single obvious explanation for this increase in satisfaction, but it is an interesting point to consider all the same.

The final questions asked on the survey were on the topic of openness and comfort on campus. A very positive 90% of the respondents said that they felt Bryant does provide an open and welcoming campus. This number dips slightly as only 87% said that they feel comfortable to freely express themselves on campus. This drop is an interesting statistic to note for future research in an attempt to determine how a percentage of people can feel that they are on an open campus, but are lacking the feeling of freedom to fully express themselves. It is encouraging, from the viewpoint of a member of the Bryant community, that both of those numbers have increased since Paul's research was completed. She found that 67% considered campus friendly while only 54% considered it welcoming.

One final interesting statistic to report is how students have viewed their performance while at Bryant. The idea of performance is being measure by the amount of personal goals they feel they have met while a student on campus. A natural progression occurred in terms of grade level and the amount of goals that had been met. Juniors and seniors comprised a very large portion of the 63% claiming to have met most of the their goals. Freshmen, sophomores, and juniors made up the majority of the 33% reporting to have met some of their goals. Finally, the 3% saying that they had met all their goals were all seniors or alumni. This progression shows that students do feel that they are provided the opportunities, on average, to meet at least most of their personal collegiate goals while at Bryant.

The results from the survey show that, on average, Bryant students are having their expectations met, and they feel that they have been able to pursue and often complete their personal goals. What this shows is that students do not seem to be impacted negatively, or at least not directly, by the mismatch that occurred in the promotional materials.

CONSIDERATIONS OF INTEREST

"I wasn't a minority until I came to Bryant", said a current sophomore of Bryant University. This student happens to be female. This student also happens to be Latina. This comment came during a discussion occurring in response to a racially driven message that had been posted on the online social network, Facebook.com as mentioned earlier.

At some point, through some set of circumstances, the term multicultural became synonymous with minority. Minority status, however, is completely relative and dependent on environment. Such environments are often created and magnified on college campuses, as masses of similarly aged and minded people pack together in a small shared living space. In then becomes the responsibility of an institution of higher education to not only populate its campus with the best and brightest students available, but also to provide those students with a safe and nurturing environment.

The following is a summation of the information discussed previously considering Bryant University and the promotional material that was coded and reviewed.

Enrollment: 3,177 undergraduate students

Pictures examined: 117

People (in pictures) examined: 698

Gender Diversity

	Reported	Shown in Material
Female	41%	46.7%
Male	59%	46.7%
Unknown		6.6%

Discrepancy: There are an equal number of males and females depicted in the material. Females are over represented by 5%; males are under represented by 12%. The materials reflect a much more balanced gender mix than the reported numbers suggest.

Racial Diversity

	Reported	Shown in Material	Result
Black	2%	6.9%	over rep
White	86%	69.5%	under rep
Asian	3%	2.7%	close
Latino/a	4%	3.0%	close
Other Ethnicity	1%	1.7%	close
Unreported/unknown some error	3%	9.3%	

Discrepancy: Black students are over represented three and a half times the reported data. White students are under represented by 16%. The 9.3% unknown creates some room for compensation for the listed mismatches, but not to the extent that would excuse them entirely.

To examine the results with a sociological perspective, it is important to break the responses into various subgroups to see if the school means something different to some than it does to others. As Neal Schmitt, and the rest of the department of psychology at Michigan State University, found in their study, background and demography does play a role in the perceptions and performance of college students[11]. The demographic variables to be considered are gender, ethnicity, reported family income, and sexual orientation. These variables will be considered independently, however a future paper topic could easily focus on the intricate

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[11] Schmitt, Neal, et al. "The Use of Background and Ability Profiles to Predict College Student Outcomes". *Journal of Applied Psychology*. US. Jan. 2007. Vol. 92(1), p165

connections between these various subgroups, such as black females versus white females or transfer students with high incomes versus those with lower incomes.

Gender

Gender is the most obviously mismatched aspect of Bryant's marketing material relative to the actual campus population. The material could lead a viewer to believe that the campus is equally balanced with men and women in terms of absolute population. With this mismatch, it is worth breaking down the answers of men and women on the survey to see if either subgroup is more or less satisfied or comfortable than the other.

In response to the question about explicit satisfaction at Bryant neither men nor women showed a greater likelihood of being more or less pleased. Both groups answered with about 20% strongly agreeing, 62% agreeing, and 15% neutral on the topic. The two groups also agreed, at a rate of nine out of ten respondents each, that Bryant provides a welcoming environment. The largest variance between the two subgroups was in regard to expressing oneself on campus. Both groups answered positively to this question, around 85% in agreement, with women slightly higher approaching 86-87%.

This shows that gender possibly does not play a role in satisfaction with ones overall Bryant Experience. According to the survey, men and women should feel equally welcome on campus. Any unwelcome feelings are likely the result of an isolated incident or based on some other individual characteristic of that person. One possibility could be ethnicity or background.

Ethnicity

While gender was the most mismatched aspect of the marketing material, racial differences were also noted. Even though the material was not drastically different than the current population, black students were still over represented and white students were under represented. This mismatch may play a role in developing

expectations for different students entering Bryant, then result in dissatisfaction once they come onto campus as a student if those expectations are not met.

In terms of explicit satisfaction, white students were the mostly likely group to respond with "strongly agree" while no black or "other ethnic" (such as Indian, Middle Eastern, etc) students did the same. Another difference was seen to the question of Bryant affording a welcoming environment as 90% of Asians and white students agreed, only 85% of black and Hispanic students concurred. An even greater disparity occurred in the question of freedom to express oneself where, again, 90% of white students feel freedom of expression, but all other subgroups, including black, Asian, Hispanic, and "other ethnic" students, only agreed at a rate of 85%

These responses show that overall, most students, regardless of race or ethnicity feel welcome on campus and feel free to express themselves. However, the responses do show that a multicultural student is more likely to not feel as welcome as their white counterparts. Further research could be done to investigate why those groups do not feel as comfortable on campus. This slightly increased discomfort could be relative to the fact that the campus is not as diverse as the printed material promotes it as being.

Reported Family Income

Socioeconomic status is often tightly connected with family income. While some professions pay more than others but still carry less social prestige, a higher income could still provide a student different opportunities to represent themselves on a college campus than provided for a student of lesser means, regardless of parents' occupations. There was no way to match or mismatch family income reports to the promotional material therefore it is a slightly harder to judge how expectations could be set for students in this regard.

There was no apparent variance in explicit satisfaction as different subgroups of family income (< $50,000, between $50,000-$100,000, between $100,000-$150,000, > $150,000) all responded similarly, in agreement, to the question. Some variation

was seen in terms of offering a welcoming environment as well as in terms of freedom of self-expression. The two lower income groups felt, 90% in agreement, that Bryant offers a welcoming environment, while only 85% of the higher two segments agreed. Only the lowest segment, of < $50,000 income, felt free to express themselves at a rate of 90%. The other three segments only agreed to a point of 85%.

This breakdown is similar to the ethnic and racial groups in that most students generally feel that Bryant is open and welcoming, however, some groups seem to feel more comfortable than others. Further research would need to be done to examine why the trend occurs, but it seems that lower income students feel more welcome and comfortable on campus that their more well off counterparts. This suggests that Bryant is not an elitist institution, but other explanations should be examined before making a final determination.

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is also an area of demographics that could not easily be represented in the promotional material. Because of the nature of the United States culture, and the developmental age of college students, sexual orientation could possibly be one of the more sensitive personal issues internalized by a student. Therefore, it is an area in which support could be more required, relative to other concerns, to help a student feel welcome and accepted on a campus.

In terms of satisfaction, there was, like with many of the other subgroups, no real variance in terms of explicit satisfaction of one group of students (heterosexual, homosexual, or bi-sexual) compared to any other. Students in all groups mostly agreed with being satisfied in general with Bryant, with smaller, fairly equal factions, strongly agreeing or being neutral on the topic. An interesting breakdown of the subgroups occurred when asked about the welcome campus and freedom of self-expression. All the homosexual respondents said they felt the school was welcoming and they all felt free to express themselves on campus. Only half of the bi-sexual respondents reported they felt the school was welcoming, and none of them felt free

to express themselves fully. The homosexual students agree, at 90% that campus was welcoming, but only 86% reported feeling free to express themselves. Those figures nearly match the average responses for all students.

A larger sample, if not full population response, would really help to examine these results further, but the responses that were given are fairly clear. Bryant does seem to provide for a fairly open and welcoming environment. An area of concern could focus on the bi-sexual respondents and their discomfort. But, since the homosexual students seem to feel comfortable in general, maybe the bi-sexual students need more of an individual focus rather than an institutional one. This is not to say that one group shares the same experiences as the other, but they are related enough to think that if campus is open toward one is should be open to the other.