Effects of Self-Efficacy and Self-Esteem on Homesickness and College Adjustment

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Abstract: The second week of college 107 first-year college students completed a questionnaire assessing self-efficacy, self-esteem, homesickness, and adjustment to college. In both women and men the non-homesick scored higher in overall self-efficacy as well as all three subscales of that measure: initiative, effort, and persistence. Non-homesick students exhibited better behavioral adjustment to college than the homesick. In women students the non-homesick also exhibited better emotional adjustment, a result not found in men in the present sample. These results suggest that self-efficacy may ameliorate the experience of homesickness resulting in better initial adjustment to college.

Previous research has looked at the frequency and impact of homesickness on children at summer camps (Holt, Bewick, & Gately, 2005; Thurber & Sigman, 1998) and boarding schools (Fisher, 1989), college students starting college (Benn, Harvey, Gilbert, & Irons, 2005), and adults (Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, & Van Heck, 1999). The present research was designed to add to that body of literature by assessing the impact of self-efficacy and self-esteem on the experiences of homesickness and initial adjustment to college in first-year college students. It was predicted that students with higher self-efficacy and self-esteem would experience less homesickness. Further, it was predicted that students who experienced less homesickness would show better initial adjustment to college than students experiencing higher levels of homesickness.

Method

Participants

A total of 107 first-year students (28 men, 79 women) attending a private liberal arts college volunteered to participate in the present research.

Materials

A questionnaire was developed consisting of a question about the participant's gender and measures designed to assess self-efficacy, self-esteem, homesickness, and college adjustment.

To assess self-efficacy, the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) (Bosscher & Smit, 1998) was incorporated into the questionnaire. The GSES was designed to assess general self-efficacy. The scale was originally developed by Sherer, et al. (1982) as a 23-item measure (17 items measured general self-efficacy and six measured social self-efficacy). The original 17 general self-efficacy items were modified as a 12-item measure by Bosscher and Smit (1998). The modified 12-item scale was used in the present study. The modified measure yields a total (whole scale) score of general self-efficacy and scores on three subscales: initiative, effort, and persistence. Acceptable levels of reliability and validity have been reported for both the original form of the GSES (Sherer, et al., 1982) and the shorter form used in the current research (Bosscher & Smit, 1998).

To assess self-esteem, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) (Rosenberg, 1965) was incorporated into the questionnaire. The RSES, which consists of 10 items, was designed as a measure of global self-esteem. Rosenberg developed the RSES as a Guttman scale where items are represented on a continuum ranging from items endorsed even by those with low self-esteem to items only endorsed by those high in self-esteem. Extensive research has been completed using the RSES and acceptable levels of reliability and validity have been reported for the RSES (Blasovich & Tomaka, 1991).

The Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI) (Fisher, 1989) was used to assess homesickness. The DRI consists of 29 items that the respondent rates as to the extent that each item applies to him or her. Good reliability and validity have been established for the DRI (Fisher, 1989).

Lastly, adjustment to college was assessed through the Tests of Reactions and Adaptations to College, English Version (TRAC) (Larose & Roy, 1995). The TRAC is a 50-item measure of learning propensity and general adaptation to college. The TRAC yields scores on nine sub-scales grouped into

three domains. In the emotional domain the subscales consist of fear of failure and examination anxiety; in the behavioral domain the subscales consist of examination preparation, quality of attention, seeking assistance form peers, seeking help from teachers, and giving priority to college studies; and in the belief domain the subscales consist of belief in effective work methods and belief in easiness. Good reliability and validity have been established for the TRAC (Larose & Roy, 1995).

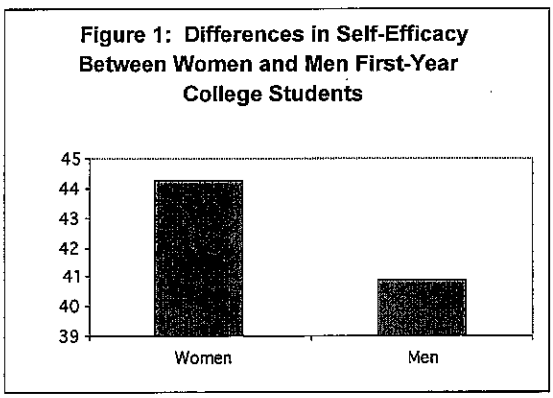
Procedure

All first-year college students attending a private liberal arts college were invited to participate in the current research. In order to detect more lasting, rather than transient, homesickness and potential adjustment difficulties, the questionnaire was administered during the second and third weeks of the first semester.

Results

Rating Homesickness: Students were categorized as homesick (the top 25% on the DRI) or non-homesick (all other participants). A significant difference in DRI scores was found between the homesick ($M = 27.23$, $SD = 4.62$) and non-homesick ($M = 10.48$, $SD = 4.27$) groups, $t(105) = 14.89$, $p < .001$, suggesting there is a true difference between participants categorized as homesick and those categorized as non-homesick.

Self-Efficacy: As presented in Figure 1, women scored higher than men in overall self-efficacy on the GSES.



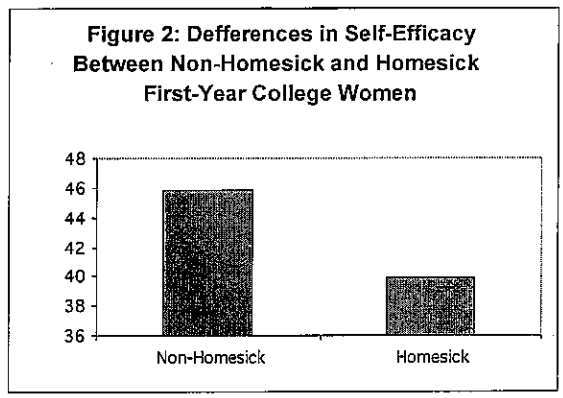
Women also scored higher than men on two out of the three subscales of the GSES: effort and persistence (see Table 1).

Table 1
A Comparison of Women and Men Students on Self-Efficacy (GSES)

Self-Efficacy Scale	Women	Men	*t*	*p* .
Whole Scale	44.28	40.86	-1.99	.03
Initiative	11.18	10.64	-1.07	ns
Effort	17.72	16.57	-1.74	.05
Persistence	15.25	13.64	-2.28	.02

df = 105 for all analyses

Even with those differences in self-efficacy, the impact of self-efficacy on the experience of homesickness was similar in men and women. As presented in Figure 2, homesick women had lower self-efficacy scores than non-homesick women.



The homesick women also scored lower on all three sub-scales of the GSES: initiative, effort, and persistence (see Table 2).

Table 2
A Comparison of Non-Homesick and Homesick Women Students on Self-Efficacy (GSES)

Self-Efficacy Scale	Non-Homesick	Homesick	*t*	*p* .
Whole Scale	45.84	39.95	3.16	.01
Initiative	11.52	10.24	2.30	.02
Effort	18.24	16.29	2.54	.01
Persistence	15.91	13.43	3.57	.001

df = 77 for all analyses

Similarly, homesick men had lower self-efficacy than non-homesick men (see Figure 3) and scored lower on all three sub-scales of the GSES (see Table 3).

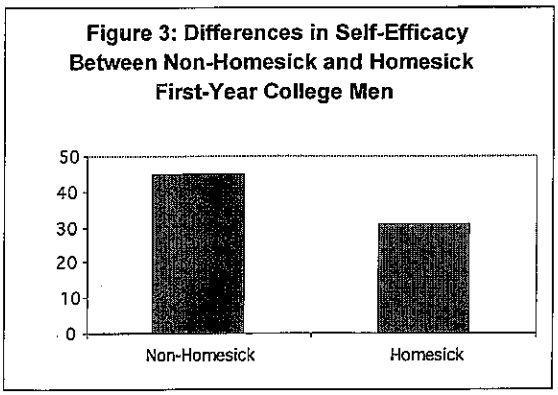


Table 3
A Comparison of Non-Homesick and Homesick Men Students on Self-Efficacy (GSES)

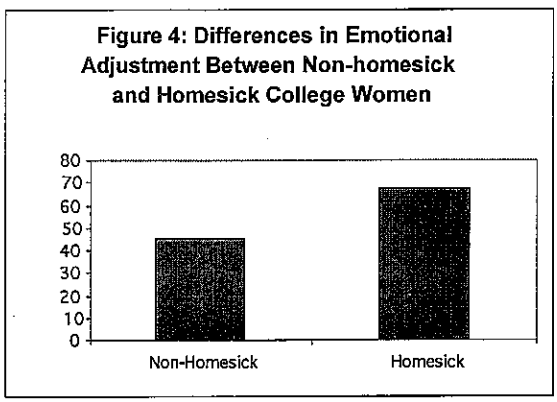
Self-Efficacy Scale	Non-Homesick	Homesick	*t*	*p* .
Whole Scale	44.90	30.75	7.27	.001
Initiative	11.30	9.00	2.56	.01
Effort	17.80	13.50	5.68	.001
Persistence	15.80	8.25	9.77	.001

df = 26 for all analyses

Self-Esteem: There were no differences in self-esteem between men and women nor was there a difference between the homesick and non-homesick on levels of self-esteem.

Homesickness and Adjustment to College: Although there were no significant differences between men and women on either the DRI (measuring homesickness) or TRAC (assessing adjustment), there were differences in the impact homesickness had on adaptation.

As presented in Figure 4, homesick women showed higher levels of negative emotional adjustment than non-homesick women.



The homesick women also scored higher on both emotional domain subscales of the TRAC (see Table 4). Homesick women also showed fewer appropriate behavioral responses than the non-homesick (see Figure 5) and scored lower on four out of five subscales in the behavioral domain (see Table 4). There were no differences between the homesick and non-homesick women in the belief domain.

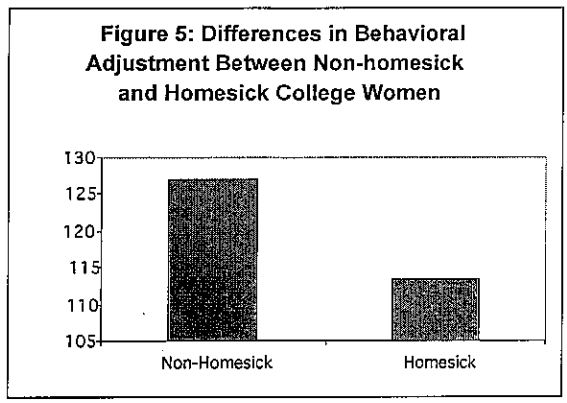
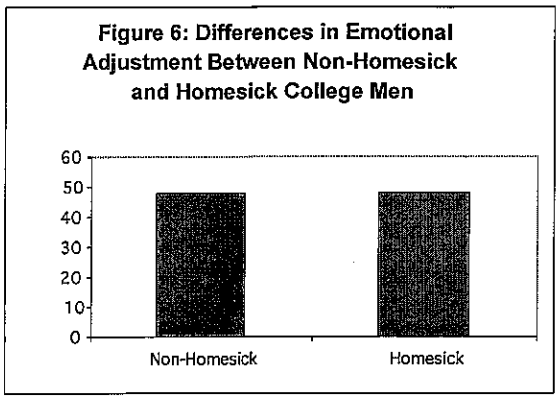


Table 4
A Comparison of Non-Homesick and Homesick Women Students on Adjustment to College (TRAC Subscales)

TRAC Subscale	Non-Homesick	Homesick	*t*	*p* .
Emotional Domain:				
Fear of Failure	17.14	28.33	-4.20	.001
Exam Anxiety	28.53	39.52	-3.42	.001
Behavioral Domain:				
Exam Preparation	31.12	28.57	1.89	.03
Quality of Attention	31.41	27.62	2.68	.01
Assistance Peers	18.40	15.67	2.54	.01
Assistance Teachers	25.24	21.76	2.21	.02
Priority to College	20.72	19.67	0.82	ns
Belief Domain:				
Belief in Work	21.09	21.86	-0.86	ns
Belief in Easiness	13.74	13.71	0.03	ns

df = 77 for all analyses

In men, while there were no differences between the homesick and non-homesick in negative emotional adjustment (see Figure 6), the homesick did show fewer appropriate behavioral responses than the non-homesick (see Figure 7). The homesick also scored lower on all five behavioral subscales. In the belief domain the homesick believed that things should be easier more than the non-homesick (see Table 5).



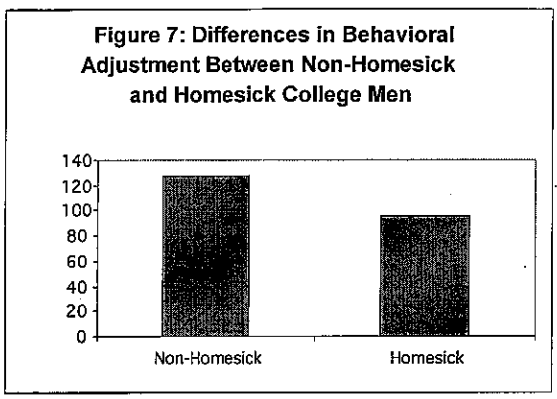


Table 5
A Comparison of Non-Homesick and Homesick Men Students on Adjustment to College (TRAC Subscales)

TRAC Subscale	Non-Homesick	Homesick	*t*	*p*
Emotional Domain:				
Fear of Failure	21.20	21.75	-0.12	ns
Exam Anxiety	26.50	32.25	-1.41	ns
Behavioral Domain:				
Exam Preparation	30.20	23.25	3.32	.01
Quality of Attention	29.40	23.25	2.57	.01
Assistance Peers	19.00	14.25	1.88	.04
Assistance Teachers	27.50	21.25	2.39	.02
Priority to College	21.80	14.50	4.74	.001
Belief Domain:				
Belief in Work	21.10	17.75	1.26	ns
Belief in Easiness	13.10	18.25	-2.99	.01

df = 26 for all analyses

Discussion

As predicted, students with higher self-efficacy exhibited less homesickness. No effect on homesickness was found for self-esteem. The finding that self-efficacy lessens the experience of homesickness in first-year college students suggests that the skills of those high in self-efficacy (i.e., initiative, effort, and persistence) are the skills needed for successful adjustment to new situations, thus ameliorating the experience of homesickness. In turn, those lower in homesickness exhibit better initial adjustment to college. The ramifications of the behavioral choices made by the homesick compared to the non-homesick may have a lasting impact on college success. These factors, coupled with the negative emotional affect found in homesick women in the present study, may place homesick students at greater risk for continued difficulties in college and early withdrawal from college. Currently research is underway that is looking at the lasting impact of these and other variables across the students' college career.

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