

WELCOME TO YOUR GRADUATE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE:
GRADUATE STUDENT ORIENTATION AND THE NEED FOR EVALUATION

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ARTS

BY

MARGARET A. CUDE

DR. ADAM KUBAN - ADVISOR

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

MUNCIE, INDIANA

MAY 2015

WELCOME TO YOUR GRADUATE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE:
GRADUATE STUDENT ORIENTATION AND THE NEED FOR EVALUATION
A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARTS
BY
MARGARET A. CUDE

Committee Approval:

_____	_____
Dr. Adam Kuban, Committee Chairperson	Date
_____	_____
Prof. Michelle O'Malley, Committee Member	Date
_____	_____
Prof. Mark Massé, Committee Member	Date

Departmental Approval:

_____	_____
Dr. Michael Holmes, Departmental Chairperson	Date
_____	_____
Dr. Robert Morris, Dean of Graduate School	Date

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY
MUNCIE, INDIANA
MAY 2015

ABSTRACT**THESIS:** Welcome to your Graduate School Experience**STUDENT:** Margaret A. Cude**DEGREE:** Master of Arts**COLLEGE:** Communication, Information, and Media**DATE:** May, 2015**PAGES:** 56

Issac, Pruitt-Logan, and Upcraft (1995) called the graduate students' experience "the great unaddressed academic issue in higher education" (p. 13). Since the mid-1990s, there has been significant research seeking to bring a new understanding to this issue. Many of the existing studies have examined a single institution or one population within multiple institutions. Studies have also been conducted on graduate student socialization and its effect on student success. Yet, what still remains to be explored is how evaluation of graduate student orientation can improve the student socialization experience. This study seeks to fill that gap by applying a standard evaluation to three universities from the Mid-American Conference (MAC) and assessing the successes or shortcomings of these orientation programs as a means of socialization. This study's overarching question asks to what extent is orientation a successful means of socializing graduate students to their respective universities. Results from qualitative data analysis revealed that post-orientation, on-campus connections contributed more often as a measure of effectiveness at socializing students to graduate school. This research offers implications – based on data – for the theories and application surrounding orientation programs.

Acknowledgements

This project was successfully completed with the support of many people for whom I have great appreciation and respect. I am forever indebted to those who contributed to the completion of this thesis in a myriad of ways, large and small.

To my thesis advisor, Dr. Adam Kuban: First and foremost, I am grateful to you. You welcomed me into the world of journalism and public relations. You supported my research and encouraged me to seek out means of presenting or publishing it wherever possible. You were flexible and patient as you guided me through this project and its many drafts. You helped me to grow as a student and to come out of this process a scholar.

To my committee members, Professors Michelle O'Malley and Mark Massé: I would like to offer my thanks and gratitude for your insights throughout the duration of this project.

To Dr. William Knight and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at Ball State University: Thank you for being ever patient with me as we discussed acquisition and analysis of data. I will always appreciate your introducing me to the world of institutional research, and I am very excited for what comes next.

To my mentors at Ball State University, Murray State University, and beyond, most notably Mr. Robert Troutman and Dr. Brian Clardy: Thank you for believing in me and encouraging me to continue my education. I know my course has been varied, but you've always been supportive of me as I moved forward, and I know I can count on your continued support as I make my way into the professional world.

To Mrs. Stephanie Wilson: For giving me a chance, for introducing me to the process of graduate student orientation, and for helping me navigate into a new field, I am forever grateful to you. You have been my mentor these last four years, fostering growth in me professionally and personally. You have given me every opportunity to expand my skillset and find new passions. I am who I am today in no small part because of you.

To all of my friends and colleagues, most notably Ms. Faith Kellermeyer and Tyler Wolford: Thank you for always being there to talk ideas through, for listening to me freak out about job opportunities and a million other things. Your understanding, patience, support, and multiple read throughs are much appreciated, as were the many cups of coffee we shared.

To my family, most especially my parents, Rev. Rodney and Karen Cude, and my brothers, Andrew and Tim Cude: I would like to offer you my greatest thanks. Your support and encouragement have never wavered, even through degree changes and my moving to Indiana. From the minute I entered this world to this moment, you have been my constant, and I know you will continue to be, even as we all move into the next stage of our lives.

Table of Contents

Abstract..... 2

Acknowledgements 3

Table of Contents 4

Introduction 6

Literature Review and Research Questions..... 8

 Graduate Student Orientation 8

 Socialization.....17

Implications of this Study21

Methodology22

 Definitions of Terms23

 Population/Sample24

 Universities Under Review24

 Ball State University.....24

 Bowling Green State University.....25

 Miami University26

 Students.....27

Measurement Instrumentation.....27

Data Collection.....28

WELCOME TO YOUR GRADUATE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE	5
Data Analysis	29
Ethical Considerations.....	30
Results	31
Pilot Study	31
Findings.....	32
Limitations	32
Full Study	33
Participants	33
Results.....	35
Discussion and Major Findings	45
Limitations	48
Recommendations to the Universities	49
Implications for Future Research	50
References	52
Appendix A: Questionnaire for Students	57

Introduction

Issac, Pruitt-Logan, and Upcraft (1995) called the graduate students' experience "the great unaddressed academic issue in higher education" (p. 13). According to Poock (2004b, p. 470), researchers interested in higher education have often focused on the needs and experiences of undergraduate students. However, Poock (2004b, p. 470-471) also noted that, since the mid-1990s, there has been increased attention on the needs of graduate students ranging from retention (Washburn, 2002), to admissions (Poock, 2001), to diversity (Issac, Pruitt-Logan, & Upcraft, 1995), as well as a variety of service areas. The orientation of graduate students is one such service area.

Observers of the graduate community are learning that "many graduate students when first entering their respective programs are just as confused and anxious as they were as new undergraduates" (Rosenblatt & Christensen, 1993, p. 502). Orientation can assist students in acclimating to their new environment of graduate education (Bolye & Boice, 1998).

One could argue that the organizing of the orientation is very similar to a public relations campaign. Campaigns typically compose of four parts for which practitioners of public relations have developed the acronym RACE: research, action, communication, and evaluation (Marston, 1963, p. 185-203). Therefore, if an orientation program is viewed as a campaign, then there needs to be an element of evaluation. Unfortunately, this seems to be largely lacking, both in practice and in the literature, with numerous internal studies and reports typically looking at a single institution and often a single discipline within that institution but minimal effort at large-scale research projects. This is the rationale for the following study.

The greatest benefit of a successful orientation program is the socialization of students (Vickio & Tack, 1987; Poock, 2004b). Hence, socialization theory has received attention by those who seek to understand and assist this process (Corcoran & Clark, 1984; Weidman & Stein, 1990) and is the theory guiding this paper as well.

The purpose of this explanatory research study is twofold. First, this study seeks to examine if graduate student orientation is an effective tool in successfully socializing students to their new university and the culture of graduate school. Second, this study conducts an evaluation of student perspectives regarding their orientation programs and acquires information for improving orientation to effectively achieve socialization objectives of a given institution.

The overarching question this study addresses is whether graduate student orientation is a successful means of socializing graduate students to their university. Graduate student orientation practices vary by university, department, and the student group in question. This is why a standard evaluation for orientation can be difficult to develop.

Literature Review

A more comprehensive evaluation can be developed by first examining studies involving graduate students or specific orientation programs. Likewise, if the greatest benefit of a successful orientation program is to help foster the socialization of students (Vickio & Tack, 1987; Poock, 2004b), then understanding this process is key in the evaluation of graduate student orientation.

Graduate Student Orientation

Observers of the graduate community acknowledge that “many graduate students when first entering their respective programs are just as confused and anxious as they were as new undergraduates” (Rosenblatt & Christensen, 1993, p. 502); orientation can assist students in acclimating to their new environment of graduate education (Bolye & Boice, 1998).

Bolye and Boice (1998) identify relationships with professors and peers as a major difference between undergraduate and graduate student cultures. Graduate students ought to view professors as academic and professional mentors (Bolye & Boice, 1998). Where undergraduates often have little choice in their professors, particularly for core curriculum courses, graduate students will be selecting a faculty member to advise them on their thesis or dissertation project. Professional boundaries ought to be upheld, but graduate students also need the opportunity to get to know faculty before “committing to a long, close working relationship... [this] may prevent unsuccessful completion of degree requirements due to incompatible advising relationships” (Bolye & Boice, 1998, p. 91).

Likewise, where undergraduate students are, most typically, competing with their classmates for the best grades, graduate students ought to view their peers as colleagues,

not competitors (Bolye & Boice, 1998, p. 89). Of course, not all aspects of graduate school are cooperative, such as programs where students compete for funding on a yearly basis; the literature does not focus upon these programs. This link between collegiality and academic development has been explored by other scholars, including Katz and Hartnett (1976), whose study showed that environments that hinder peer interactions, such as competitive academic climates with an emphasis on grade achievement, were negatively related to scholarly socialization.

While there are certainly differences between undergraduate and graduate students and their orientation processes, some recent studies of the undergraduate orientation experience show how it is changing. For example, Brown's (2012) orientation survey to improve student retention. Here, Brown developed a survey administered to all incoming freshmen who have declared a major within the College of Education and Health Professions at Columbus State University (Georgia) during their summer orientation. The survey was developed to identify "at risk" students, so the college could implement "intervention strategies" to better assist them (Brown, 2012, p. 849-850). These students were determined to be "at risk" based on a number of factors, including individual aptitude, family attributes, financial commitment, academic intentions, peer relations, and self-knowledge (Brown, 2012), factors which also influence graduate students.

Another example would be Cho's (2012) developmental study of online student orientation. She stated that "although orientation for online students is important to their success, little information about how to develop an online student orientation (OSO) has appeared in the literature" (Cho, 2012, p. 1051). Therefore, her article described the "analysis, design, development, and evaluation phases of the OSO in higher education" (Cho,

2012, p. 1051). While her study was not entirely related to this study in that it examines undergraduate students and does not provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of online orientation, it is still relevant. If universities continue to operate on tightened budgets (Webley, 2012), perhaps online orientations will become more common, even for on-campus students.

Studies on orientation activities for entering graduate students have tended to focus on either academic departments or campus-wide activities. For example, Barker, Felstehausen, Couch, and Henry (1997) studied graduate students through Texas Tech University. Miller, Miles, and Dyer (2001) and Taub and Komives (1998) studied graduate students in specific academic departments. Boyle and Boice (1998) attempted to bridge this gap by proposing that the academic departments most effective at socialization “supplement the [campus-wide] orientation with a departmentally sponsored orientation” (p. 88).

In 2002, Pooch surveyed 208 master’s and doctoral students who participated in the campus-wide orientation offered at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This study assessed the orientation needs of the students and whether those needs were best met by campus-wide or departmental efforts. The results indicated that information on university services was best met by a campus-wide orientation, while social and academic needs were best met by academic departments. These results varied, however, “when examining specific populations, such as women and students of color” (Pooch, 2002, p. 236-240).

The specific orientation needs of student groups, based on color (Dedrick & Watson, 2002; McDavis, Molden & Wilson, 1989; Robinson, 1996,), gender (Dedrick & Watson,

2002), or age (Barker, Felstehausen, Couch, and Henry, 1997; Polson, 2003) are also a topic of considerable research. While there are studies such as Poock's (2002), which show these needs can vary, it seems that, in general, the results of these studies are very similar in their conclusions regarding the need for effective orientation. For example, while students of color may feel social isolation more profoundly than white students (Issac, Pruitt-Logan and Upcraft, 1995), particularly at predominantly white institutions (Robinson, 1996), a proactive approach has been shown to reduce social isolation in students of color.

Prospective African American graduate students who attended a pre-enrollment summer orientation program at the University of Florida achieved higher grade point averages and experienced a smoother transition to graduate study than African American students who did not attend the program (McDavis, Molden, & Wilson, 1989).

While there is no standard protocol for how a graduate student orientation is organized, there are guidelines for which the process is expected to fulfill. In 2012, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) outlined 13 standards and guidelines for student orientation in *The Book of Professional Standards for Higher Education*. Please refer to Table 1 for a list of these standards, their definition, and a summation of Poock's (2004a) discussion of each. The CAS standards were chosen for this study because they "have utility for institutions of all types and size and provide criteria to judge the quality and appropriateness of student orientation programs" (2001, p. 221). However, the Council's standards, though a useful tool, do not entirely address the unique nature of graduate student orientation.

Table 1

CAS Standards and Poock's Discussion

CAS Standard	Definition. Orientation must...	Summation of Poock's Discussion
Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •facilitate the transition of new students into the institution and initiate new students' integration into its intellectual, cultural, and social climate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •72.8percent of CGS respondents offered campus-wide orientation sessions to their incoming graduate students •Some offer orientation through a particular college
Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •be available to all new students •provide sufficient information about academic policies, procedures, requirements, and programs •inform them about the availability of services and programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •While most discussion focused on graduate school/university policies, the topics covered during orientation often required coordination with other institutional units; some offered tours of the campus •Few institutions, however, offered information on employment or educational opportunities for students' spouses or partners
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •be led by those who are appointed, positioned, and empowered leaders within the administrative structure to accomplish their mission, elected on the basis of formal education and training, relevant work experience, personal attributes, and other professional credentials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ph.D.'s, or other doctoral, were the norm for most graduate school leaders who often held faculty appointments in academic units •The spirit of this standard relates to the training and education of professionals who work full-time in orientation programs •CGS staffing patterns indicated that, no one had a position dedicated solely to orientation
Organization & Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •provide channels for review of administrative policies and procedures •have written policies and procedures regarding program delivery that are reviewed regularly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Since the goals of orientation involved sharing information and fostering social interaction, 52percent held workshops and small group sessions •Most programs lasted half a day (26.6percent lasted a full day), tended to start two to five days prior to the start of classes and were optional
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •establish procedures for staff selections, training, and evaluation and provide appropriate professional development opportunities •be organized by staff who hold an earned graduate degree in a relevant field or possess an appropriate combination of education and experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The graduate schools' professional staff tended to hold terminal degrees and the appropriate faculty rank •This is directed towards those who work in orientation full-time •While the model appeared common at the undergraduate level, it was not so in the graduate school
Financial Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •possess priorities whether set periodically or as a result of extraordinary conditions, which are determined within the context of its mission, goals, and resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Funding for campus-wide orientation programs was provided by the graduate schools (60percent) or student governments/organizations (10.5percent) •A lack of financial support from VPs of student affairs appeared to show that graduate students are not high priority, unlike undergraduates

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • However, 93.4 percent of the institutions did not charge an orientation fee
Facilities, Technology & Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have adequate and suitably located facilities and equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The survey did not address this issue.
Legal Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure the institution inform staff and students, in a timely and systematic fashion, about extraordinary or changing legal obligations and potential liabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is unclear from the survey whether the campus-wide orientation leaders were familiar with their legal responsibilities
Equal Opportunity, Access & Affirmative Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take affirmative action to remedy significant imbalances in student participation and staffing patterns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because the survey addressed practices not participants, it is not clear whether there were imbalances
Campus & Community Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish, maintain, and promote effective relations with relevant campus offices and external agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topics that involved on/off-campus agencies tended to be offered during the orientation workshops such as libraries, health services, student organizations, parking, career services and recreation • Community activities were also addressed by the respondents
Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote cultural and educational experiences that are characterized by open and continuous communication, deepen understanding of one's cultural and heritage, and respect and educate about similarities, differences, and histories of cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students of color benefited the most from campus-wide orientation programs that included diversity; because of their relatively small numbers and their isolation among departments, students of color were offered the opportunity for social interaction during campus-wide orientation.
Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require that all persons involved in the delivery of the student orientation program adhere to the highest principles of ethical behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately one-third of all respondents indicated that they addressed ethics during orientation • Ethics was also woven into graduate education as workshops, institutional review boards and conditions of federal granting agencies
Assessment & Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regularly undergo systematic qualitative and quantitative evaluations of program quality to determine whether and to what degree the mission and goals are being met 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately two-thirds of the respondents conducted quantitative and qualitative assessments that were used to modify their future orientation programs

Note. Adapted from "Graduate student orientation: Applying CAS standards to national practices," by M.C. Poock, 2004, *College And University*, 80(2), p. 19-26.

To address the shortcomings of the CAS standards, Poock (2004a), applied them to the results of his nationwide study (Poock, 2004b) on orientation practices by U.S. member institutions of the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS). Poock (2004a) found that most of the practices adhere, in varying degrees, to the standards, though two of the standards—leadership and human resources—did not typically fit into the graduate student orientation programs. The issue for both leadership and human resources was that the graduate schools' professional staff "tended to hold terminal degrees and the appropriate faculty rank...the spirit of the standard is directed towards those who work in orientation programs full-time" (Poock, 2004a, p. 2) In his conclusion, he stated:

...leadership and human resources standards appeared to be directly related to undergraduate orientation and did not fit into the graduate school model. This does not mean that graduate schools failed to meet these standards. If revised to address graduate school staffing patterns and the unique nature of graduate student orientation, they, then, would be effective and appropriate. (Poock, 2004a, p. 22)

The final standard outlined by CAS is assessment and evaluation; Poock's (2004a) study showed that nearly two-thirds of the CGS member institutions who responded to his survey conduct "quantitative and qualitative assessments that were used to modify their future orientation programs" (2004a, p. 22). Some specific cases of graduate student evaluation include reports by Buchanan (1989) at Oklahoma State University (OSU), Vickio and Tack (1987) at Bowling Green State University (BGSU), and Barker, Felstehausen, Couch, and Henry (1997) at Texas Tech University. Buchanan sent out a questionnaire examining student perceptions of the OSU environment to 920 minority, foreign, and white graduate students, of whom 284 (31 percent) responded. Respondents perceived their orientation to OSU as "mediocre. Considering that orientations are currently provided by

the Graduate College and the academic department, the negative rating cannot be attributed solely to either [College or department]" (Buchanan, 1989, p. 47).

Vickio and Tack (1987) provided a detailed report of the BGSU orientation program. Vickio and Tack (1987) explicitly state that their intention in their student-completed orientation evaluation was to "determine the efficiency of the BGSU graduate student orientation program...Data collected allowed the key staff to assess all dimensions of the orientation program and to ascertain how the program could be improved" (p. 16). Vickio and Tack (1987) conclude their report by stating the following:

At BGSU, there is no question that the benefits of the orientation program far outweigh the costs. The program conveys the message to new graduate students that someone truly cares about them; it also provides them with valuable insights into their development as instructors, researchers, students, and human beings. (p. 17)

In addition to the conversations regarding graduate student orientation and its evaluation, graduate education in general is under scrutiny, much of which focuses on the high rates of attrition (Bowen and Rudenstine, 1992; Marcus, 1997). For example, doctoral student attrition in the U.S. has reported rates of approximately 50 percent across disciplines (Nettles & Millett, 2006). Attrition rates of underrepresented populations have been reported at higher rates across disciplines (Council of Graduate Schools, 2004). Addressing the high attrition rates requires evaluation of the early years of graduate education, including the effectiveness of orientation programs.

Barker, Felstehausen, Couch, and Henry (1997) found that the vast majority of the 454 older graduate student respondents at Texas Tech University believed the orientation program offered to them was beneficial. The respondents also stated that a workshop format that allowed students to attend the sessions that best fit their needs was the desired

format. These findings are consistent with those found by Vlisides and Eddy (1993), who reviewed campus-wide orientation models at several research institutions, and Polson (2003), who examined the needs of the growing population of “adult graduate students” (p. 59). The programs and services offered at the universities varied in scope and focus, but they were designed to assist in students’ transitions to graduate study.

These studies show one of the major problems with this area: Evaluation of the orientation process, if carried out, is often highly qualitative, making it difficult to make broader generalizations. Reaching a consensus regarding student perceptions is much more difficult than if researchers are measuring attendance, yet it is these perceptions that will show if socialization was successful. However, university administrators are looking at hard numbers regarding attrition (Council of Graduate Schools, 2004); therefore, to show the importance and effectiveness (or failures) of orientation, there must be a quantitative element of orientation evaluations, which this study incorporates.

Upcraft and Farnsworth (1984) defined orientation as “any effort on the part of the institution to help entering students make the transition from their previous environment to the collegiate environment and enhance their success” (p. 27). While Upcraft and Farnsworth (1984) developed this definition for undergraduate orientation, the issues related to transitioning to a new educational environment also apply to graduate students. This application was made evident by Taub and Komives (1998), whose study outlined a “comprehensive orientation for new graduate students” (p. 394) and student evaluations of these programs, and Vlisides and Eddy (1993), who reviewed campus-wide orientation models at several research institutions. The programs offered at the universities varied in scope and focus, but they were designed to assist in students’ transitions to graduate study.

Socialization

Socialization is generally transmitted through the existence of the organizational culture, and in the case of graduate students, through the culture of higher education.

Tierney (1997) described organizational culture as “the sum of activities — symbolic and instrumental — that exist in the organization and create shared meaning. The definition of socialization pertains to the successful understanding and incorporation of those activities by the new members of the organization” (p. 3). Borrowing from Merton (1957), Tierney stated, “Culture is the sum of activities in the organization, and socialization is the process through which individuals acquire and incorporate an understanding of those activities” (p. 4). He continued:

An organization’s culture, then, teaches people how to behave, what to hope for, and what it means to succeed or fail. Some individuals become competent, and others do not. The new recruit’s task is to learn the cultural processes in the organization and figure out how to use them. (p. 4)

Therefore, when considering the orientation process, socialization refers to the process whereby a student learns the knowledge and skills necessary to assume his or her organizational role. As explained by Gardner (2008), “socialization affects every part of the student experience, from the first contacts with a graduate program through the dissertation defense” (p. 126). As new students become socialized, they learn about the university or department and its history, values, jargon, culture, and procedures. Likewise, “unsuccessful socialization contributes to the decision to depart from the degree program” (Council of Graduate Schools, 2004). What makes the graduate student socialization process so unique is that it is a dual process (Tinto, 1993; Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001),

whereby “new students are simultaneously directly socialized into the role of graduate student and are given preparatory socialization into a profession” (Golde, 1998, p. 56).

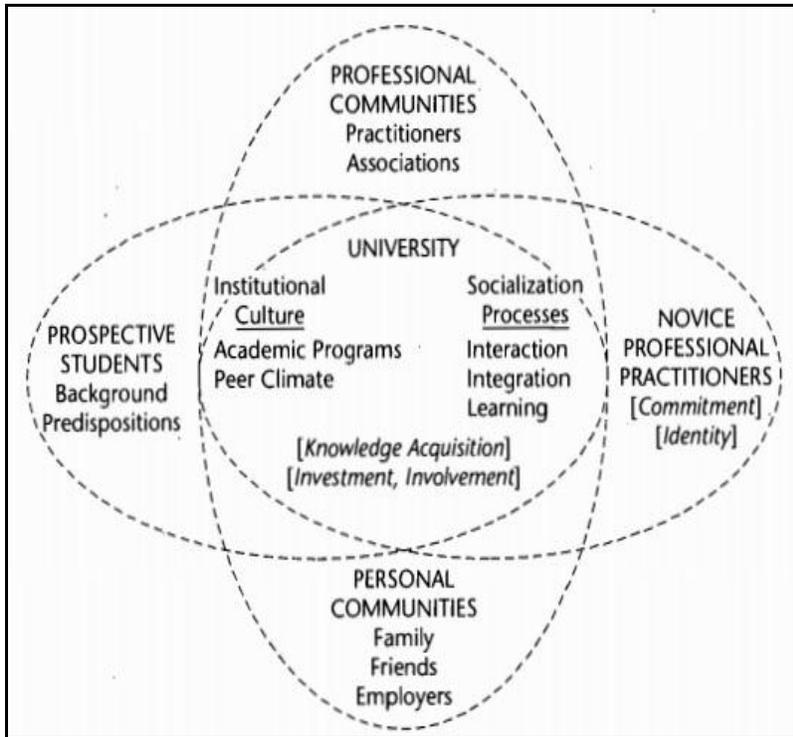
Boyle and Boice (1998) noted that the first step in this dual socialization process is an orientation program. Studies indicated that orientation programs tend to increase persistence and retention (Buchanan, 1989; Phillips, Daubman, & Wilmoth, 1986; Washburn, 2002) and to “welcome and allay incoming student anxiety” (Vlisides & Eddy, 1993, p. 96). Such anxiety and emotional stress is not uncommon among new graduate students (Golde, 2000), and research has indicated that a welcoming environment is instrumental in alleviating this stress and anxiety and creating a smoother transition to the role of graduate student (Phillips, Daubman, & Wilmoth, 1986; Poock & Love, 2000; Rosenblatt & Christensen, 1993; Taub & Komives, 1998).

Many students also experience socialization into their profession through research and teaching assistantships (Austin, 2002). Research assistants are afforded the opportunity to work alongside and learn from faculty who serve as socializing agents. Likewise, teaching assistants are socialized to their role as classroom instructors. However, according to a study by Miller and Deggs (2012), this process is changing as the higher education landscape shifts. Miller and Deggs (2012) argued that “increased emphasis on research and teaching for faculty as well as migration to distance education delivery formats has affected the amount of time that faculty can devote to mentoring graduate students” (p. 24). The results of this study indicated that current graduate adult education programs seem to be less focused on professional socialization and mentoring due in part to distance education delivery formats and changes in program structure.

Orientation affords students the opportunity to learn about the expectations of graduate study (Haggerty, 2010) as well as the culture of their profession (Boyle and Boice, 1998). Weidman, Twale, and Stein (2001) offer a model that incorporates the socialization of graduate students into both the university and the profession. At the core of this model is the role of the university, with a focus on institutional culture (academic programs and peer climate) and socialization processes (interaction, integration, and learning). Influencing this core are related areas of socialization, namely professional communities; prospective students' backgrounds and predispositions; the needs of novice professional practitioners; and personal communities that include family, friends, and employers. While this model focuses heavily on socialization into an academic field or profession, it parallels the aforementioned authors in stressing the importance of learning institutional norms and expectations associated with the transition to graduate study—that is, orientation plays a key role in graduate student socialization.

Figure 1

Model of Socialization of Graduate Students



Note. From “Socialization of Graduate and Professional Students in Higher Education: A Perilous Passage?,” by J.C. Weidman, D.J. Twale, and E.L. Stein, 2001, *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report*, 28(3), p. 37.

Implications of this Study

As noted earlier, since the mid-1990s, “there has been increased attention on the needs of graduate students ranging from retention (Washburn, 2002), to admissions (Poock, 2001), to diversity (Issac, Pruitt-Logan, & Upcraft, 1995), as well as a variety of service areas” (Poock, 2004a, p. 470-471), including graduate student orientation. This study allows for a better understanding not only of orientation practices but also students’ perceptions of their effectiveness at socializing students to the university. This evaluation also assists in addressing the issue of high attrition rates at the graduate student level.

More specifically, this study produces recommendations based on the students’ input for those universities under review regarding how to improve their orientation programs to better accommodate student attendance and socialization needs. These recommendations have been included here, but will also be formally submitted to the universities in the form of policy recommendations. While, of course, the universities cannot be forced to accept the recommendations, at least the information has been made available to them and, hopefully, other universities seeking to better understand the graduate student orientation and socialization processes.

Methodology

This study sought to examine university graduate student orientation programs and the use of evaluation in their programs. Second, it was intended to acquire students' perceptions regarding the role of orientation in their socialization.

For the purpose of this research project, the researcher chose to implement a research design to explore graduate students' experiences and perceptions regarding graduate student orientation and its effectiveness at socializing them to their respective universities. The study utilized a combination of qualitative and quantitative research by means of a questionnaire administered to first-year graduate students at the universities under review. This questionnaire was developed through review of the literature on graduate student orientation and graduate student orientation evaluation, which offered previously-administered questionnaires used in these studies. A basic understanding of the orientation practices at each institution was acquired through email correspondence with the graduate school contacts at each institution.

The questionnaire directed to students was administered online and was anonymous, unless the students disclosed aspects of their experience that revealed their identity. The questionnaire was distributed via the list serves of the graduate schools at the universities who agreed to participate in this study. There were three universities who agreed to participate in and fit the necessary parameters of this study: Miami University, Bowling Green State University, and Ball State University. These universities were selected based on their geographic location and comparable graduate school enrollment and program offerings. The intention was not to conduct university-based comparisons of

socialization, but, rather, to examine the results as a whole and develop holistic conclusions about the graduate student orientation experience.

In an attempt to improve the internal validity of this project, a pilot study was conducted at Ball State University (BSU) in April 2014. This helped to determine existing ambiguities or biases in the way the questions were stated. These were identified and corrected before exposing the survey to a larger population.

Definitions of Terms

For the purposes of this study, Upcraft and Farnsworth's (1995) definition for graduate student orientation was altered. For this study, when "graduate student orientation" is referenced, it refers to an organized program to help new graduate students make the transition from their previous environment to the graduate-level collegiate environment and enhance their success. Specifically, this program must be held on-campus, sponsored by the university (not a specific program/department), and offered for all graduate students, not only those in certain academic areas. The program must be conducted on the students' own time, not as part of a class, and ought to include information from various offices/departments on campus related to graduate study (e.g. library resources, grant opportunities, handbook, etc.).

This study utilized Turner and Thompson's (1993) definition of socialization as the process whereby a student learns the knowledge and skills necessary to assume his or her organizational role. To determine the successful rate of socialization, this study sought to learn two specific things from students. First, did the students feel that orientation was a contributor to their successful socialization to the university or did they just "learn as they went"? While the term "socialization" did not appear in the survey, the questions were

crafted to extract this information from respondents. Second, did students who did not attend orientation think it hindered their socialization in any way? Students who did not participate in the orientation were also asked why they made that decision.

Population/Sample:

Universities under Review. When seeking universities to participate in this study, those with comparable graduate student populations and graduate school offerings were specifically sought. Ball State University, Miami University in Ohio, and Bowling Green State University emerged as both interested and appropriate schools to explore.

While these universities were founded at various times, their respective graduate schools were all founded in the same ten year period. These universities have comparable graduate student populations, program offerings, are all part of the Mid-American Conference, and are in the same region of the United States, making them solid candidates for a comprehensive examination of the orientation programs of these universities using the same evaluation framework.

Ball State University. Located in Muncie, Indiana, Ball State University (BSU) began as a small, private, teacher-training school founded by Frank C. Ball and his brothers in 1899 and was renamed the Indiana State Normal School Eastern Division in 1918 after the Ball brothers gifted the university and land to the state of Indiana. In recognition of the Ball family's generosity, the Indiana General Assembly changed the school's name to Ball Teachers College in 1922 and then Ball State Teachers College in 1929. As more programs were developed and new students attracted to the college, it was renamed Ball State University (BSU) in 1965 (Ball State University, History).

The BSU Graduate School was founded in 1968 (Ball State University, History). At the time of this study, the Graduate School had a population of approximately 4,400 students (Ball State University Office of Institutional Effectiveness, 2014). The Graduate School offered over 100 graduate programs, including certificate, master's, doctoral, and specialist programs, some of which might be completed entirely online (Ball State University, Graduate School).

According to S. Wilson, (personal communication, November 17, 2014), the BSU Graduate Student Orientation is primarily organized by one graduate assistant and his/her supervisor, the Graduate School Recruiter. For Fall 2014, the orientation was held on August 14, four days before the commencement of classes. This one-day orientation provided some sessions for specific populations, such as a doctoral student session and "New to Ball State" session. The orientation was not required, but students were encouraged to attend via email as well as social media posts. The orientation provided information on campus culture, professionalism, Immersive Learning, counseling services, library services for grad students, and work-life balance. There was also a social event held off-campus for all graduate students.

Bowling Green State University. Established in 1910 as a teacher-training institution, Bowling Green held its first classes in 1914 (Bowling Green State University, History and Traditions). Located in Bowling Green, Ohio, the school offered its first four-year degree programs in 1929 and continued to add to the number of offered programs each year (Bowling Green State University, History and Traditions). In 1935, Bowling Green achieved full university status and became Bowling Green State University (BGSU) (Bowling Green State University, History and Traditions).

In 1947, the BGSU Graduate College was formed (Bowling Green State University, History and Traditions). At the time of this study, BGSU offered 95 graduate programs which can be completed on-campus, online, or a blend of both, including doctoral and master's degrees, together with specialist and certificate programs, with a graduate student population of approximately 2,500 (Bowling Green State University Graduate College).

For fall 2014, according to S. Leatherman, (personal communication, January 16, 2015), BGSU's Graduate Student Orientation was organized by one, full-time staff member. This year, the orientation was held over the course of one week, August 18-22, with classes beginning the following Monday. The Graduate College hosts events on August 19-20, with departments hosting program events the remainder of the week. The BGSU orientation is specifically targeted at students with Graduate Assistantships and is required for those students; however, non-assistantship students are also encouraged to attend. The orientation exposes students to all of the training and proper paperwork required for graduate assistants, such as payroll, compliance training, and professional development.

Miami University. Miami University (MU) is one of the oldest public institutions in the country (Miami University, History and Traditions). Located in Oxford, Ohio, and originally chartered in 1809, MU opened its doors 1824. The school was closed during the 1870s and early 1880s due to a lack of funds. In 1885, classes resumed after the Ohio legislature appropriated funds to allow MU to reopen (Miami University, History and Traditions).

The Graduate School at MU was established in 1946. At the time of this study, MU had a graduate student population of just fewer than 2,500 and offered over 75 degree programs including graduate certificates, doctoral programs and master's programs

(Miami University, Programs and degrees). None of their degrees could be wholly completed online, though there are some online courses.

According to L. Haines, (personal communication, November 17, 2014), Graduate Student Orientation at MU is a joint effort by many individuals within the Graduate School. However, the primary organizers are the Associate Dean of the Graduate School and the Assistant to the Dean of the Graduate School. They held their Fall 2014 orientation on August 18, one week before the commencement of classes. This one-day orientation was not required, but was specifically targeted at students with graduate assistantships. The idea was to give students a general knowledge of campus, covering topics such as the library, IT services, health services, and the university attorney.

Students. The decision was made to survey only first-year graduate students because they are the ones who have just come through the graduate orientation program and are in the midst of their socialization to the university.

To acquire purposive responses, students who attended the same university for any previous degree as for their current graduate degree were excluded. This group was excluded because their experience would presumably skew the results of the study. Those students who are attending the same university for their graduate degree as they did for any previous degree have added exposure to the university and, therefore, their socialization is at a different point than incoming university graduate students.

The pilot study identified another subset of students: online only. These students are not a part of the on-campus orientation or socialization experience and were therefore excluded from participation in the full study.

Measurement Instrumentation

The survey for this study was created in Qualtrics. A link to the survey was emailed to all first-year graduate students at the universities under review. This survey sought to examine if the students had, in their estimation, undergone a successful socialization process and what, if any, role the orientation program had in that process. Socialization, the process whereby a student learns the knowledge and skills necessary to assume his or her organizational role, is generally transmitted through the existence of the organizational culture, and in the case of graduate students, through the culture of higher education.

The full study survey started with three screening question for the students:

- Is this your first semester in your current graduate degree program?
- Did you attend your current university for any previous degree?
- Are you currently enrolled in at least one on-campus course?

Based on their responses, they were either directed to the remainder of the survey or thanked for their time and dismissed. Students were questioned as to whether or not they attended orientation and the motives behind that decision, selecting from a list of variables or they could select "Other" and provide their own answers. They then answered Likert-type scale questions to assess their perspectives of how attending/not attending orientation impacted their transition to their respective universities. Please see Appendix A for complete Questionnaire for Students.

Data Collection

As previously stated, the student questionnaire was administered via list serves from the graduate schools of the universities to those who agreed to participate in this study. Because of the large population size and the multi-university participation, it was

decided that a web-based survey was the most convenient way of distributing and collecting surveys, and Qualtrics was selected based on the researcher's experience with this tool. The questionnaire was composed of primarily close-ended questions for the sake of being able to efficiently consolidate responses to certain questions and ascertain trends. However, there were a few opinion-based, open-ended questions to allow for a deeper understanding of student perceptions regarding the necessity and effectiveness of the graduate student orientation.

Because there was no intent to follow-up with individual students regarding their answers, there was no need to collect any personal information from the students, only general demographic information. Therefore, students' anonymity was wholly maintained, unless they disclosed aspects of their experience that revealed their identity.

The student survey link was sent to the graduate school contacts at their respective universities. They then sent out emails to all of their graduate students, whose emails were available through university list serves. The student responses were then recorded through the survey website. The questionnaire was available online for three weeks from the date of the emails. Reminders were distributed at the start of each week, so a total of three emails were sent to students.

No incentives were offered to the students for their participation.

Data Analysis

The closed-ended questions, most of which were based on Likert-type scales, allowed for a quantitative analysis of the data. Qualtrics analytics and SPSS were utilized for this analysis, particularly for cross tabulations to examine attendance of orientation by demographic group (male/female, traditional/non-traditional, international/domestic, and

race). This identified any statistically significant differences in attendance between these groups, which would allow the universities to better target them in future outreach and orientation promotions. Also of interest was how, if at all, different demographic groups' perceive orientation's role in their socialization.

Ethical Consideration

Of course, this study could not proceed without the proper approval from the Institutional Review Board. As this was an anonymous survey, there were no issues regarding the participants' identities. The IRB Guidebook specifically states:

Research involving survey or interview procedures with adult subjects is exempt from the federal regulations unless the information obtained is recorded in such a manner that the subjects can be identified, and the information obtained could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

This project was, therefore, exempt from IRB oversight.

Results

Pilot Study

The purpose of the pilot study was not to garner student perceptions of orientation and their socialization but to test the survey instrument. The area of particular importance was assuring question clarity. If the questions were unclear, students could note this wherever appropriate. Another indicator was if students started but did not complete the survey.

Of the 207 completed surveys, 44 % (n=92) were considered viable based on the inclusion criteria: first-year graduate students and students who did not attend the same university for any previous degree as their current graduate degree. One additional criterion not originally considered was that of online-only students, who are not a part of the on-campus orientation or socialization experience. However, the pilot study revealed a large number of respondents from this population participating in the survey. These students were, therefore, excluded from the study.

With regards to gender, the respondents were 39 % (n=36) male, 59 % (n=55) female, and 2 % (n=2) preferred not to disclose their gender. The survey instrument allowed for a “prefer not to disclose” option, designed to allow those who identify outside of the binary gender designations, such as members of the LGBTQIA community, an opportunity to do so. With regards to race, 82% (n=77) of respondents identified as White/Caucasian; 5% (n=5) of respondents identified as African American, with 4 % (n=4) identifying as Asian and as Other (n=4). Finally, 2% (n=2) of respondents identified as Hispanic, and the remaining 2 % (n=2) preferred not to disclose their ethnicity.

Findings. Looking at the ninety-two survey responses in regard to the content of the survey, the only surveys that were not completed were open for less than twenty seconds on the survey's introduction. This implies that the students either deemed the survey uninteresting or realized they were not members of the desired population, and so opted out of participating in the survey itself. In the comments sections, there were no responses that indicated any questions were unclear. Based on the large number of unviable survey responses in the pilot study, screening questions were added to the beginning of the survey:

- Is this your first semester in your current graduate degree program?
- Did you attend your current university for any previous degree?
- Are you currently enrolled in at least one on-campus course?

If they did not fit the criteria for this study, they were excluded from the remainder of the survey.

Limitations. As mentioned above, out of the 207 completed surveys, only 44% (n=92) were considered viable. This showed flaws in the design of the survey instrument. While the inclusion / exclusion criteria were included in the letter of recruitment sent to students, many still completed the survey even though they did not fit the parameters of the population being sought out. Those 115 surveys were discarded because their responses indicated they did not fit the parameters of the study.

Another point is that the survey had to be approved by IRB before it could be distributed. The survey was not administered until April 2014, orientation having taken place eight months prior. This was also taken into consideration, as the full thesis study was prepared. Additionally, as the spring semester continued to proceed, the graduate

students had more projects to be completed before the end of the semester. This contributed to another possible limitation of the study because the level of pressure on the graduate students may have affected the response rate.

Full Study

Participants. Of the 544 completed surveys initiated by students, 68.2% (n=371) were excluded based on their incompatibility with the study's parameters, leaving the study with a total sample size of 173. The remainder of this report will focus on the 173 survey responses deemed useable.

See Table 2 for a demographic breakdown of respondents by university and the total sample. Of the 173 respondents, 31% (n=53) were male, 69% (n=119) were female and 1% (n=1) preferred not to disclose their gender. The majority of respondents, 86.1% (n=149), identified as White/Caucasian. The vast majority of respondents also identified as U.S. citizens (n=155) and were ages 22-25 (n=118). The majority of respondents (n=76) were from University 3. Please refer to Table 3 for a breakdown of the academic identifiers the respondents completed. The majority of respondents indicated they had come straight from their previous degree program to their current degree program (n=97), and were pursuing Master's degrees (n=131).

Table 2

Demographic Breakdown of Respondents by Gender, Age, Citizenship Status, and Race

	University 1		University 2		University 3		Total	
	n	Percentage	n	Percentage	n	Percentage	n	Percentage
Gender								
Male	15	25.9%	27	35.5%	11	28.2%	53	30.6%
Female	43	74.1%	48	63.2%	28	71.8%	119	68.8%
Prefer Not to Disclose	0	--	1	1.3%	0	--	1	0.6%
Age								
18-21	1	1.7%	2	2.6%	4	10.3%	7	4%
22-25	42	72.4%	50	65.8%	26	66.7%	118	68.2%
26-30	11	19%	16	21.1%	5	12.8%	32	18.5%
31-35	0	--	4	5.3%	1	2.6%	5	2.9%
36-40	1	1.7%	1	1.3%	1	2.6%	3	1.7%
40+	3	5.2%	3	3.9%	2	5.1%	8	4.6%
Citizenship Status								
Domestic	49	84.5%	68	89.5%	38	97.4%	155	89.6%
International	9	15.5%	8	10.5%	1	2.6%	18	10.4%
Race								
White/Caucasian	46	79.3%	67	88.2%	36	92.3%	149	86.1%
African American	3	5.2%	1	1.3%	1	2.6%	5	2.9%
Hispanic	0	--	2	2.6%	0	--	2	1.2%
Asian	7	12.1%	4	5.3%	1	2.6%	12	6.9%
Native American	0	--	0	--	0	--	0	--
Pacific Islander	0	--	0	--	0	--	0	--
Other	2	3.4%	0	--	1	2.6%	3	1.7%
Prefer not to Disclose	0	--	2	2.6%	0	--	2	1.2%

Table 3

Academic Identifier Breakdown of Respondents by University

	University 1		University 2		University 3		Total	
	n	Percentage	n	Percentage	n	Percentage	n	Percentage
Time Off								
Straight Through	31	53.4%	40	52.6%	26	66.7%	97	56.1%
1-2 years off	18	31%	18	23.7%	8	20.5%	44	25.4%
3+ years off	9	15.5%	18	23.7%	5	12.8%	32	18.5%
Type of Degree Program								
Certificate	1	1.7%	0	--	1	2.6%	2	1.2%
Master's	46	79.3%	57	75%	28	71.8%	131	75.7%
Doctoral	10	17.2%	19	25%	9	23.1%	38	22%
Specialist	1	1.7%	0	--	1	2.6%	2	1.2%

*** $p < .05$

Results. Eighty-two percent of respondents (n=142) indicated they had attended their university's graduate student orientation. Table 4 shows orientation attendance by demographic breakdown and statistical significance of each demographic group. With regard to attendance, none of the demographic groups showed any statistically significant differences. However, differences were found in orientation attendance by student type of degree program, as demonstrated in Table 5, which shows orientation attendance by academic identifier and statistical significance of each group.

Table 4

Orientation Attendance by Demographic Breakdown of Respondents

	Did You Attend Your University's Graduate Student Orientation?				Statistical Significance Chi-Square				
	Yes		No		Mean	s.d.	Chi ² Value	df	p value
	n	Percentage	n	Percentage					
Gender									
Male	46	86.8%	7	13.2%	1.70	.472	1.427	2	.490
Female	95	79.8%	24	20.2%					
Prefer Not to Disclose	1	100%	0	--					
Age									
18-21	6	85.7%	1	14.3%	2.44	1.025	8.147	5	.148
22-25	100	84.7%	18	15.3%					
26-30	25	78.1%	7	21.9%					
31-35	5	100%	0	--					
36-40	2	66.7%	1	33.3%					
40+	4	50%	4	50%					
Citizenship Status									
Domestic	129	83.2%	26	16.8%	1.10	.306	1.328	1	.249
International	13	72.2%	5	27.8%					
Race									
White/Caucasian	123	82.6%	26	17.4%	1.45	1.305	2.371	5	.796
African American	4	80%	1	20%					
Hispanic	2	100%	0	--					
Asian	10	83.3%	2	16.7%					
Other	2	66.7%	1	33.3%					
Prefer not to Disclose	1	50%	1	50%					

*** $p < .05$

Table 5

Orientation Attendance by Academic Identifier Breakdown of Respondents

	Did You Attend Your University's Graduate Student Orientation?				Statistical Significance Chi-Square				
	Yes		No		Mean	s.d.	Chi ² Value	df	p value
	n	Percentage	n	Percentage					
Time Off									
Straight Through	82	84.5%	15	15.5%	1.62	.780	.930	2	.628
1-2 years off	35	79.5%	9	20.5%					
3+ years off	25	78.1%	7	21.9%					
Type of Degree									
Certificate	0	--	2	100%	2.23	.475	10.791	3	.013***
Master's	109	83.2%	22	16.8%					
Doctoral	32	84.2%	6	15.8%					
Specialist Program	1	50%	1	50%					

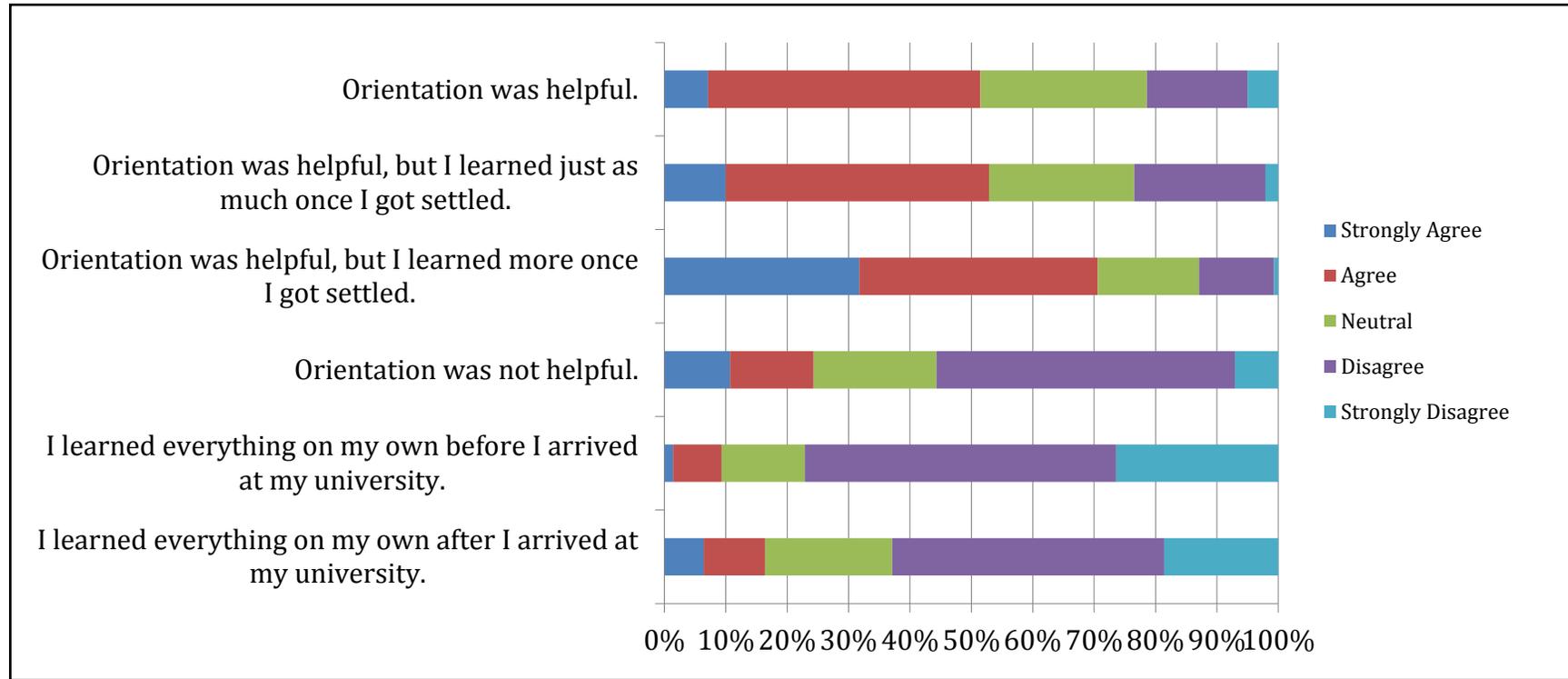
*** $p < .05$

Students indicated they attended orientation thinking it would be helpful in their transition to the university (n=102) and their transition to graduate school (n=96). However, the primary factor for students attending orientation was because it was "required" as part of their assistantship or for their degree program (n=108). Figure 2 shows the extent to which the 142 students who attended orientation felt it impacted their socialization. These show more positive responses to prompts indicating orientation was helpful and more negative responses to prompts indicating orientation was not helpful. Table 6 compares these responses across demographic groups. This data demonstrate a few points that are statistically significant. First, two different data points indicate that international students are more likely to perceive the orientation process more helpful than domestic students ($p=.018$; $p=.005$). Second, while men and women indicated they

found orientation helpful in their transition to their university, women were more likely than men ($p=.020$) to feel they did not receive the support they needed once they were settled in their programs. Age also showed statistically significant differences, so post hoc tests were run to see which groups were different; please see Tables 7 and 8. Here, we see a clearer picture of the differences across groups. First, 22-25 year-old graduate students indicated more than other age groups that they learned more at orientation than when they settled on campus. Second, older graduate students, particularly those aged 31-35, indicated feeling they did not receive the support they needed once they were settled in their programs more than their younger peers. Table 10, however, shows that there was no statistically significant difference when comparing responses based on both gender and age.

Figure 2

Students' (n = 173) impressions of orientation as a contributor to their transition to their universities.



	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
Orientation was helpful.	7.1%	44.3%	27.1%	16.4%	5.0%
Orientation was helpful, but I learned just as much once I got settled.	10.0%	42.9%	23.6%	21.4%	2.1%
Orientation was helpful, but I learned more once I got settled.	31.7%	38.8%	16.5%	12.2%	0.7%
Orientation was not helpful.	10.7%	13.6%	20.0%	48.6%	7.1%
I learned everything on my own before I arrived at my university.	1.4%	7.9%	13.6%	50.7%	26.4%
I learned everything on my own after I arrived at my university.	6.4%	10.0%	20.7%	44.3%	18.6%

Table 6

Perceptions of Orientation Effectiveness by Demographic Breakdown of Respondents

	Sum of Squares	df	s.d.	Mean Square	F	Significance
Orientation was helpful.						
Gender	2.742	2	.478	1.371	1.383	.254
Age	5.26	5	.907	1.052	1.058	.387
Citizenship Status	5.497	1	.270	5.497	5.702	.018***
Race	4.947	5	1.158	.989	993	.425
Orientation was helpful, but I learned just as much once I got settled.						
Gender	7.709	2	.478	3.854	4.032	.020***
Age	16.139	5	.907	3.228	3.529	.005***
Citizenship Status	3.451	1	.270	3.451	3.522	.063
Race	10.774	5	1.158	2.155	2.257	.052
Orientation was helpful, but I learned more once I got settled.						
Gender	.046	2	.478	.023	.022	.978
Age	17.435	5	.907	3.487	3.718	.003***
Citizenship Status	.738	1	.270	.738	.715	.399
Race	8.640	5	1.158	1.728	1.721	.134
Orientation was not helpful.						
Gender	2.017	2	.478	1.009	.794	.454
Age	2.746	5	.907	.549	.424	.831
Citizenship Status	9.740	1	.270	9.740	8.078	.005***
Race	10.217	5	1.158	2.043	1.650	.151
I learned everything on my own before I arrived at my university.						
Gender	.117	2	.478	.059	.068	.934
Age	2.453	5	.907	.491	.572	.721
Citizenship Status	1.414	1	.270	1.414	1.684	.197
Race	2.269	5	1.158	.454	.529	.754
I learned everything on my own after I arrived at my university.						
Gender	.866	2	.478	.433	.355	.702
Age	5.449	5	.907	1.090	.898	.484
Citizenship Status	3.047	1	.270	3.047	2.549	.113
Race	10.328	5	1.158	2.066	1.756	.126

*** $p < .05$

Table 7

Significant Differences Between Age Groups on "Orientation was helpful, but I learned just as much once I got settled."

	Age Range					
	18-21	22-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	>40
18-21		.008***	.252	.863	.523	.419
22-25	.008***		.008***	.027***	.396	.235
26-30	.252	.008***		.395	1.000	1.000
31-35	.863	.027***	.395		.618	.534
36-40	.523	.396	1.000	.618		1.000
>40	.419	.235	1.000	.534	1.000	

*** $p < .05$

Table 8

Significant Differences Between Age Groups on "Orientation was helpful, but I learned more once I got settled."

	Age Range					
	18-21	22-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	>40
18-21		.104	.185	.055	.401	.506
22-25	.104		.713	.000***	1.000	.614
26-30	.185	.713		.000***	.911	.745
31-35	.055	.000	.000***		.028***	.018***
36-40	.401	1.000	.911	.028***		.766
>40	.506	.614	.745	.018***	.766	

*** $p < .05$

Table 9

Means and Standard Deviations for Gender and Age in Response to "Orientation was helpful, but I learned more once I got settled."

	Male		Female		Total	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
18-21	3.00	.000	3.75	5.00	3.50	5.48
22-25	2.03	.778	2.56	.998	2.42	.973
26-30	2.80	.789	3.13	1.125	3.00	1.000
31-35	4.00	--	3.25	.957	3.40	.894
36-40	2.50	.707	3.00	.000	3.00	.000
>40	2.32	.857	3.50	.707	3.00	.816

Table 10

Summary of Two-Way Analysis of Variance for Gender and Age in Response to "Orientation was helpful, but I learned more once I got settled."

	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Significance
Gender	2	3.920	1.960	2.249	.110
Age	5	17.531	3.506	4.023	.002***
Gender * Age	4	1.747	.437	.501	.735
Error	128	111.564	.872		

*** $p < .05$

Only 18% (n=31) of the respondents did not attend orientation. As shown in Figure 3, the majority (35.5%; n=11) stated they had a time conflict and 16.1% (n=5) indicated they did not know about the orientation. Table 11 shows respondents' contentment with having missed orientation by various demographic groups and Table 12 shows these responses by academic identifiers. These showed no statistical significance. However, of those respondents, 47% (n=14) indicated they were content having missed orientation while 53% (n=16) of those respondents who did not attend indicated they wish they had attended orientation.

Figure 3

Students' (n = 31) reasons for not attending orientation.

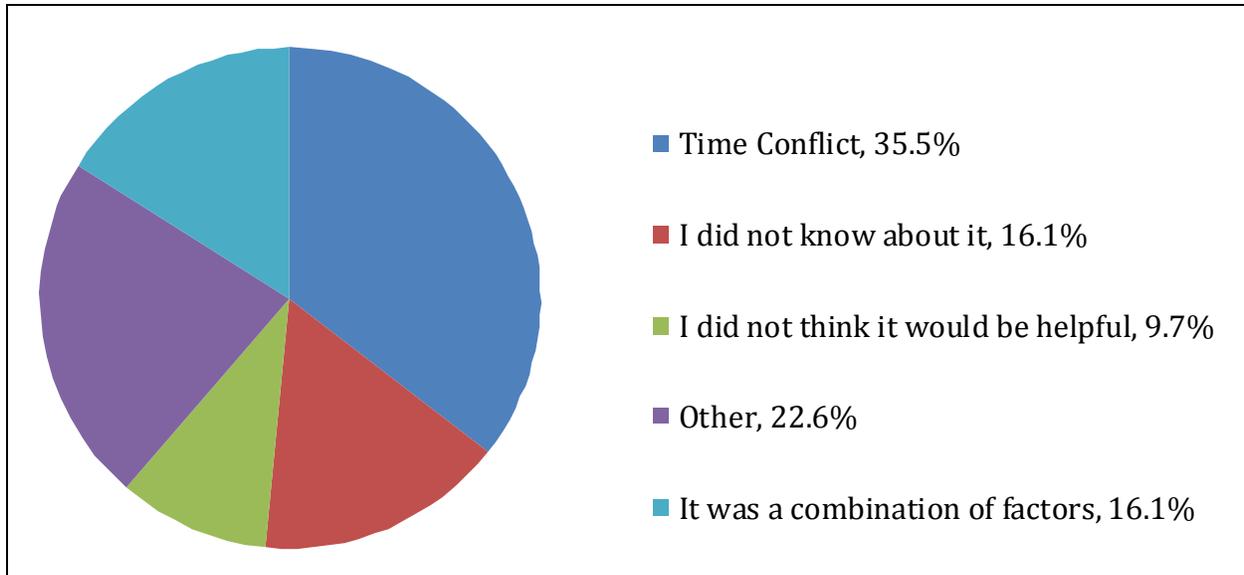


Table 11

Satisfaction with Missing Orientation by Demographic Breakdown of Respondents

	Do You Wish You Had Attended Orientation?				Statistical Significance Chi-Square				
	n	Yes Percentage	n	No Percentage	Mean	s.d.	Chi ² Value	df	p value
Gender									
Male	3	42.9%	4	57.1%	1.77	.430	.403	1	.526
Female	13	56.5%	10	43.5%					
Prefer Not to Disclose	--	--	--	--					
Age									
18-21	1	100%	0	--	2.83	1.440	5.648	4	.227
22-25	11	64.7%	8	35.3%					
26-30	2	28.6%	5	71.4%					
31-35	--	--	--	--					
36-40	1	100%	0	--					
40+	1	25%	3	75%					
Citizenship Status									
Domestic	13	52%	12	48%	1.17	.379	.107	1	.743
International	3	60%	2	40%					
Race									
White/Caucasian	13	52%	12	48%	1.67	1.768	4.929	4	.295
African American	1	100%	0	--					
Hispanic	--	--	--	--					
Asian	0	--	2	100%					
Other	1	100%	0	--					
Prefer not to Disclose	1	100%	0	--					

Table 12

Satisfaction with Missing Orientation by Academic Identifier Breakdown of Respondents

	Did You Attend Your University's Graduate Student Orientation?				Statistical Significance Chi-Square				
	Yes		No		Mean	s.d.	Chi ² Value	df	p value
	n	Percentage	n	Percentage					
Time Off									
Straight Through	9	60%	6	40%	1.73	.828	.612	2	.736
1-2 years off	4	50%	4	50%					
3+ years off	3	42.9%	4	57.1%					
Type of Degree									
Certificate	1	50%	1	50%	2.20	.610	.918	3	.821
Master's	11	52.4%	10	47.6%					
Doctoral	3	50%	3	50%					
Specialist Program	1	100%	0	--					

Discussion and Major Findings

This study sought to examine university graduate student orientation programs and the use of evaluation in their programs. Second, it was intended to acquire students' perceptions regarding the role of orientation in their socialization. Again, when considering the orientation process, socialization refers to the process whereby a student learns the knowledge and skills necessary to assume his or her organizational role.

Eight-two percent of respondents (n=142) specified they had attended their respective university's graduate student orientation. With regard to attendance, none of the demographic groups displayed any statistically significant differences. However, differences were found in orientation attendance by students' type of degree program. The data point to master's and doctoral students being more likely to attend the orientation than certificate or specialist program students. However, with such small populations in the certificate and specialist programs, it is difficult to extrapolate this finding to the broader population. Likewise, without qualitative follow-up, the question of why these groups are less likely to attend orientation is also speculative.

This study showed no statistically significant findings related to the self-identified race of students and their perceptions related to orientation and their transition to the university. This result seems contrary to the literature presented by Dedrick and Watson (2002), McDavis, Molden and Wilson (1989) and Robinson (1996), which indicated that students of color and minority students have different orientation needs than those of white students. However, the institutions under review all had predominantly white student populations, with the sample size being only 13.9 percent minority students. Because of this, no broad conclusions may be drawn from this small sample.

Women responded more often than men that they did not learn as much about their university and graduate program culture once they settled, suggesting that women may not receive as much socialization as they would like after arriving on campus. This seems to align with the literature presented related to the varied needs of students based on gender, presented by Dedrick and Watson (2002). However, as Dedrick and Watson did not provide specific orientation needs of women in this work and without qualitative follow-up from the women respondents, it is unclear what areas of their socialization process are in need of improvement.

Barker, Felstehausen, Couch, and Henry (1997) and Polson (2003) indicated that students of various age groups also had different orientation needs. The data in this study support their findings, as 31-35-year-old students denoted disagreement that they learned just as much or more once they were settled. This indicates that this age group, as with female graduate students, is perhaps not receiving the assistance it needs after reaching campus. This aligns with Barker, Felstehausen, Couch, and Henry's (1997) survey of older graduate students who had delayed entry to graduate school. They found that these students had important needs for information regarding library services, conducting library searches, technical writing, and time management. Important but less critical needs were expressed for information about availability of assistantships, study skills, medical services, stress management, career counseling, test taking, and financial counseling.

Students indicated they attended orientation thinking it would be helpful in their transition to the university (n=102) and their transition to graduate school (n=96). However, the primary factor for students attending orientation was because it was "required" as part of their assistantship or for their degree program (n=108). The data

reveal that respondents who attended orientation were somewhat indifferent about its impact on their transition to the university, yet they offered a dissenting response when asked if their orientation was helpful to them or not. Based on the responses, orientation seems to help students in their transition to the university. However, respondents' note that they learned more once they were settled into their program of study and the university. The implication here is that students are learning something valuable after orientation concludes.

Only 18 % (n=31) of the respondents did not attend orientation. Of those respondents, 47 % (n=14) specified they were content having missed orientation. These respondents suggested they did not believe orientation would have made a difference in their experience at the university or would have been a waste of time. The majority of these respondents also noted they received some type of departmental or assistantship orientation, which they felt served as a substitute for the campus-wide orientation.

However, 53% (n=16) of those respondents who did not attend indicated they wish they had attended orientation. These respondents stated that they believed orientation would have allowed them to meet more people and given them a better understanding of the university's campus, policies, procedures, and culture, easing their transition to the university and the graduate school experience. While these respondents do represent the majority, it is a very slim majority, so broader statements regarding students' contentment with having missed orientation are not possible.

Limitations

While the survey was distributed to the three participating universities in October 2014, closer to the time of orientation and at a point in the semester that was presumably

less stressful for students, the response rate was actually lower than with the pilot study. The relatively small response rate was likely a contributor to the lack of significance across demographic groups. Another limitation that must be acknowledged is that the primary contact at Miami University was out of the country when the survey was ready for distribution. Because of issues getting approval for another member of the university to send the survey out to students, it was not distributed to Miami University students for one full week. To accommodate this, the survey was left open for an additional week.

While this study cannot make generalizations about all graduate student orientations, these results can arguably be applied to other MAC schools with graduate student populations comparable to the ones at Ball State University, Bowling Green State University, and Miami University.

Finally, the method of this study, a self-administered survey, also has its own weaknesses by nature. First, surveys are inflexible. The survey that was used by the researcher, as well as the method of administering it, cannot be changed throughout the process of data gathering. Although this inflexibility can be viewed as a weakness of the survey method, this can also be a strength considering the fact that preciseness and fairness are both exercised in the study. Second, and more important, surveys possess the disadvantage of artificiality. There is always a risk that people's answers to questionnaire items may not reflect their true views. If a participant is worried there will be negative repercussions to their personal responses, they are less likely to be honest. This study attempted to overcome these weaknesses by thoroughly testing the survey and guaranteeing participant anonymity.

Recommendations to the Universities

Based on the data and its correlation to the literature, there are three primary recommendations for the universities involved in this study. These recommendations will be formally submitted to the Graduate School orientation managers, with the Graduate School Deans carbon copied on the message.

First, the universities might consider hosting follow-up programs, either at the university or departmental level. These might help those students who need additional assistance after orientation programs have concluded as well as giving those students who did not attend orientation the chance to partake in the information presented.

Second, the universities might consider hosting focus groups with their students, specifically women and 31-35-year-old graduate students, to ascertain what information they feel is missing or how the university can assist in their continued socialization and success.

Finally, these universities ought to consider utilizing their offices of Institutional Effectiveness or Institutional Research to get specific, updated numbers related to graduate student completion rates, time to degree, etc. If these completion rates are low or the time to degree spans are high across particular populations then the universities might consider how they can provide additional support to these groups post-orientation.

Implications for Future Research

As demonstrated in the literature review, the majority of existing studies examining graduate student socialization tend to focus on a single institution, often focusing on a single academic discipline within that institution and sometimes even a particular population within that academic discipline or institution. Consider, for example, McDavis, Molden, and Wilson's (1989) study directed at retaining African American graduate students at the University of Florida. This thesis study was an attempt to evaluate the relationship between graduate student orientation and socialization across all disciplines at multiple universities. It was the researcher's first attempt, which yielded intriguing results, namely where the data seems to conflict with the existing literature. With this in mind, there is still much work to be done in this area.

If such a study were to be replicated, one suggestion would be to involve more universities so that the results might be more generalizable. If this were pursued, further steps might be taken to assure an even greater response rate. For example, the survey could be disseminated electronically or in hard copy to first semester graduate courses, if such courses exist at the institution. This would, of course, require work with all the departments who offer graduate courses and permission from the instructors, as well as the time and manpower to distribute and analyze the results. A more feasible option would be that, if resources are available, incentives might be offered to participants.

Another suggestion would be to ask students about their expectations for attending orientation. It would be of interest to see if students' expectations of what they learn in orientation are met or not. Also of interest for future studies would be to have students identify their specific degree program or academic department. This is one aspect of the

population that this study did not consider. However, it would allow for comparisons across various academic disciplines.

This study has left many questions still in need of exploration. For example, if students are learning more once they are settled on campus, what information might orientation provide to give the students more information initially? Are these gaps in the information being provided to students, or are they simply building on what they learned at orientation? How can the process be improved? What aspects of orientation are of particular assistance to international students? With women and certain age groups indicating they do not receive additional information after getting settled in their programs, is it possible they are being treated differently than their male counterparts or younger students within their graduate programs?

If such a study were to be replicated, future researchers might consider adding an index of the variables related to successful socialization or orientation. They might also consider adding more qualitative components, perhaps even a follow-up focus group or individual interviews. While this study indicated elements of the orientation process the surveyed students were dissatisfied with, it did not allow for students to specify the areas in need of improvement.

References

- Austin, A. E. (2002). Preparing the next generation of faculty: Graduate school as socialization to the academic career. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 73(1), 94-122.
- Ball State University. (n.d.). *Graduate School*. Retrieved November 16, 2014, from <http://cms.bsu.edu/Academics/%20CollegesandDepartments/GradSchool.aspx>.
- . (n.d.) History. *About*. Retrieved November 16, 2014 from <http://cms.bsu.edu/about/historyandmission>
- Ball State University Office of Institutional Effectiveness. (2014). Enrollment by Race – On-Campus Only [Data file]. Retrieved November 16, 2014, from http://cms.bsu.edu/-/media/WWW/DepartmentalContent/Factbook/1314PDFs/Student_OnCampus_Race_201314.pdf
- . (2014). New Graduate and International Enrollment - On-Campus Only [Data file]. Retrieved November 16, 2014, from http://cms.bsu.edu/-/media/WWW/DepartmentalContent/Factbook/1314PDFs/Student_OnCampus_Graduate_International_201314.pdf
- . (2014). Student_New_Graduate_International_StudyAbroad_201314.pdf
- Barker, S., Felstehausen, G., Couch, S., & Henry, J. (1997). Orientation programs for older and delayed-entry graduate students. *NASPA Journal*, 35(1), 57–68.
- Bowen, W. G., and Rudenstine, N. L. *In Pursuit of the Ph.D.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Bowling Green State University. (2014). Headcount (HC) by Campus [Data file]. Retrieved November 16, 2014, from <http://www.bgsu.edu/content/dam/BGSU/ir/documents/student-information/2014-reports/HC148.pdf>.
- . (n.d.). Graduate Programs. *Graduate College*. Retrieved November 16, 2014, from <http://www.bgsu.edu/graduate/graduate-programs.html>.
- . (n.d.) History and Traditions. *About BGSU*. Retrieved November 16, 2014, from <http://www.bgsu.edu/about/history-and-traditions.html>
- Boyle, P., & Boice, B. (1998). Best practices for enculturation: Collegiality, mentoring, and structure. In M. S. Anderson (Ed.), *The experience of being in graduate school: an exploration* (pp. 87–94). *New directions for higher education* (no. 101). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brown, J. L. (2012). Developing a freshman orientation survey to improve student retention within a college. *College Student Journal*, 46(4), 834-851.

- Buchanan, D. A. (1989). *A study of graduate student perceptions of the Oklahoma State University environment*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 330 284)
- Cho, M. (2012). Online student orientation in higher education: A developmental study. *Educational Technology Research And Development, 60*(6), 1051-1069.
- Corcoran, M., & Clark, S. M. (1984). Professional socialization and contemporary career attitudes of three faculty generations. *Research in Higher Education, 20*(2), 131-153.
- Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education. (2012). Orientation Programs. In Mitstifer, D. I. (Ed.), *The book of professional standards for higher education* (pp. 372-381). Washington, DC: Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education.
- Council of Graduate Schools. (2003). Preparing Future Faculty Program. Retrieved from <http://www.preparing-faculty.org>.
- . (2004). *Ph.D. completion and attrition: Policy, numbers, leadership, and next steps*. Washington, DC: Council of Graduate Schools.
- Dedrick, R. F., & Watson, F. (2002). Mentoring needs of female, minority, and international graduate students: A content analysis of academic research guides and related print material. *Mentoring and Tutoring, 10*(3), 275-289.
- Gardner, S. K. (2007). "I heard it through the grapevine": Doctoral student socialization in chemistry and history. *Higher Education, 54*(5), 723-740.
- Golde, C. M. (1998). Beginning graduate school: Explaining first-year doctoral attrition. In M. S. Anderson (Ed.), *The experience of being in graduate school: an exploration* (pp. 55-64). *New directions for higher education, 101*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Haggerty, K. (2010). Tough love: Professional lessons for graduate students. *American Sociologist, 41*(1), 82-96. doi:10.1007/s12108-010-9088-8
- Issac, P. D., Pruitt-Logan, A. S., & Upcraft, M. L. (1995). The landscape of graduate education. In A. S. Pruitt-Logan and P. D. Issac (Eds.), *Student services for the changing graduate student population* (pp. 13-21). *New directions for student services* (no. 72). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Katz, J., and Hartnett, R. T. *Scholars in the Making*. Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1976.
- Marcus, M. B. "Half a Doctor." *U.S. News and World Report*, April 7, 1997, p. 72.
- Marston, J. E. (1963). *The nature of public relations*. McGraw-Hill.

- McDavis, R. J., Molden, I. T., & Wilson, S. R. (1989). Summer programs: A method for retaining Black graduate students. *Journal of College Student Development, 30* (3), 272–274.
- Miami University. (2013.). Programs and Degrees. Retrieved November 16, 2014, from <http://miamioh.edu/graduate-studies/programs-degrees/index.html>.
- . (2014). Students. *Miami University College Portrait*. Retrieved November 16, 2014, from <http://www.collegeportraits.org/OH/MU/characteristics>.
- . (n.d.) History and Traditions. Retrieved November 16, 2014, from <http://miamioh.edu/about-miami/history-traditions/index.html>
- . (n.d.) National University, 1941–1970. *Historical Timeline*. Retrieved November 16, 2014, from <http://www.miami.muohio.edu/about-miami/history-and-traditions/historical-timeline/index.html>.
- Miller, M. T., & Deggs, D. (2012). The changing paradigm of graduate student professional socialization and mentoring in graduate adult education programs. *Journal Of Faculty Development, 26*(2), 24-28.
- Miller, M. T., Miles, A. S., & Dyer, B. G. (2001). Graduate student orientation through a professional seminar: A case study of doctoral students, 1997–2000. *Journal of College Orientation and Transition, 8*(2), 22–31.
- Nettles, M. T., & Millett, C. M. (2006). *Three magic letters: Getting to Ph.D.* Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Phillips, M. S., Daubman, K. A., & Wilmoth, D. (1986). A graduate student orientation program. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 27*(3), 280–281.
- Polson, C. J. (2003). Adult graduate students challenge institutions to change. *New Directions For Student Services, 102*, 59.
- Poock, M. C. (2001). African American graduate enrollment: The impact of online applications. *College Student Affairs Journal, 20* (2), 72–81.
- . (2002). Graduate student orientation: Assessing need and methods of delivery. *Journal Of College Student Development, 43*(2), 231-245.
- . (2004a). Graduate student orientation: Applying CAS standards to national practices. *College And University, 80*(2), 19-26.
- . (2004b). Graduate student orientation practices: Results from a national survey. *NASPA Journal, 41*(3), 470-486.

- Poock, M. C. & Love, P. G. (2000). Factors influencing the program choice of doctoral students in higher education administration. *NASPA Journal*, 38 (2), 203–223.
- Robinson, C. (1996, April). *One solution to minority graduate students' discontent at Peabody College*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, NY. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 396 642)
- Rosenblatt, H. S., & Christensen, C. (1993). "Welcome to the whole family": A graduate student orientation. *College Student Journal*, 27, 502-502.
- Taub, D. J., & Komives, S. R. (1998). A comprehensive graduate orientation program: Practicing what we preach. *Journal Of College Student Development*, 39(4), 394-398.
- Tierney, W. G. (1997). Organizational socialization in higher education. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 68, 1–16.
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Turner, C. S. V., & Thompson, J. R. (1993). Socializing women doctoral students: Minority and majority experiences. *The Review of Higher Education*, 16 (3), 355–370.
- Upcraft, M. L., & Farnsworth, W. M. (1984). Orientation programs and activities. In M. L. Upcraft (Ed.), *Orienting students to college* (pp. 27–38). *New directions for student services* (no. 25). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Vickio, C., & Tack, M. W. (1987). *The orientation of new graduate students at Bowling Green State University* (ED 285 472). Miami, Ohio: Bowling Green State University.
- Vlisides, D., & Eddy, J. (1993). Graduate student orientation models. *College Student Journal*, 27, 96-96.
- Washburn, M. H. (2002). Rebuilding community: A pilot program for decreasing doctoral student attrition. *College & University*, 78(1), 13–16.
- Webley, K. (2012). Business: Money students bear the burden of state higher ed cuts. *Business & Money*. Retrieved February 17, 2014, from <http://business.time.com/2012/01/25/students-bear-the-burden-of-state-highered-cuts/>
- Weidman, J. C., & Stein, E. L. (1990, October). *The professional socialization of graduate students in educational administration*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the University Council for Educational Administration, Pittsburgh, PA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 326 945)

Weidman, J. C., Twale, D. J., & Stein, E. L. (2001). Socialization of Graduate and Professional Students in Higher Education: A Perilous Passage? *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, 28*(3). *Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Appendix A

Survey for Students

Study Title Welcome to your Graduate School Experience: Graduate Student Orientation and the Need for Evaluation

Study Purpose and Rationale

The purpose of this explanatory research study is twofold. First, it is to examine if graduate student orientation is an effective tool in successfully acclimating students to their new university and the culture of graduate school. Second, this study seeks to see if an evaluation of student perspectives provides pertinent information for improving orientation to effectively achieve this successful acclimation.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

To be eligible to participate in this study, you must be 18 years of age or older, be able currently enrolled in your first year of graduate study at your respective university and taking courses on-campus.

You may not participate in this study if you have attended your current university for any previous degree.

Participation Procedures and Duration

For this project, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire about your graduate school experience and how, if at all, the Graduate Student Orientation impacted your acclimation to your university. It will take approximately 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Data Confidentiality or Anonymity

All data will be maintained as anonymous and no identifying information such as names will appear in any publication or presentation of the data.

Storage of Data

Paper data will be stored in a filing cabinet in the researcher's home office for 18 months and will then be shredded. The data will also be entered into a software program and stored on the researcher's password-protected computer for 18 months and then deleted. Only the researcher and the researcher's advisor will have access to the data.

Risks or Discomforts

There are no perceived risks for participating in this study

Benefits

There are no perceived benefits for participating in this study

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at any time for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before signing this form and at any time during the study.

IRB Contact Information

For one's rights as a research subject, you may contact the following: For questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Director of the Office of Research Integrity at Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070 or at irb@bsu.edu.

Researcher Contact Information

Principal Investigator:

Margaret A. Cude, Graduate Student
Department of Journalism
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306
Telephone: (270) 556-6081
Email: macude@bsu.edu

Faculty Supervisor:

Dr. Adam J. Kuban, Assistant Professor
Department of Journalism
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306
Telephone: (765) 285-8276
Email: ajkuban@bsu.edu

By clicking "Next", I indicate my informed consent to participate in this survey.

Screening Questions:

- Is this your first semester in your current graduate degree program?
 - Yes
 - No (If selected, they skip to "Thank you for participating")
- Did you attend your current university for any previous degree?
 - Yes (If selected, they skip to "Thank you for participating")
 - No
- Are you currently enrolled in at least one on-campus course?
 - Yes
 - No (If selected, they skip to "Thank you for participating")

Demographic Information:

- Are you biologically Male or Female?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Prefer not to Disclose
- Please select your age group:
 - 18-21
 - 22-25
 - 26-30
 - 30-35

- 36-40
- Older than 40
- Are you a U. S. citizen?
 - Yes
 - No
- What is your race?
 - White/Caucasian
 - African American
 - Hispanic
 - Asian
 - Native American
 - Pacific Islander
 - Other
 - Prefer not to Disclose
- Where are you currently pursuing a graduate degree?
 - Ball State University
 - Bowling Green State University
 - Miami University
 - Other: _____
- Did you come straight from your previous degree or have you taken time off before pursuing your current degree?
 - I came straight from my previous degree program to my current degree program
 - I took 1-2 years off
 - I took 3+ years off
- What type of degree are you currently pursuing?
 - Certificate
 - Master's
 - Doctoral
 - Specialist programs

Question 1: Did you attend your university's graduate student orientation?

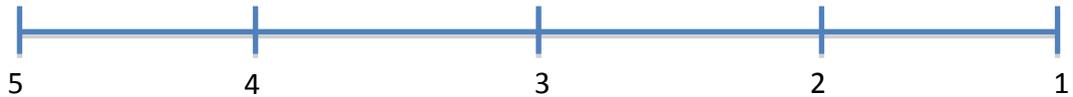
- Yes (follow-up questions below)
 1. Why did you attend the orientation? (Please rank your top three reasons, with 1 being the most important reason.)
 - ___ I thought it would be helpful in my transition to the university
 - ___ I thought it would be helpful in my transition to graduate school
 - ___ I heard there would be prizes/giveaways
 - ___ I heard there would be food provided
 - ___ I wanted to participate in the campus tour
 - ___ I knew people who were attending
 - ___ I thought it would be a good social outing
 - ___ I thought it would be a good networking opportunity
 - ___ It was required as part of my assistantship/for my program
 - ___ Other: _____(more space here for comments)

2. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements based on the scale below. (5-Strongly agree, 4-agree, 3-neutral, 2-disagree, 1-strongly disagree)

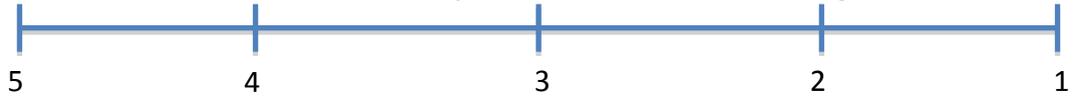
- Attending the graduate student orientation was helpful in my successful transition to Ball State University.



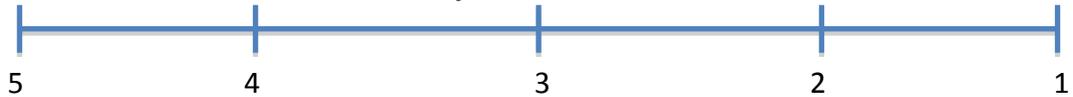
- Attending the graduate student orientation was helpful in my successful transition to Ball State University, but I learned just as much once I got settled.



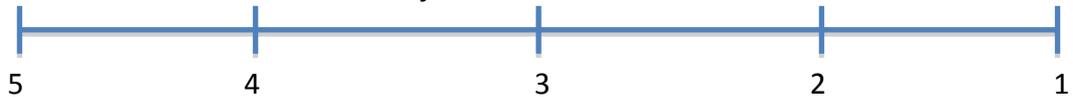
- Attending the graduate student orientation was helpful in my successful transition to Ball State University, but I learned more once I got settled.



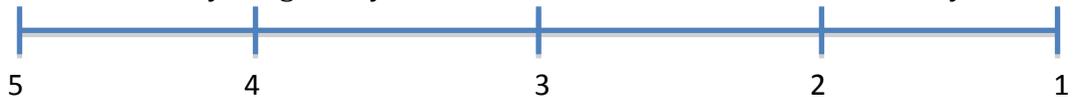
- Attending the graduate student orientation was not helpful in my successful transition to Ball State University.



- I learned nothing new at orientation. I learned everything on my own before I arrived at Ball State University.



- I learned everything on my own after I arrived at Ball State University.



- No (follow-up questions below)

1. Why did you not attend the orientation? (Please select the most influential factor)

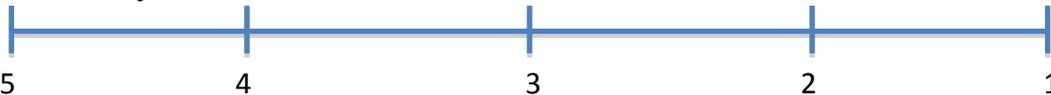
- Move-related time conflict
- University/Department-related time conflict
- I did not know about the orientation
- I did not feel the orientation would be helpful
- Other: _____
- It was a combination of factors, including _____

2. Do you wish you had attended the orientation?

- No. Why? _____

- Yes. Why? _____

Question 2: Do you have a graduate assistantship?

- Yes (follow-up questions below)
 1. Where is your assistantship?
 - In my academic department
 - In an academic department, but not the one I'm studying in
 - In an administrative office
 - Other: _____
 2. Are you contracted for a full or part-time assistantship?
 - Full-time
 - Part-time
 - I'm not sure
 3. On average, how many hours do you work per week in your assistantship position?
 - 0-5
 - 6-10
 - 11-15
 - 16-20
 - 20<
 4. Did you undergo any training or orientation as part of your assistantship?
 - Yes
 - No
 5. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements based on the scale below. (5-Strongly agree, 4-agree, 3-neutral, 2-disagree, 1-strongly disagree)
 - My assistantship has been helpful in my successful transition to Ball State University.
 
 - My assistantship has not been helpful in my successful transition to Ball State University.
 
 - My assistantship has been helpful in my successful transition to my academic department.
 
 - My assistantship has not been helpful in my successful transition to my academic department.



- My assistantship has helped me to make connections with other graduate students and professors in my department.



- My assistantship has not helped me to make connections with other graduate students and professors in my department.



- No

Thank you for participating in the survey.