



2-1-1997

An Analysis of Native and Transfer Characteristics as Expressed in 1995 CIRP Survey Findings

Gary (Gary Russell) McKinney
Western Washington University

Joseph E. Trimble
Western Washington University

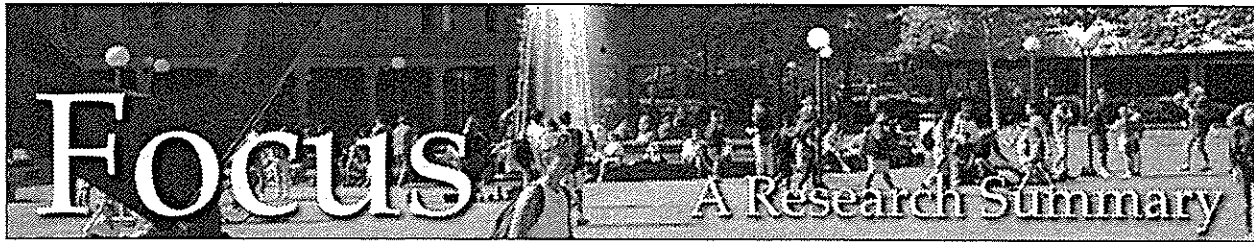
Follow this and additional works at: https://cedar.wwu.edu/surveyresearch_docs

 Part of the [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

McKinney, Gary (Gary Russell) and Trimble, Joseph E., "An Analysis of Native and Transfer Characteristics as Expressed in 1995 CIRP Survey Findings" (1997). *Office of Survey Research*. 575.
https://cedar.wwu.edu/surveyresearch_docs/575

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Institutes, Centers, and Offices at Western CEDAR. It has been accepted for inclusion in Office of Survey Research by an authorized administrator of Western CEDAR. For more information, please contact westerncedar@wwu.edu.



The Office of Institutional Assessment and Testing • Western Washington University

Volume 2, Issue 2

February, 1997

An Analysis of Native and Transfer Characteristics as Expressed in 1995 CIRP Survey Findings

Prepared by Gary McKinney and Joseph E. Trimble

During the summer of 1995, both Western natives (first-time, in-coming freshmen) and first-quarter transfers completed the Student Information Form, a questionnaire developed by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), sponsored by the American Council on Education and the Graduate School of Education & Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. Prior to the summer of 1995, the CIRP Survey had been administered only to Western freshmen, usually during summer and/or freshmen orientation programs. With the establishment in 1995 of Western's summer program for transfers, Transitions, the opportunity to administer the CIRP Survey to this cohort of students became available for the first time.

The CIRP Survey has been administered to Western freshmen since 1971. Those administrations have afforded researchers an exceptional collection of findings. The characteristics, attitudes, values, educational achieve-

ments, and future goals of in-coming Western freshmen are revealed in CIRP data. Tracking future cohorts of transfers will establish for that cohort what already exists for freshmen: a valuable historical record of findings.

Nationally, CIRP publications and research based on CIRP data are among the most often cited sources found in higher education literature. At Western, CIRP findings have been cited in official WWU reports submitted to both Higher Education Coordinating Board and Office of Financial Management. CIRP findings are an integral part of the annual InfoFact series and supplement a myriad of reports published through Western's Office of Institutional Assessment and Testing. CIRP findings also serve as the basis for longitudinal studies of Western seniors. The College Student Survey (CSS) is administered annually to seniors who had participated in the CIRP as freshmen. Among others, these findings assist administrators of policy analysis, human resource planning,



WESTERN
WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

The number of students participating in this survey was 699 freshmen and 69 transfers. This constitutes 38% of new freshmen and 7% of new transfers in the fall of 1995. Also, the sample was not random, but only those students who 1) chose to participate in either Summerstart or Transitions, and 2) chose to fill out a CIRP questionnaire. When reviewing the findings, these issues are important to keep in mind.

Though this report will deal mostly with the differences between transfers and native freshmen, their most important similarity should be mentioned first: both cohorts were new to Western; both were expected to confront unfamiliar surroundings and experiences. This basic fact is, from an administrative point of view, also one of extreme importance. The primary reason for the development of the Transitions program--and for the continuing use of summer and freshmen orientation programs--was to improve the University's efficiency. Numerous assessment reports have indicated that there can never be too much advising. Findings support what common sense would intuit: the sooner students choose a major, the clearer administrative expectations are delineated, the better chance there is that they will graduate in an expeditious manner. Administratively, it is no longer a simple matter of providing students with an outstanding educational experience. State mandates now demand that that outstanding education be delivered as expeditiously as possible. More students are queued up at our doors and Western must find ways to accommodate them.

To meet these expectations, efficiency becomes paramount. Yet in order to work efficiently, the subject matter must be understood. In the case of the University, the subject is students, and what administrators need to understand is what these students look like. Quantified information on native freshmen is abundant. Much less information exists for transfers. Hopefully, this report will begin to address that information gap.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN NATIVE FRESHMEN AND TRANSFERS

Native freshmen and transfers had many similarities. For one, ethnically, both groups were in the majority "White/Caucasian" (91.6% freshmen vs. 89.4% transfers). For another, whether a freshmen or transfer, about the same percentage worried over finances: **76.3% of freshmen and 75.8% of transfers indicated some or a major concern about financing college.**

Whether freshman or transfer, the percentage rating their academic ability above average or in the top 10% was nearly identical (78.9% freshmen vs. 75.0% transfers). Self-ratings for intellectual self-confidence were also similar (59.6% freshmen vs. 60.3% transfers). In 12 of the 19 areas self-evaluated, percentages differences were less than 5%, including those for writing ability, mathematical ability, and social self-confidence.

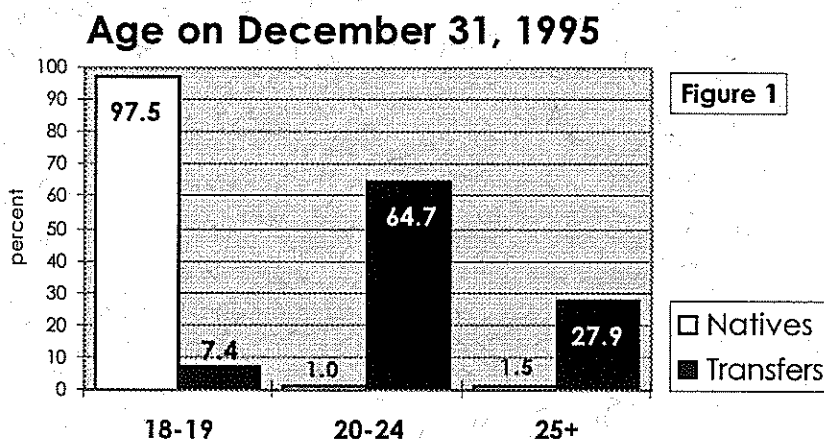
In the area of societal issues, native freshmen and transfers often had similar outlooks. For instance, all but a small percentage agreed strongly or somewhat that just because a man thinks that a woman has "led him on" does not entitle him to have sex with her (94.2% freshmen vs. 98.5% transfers). A majority in both groups agreed that there is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals (69.9% freshmen vs. 66.2% transfers). Only about a third of each group agreed that the Federal government should raise taxes to reduce the deficit (39.7% freshmen vs. 35.3% transfers).

A majority of both native freshmen and transfers considered helping others in difficulty as an essential or very important objective (62.0% freshmen vs. 65.6% transfers). About a quarter of each group considered being successful in their own business essential or very important (25.1% freshmen vs. 27.4% transfers). Nearly identical percentages considered influencing social values essential or very important (40.2% freshmen vs. 40.6% transfers). Whether native freshmen or transfer, about a third of survey respondents considered promoting racial understanding an essential or very important objective (36.5% freshmen vs. 32.8% transfers).

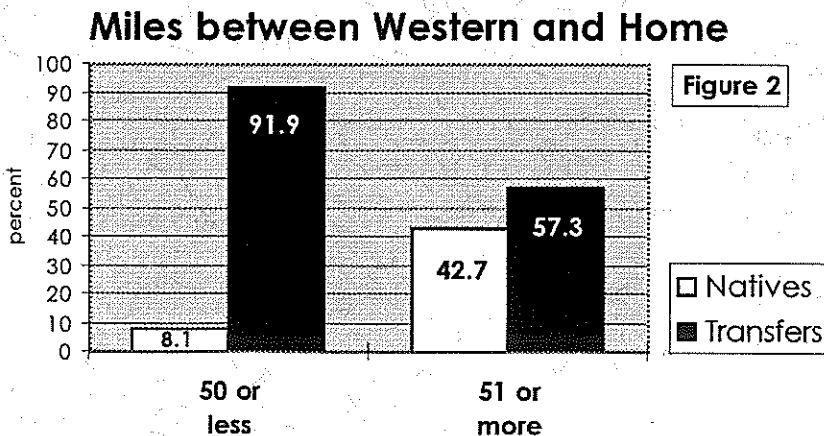
About half of both native freshmen and transfers estimated that their chances were very good that they would be satisfied with Western (56.1% freshmen vs. 55.4% transfers). Most were confident of finding a job within their major (66.5% freshmen vs. 67.7% transfers). Very few of either group estimated they would participate in demonstrations or protests (6.0% freshmen, vs. 6.2% transfers).

DISSIMILARITIES BETWEEN NATIVE FRESHMEN AND TRANSFERS

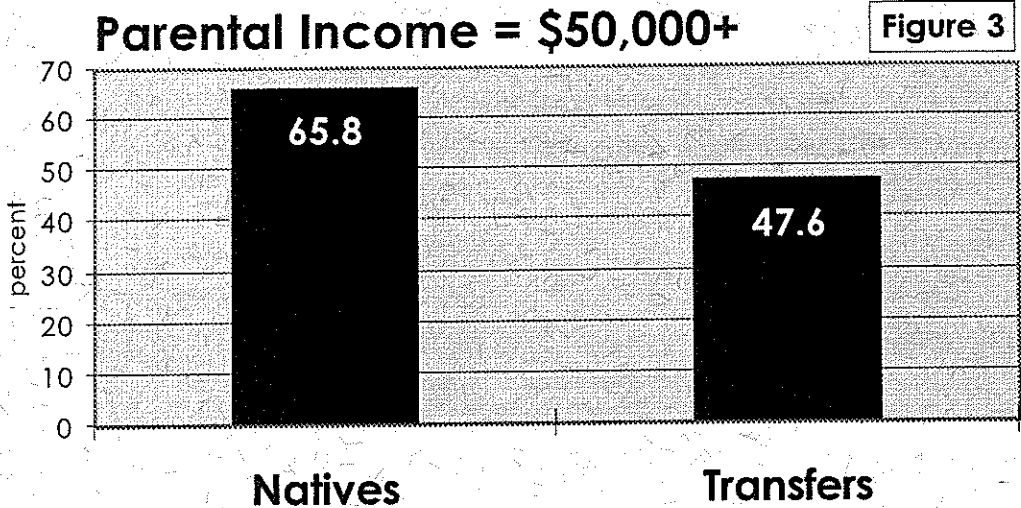
The first obvious dissimilarity between native freshmen and transfers is that transfers tend to be older. Not just a couple of years older, but often five years older or more. (See Figure 1.)



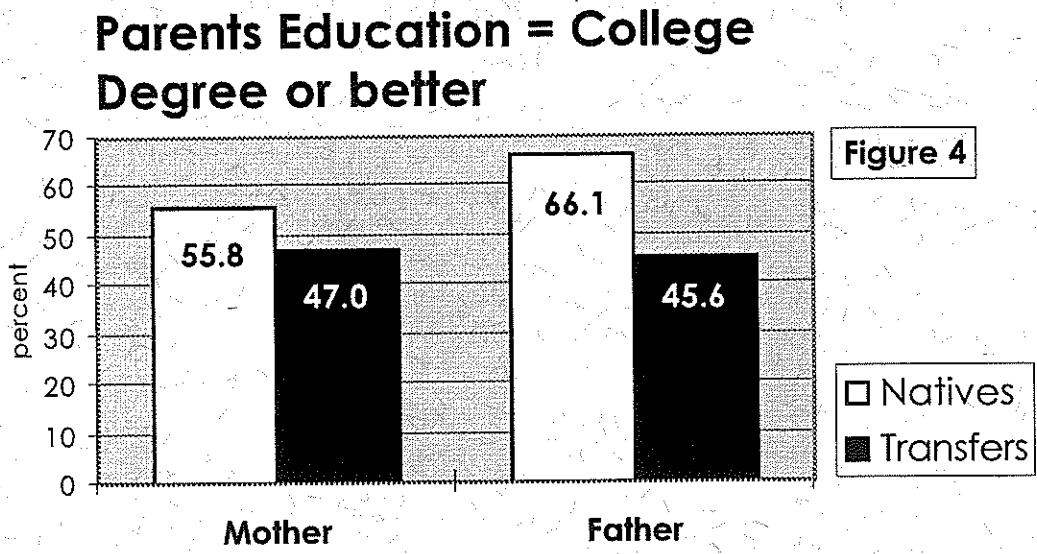
Home, for transfers, tends to be much closer to Western than it is for native freshmen. Probably, this is because transfers consider where they currently live to be home, while freshmen, most of whom live in residence halls, consider those halls temporary and their family homes permanent. (See Figure 2.)



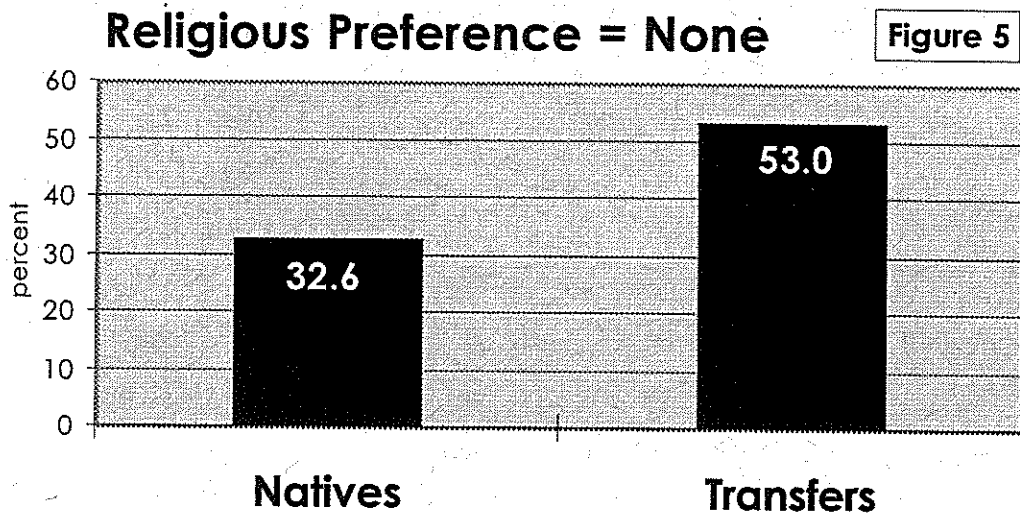
The parents of transfers have a tendency to be less well-off than the parents of native freshmen. The percentage of transfers indicating that their parents earn \$50,000 a year or more was 47.6%, while the percentage of freshmen indicating that their parents earn \$50,000 a year or more was 65.8%. (See Figure 3.)



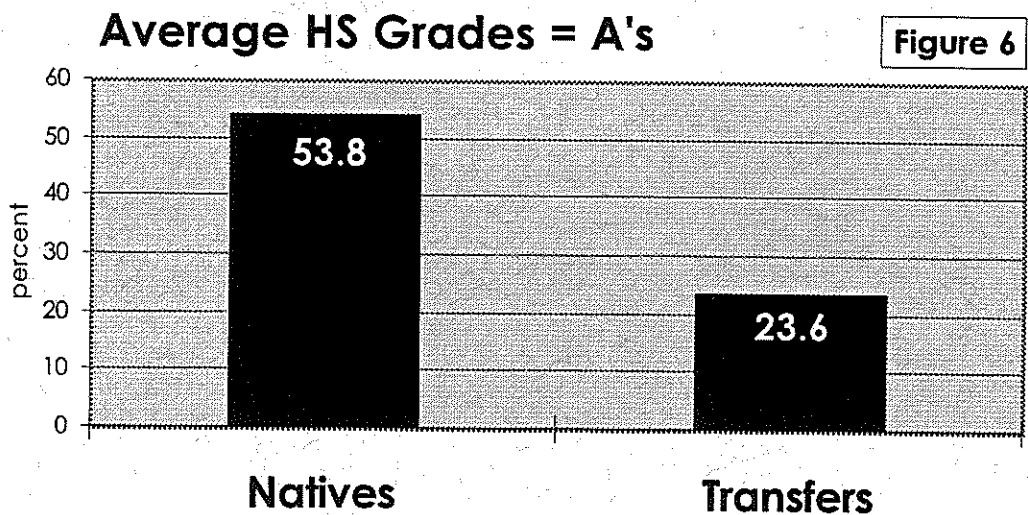
The parents of transfers also have a tendency to be somewhat less well-educated than the parents of freshmen: 47.0% of the mothers of transfers had a college degree or better versus 55.8% of the mothers of freshmen; and 45.6% of the fathers of transfers had a college degree or better versus 66.1% of the fathers of freshmen. It's also interesting to note that while the percentage of mothers and fathers with college degrees are about equal for transfer students, the fathers of freshmen were more likely to have a college degree than were the mothers of freshmen. (See Figure 4.)



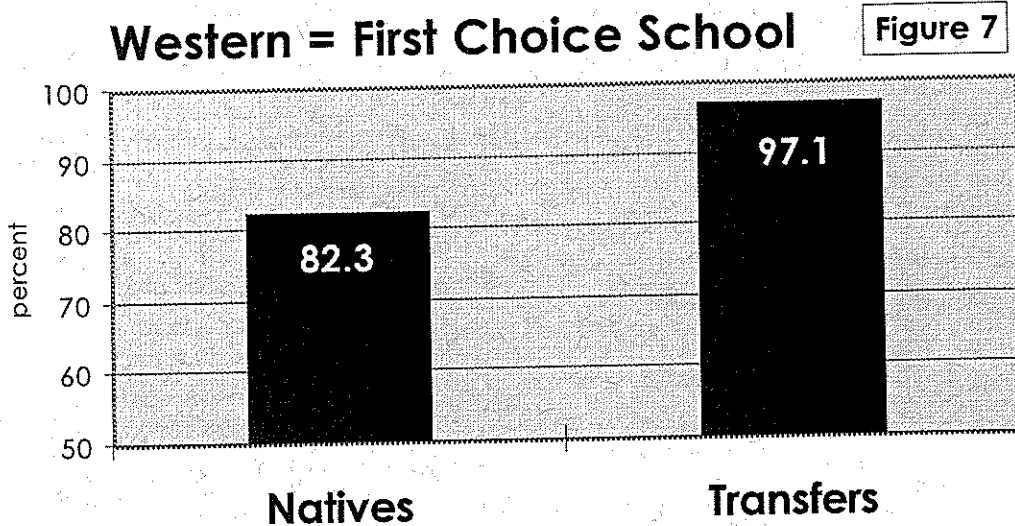
Transfers tended to show less interest in religion than did native freshmen. Over half of transfers indicated no religious preference (53.0%), while less than a third of freshmen indicated no religious preference (32.6%). (See Figure 5.)



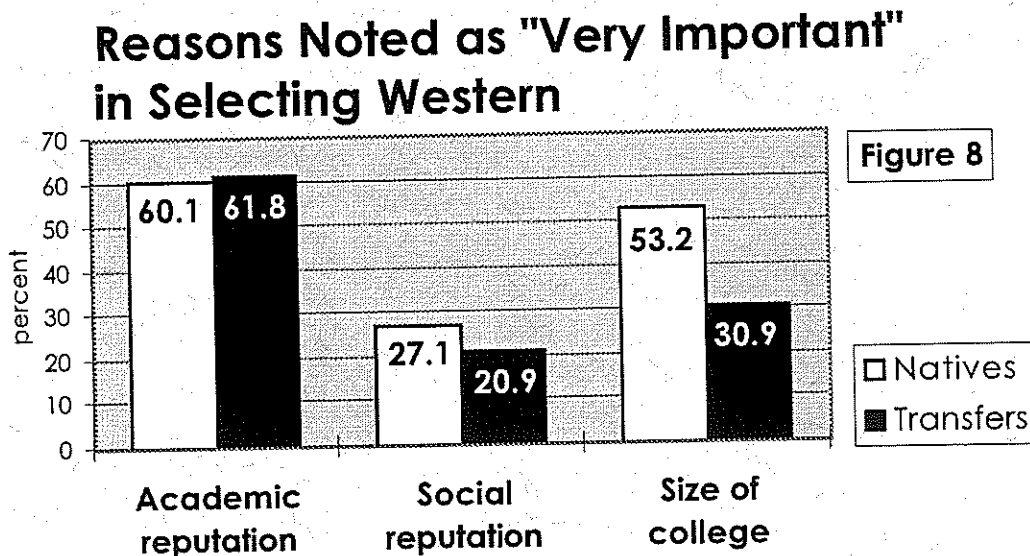
Far fewer transfers than native freshmen earned A's in high school. Less than a quarter of transfers earned A's (23.6%), compared to over half of natives (53.6%). (See Figure 6.)



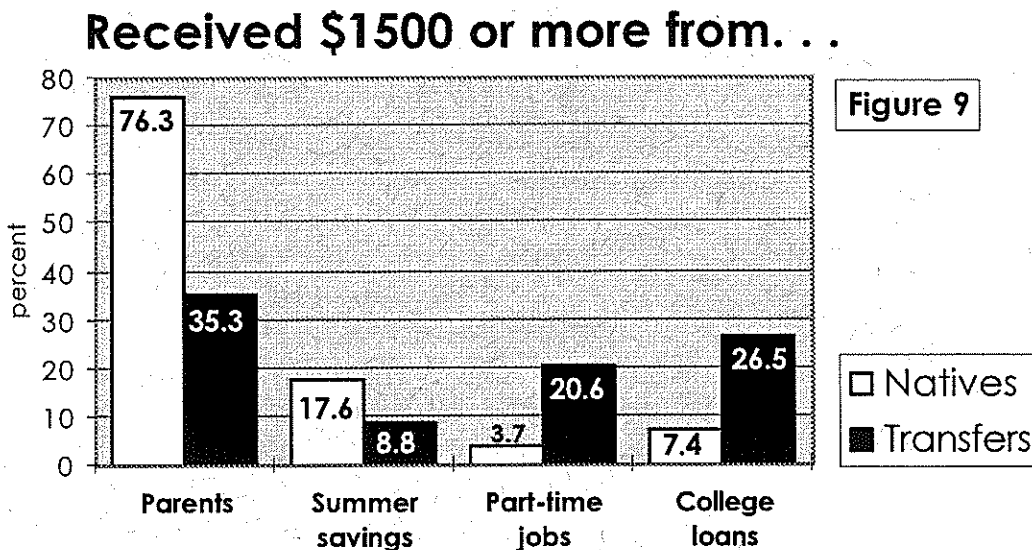
Increasingly, Western has been the first school of choice for native freshmen. In 1985, for instance, 72.2% indicated Western had been their first choice, while in 1995, 82.3% indicated Western had been their first choice. The 1995 figure, especially, is a high percentage, though not as high as the figure for transfers making Western their first choice, which, at 97.1% was nearly unanimous. (See Figure 7.)



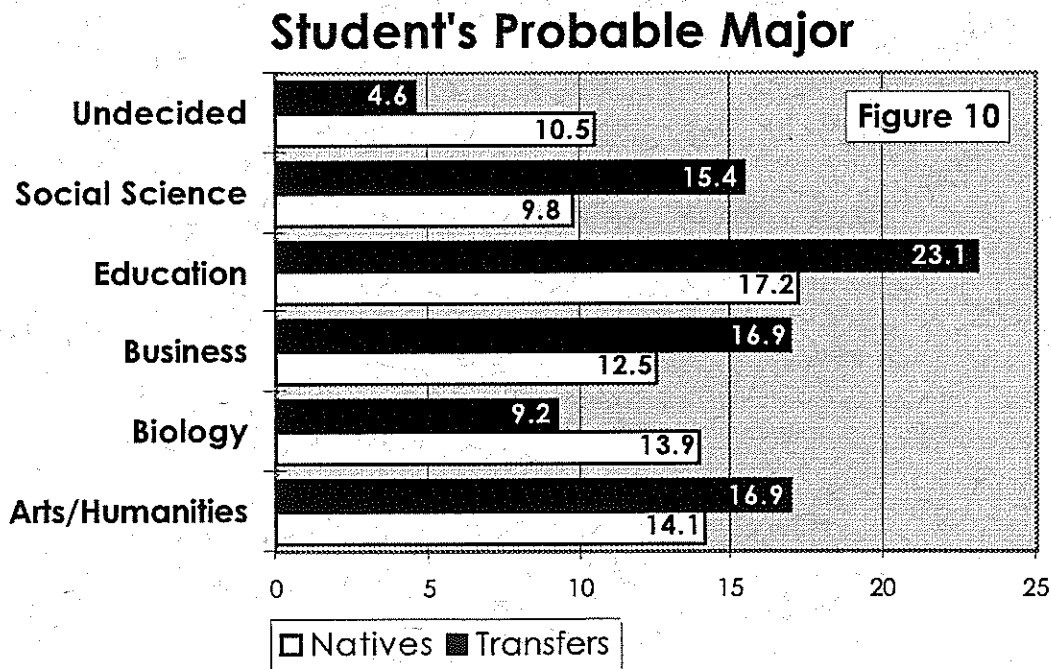
The primary reason given by native freshmen and transfers for choosing Western was the same: academic reputation. With 60.1% of freshmen and 61.8% of transfers indicating they had chosen Western for its academics, it was by far the most important of the 18 reasons listed. When it came to other reasons, if there were significant dissimilarities of opinion, it was only for a certain few issues; for instance, freshmen more than transfers were likely to indicate size of college (53.2% freshmen vs. 30.9% transfers), and good social reputation (27.1% freshmen vs. 20.9% transfers). (See Figure 8.)



Transfers were more likely than native freshmen to have received \$1500 or more from part-time jobs and college loans, while freshmen were more likely than transfers to have received \$1500 or more from their parents and summer savings. (See Figure 9.)



Transfers were more likely to have decided on a probable major than were native freshmen. The percentage of transfers anticipating majoring in the social sciences, education, business and arts/humanities was greater than for freshmen. Freshmen were more likely to be undecided, though the percentage of freshmen anticipating majoring in biology was greater than for transfers. (See Figure 10.)



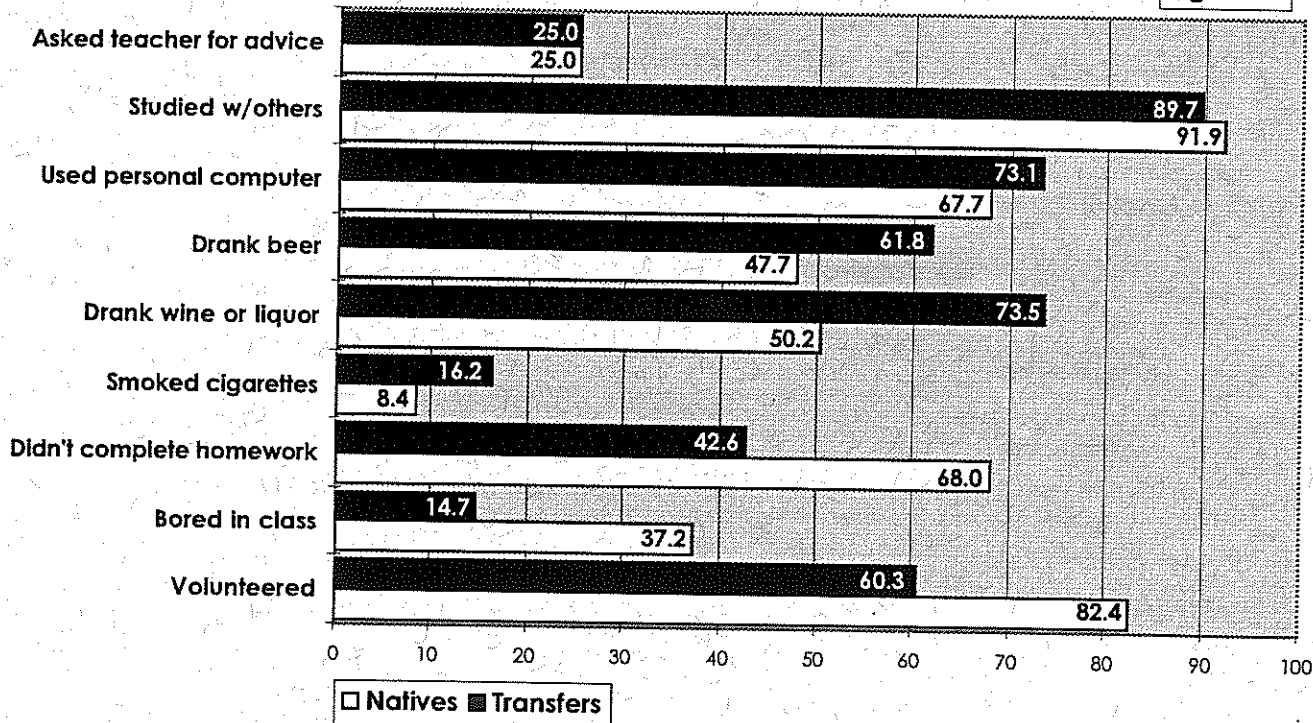
A series of items on the questionnaire asked students about their activities in the year preceding the survey. For transfers that would mean while they were in a college other than Western, most often a community college, though it could have also been another four-year school. For native freshmen, the preceding year would mean while they were high school seniors. Many of the resulting percentages were similar. For instance, about the same had asked a teacher for advice (25.0% freshmen vs. 25.0% transfers), studied with other students (91.9% freshmen vs. 89.7% transfers), and used a personal computer (67.7% freshmen vs. 73.1% transfers). For many other activities, percentages were quite dissimilar.

Transfers, for instance, were more likely to have drunk beer (61.8% transfers vs. 47.7% freshmen) or liquor (73.5% transfers vs. 50.2% freshmen), or to have smoked cigarettes (16.2% transfers vs. 8.4% freshmen). More than likely these more "adult" activities among transfers would have to do with their age and the fact that most were living on their own (52.9% of transfers indicated their planned fall residence as a home, apartment, or room other than their parents', whereas 94.8% of freshmen planned to live in a college dormitory).

Freshmen, on the other hand, were more likely to have been bored in class (37.2% freshmen vs. 14.7% transfers), or to have not completed homework on time (68.0% freshmen vs. 42.6% transfers). These figures may have been influenced by the fact that freshmen were reporting on high school activities whereas transfers were reporting on college activities--though if so, this may be a sad commentary on what's happening at the high school level. On a more positive note, freshmen were also more likely to have performed volunteer work (82.4% freshmen vs. 60.3% transfers). (See Figure 11.)

Activities in the Last Year

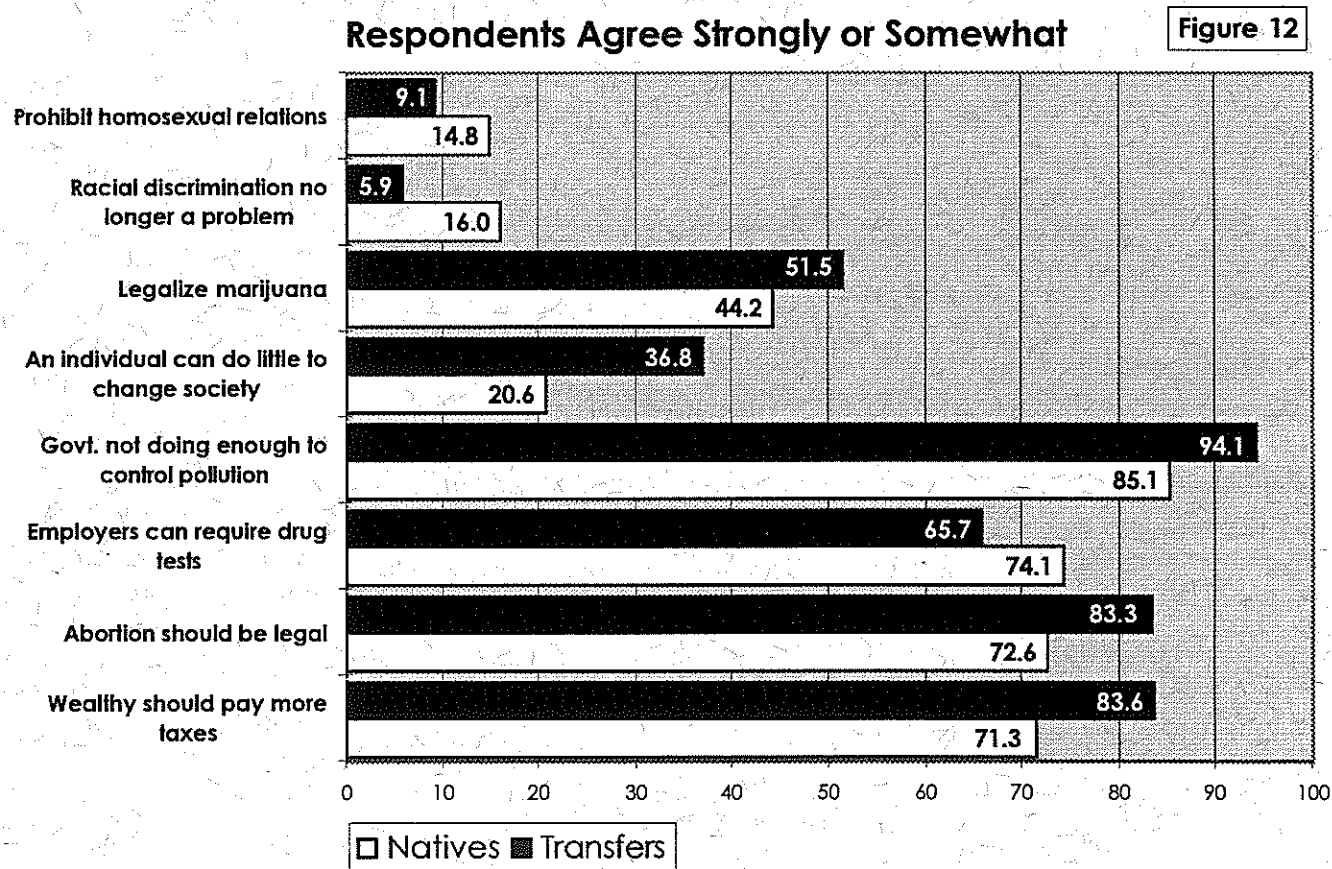
Figure 11



Another series of items queried students on their views of current social issues. Generally, transfers and native freshmen were not all that different in their outlooks. Nowhere were percentages so wide apart as to raise eyebrows. Subtle distinctions, however, were abundant, the most obvious being the slightly more “liberal” slant that transfers took over freshmen. For instance, the percentage of transfers agreeing strongly or somewhat that “It is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships” was 9.1% for transfers and 14.8% for freshmen. Similarly, the percentage of transfers agreeing that “Racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in American” was 5.9% for transfers and 16.0% for freshmen. Transfers were also less likely to agree that “Employers should be allowed to require drug testing of employees or job applicants” (65.7% transfers vs. 74.1% freshmen).

Transfers were more likely to favor legalizing marijuana (51.5% transfers vs. 44.2% freshmen), having abortion remain legal (88.8% transfers vs. 72.6% freshmen), and requiring the wealthy to pay more taxes (88.6% transfers vs. 71.3% freshmen). Transfers were also more likely than freshmen to agree that “The Federal government is not doing enough to control environmental pollution.” (94.7% transfers vs. 85.1% freshmen).

Freshmen, however, appeared considerably less cynical than transfers. One item stated: “Realistically, an individual can do little to bring about changes in our society.” Only 20.6% of freshmen agreed with this statement, while 36.8% of transfers agreed. (See Figure 12.)



As might be expected from the previous information on survey respondents' views regarding social issues, the political orientation of transfers differed somewhat than that of native freshmen. A higher percentage of transfers than freshmen considered their political orientation to be liberal (44.6% transfers vs. 34.0% freshmen, while a higher percentage of freshmen than transfers considered their political orientation to be middle-of-the-road (46.6% freshmen vs. 41.5% transfers) or conservative (16.0% freshmen vs. 13.8% transfers). (See Figure 13.)

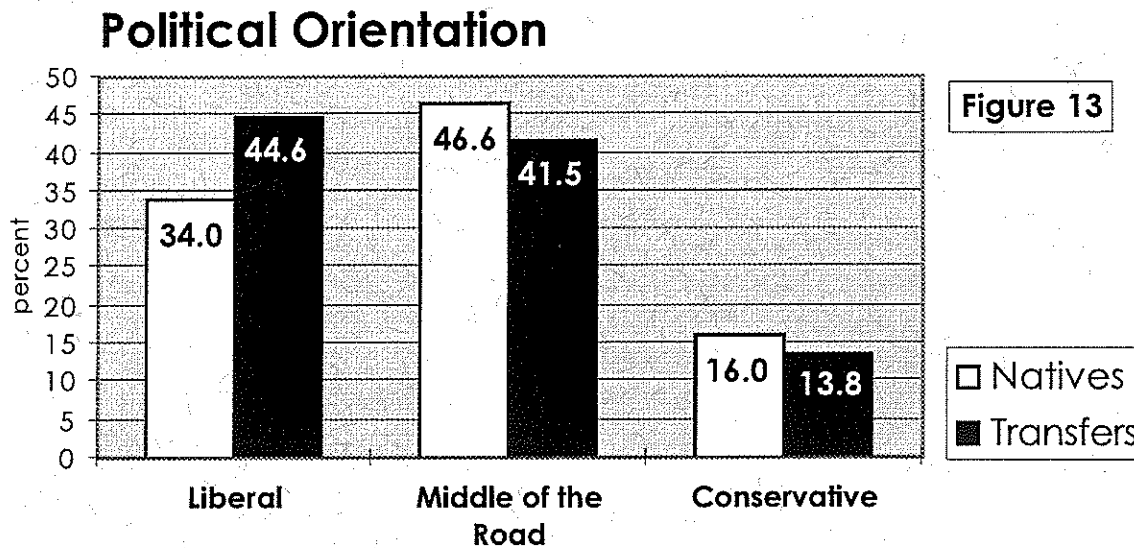


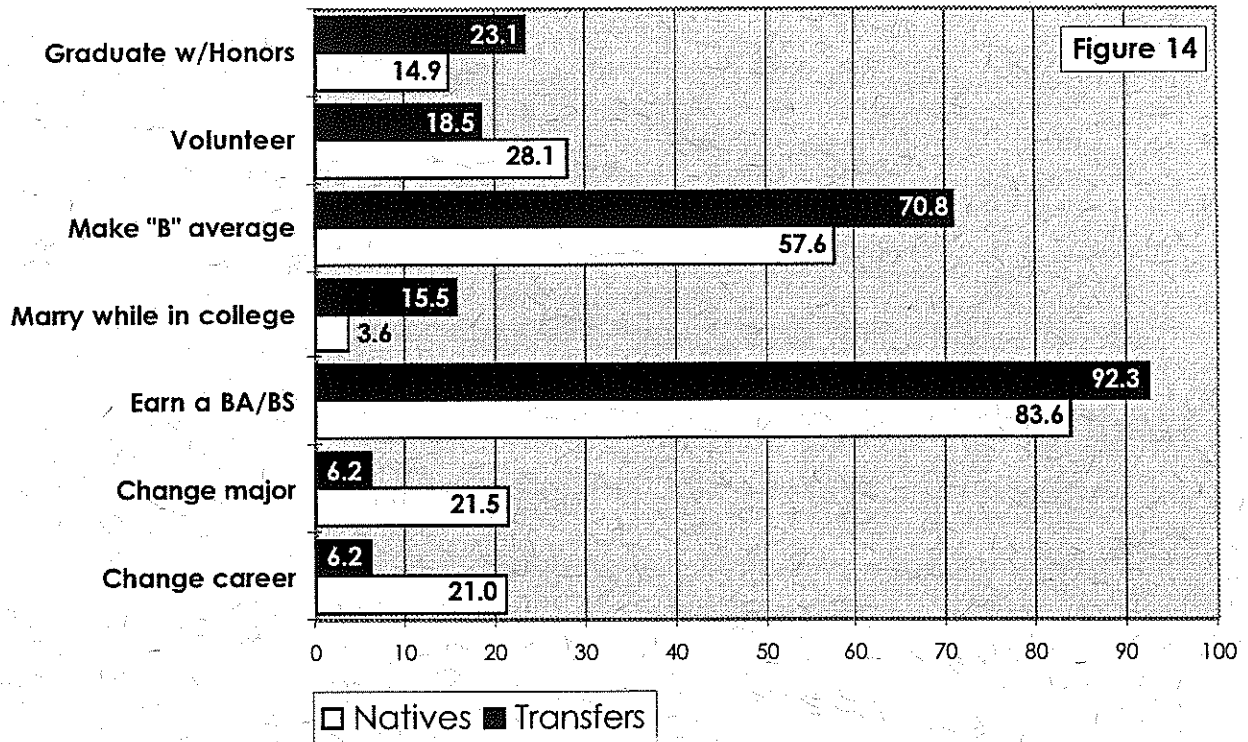
Figure 13

Survey respondents were asked to respond to a series of items querying future activities. Responses indicated a tendency for transfers to appear somewhat more confident than native freshmen. A higher percentage of transfers than freshmen thought the chances were “very good” that they would graduate with honors (23.1% transfers vs. 14.9% natives); that they would make a “B” average (70.8% transfers vs. 57.6% natives); and that they would earn a Bachelor’s degree (92.3% transfers vs. 83.6% natives).

Transfers were also less likely than freshmen to indicate they would change their major (6.2% transfers vs. 21.5% natives), or change their career (6.2% transfers vs. 21.0% natives). Being somewhat older and with college experience already under their belts, these findings echo common sense. So, too, would age influence the finding that transfers were more likely to anticipate getting married while in college (15.5% transfers vs. 3.6% freshmen).

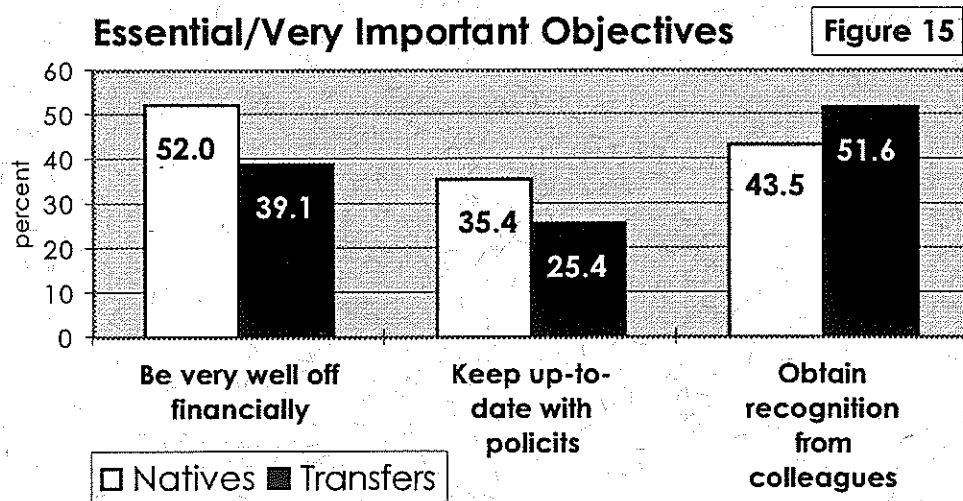
Freshmen, on the other hand, were more likely to anticipate that they would participate in volunteer or community service work (28.1% freshmen vs. 18.5% transfers). (See Figure 14.)

Chances Very Good Respondent Will. . .



When it came to differences in what native freshmen and transfers considered to be essential or very important life objectives, there were far more similarities than differences. For instance, nearly equal percentages of freshmen and transfers alike considered it essential or very important to help others in difficulty (62.0% freshmen vs. 65.6% transfers), to influence the political structure (17.0% freshmen vs. 17.2% transfers), and to influence social values (40.2% freshmen vs. 40.6% transfers).

Out of the nineteen objectives listed, only three had percentage differences of note. Higher percentages of freshmen than transfers considered it essential or very important to be very well off financially, and to keep up-to-date with politics. A higher percentage of transfers than freshmen considered it essential or very important to obtain recognition from colleagues. (See Figure 15.)



Discussion

Transfers and native freshmen do not differ greatly. They differ subtly. Transfers are somewhat older, somewhat more liberal politically, and indicate a slightly more cynical world view than freshmen. Transfers are more self-reliant than natives: more of their own money goes to paying for their education, they receive less money from their parents, and they are more likely to live separate from either their family home or university residences.

Freshmen, on the other hand, have somewhat more well-educated and financially well-off parents than transfers, and are far more likely to live in campus residence halls. They are less likely than transfers to have chosen a major, and far more likely to anticipate that they would change majors during their academic careers.

One way to apply this comparative knowledge would be to consider graduation efficiency. Getting students through Western efficiently has taken on much importance of late, so what can this data do to help address that issue? To start, a recent OIAT report utilizing the Graduation Efficiency Index or GEI (see Focus Volume 1, Issue 11) found the average GEI for native freshmen to be 86.5%, and for transfers to be 79.4%. Yet according to this report's findings, transfers appear less likely to change majors, have confidence in their academic ability, and have a generally more "adult" outlook regarding their education. These are attributes that one would think would aid efficiency, not detract from it.

Though the reasons for transfer graduation efficiency being less than that of natives are varied, one is especially germane to this report. Recall that the CIRP survey was administered to students attending orientation programs—both freshmen and transfers. Why this is important is that many assessment findings have indicated that advising and planning are critical to graduation efficiency. Most recently, the OIAT report on 1995 graduates (see Focus Volume 2, Issue 1) noted that those students who had participated in Summerstart averaged 14.6 quarters to graduation, while non-participants averaged 15.5 quarters—a full quarter less time spent at Western.

Here is the connection: transfers who took the CIRP did so at Transitions, the transfer summer orientation program. The question that will be very interesting to ask two years hence will be how much more efficient might this cohort be than transfers who did not attend Transitions?

published by:

Office of Institutional Assessment and Testing

Dr. Joseph E. Trimble, Director

For copies of Office of Institutional Assessment and Testing (OIAT) technical reports, Focus Research Summaries, or InfoFacts, please contact Gary McKinney, Western Washington University, MS: 9010, Bellingham, WA 98225. Or call, FAX, or e-mail at: telephone (360) 650-3409; FAX (360) 650-6893; email garyr@Nessie.cc.wvu.edu. Expanded executive summaries of OIAT reports can be found on our World Wide Web page. To access our page use the following address:

<http://www.wvu.edu:80/CampusInfo/UnivSuppServ/Assessment.html>