

A STUDY OF BLACK STUDENTS' ATTITUDES
TOWARD STUDENT ACTIVITIES AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE

A Seminar Paper

Presented to

The Faculty of the College of Education

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

by

Philip N. Henry

May, 1977

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN - LA CROSSE

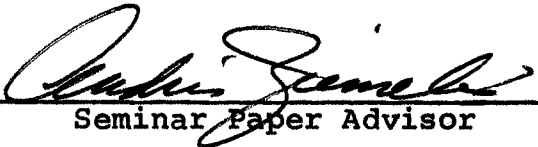
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Candidate: Philip N. Henry

I recommend acceptance of this seminar paper in partial fulfillment of this candidate's requirements for the degree Master of Science in Education: College Student Personnel

5/11/77

Date


Seminar Paper Advisor

This seminar paper is approved for the College of Education.

5/11/77

Date


Dean, College of Education

ABSTRACT

The intent of this study was to examine the attitudes of black students at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse toward student activities. The investigation was conducted during the spring semester of the 1975-76 academic year.

A questionnaire was used to obtain the data. It contained 16 questions of which 12 were placed on a continuum with 5 choices: 1) Strongly Agree, 2) Agree, 3) Neutral, 4) Disagree, and 5) Strongly Disagree. The subjects were asked to check the most acceptable answer to the question. The remaining questions were used to elicit personal data and suggestions.

The subjects for the study consisted of 55 black students who comprised the experimental group. Of the 55, 47 were respondents. The control group consisted of 50 white students of which 31 responded. Both groups were given identical questionnaires.

Hypotheses stated that: 1) There was greater apathy among black students than white students regarding student activities; 2) This apathy was related to cultural and social behavior perceived to be prejudiced; and 3) Disenchantment with the social and cultural environment was a major cause of the present dropout rate among black students.

Results indicated black students were much more apathetic than their white counterparts. However, prejudices were perceived by both groups, though to a lesser degree by the control group. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were partially substantiated by the results. Though some disenchantment with student activities was evident in both groups, it was not strong enough to affect academic performance. Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the faculty and staff of the College Student Personnel Program, I offer my most unselfish gratitude. A special thanks is accorded Dr. Ziemelis for his untiring support and advice. I remain indebted to Gennette and Ruth for their help in preparing the final copy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	INTRODUCTION	1
	Statement of Problem	2
	Purpose of the Study	3
	Review of Literature	3
	Delimitations	6
	Definition of Terms	7
	Hypotheses	7
II	METHOD	8
	Sample	8
	Instrumentation	
III	RESULTS AND TESTS	11
	Results	11
	Tests of the Hypotheses	13
	Discussion	15
	Recommendations	16
	APPENDIX	17

INTRODUCTION

There is a recognized tendency among black students at predominantly white institutions to band together and participate sparingly in student activities. The social life for many of these students is centered around black student unions, black fraternities or sororities, or other basically segregated groups. Though some achieve recognition and honors for their various accomplishments in organized sports, especially football and basketball, for the most part black students remain a separate part of the campus social environment. This lack of integration is contributed to by many factors, among them are race, prejudices, stereotypes, suspicion, and misunderstanding. As long as these qualities challenge the intent of student activities, the fruitful atmosphere expected is unlikely to occur.

This study will examine the attitudes of black students at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse to see if they perceive hostility in student activities on this campus. The present study was a follow-up of two previous studies. The first study (Esquilin, 1970) was entitled "The Effects of the Black Student and the Black Cultural Center on the WSU-La Crosse Environment." It examined the white students' attitudes toward the black student. The

second study (Robert M. McLoone, 1971) was entitled "A Study of Black Students' Social and Academic Life at University of Wisconsin-La Crosse - A Study of Black Attitudes." It was found in this study that black students did in fact perceive discrimination in social activities; however, valid conclusions could not be drawn due to the small sample. The present author is unaware of any current studies which focus on the views of black students at UWL concerning student activities. This study focused on many of the problems facing black and white students as education attempts to eliminate the color line.

The questions being posed in current literature on this subject are paramount to the frustration encountered by many college student personnel workers who endeavor to make the campus a melting pot. Literature, in most instances, is obliged to deal with the academic adjustments of the minority sector. However, it stands to reason that social and cultural maladjustments could trigger academic insecurity. Another purpose of this study was to examine that possibility.

Statement of Problem. Student activities are believed to constitute a valuable experience in overall college life. Generally, university administrators encourage the participation of students in this non-academic education because it lends to professional, cultural, and social development. This study examined the attitudes of black students to

determine if they felt left out of this experience at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. And if so, how had it affected their adjustment?

Purpose of the Study. The purpose of the study was to survey the attitudes of black students at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse regarding student activities. Such a study could reveal the problems of adjustment thought to be among many black students and the overall impact of these problems on their academic lives.

Review of Literature

The adjustment of blacks on predominantly white campuses is an area which has not gone unnoticed by researchers. Numerous materials were identified in the Education Index and in the card catalogue at Murphy Library under "University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Students." For the purposes of this study the writer chose to consult only materials published since 1970.

Esquilin (1970) did a study of the white students' attitudes towards the black student and the Black Cultural Center at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. He utilized a questionnaire to secure the opinions of a random sample of subjects. It was found that there were ambivalent attitudes toward black students. The overwhelming majority of those surveyed thought that blacks should not be excluded from campus social life. However, when asked

about accepting more blacks on campus, their willingness dropped below fifty percent. The study also indicated a trend in the supporting pattern of the subjects. Off-campus male students showed a consistent discriminatory pattern, while the on-campus female showed a consistent supporting pattern.

Hoeff (1970) conducted a study on college student attitudes and background of participation in extra-curricular activities at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. His findings held that participation in activities was influenced by: 1) time needed for studying; 2) personal interest and desire; 3) nature of activity regarding value and importance; 4) timing of scheduled activities; and, 5) involvement in other activities. These factors would no doubt beset black students who are already apprehensive because of cultural differences. The study concluded that since the background and attitudes were varied and differed slightly, it became a duty of the institution to provide a wide variety of extra-curricular activities to give students the opportunity to participate.

McLoone (1971) studied the black students' social and academic life at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Though his number of respondents was small, it was found that fifty percent of them had witnessed prejudiced treatment in the dorms, while the same percentage had been discouraged from joining social organizations on campus. In terms of

social experience on campus, eighty percent of this small sample had experienced discrimination. Social rejection was further amplified by almost total perceived repulsion from the city. Therefore, it was not surprising that one hundred percent of the respondents' friends were black, though many had white acquaintances. Moreover, such a minute sample is in need of corroboration to substantiate these results.

Jungers (1974), in his evaluation of the Minority Cultural Center Program at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, indicated that there was little transition taking place from a minority student's home environment to assimilation on a white campus. The need for such a center was, thus, substantiated.

The pattern of adjustment among black students has also captured national attention. Greene and Winters (1971) conducted a study entitled "Motives, Involvements, and Leadership Among Black College Students." This study explored the action correlates of three motives - Power, Achievement, and Affiliation - within a sample of black college students at Wesleyan University. It was found that the need for Power was related to holding office, being rated as influential, and participating in the Black Repertory Theatre. Northern reared blacks' need for power related to activity in the extramural black community and distrust of the system. Southern reared blacks' need for Power and need for Achievement was related to Pragmatism.

Another study was conducted by Lyons (1973). It dealt with "The Adjustment of Black Students to Predominantly White Campuses." The study, conducted at Kentucky State University, sought to investigate 140 colleges and universities throughout the country concerning the adjustment of black students. Lyons obtained 68 returns that were usable. Of the 68, 62 had black student organizations. Where there were few blacks, they tended to depend on each other totally.

Gibbs (1974) reported research entitled "Patterns of Adaptation Among Black Students at a Predominantly White University: Selected Case Studies." This study treated black students who obtained counseling at the college mental health clinic from 1969-1972 at Stanford University. The study noticed four modes of adaptation - withdrawal, separation, assimilation, and affirmation.

A study entitled "Organizational Alienation Among Black College Students: A Comparison of Three Educational Settings" by Babbit, Burbach, and Thompson (1975) examined the question of alienation in different topography. It compared the settings in a large urban center. Results stated that students attending large urban schools felt less alienated because many were commuters who went back to their own communities each day. The communities in an urban setting proved, too, to be more diverse.

Delimitations

Subjects for this study were black students enrolled at

the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse for the spring semester 1976. A list of 55 students both graduate and undergraduate was obtained from the Institute of Minority Studies along with their present addresses. The computer center supplied a random sample of names and addresses of 50 white students who were used as the control group.

Definition of Terms

Black students included those students classified by the Institute of Minority Studies as black. This study did not include the Asian-Americans, Latinos, Native-Americans, or other foreign students.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study.

- 1) There is greater apathy among black students than white students regarding student activities at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.
- 2) Apathy among black students is related to cultural and social behavior perceived by them to be prejudiced.
- 3) Disenchantment with the social and cultural environment is a major cause of the present dropout rate among blacks.

Chapter II

METHOD

Sample

To obtain the information necessary for the study, a list containing the names of 55 black students and their current addresses was acquired from the Institute of Minority Studies at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. This list consisted of all the black students enrolled for the spring semester of the 1975-76 academic year.

The white students used as the control group were randomly selected by computer at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Computer Center. The center supplied the names and addresses of 50 white students between the ages of 18 and 26.

Instrumentation

The data were compiled from information recorded on a questionnaire given to each student. The questionnaire was designed to elicit the attitudes of the subjects regarding student activities at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

The questionnaire contained a one page list of 16 questions. Questions 1 through 3 recorded personal data and 4 through 15 were constructed on a continuum. The subjects

were to check the numbers representing their attitudes. The available choices were as follows: 1. strongly agree; 2. agree; 3. neutral; 4. disagree; and, 5. strongly disagree. Question 16 was reserved for suggestions, comments, and criticisms. Both positively stated as well as negatively stated questions were used. The subjects' attitudes, perceptions, and levels of participation regarding student activities were covered.

Of the 55 black students, there were 47 respondents. They were contacted by visiting dormitory rooms, Afro-American Association meetings, and frequenting the Minority Cultural Center. Approximately 20 questionnaires were either lost, misplaced, or mishandled enroute to the proposed subjects. Of the 47 respondents, 20 were female and 27 male.

Of the 50 white students, 31 responded. Similar efforts were made to contact this group, though less effective. Of the 31 respondents, 22 were female and 9 were male.

The experimental group (the 47 black students) and the control group (the 31 white students) were given identical questionnaires. The sample remained anonymous except for the list used to determine whether a subject had been contacted or not.

It was hoped that the information received from the test group could be correlated to see if a significant pattern of response to student activities was present among the

subjects. It was further speculated that these data could be compared to the correlations for whites' responses to see if there were significant differences in the responses of the two groups and their overall perception of the extra-curricular environment.

Chapter III

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

To test the three hypotheses concerning black students' attitudes towards student activities, two methods of analysis were used. First, the responses to each variable by the experimental group were compared to those of the control group. A t test of independent means was used to compute the results. Secondly, the responses within each group were correlated to determine the significance of relationships between variables on the questionnaire. Shown below are the variables and results. On Table 1 are recorded the questionnaire items and the results of the t tests which included the mean and standard deviation for each group, the degrees of freedom, and t for equal variance. The second part of the table displays the number of the question which correlated with the designated variable, and the level of significance.

TABLE 1

Analyses of Black and White Students' Attitudes
Toward Student Activities

Questionnaire Items	Black Students \bar{X} S.D.	White Students \bar{X} S.D.	d.f.	t	p	Black Students Correlations	p	White Students Correlations	p
4.) I feel that student activities are a valuable part of a college experience.	1.8 1.1	1.5 .7	76	-1.3	<.01			(+) 4	<.05
5.) I am aware of the various activities offered to students at UW-L.	2.8 1.0	2.1 0.8	74	-3.0	<.01			(+) 4 (+) 5	<.01 <.01
6.) I feel welcomed to participate in the various activities on campus.	3.3 1.2	2.4 0.9	74	-3.3	<.01	(+) 5	<.01	(+) 4 (+) 6	<.01 <.01
7.) I am a hearty participant in student activities.	3.1 1.0	2.7 1.2	74	-1.5		(+) 5	<.05	(+) 4 (+) 6	<.01 <.01
8.) Classes allow me little time to engage in activities.	2.7 1.1	2.8 1.0	73	0.5		(+) 4	<.05		
9.) I feel that the present student activities program is not responsive to my extracurricular needs.	2.8 1.1	3.2 1.3	75	1.3		(-) 6	<.01	(-) 5 (-) 6 (-) 7 (+) 8	<.05 <.01 <.05 <.01
10.) I prefer activities offered by the city of La Crosse as opposed to campus activities.	3.6 1.0	3.6 0.9	76	-0.1					
13.) I participated in Black Cultural Week.	2.1 1.0	3.7 1.1	71	6.2	<.01			(+) 8 (-) 10	<.05 <.01
14.) I am content with my level of participation in student activities.	3.0 1.2	2.5 1.0	73	-1.9	<.05	(-) 4 (+) 5 (+) 6	<.05 <.01 <.01	(+) 5 (+) 6 (+) 7	<.01 <.01 <.01
15.) I am content with my academic performance at UW-L.	2.7 1.1	2.0 1.1	75	-2.6	<.05			(+) 7 (+) 14	<.05 <.05

Tests of the Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 stated that there is greater apathy among black students than white students regarding student activities at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. To test this hypothesis, the responses to variables 5, 7, and 9 were analyzed.

Variable 5 examined each group's awareness of the various student activities offered. It was found that though black students overwhelmingly believed student activities to be valuable, as indicated by responses to variable 4, they responded near neutral ($\bar{X}=2.8$) when asked about their awareness of various activities on campus. White students, too, responded that student activities were valuable but unlike the experimental group, they indicated that they were aware of the activities offered ($\bar{X}=2.1$). The difference in level of awareness between the two groups was significant at the .01 level. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was supported by these results. Further, the correlation found between responses to variable 4 and 5 by the control group demonstrates the expected pattern. On the other hand, the experimental group recognizes the value of student activities, yet remains neutral on awareness of these activities.

In analyzing the responses to variable 7, it was found that neither group considered themselves "hearty participants." The differences between the groups were not significant. A significant correlation was found in responses by the experimental group to the "hearty participant" variable

(5) and the "awareness" variable (7). Hypothesis 1 is supported by this correlation.

Black students appeared less optimistic in response to variable (9) which addressed the responsiveness of present activities programs to student needs. The difference in the responses of the two groups, nonetheless, was not significant. Surprisingly, the control group had a mean of 3.2 which indicates less than satisfaction with student activities. Hypothesis 1 was not supported by these results.

Hypothesis 2 stated that apathy among black students is related to cultural and social behavior perceived by them to be prejudiced. To test this hypothesis, the responses to variable 6 were analyzed. It was found that the atmosphere surrounding student activities tended to be receptive for the control group ($\bar{X}=2.4$), though a considerable number were neutral or in disagreement. Black students, on the whole, were neutral ($\bar{X}=3.3$) while many were in disagreement with the "welcomed" variable. The level of significance between the responses of the two groups was .01. These results supported hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 stated that disenchantment is a major cause of the present dropout rate among blacks. The responses given to variable 15 in relation to variables 6, 9, and 14 did not support this hypothesis. The expected correlations between variables 6, 9, and 14 and the "academic performance" variable were not significant. Interestingly enough, the

responses by the control group to variable 15 correlated positively with variables 7 and 14.

Discussion

The purpose of the preceding study was to survey the attitudes of black students at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse regarding their views of student activities. It was expected that their responses would indicate extra-curricular instability, if such instability existed, which could be addressed through a more comprehensive student activity program. Results indicate that apathy towards student activities is not defined necessarily along racial lines, though particular aspects of the activities program are much less appealing to black students than white students. The survey, especially the comments, shows that many of the white participants felt alienated because of cliques related to Greeks and athletes who are much more spirited and unified. Perhaps a more comprehensive follow-up study will reveal detailed causes of apathy among white students.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 were substantiated by the results. The black participants appeared much more apathetic than their white counterparts. This may be owing, in part, to the urban environment from which many of the black students

came. Understandably, urban or ghetto activities have a much more restrictive nature. Nonetheless, perceived prejudices remain a key factor to be reckoned with.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- 1.) Boxes noting 'suggestions' for student activities should be placed accessibly around the UWL campus.
- 2.) Students in organizations, clubs, and various extracurricular activities should be encouraged by their advisors to personally invite members of minority groups to their gatherings.
- 3.) Conscientious students and faculty advisors should openly discuss the reasons for inclusion or exclusion of minority members.
- 4.) A multiracial board should be established to induce activities which would encourage participation by all ethnic groups.

APPENDIX

REFERENCES

- Babbit, Charles E., Burbach, Harold J., and Thompson, Myron A., III. "Organizational Alienation Among Black College Students: A Comparison of Three Educational Settings," Journal of College Student Personnel, 16 (Jan.), 1975.
- Barbour, Floyd B., ed. The Black Seventies. Boston: Sargent Publication, 1970.
- Esquilin, Luis R. "The Effects of the Black Student and the Black Cultural Center Concept on the WSU-La Crosse Environment," Master's Thesis University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, 1970.
- Gibbs, Jewelle T. "Patterns of Adaptation Among Black Students at a Predominantly White University: Selected Case Studies," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 44, (Oct.), 1974.
- Greene, Dwight L. and Winter, David G. "Motives, Involvements, and Leadership Among Black College Students," Journal of Student Personnel, 39 (Sept.), 1971.
- Hoffman, Wayne R. "Student Attitudes Regarding Student Center Facilities and Programs at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse," Master's Thesis University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, 1973.
- Junger, Fred E. "An Evaluation of the Minority Cultural Center Program at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse," Master's Thesis University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, 1974.
- Lyons, James E. "The Adjustment of Black Students to Predominantly White Campuses," Journal of Negro Education, 42 (Fall), 1973.
- McLoone, Robert M. "A Study of Black Students' Social and Academic Life at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Master's Thesis University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, 1971.
- Nichols, David C. and Mills, Olive. The Campus and the Racial Crisis. Washington: American Council on Education, 1970.

Comments and Criticisms Made by Students

"We need better scheduling of events other than 1 p.m. to 4 p.m."

"There is a lack of advertisement."

"I like the cellar."

"We need more blacks on campus."

"More activities geared toward blacks needs."

"The non-traditional student is left out of activities."

"Activities are mostly geared toward white students."

"Too much Greek emphasis."

"We need to involve Viterbo and WWTI in more activities."

"Greek biasness"

"Something unique is needed like a 24 hr. party, bike rides, and outdoor concerts."

"The bulletin boards are ridiculous."

"More racquet ball courts."

"More wide open areas."

"Aim more emphasis at the dormitories."

SURVEY OF STUDENT ACTIVITIES AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE

PERSONAL DATA (Check one)

- 1.) Race a. Black_____ b. White_____
- 2.) Sex a. Male_____ b. Female_____
- 3.) Classification a. Fresh____ b. Soph____ c. Jr____ d. Sr____ e. Grad_____

For the following questions, please indicate your answer by checking the number which corresponds in your opinion to the most acceptable answer: 1.) Strongly Agree 2.) Agree 3.) Neutral 4.) Disagree 5.) Strongly Disagree.

- 4.) I feel that student activities are a valuable part of a college experience. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5_____
- 5.) I am aware of the various activities offered to students at UW-L. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5_____
- 6.) I feel welcomed to participate in the various activities on campus. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5_____
- 7.) I am a hearty participant in student activities. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5_____
- 8.) Classes allow me little time to engage in activities. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5_____
- 9.) I feel that the present student activities program is not responsive to my extracurricular needs. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5_____
- 10.) I prefer activities offered by the city of La Crosse as opposed to campus activities. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5_____
- 11.) I am a member of at least two campus organizations. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5_____
- 12.) I am a member of the Afro-American Association at UW-L. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5_____
- 13.) I participated in Black Cultural Week. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5_____
- 14.) I am content with my level of participation in student activities. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5_____
- 15.) I am content with my academic performance at UW-L. 1_____2_____3_____4_____5_____
- 16.) Please list any suggestions, comments, or criticisms concerning student activities at UW-L. Ideas which you feel will improve student participation are especially welcomed.

THANK YOU!!!

PHILIP HENRY - SEMINAR PAPER - BLACKS

NUMBER OF VARIABLES IS 12

THE NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS IS 47

VARIABLE	MEAN	S.D.
1	1.872	1.135
2	2.765	1.183
3	3.234	1.306
4	3.021	1.207
5	2.659	1.221
6	2.765	1.237
7	3.680	1.065
8	3.148	1.285
9	2.446	1.282
10	1.936	1.169
11	2.893	1.402
12	2.723	1.192

BLACK STUDENTS

CORRELATION

VARIABLE	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
4	1.00											
5	0.09	1.00										
6	-0.24	0.39	1.00									
7	-0.08	0.28	0.20	1.00								
8	0.28	0.09	0.04	0.26	1.00							
9	0.21	-0.17	-0.48	-0.04	-0.20	1.00						
10	-0.34	0.01	0.18	0.01	-0.19	-0.14	1.00					
11	-0.08	0.31	0.10	0.39	0.16	-0.36	-0.11	1.00				
12	0.29	-0.14	-0.18	-0.03	0.15	0.03	-0.10	0.20	1.00			
13	0.17	0.00	-0.26	0.19	0.17	0.03	0.00	0.12	0.43	1.00		
14	-0.28	0.40	0.39	0.25	-0.03	-0.20	0.14	0.27	-0.26	-0.10	1.00	
15	0.12	0.12	0.15	0.03	0.02	-0.02	-0.11	-0.16	-0.14	-0.14	-0.10	1.00

PHILIP HENRY - SEMINAR PAPER - WHITES

NUMBER OF VARIABLES IS 12

THE NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS IS 31

VARIABLE	MEAN	S.D.
1	1.548	0.768
2	2.193	0.833
3	2.354	1.018
4	2.774	1.117
5	2.677	1.222
6	3.225	1.359
7	3.545	0.915
8	2.645	1.518
9	4.129	1.258
10	3.645	1.305
11	2.580	1.025
12	2.064	1.181

WHITE STUDENTS

CORRELATION

VARIABLE	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
4	1.00											
5	0.35	1.00										
6	0.47	0.51	1.00									
7	0.46	0.26	0.51	1.00								
8	-0.16	-0.03	-0.31	0.07	1.00							
9	-0.28	-0.36	-0.57	-0.36	0.47	1.00						
10	-0.14	-0.13	-0.18	-0.21	-0.20	-0.07	1.00					
11	0.34	0.29	0.28	0.70	0.15	-0.22	-0.09	1.00				
12	0.20	-0.18	-0.04	0.35	-0.06	0.06	0.24	0.23	1.00			
13	0.10	0.10	0.07	0.06	0.39	0.10	-0.42	0.09	-0.05	1.00		
14	0.22	0.45	0.53	0.53	-0.03	-0.26	-0.24	0.33	0.02	0.21	1.00	
15	0.29	0.19	0.23	0.42	0.08	-0.03	-0.04	0.14	-0.01	0.17	0.44	1.00