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Edwards, Tyler D.S. *Homesickness, Social Belonging, & Retention in First-Year Students*

Abstract

A study was performed to examine the relationship between homesickness, retention and social belonging in college students. Colleges and universities place a large focus on increasing their retention rates. One threat to retention is homesickness, which has an adverse impact on students' academic success. Social belonging (i.e. the need to belong to a social group) has been proposed as an explanation and cause of homesickness (Sun, Hagedorn, & Zhang, 2016; Watt & Badger, 2012). By determining the relationship between homesickness, social belonging, and retention, interventions could be created to better a student's college experience and thereby increase retention. Archival data was used from the University of Wisconsin, Stout's Fall 2016 Mapworks Transition Survey. The sample consisted of 1218 first-year students. A Pearson's bivariate correlation indicated there existed a significant relationship between distressed homesickness and social integration. A logistical regression provided no evidence that a significant relationship existed between distressed homesickness and retention, or that social integration moderated this relationship. Recommendations are given for further research to better explore these variables, as well as examining other constructs that could impact these relationships.

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Chapter I: Introduction & Literature Review

There is an ever-growing amount of research looking at increasing student retention at universities and colleges in the United States (Brunk-Chaves & Fredericksen, 2008; Fowler & Boylan, 2010; Romano & Connell, 2015). As state and federal financial contributions are reduced, institutions of higher education have looked towards their student populations to help fund the gap in their budgets (Barr & Turner, 2013; Cellini, 2009). Moreover, colleges and universities across the United States have begun to embrace the role as equal partners with students in ensuring they find academic and social success on their campuses (Murrell, 2016). No longer is it seen as sufficient for a university to provide a classroom setting. Instead, higher education faculty and staff are charged with developing a holistic environment that meets the needs of their ever-growing student body (Murrell, 2016). While various factors have been explored in assessing the reasons why students choose to remain or leave a university, homesickness and its impact on students has received increasing attention in the past few decades (Fisher, Murray, & Frazer, 1985; Thurber & Walton, 2012; Watt & Badger, 2009). The causes of homesickness are not agreed upon in the literature (Sun et al., 2016). One theory that has not received as much attention as some of the others is the idea that homesickness is a result of a person's need to socially belong (Watt & Badger, 2009). Therefore, the purpose of this present study was to investigate whether or not a student's need to socially belong can compensate for their feelings of homesickness, and thereby increase their likelihood to be retained at their university or college.

Retention Antecedents

Research in university student retention has primarily focused on isolating quantitative, standardized variables in an effort to predict whether or not a student would find success in the

college setting (Raju & Schumacker, 2015). Of these, college preparatory grade point average (GPA) and standardized national testing (e.g. SAT or ACT) have consistently found to have a positive relationship with student success and retention (Burton & Ramist, 2001; Rohr, 2012; Tucker & McKnight, 2017). This fact is not surprising, as almost all institutions of higher education rely partly on these metrics in admitting potential students. This relationship is imperfect, however, as simply the presence of a high college preparatory GPA or standardized test scores does not guarantee a student will perform well at college (Brock, 2010). Therefore, researchers have also focused on other factors that could better predict student success and retention (Brown, 1994; Thibodeaux, Deutsch, Kitsantas, & Winsler, 2016). Much of this research has focused on personality characteristics, where traits such as conscientiousness have shown to have a consistently positive correlation with success at a university (Gray & Watson, 2002; Hall et al., 2015). Other traits, such as stability and openness, have also been correlated with academic success; however, the research has not been as consistent in these findings (Ridgell & Lounsbury, 2004). Similarly, non-cognitive skills, such as perseverance and social skills, have also been proposed as factors in a student's academic achievement at college (Farruggia, Cheon-Woo, Watson, Moss, & Bottoms, 2016). As with personality characteristics, various non-cognitive skills have shown to be correlated with students being more successful in a college setting (Rimfeld, Kovas, & Plomin, 2016). Like other intrinsic traits, however, no perfect relationship has been found with academic success. Researchers, therefore, have also investigated external factors, like one's environment, in order to better understand student success in college.

Environmental factors have also been explored. For instance, living on a college campus versus living off campus has been found to increase academic achievement and retention

(Schudde, 2011). Living-learning communities, where students with common interests or goals are housed together, have proven to be beneficial for retention as well (Purdie II & Rosser, 2011). Similarly, shared seminar courses amongst a cohort have also been found to be impactful on student success and retention (Purdie II & Rosser, 2011). Still, as with intrinsic factors, no one external factor has been designated as the best construct to explain academic success.

Though there exist many more variables that have been researched to understand their impact on student retention, homesickness is one receiving increased attention as a combination of both internal and external factors.

Homesickness

Homesickness refers to a student's negative feelings associated with leaving their home-life to attend college (Thurber & Walton, 2012). Generally, there are considered two types of homesickness: Separation and Distressed (Stroebe, Schut, & Nauta, 2015). To better understand these definitions, it is best to envision the idea of homesickness in three parts.

The first component is concept of home-life. Traditionally, homesickness was conceived as a person's longing for their nuclear family (Archer, Ireland, Amos, Broad, & Currid, 1998). With further research, however, the literature now considers homesickness a result of a separation from one's home-life. While missing one's nuclear family falls under this definition, home-life also refers to a person's extended or socially constructed family, friends, peers and coworkers, neighborhood and community (Archer et al., 1998). It can also refer to missing familiar surroundings or routines, as well as services, amenities, and resources (Archer et al., 1998). Furthermore, it can even refer to entire geographic locations, societies, and cultures (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011). Therefore, home-life is more than a person's immediate family, but their entire conception of their home environment (Fisher et al., 1985).

The second component focuses on separation. For homesickness to occur, a person must perceive some level of separation from their home environment, which can vary from person-to-person (Fisher et al., 1985). Although a person geographically further from their home-life is more likely to experience homesickness, they are not more likely to experience greater levels of homesickness than their counterparts (Stroebe, van Vliet, Hewstone, & Willis, 2002). Similarly, a person's mobility and ability to reengage with their home-life has a negative correlation with homesickness (Scopelliti & Tiberio, 2010; Stroebe et al., 2002). Thus, if a student consistently perceives separation from their home-life, and has limited means or ability to rectify or accommodate for this separation, they can potentially experience homesickness. If both of these components have been met, the person is considered to be experiencing at least Separation Homesickness (Stroebe et al., 2015). For the second type of homesickness to be occurring, however, a third component is needed.

The final piece of homesickness is where Distressed and Separation homesickness deviate. The third component of Distressed Homesickness requires the presence of negative feelings and outcomes due to a person experiencing separation from their home-life (Thurber & Walton, 2012). A person simply being separate from their initial home-life once they have transitioned into their college environment does not guarantee they will experience Distressed Homesickness. In fact, many students report enjoying the greater sense of freedom and independence in their new contexts, saying nothing of the students leaving toxic or abusive home-life environments (Beck, Taylor, & Robbins, 2003). Therefore, for Distressed Homesickness to truly occur, a person must associate that separation from their home-life as having a negative effect on them. Moreover, these effects are numerous and well documented. Students experiencing homesickness typically experience high levels of emotional distress,

absentmindedness, anxiety, and depression (Archer et al., 1998). Homesickness has also been associated with negative physical health outcomes (Archer et al., 1998). What necessarily causes this interaction, however, is up for debate.

The cause or causes for homesickness are not readily agreed upon in the literature (Stroebe, Schut, & Nauta, 2015). Some researchers argue that homesickness is a result of perceived lack of control in a new context (Thurber, 1999; Thurber & Weisz, 1997). As a person attempts to adapt and assimilate into their new environment, their initial or long-term inability to do so causes them to miss their home environment that they could better control and navigate (Thurber, 1999; Thurber & Weisz, 1997). Interestingly, this explanation of homesickness has been primarily investigated through the use of young adolescents (Thurber, 1999; Thurber & Weisz, 1997). Furthermore, while there has been some evidence that perceived lack of control is negatively associated with homesickness in college students, the evidence has not been widespread or frequently replicated (Flett, Endler, & Besser, 2009).

Other research has associated homesickness with separation anxiety (Flett et al., 2009). Related to the lack of control, the literature has also put forth the theory that homesickness is a result of individuals experiencing anxiety from being separated from their familiar and comforting home environments (Flett et al., 2009). As discussed previously, most people feel some form of separation when they permanently leave their former home-life. Naturally, it could be expected these same people would experience varying levels of separation anxiety, and these feelings could cause numerous negative impacts (Stroebe et al., 2015). The presence of separation anxiety, though, is not guaranteed to also indicate the presence of homesickness. In other words, people with higher levels of separation anxiety have been found to not be homesick (Stroebe et al., 2015). Still others contend that homesickness is more comparable to a grieving

process, and that experiences of homesickness are the result of the loss of the home environment (Stroebe, Schut, & Nauta, 2016). This version of mini-grief causes the person to mourn their past life, while simultaneously not feeling adequately pleased with their new environment (Archer et al., 1998). Inherent to all of these theories is the concept that distressed homesickness is caused by a person losing their previous home-life and being unsatisfied with their current one. One interesting theory that has not received enough attention in the research is the idea that homesickness occurs out of a need for people's desire to socially belong.

Social Belonging

The need to belong, belongingness, or social belonging was first put forth as theory of social psychology by Baumeister and Leary (1995). Analyzing and reviewing decades of psychological research, Baumeister and Leary (1995) contend that people are inherently motivated to form interpersonal attachments in most situations. This need drives people to form social connections in a variety of environments, including in their work, academic, and personal lives (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Furthermore, given how motivated people are to form these bonds, social belonging needs also suggest that people heavily resist the dissolution of their current social relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Social belonging has been investigated through a multitude of topics, including many related to academic success of students (Glass & Westmont, 2014; Kennedy & Tuckman, 2013; Van Ryzin, Gravely, & Roseth, 2009). Interestingly, it has only been sparingly investigated in regard to homesickness. Two notable exceptions to this are Watt and Badger (2009) and Sun et al. (2016). Watt and Badger (2009) initially argued that homesickness arose in students due to their need to socially belong. In a two-part study, Watt and Badger (2009) examined the relationship that social belonging had with homesickness. In part one, Watt and Badger (2009)

administered various scales measuring homesickness, need to belong, home-life engagement, and social activity. A multiple regression model found homesickness levels were greater in students feeling the need to belong. Watt and Badger (2009) also found that those students that felt accepted by their new location were less likely to experience homesickness. In part two, Watt and Badger (2009) utilized an experimental design to demonstrate the causal relationship between homesickness and social belonging. Participants were split into two groups and asked to read various publication titles and descriptions (Watt & Badger, 2009). Half of the experimental groups' titles and descriptions were written in a way in order to evoke the feelings of social belonging and homesickness in the participants. All participants then completed the same scales from the first part of the study (Watt & Badger, 2009). Similar to the first study, a positive relationship between a student's need to belong and their level of homesickness was demonstrated (Watt & Badger, 2009).

Building on this theoretical framework, Sun et al. (2016) also examined the role of social belong in causing homesickness, as well as the relationship between homesickness and first-year academic success and retention. Sun et al. (2016) also argued that social belonging was a primary cause of homesickness, and that students experiencing separation and distressed homesickness were less likely to be socially integrated. Utilizing a campus wide retention software, students completed a questionnaire that assessed their homesickness levels, social integration levels, first semester GPA and retention (Sun et al., 2016). A correlational study was then performed to determine if a relationship existed between homesickness and student retention. Similar to Watt and Badger's (2009) initial research, Sun et al. (2016) also found a significant positive relationship between a student's need to belong and their levels of homesickness. This relationship was also moderated by their sense of social integration at their

new environment (Sun et al., 2016). Furthermore, students that were found with higher levels of homesickness were less likely to be retained, while students with higher levels of social integration were more likely to be retained (Sun et al., 2016).

Purpose of the Study

Building off the foundation created by Watt and Badger (2009) and Sun et al. (2016) this study attempts to investigate the relationship between homesickness, retention, and social belonging. In line with previous research discussed above, it was expected that homesickness has a detrimental effect on student retention. Furthermore, if social belonging truly influences homesickness as Watt and Badger (2009) contend, a sense of community and belonging at college should act as a substitute for a student's perceived lack of home-life connection. This finding would be in line with Sun et al.'s (2016) research that social integration moderates the relationship between need to belong and homesickness. Thus, if (lack of) social belonging is the cause of homesickness, then students with high levels of social integration should not be experiencing high levels of homesickness.

Hypotheses

Therefore, it was expected that:

- H1: Students experiencing higher levels of social integration will experience lower levels of homesickness.
- H2: Students experiencing higher levels of homesickness will be less likely to return to their current institution for the following academic year than their peers.
- H3: Social integration will moderate the relationship between homesickness and retention, such that students experiencing higher levels of social integration will be more

likely to return to their current institution for the following academic year than their peers.

Chapter II: Methodology

The purposes of this study was to explore the relationship between homesickness, social belonging, and retention. Questions from the Mapworks survey system were utilized to determine the homesickness and social integration levels of 1218 first-year students during the fall 2016 semester at UW-Stout (See Appendix A & B). A Pearson's bivariate correlation and logistic regression model were utilized to test the relationship between the variables.

Data Source and Collection

Data was collected utilizing the Mapworks success and retention program. Mapworks is a survey program that focuses on increasing student retention by determining a participant's level of academic and social integration at their respective university or college. Students are prompted four times a year to answer a survey examining a variety of factors, including but not limited to campus living environment, test anxiety, financial means, and time management. Based upon their answers, students are assigned a risk-level indicating their likelihood of leaving their current university before the start of the next academic year. Personalized interventions are then constructed for each student, with involvement from various campus partners in instituting these interventions.

All participants were prompted at least two times electronically to complete their survey. Those participants living on campus were also encouraged to complete their surveys through a variety of methods determined by the professional staff of their residence hall. These methods included, but were not limited to, floor meetings, other personalized electronic communication, door-to-door campaigning, and in-hall advertisements.

Participants

The sample consisted of 1415 first-year students originally enrolled at the University of Wisconsin, Stout (UW-Stout) in the fall 2016 semester. All 1415 students completed their Mapworks surveys sometime between their third and fifth weeks attending the university. This number of respondents represents a 90% completion rate by all first-year students registered for the fall 2016 semester. Of these 1415 initial responses, 1218 participants were included in the data analysis for this study. The remaining 197 participants were excluded due to impartial survey responses. Further demographic information is included in Table 1 and 2.

Table 1

Sample Demographics

	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	700	56.1%
Female	547	43.9%
Race		
American Indian or Alaska Native	17	1.4%
Asian	34	2.7%
Black or African American	39	3.1%
Hispanic or Latinx	0	0%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	3	0.2%
White or Caucasian	1091	87.5%
Race Unknown	63	5.1%
Total	1247	

Table 2

UW-Stout Demographics

	Percentage (%)
Gender	
Male	53.0%
Female	47.0%
Race	
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.3%
Asian	3.4%
Black or African American	2.1%
Hispanic or Latinx	0.7%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.2%
White or Caucasian	89.9%
Two or more Races	3.4%

(University of Wisconsin-Stout, 2017)

Measures

The following measures were utilized to isolate each variable for hypotheses testing.

Homesickness. Homesickness ($\alpha = .87$) was measured utilizing a four-item scale. Each item consisted of a question using a 1 to 7 Likert scale, with 1 indicating extreme levels of negative feelings about a student's separation from their home-life, while 7 indicated no negative feelings. Sample questions included, "*Do you regret leaving home to go to school?*" and "*Do you feel an obligation to be at home?*" (See Appendix A). Individual scores were calculated for each question, and then a composite score by finding an average of all four scores. All scores

were calculated instantaneously by the Mapworks' system, with the composite score indicating a participant's overall level of homesickness.

Social integration. Social integration ($\alpha = .87$) was measured utilizing a three-item scale. Each item consisted of a question using a 1 to 7 Likert scale, with 1 indicating a poor level of social integration and connectedness. Sample questions included "*Do you belong here?*" and "*Are you fitting in?*" (See Appendix B). Individual scores were calculated for each question, as well as a composite score of all three items indicating a participant's overall level of social integration. All scores were calculated instantaneously by the Mapworks' system.

Retention. Retention was measured by determining a student's enrollment status at UW-Stout on the eleventh day of class in the fall 2017 semester. If the student was enrolled in at least one course, they were considered to have been retained. Retention data was collected by the Office of Planning, Assessment, Research and Quality at UW-Stout and uploaded into the Mapworks' system on September 21, 2017.

Chapter III: Results

Data was analyzed utilizing Microsoft Excel and the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS). Data was cleaned by removing all respondents with impartial data for any of the variables. Descriptives were then calculated, and a Pearson's bivariate correlation and logistic regression model utilized to test the hypotheses.

Descriptive Analysis

The mean score for distressed homesickness was 5.40 ($SD = 1.56$). This score indicates that, on average, participants experienced a moderate level of homesickness. Of the respondents in the study, only 9.0% ($n = 112$) indicated extreme levels of distressed homesickness, while 49.3% ($n = 504$) and 41.7% ($n = 631$) indicated moderate or no level of distressed homesickness respectively. Students that were retained had a mean score of 5.39 ($SD = 1.57$), while students not retained had a mean score of 5.40 ($SD = 1.54$). This indicates that students not retained on average experienced less levels of homesickness than their peers that were. The level of difference, however, was so small that it was likely insignificant.

The mean score for social integration was 5.44 ($SD = 1.30$). This score indicates that, on average, respondents experienced a moderate level of social integration in their college environment. Of the participants in the study, only 4.0% ($n = 50$) indicated no level of social integration, while 48.9% ($n = 610$) and 47.1% ($n = 587$) indicated a moderate or high level of social integration respectively. Students that were retained had a mean score of 5.40 ($SD = 1.57$), while students not retained had a mean score of 5.47 ($SD = 1.25$). This indicates that students not retained on average experienced more levels of social integration than their peers that were. The level of difference, however, was so small that it was likely insignificant.

Of the 1218 respondents, 68.5% ($n = 834$) were enrolled by the eleventh day of class in the fall 2017 academic semester. The remaining 31.5% ($n = 384$) were not enrolled in a course by that time period. Retention data was not available for 29 respondents.

Hypothesis 1

A Pearson's bivariate correlation was performed to test the relationship between distressed homesickness and social integration. Based upon previous research a negative relationship was expected between the two variables and was found, $r(245) = -.24, p = .01$. This indicates that as a student's became more socially integrated in their new environment, their levels of distressed homesickness decreased. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Hypothesis 2

A logistic regression analysis was performed to test the relationship between distressed homesickness and retention. Unlike previous research, distressed homesickness was not found to be an adequate predictor of student retention, $\chi^2(1) = .001, p = .973$. The Nagelkerke R^2 value of .000 indicates the logistic regression model accounted for 0% of the variance in participant retention. Therefore, students experiencing lower levels of homesickness were not more likely than their peers to return to their current institution for the following academic year.

Thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Hypothesis 3

A logistic regression analysis was also performed to test whether social integration moderated the relationship between distressed homesickness and retention. Again, contrary to previous research, social integration was not found to moderate the relationship between distressed homesickness and student retention, $\chi^2(1) = .015, p = .902$. The Nagelkerke R^2 value of .000 indicates the logistic regression model accounted for 0% of the variance in participant

retention. Therefore, students experiencing higher levels of social integration were not more likely than their peers to return to their current institution for the following academic year. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Chapter IV: Discussion & Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the relationship between homesickness, social, belonging, and retention in first-year students. Homesickness and social integration data was collected from participants during their first semester of attending, to see if either variable had an impact on the students returning to their current academic institution the next year.

Demographically, the fall 2016 cohort was extremely comparable to the UW-Stout general student body population. Males represent the majority for both populations, which is an aberration in comparison to the typical trend in college education (Marcus, 2017). Given Stout's designation as a polytechnic institution and focus on STEM majors, it would be expected that more males would attend the institution (Griffith, 2010). Both populations also overwhelmingly self-identified as white or Caucasian.

The results for Hypothesis 1 were consistent with other research. As with other studies (Sun et al., 2016; Watt & Badger, 2009), this study indicated that a relationship does exist between distressed homesickness and social integration. Students experiencing higher levels of distressed homesickness were more likely to report being less socially integrated as compared to their peers. Similarly, students experiencing lower levels of distressed homesickness had a more positive social integration experience. Given the transition challenges that the first semester of college represents for many students, these results are not surprising. For most students the transition away from their home-life during their first semester is an experience they have never had before. Being able to form social and support networks in their new setting can act as a substitute for the ones they have left behind. In this way, social integration can reduce the amount of homesickness a student is experiencing. The strength of the relationship, however, was relatively weak. Although a relationship clearly exists between the two variables,

Unlike Watt and Badger (2009) and Sun et al. (2016), however, Hypotheses 2 and 3 were not supported. No relationship was found between homesickness and retention. Similarly, social integration was not found to impact this relationship in any significant manner. For both previous studies, homesickness was found to predict retention in students, such that students who were homesick were less likely to return the following academic year. Likewise, students that experienced lower levels of social integration were more likely to experience homesickness in comparison to their peers. Given that this study found that non-retained students actually had higher levels of social integration and lower levels of homesickness (if only slightly), it is not surprising these findings did not fall in line with other research.

Implications

There exists a variety of implications based upon this research. To begin with, it contrasts with other studies that have not only looked at the same variables, but also utilized the same instruments to measure these variables (Sun et al., 2016; Watt & Badger, 2009). Perhaps the findings were only applicable to similar institutions of higher education, or the measures themselves need to be examined and retooled. Also, given the well-documented negative consequences of homesickness (Archer et al., 1998), it raises questions on whether these consequences have been overstated or if there are other factors mitigating them. Perhaps these students initially experience distressed homesickness and its consequences, and then have access to various resources and other avenues to reduce the impact of homesickness. What these possible mitigating factors are, and their level of impact, could serve as starting points for further research.

This also brings into question whether social belonging truly is the cause of homesickness. Although a relationship was demonstrated between homesickness and social integration, it was

relatively weak one. If the need to belong socially was the primary cause of distressed homesickness, a more robust relationship would be expected. A better explanation and model could look to incorporate more causes of homesickness, utilizing other research findings discussed previously (Flett et al., 2009; Thurber, 1999; Thurber & Weisz, 1997). An experimental design could also be employed to measure social belonging more effectively. Introducing such a design could better understand the role that social belonging plays in causing homesickness.

A variety of other avenues could be explored further based on this study. One area that would be of interest is whether the levels of distressed homesickness and social integration were measured too early in the academic year to indicate retention for the following academic year. College represents a time of growth in a student, with that being especially true in their freshman year. Measuring homesickness and social integration in September (when the surveys were administered) could possibly not provide an adequate amount of time for many students to create those bonds and overcome their home-life attachments. Also, a student's level of distressed homesickness and social integration could have very well changed – either for the better or for the worse – by the end of their spring semester. Examining a student's responses at later periods in their first academic year could prove to be more beneficial.

Furthermore, certain situational contexts could be a factor. As a polytechnic institution, UW-Stout has a variety of specialized degree programs. Many students that attend the university make decisions on joining these programs before they have any practical experience in them. A student could have very well integrated well into the Stout community, and then realized their major did not meet their needs or expectations. As a specialized institution, UW-Stout may not have had another way to cater to those students' interests and they may have left. Conversely, a

student might be experiencing a poor social situation, but choose to remain at the school for its specialized major. This represents one of many circumstances that could be playing a larger role in a student's retention than distressed homesickness and social integration.

More globally, this thesis serves as a prime opportunity for higher education institutions to examine the importance of homesickness and social integration in regards to their students. Clearly, institutions should want to integrate their students socially and help in reducing their homesickness levels, even if doing so does not impact retention (Archer et al., 1998). Still, what has been shown to help in regards to retention in other studies was not the case in this circumstance. Colleges and universities experience tightening financial budgets every year, and they will want to make sure the interventions and programs they finance represent a good return on their investment. Further exploration of these variables, at least in regards to retention, could help make these choices clearer.

Limitations

One limitation of the study is that the variables examined here in no way represent an exhaustive list factors that can impact a student's retention. As discussed in the literature review, there are many other facets of a college experience that can determine whether or not a student finds success in a higher education environment. These other factors could have a greater impact depending upon the individual student, as well as interact with the variables researched in the present study.

Also, the self-reporting nature of Mapworks could have also posed a problem. Participants are informed that multiple employees of the university will read their responses and look to engage them and discuss their results. Understanding this, some may have reported

inflated levels of their social integration, or decreased levels of their homesickness, in order to avoid one or multiple interactions.

A final limitation is the manner in which the data was collected. As each individual community was able to decide their own survey recruitment plan, participants received a diverse range of interactions advocating for them to take the survey. Moreover, off-campus respondents received no in-person interaction, unlike their on-campus peers. Therefore, the environments and contexts that each participant took the survey varied substantially.

Conclusion

The first year of college represents a formative moment in a student's transition into adulthood. Navigating this transition can be very difficult for many students, as they look to separate effectively from their past home-lives and integrate into a new social environment. As this study and others have demonstrated, there exists some type of link between homesickness and social integration. Where this study diverged from other research is in finding a relationship between homesickness and retention, or identifying any impact that social integration has on this relationship. Although these findings create a new wrinkle in this field of research, it is one that deserves further exploring.

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Appendix B: Social Integration Instrument

To what degree do you:							
Do you belong here	1 Not at All	2	3	4 Moderately	5	6	7 Extremely
	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Are you fitting in?	1 Not at All	2	3	4 Moderately	5	6	7 Extremely
	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Are you satisfied with you social life on campus?	1 Not at All	2	3	4 Moderately	5	6	7 Extremely
	○	○	○	○	○	○	○