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SELF-IDENTITY AND THE ACQUISITION OF CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE
IN UNIVERSITY SETTINGS

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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May, 2002
We hereby approve the thesis/dissertation of

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(signed)  

(Chair of the committee)

(date)  

*We also certify that written approval has been obtained for any proprietary material contained therein.
To my husband Robert for his love, his unwavering support and his inspiration

Our children Robin and Jennifer for their love, patience, understanding and encouragement
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Acknowledgements

I would like to first thank God for allowing me the opportunity to pursue my goal of attaining a higher education, and for the support of several people throughout my college years including my family and dear friends—my mother Sarah (I wish you were here), my father Leland, my mother-in-law Mildred, my aunts Laverne, Edith and Helen, my uncle Bill and my grandmother Edith for always believing in me; my sisters Karen and Barbara, and my niece Kia for offering words of encouragement and their love; my best friend Jennifer for listening and guiding me through the tough times; and to those too numerous to mention who have helped me in countless ways over the past decade to achieve this goal.

I want to most sincerely thank my advisor, Dr. Janis Jenkins, for her advice, support, help, wisdom and an occasional nudge when I’ve gotten off track. To my wonderful committee members Drs. Thomas Csordas, Jill Korbin, David Miller, (thank you for “pinch hitting”), Roy Baumeister, Judith Oster and Robert V. Edwards who have graciously given of their time and expertise, and have provided me tremendous encouragement. To Judith Olson-Fallon who edited my dissertation, and Susan Benedict who stepped in at the last minute to assist with the transcriptions. And particular thanks to David Burney who created the research website and provided technical support.

The research would not have been possible without the help of the students who actively participated in the study, to whom I owe a debt of gratitude that I can never repay, and to the professors and teaching assistants who allowed me access to their classes in order to recruit these students.
To Mrs. Mattie Stephens and Mrs. Lelia McBath who inspired my love of learning and mentored me through very difficult times. To the many staff, administrators, professors and friends who have crossed my path just when I needed them most. In particular, Dean Robert Davis (emeritus), Associate Provost Joyce Jenoff, G. Dean Patterson, Jr., Richard and Donna Baznik, Donald Chenelle, Kathy Van Leer, Gwendolyn Johnson, Paul Stephan, Nury Miranda Velasco, Gail Taylor, Terry McBride, Adrienne Dziak, Toni Searle; Drs. Roxanne Sukol, Melvyn Goldstein, Atwood Gaines, Janet McGrath, Ignacio Ocasio, Kelly Holt, Susan Stagno, Todd Oakley, Christa Carvajal, James Zull, Minnie Bowers, Bernice Chernyk, David O’Malley, Marsha Taylor, Kent Smith, Stephen Haynesworth, Rhonda Williams and Rachel Chapman; Tanya Bankston, Emily Vernon, Tony Gholson; The Office of Graduate Studies staff: Bethany Pope, Tammie DelVallie, and Desiree Toth Perry; Carrie Reeves, Mayo Bulloch, Marcia Bell, Annie Banks, Doll Dorsey, Raechelle Grier, Irma Shields, Bernidean Strong, Betty Allen, Nelson Armstrong, Kathleen Dowdell, Barbara Reebel, Edward Verhosek, Mary Lou Matthis, Agnes Torentali, Gregory Brown, Kathryn Hall, Beverly Burkes, Henrietta Michalko, Dorothy Harrington, Lincoln Pettaway, Charles Burkett, Christine Zaremsky, Mary Ann Pelot, Diane Anderson, and Laurie Zelman (posthumously).

And special thanks to my mentor and friend, Dr. Charles Callendar, without whom I would not have fallen in love with the field of Anthropology or persisted at CWRU. May his love of the field be reflected not only in this research, but also in all of the work I undertake in the future.
Self-Identity and the Acquisition of Cultural Knowledge in
University Settings

Abstract

by

JACKLYN J. CHISHOLM

An ethnographic study of 39 freshmen was conducted at "Charter" University, a
private research university in the Mid-West to address the question, "During the
freshman year, how is the culturally constructed identity of "college student" a factor in
students' persistence in college?" The theoretical basis for the study is that of viewing the
freshman year as a "Rite of Passage" (Turner 1964) for students entering college. The
researcher advanced that a change from an identity of "high school student" to that of
"college student" was an important, yet overlooked, factor leading to successful
completion of an undergraduate degree.

The study results using narrative analysis of survey, journal, and interview data
collected through a website developed for the study, seemed to support the theory that the
freshman year is a rite of passage for freshmen, in that the majority of study participants
experienced a change in their identities from "high school students" to "Charter
University college students." This identity change occurred through a process of
enculturation to the "culturally figured world" of Charter University. A culturally figured
world (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain 1998) denotes an expanded view
of culture as being comprised of many socially and culturally constructed domains of meaning and interpretation. It was through the development of cultural competency by students within the figured world of Charter University that a “Charter University college student” identity was formed. It was further found that students who developed this identity were more likely to persist at Charter University than those who did not.

It is hoped that the knowledge gained by this study will engage others in a discussion of the important role played by the culture of institutions of higher education as it relates to student self-concepts and student persistence; be useful in the search for more effective student persistence models; and motivate further study in this area regarding self-identity and cultural acquisition and their importance to successful transitions from one sociocultural setting to another.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Attending college\(^1\) in America is often viewed as a “rite of passage” (London 1992:6), in that it is seen as the beginning of the transition from adolescence to adulthood in terms of preparing individuals to take their place in society as responsible citizens and by preparing them for careers and providing opportunities for increasing social mobility (Dobbert 1974, Moore 1976). As part of the process of successfully graduating from college, the freshman year of college looms large in setting into motion the psychocultural forces that shape identity. The importance of the freshman\(^2\) year to a student’s ultimate success (i.e., graduation) cannot be overstated; it is considered critical to student persistence\(^3\) (Tinto 1993).

Victor Turner’s (1964) classic anthropological analysis of rites of passage, or "rites of transition," is characterized by three distinct phases. Typically, a rite of passage begins with the phase of separation, which includes “symbolic behavior” denoting a detachment of the individual from an earlier fixed point in the social structure (i.e., a "state"). The next phase has been identified as a margin ("limen"), wherein the

\(^1\) The word “college” is used as a generic term meaning to attend an institution of higher education. It is often used interchangeably with “university.”

\(^2\) Freshmen are herein defined as individuals who have never attended a college or university, have attended pre-college summer programs prior to entering college or have earned college credit prior to high school graduation.

\(^3\) Tinto defined “persistence” as students who eventually graduate from a higher educational institution. Educational researchers use the terms “persistence” and “retention” to denote students’ return to college from one year to the next through graduation (See Postsecondary Education Opportunity. 2001:1).
individual's state is considered ambiguous: the old state is gone, but the individual has not assumed a new state yet. Finally, the rite of passage concludes with a phase described as aggregation, which signifies a completion of the process (Turner 1964:5). Turner states that rites of passage are not restricted to movement between ascribed statuses, instead Turner envisions rites of passage to include any change from one state to another, especially entry into a "newly achieved status," or membership in a group that does not include the entire society (p.6). I would argue that the second phase in this process, the margin or “liminal period,” is equivalent to individuals leaving their previous state of “high school student” in their transition to or, as Turner defines it, “becoming” a “college student” during the freshman year:

...I prefer to regard transition as a process, a becoming, and in the case of rites [of] passage even a transformation (p. 4).

I believe this transition to or becoming a college student is an important, yet overlooked, factor in a student's persistence in a college or university through graduation. Moreover, I submit that the freshman year is representative of the liminal period for matriculating students, in that freshmen describe themselves and are viewed by others as having attained not only the status of college student during their first year, but also the identity of college student. I will return to this topic in Chapter Two, but in order to understand the experience of attending a college or university, it is first necessary to understand its history in American society.

Many American universities\(^4\) were originally created to train clergy\(^5\) and to act in lieu of parents to develop “character” in their students (Moore 1976, Upcraft 1991). But

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\(^4\) According to Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1988:1291), universities are educational institutions that are comprised of an undergraduate division which confers bachelor’s degrees and a

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over time their mission was expanded to include preparing individuals for the roles they would play in society. Attendance at college was, therefore, viewed as a vital part of socialization⁶ (Handlin and Handlin 1970, Upcraft 1991), with the institutions of higher education portrayed as purveyors of and repositories of the sociocultural knowledge of the surrounding society. Colleges and universities continue to be perceived by many as carrying out these functions within American society. However, with the advent of anthropological research into the impact of culture within and on educational settings in the early 1950's, the role of colleges and universities as simply storehouses and transmitters of sociocultural knowledge has been called into question. As a result, colleges and universities may now be viewed from a different perspective—as cultural systems to which students become socialized or enculturated (Wolcott 1976:448).

And although admission to college is still highly valued within American society, the persistence of students has become an increasingly important issue for higher education administrators and federal and state legislators within the last twenty years. This is due to a number of factors including a significant decrease in the birth rate in America, as well as the yearly escalation of tuition costs, the marked decrease in federal and state financial aid for middle income families, and the increasing diversity of the student body (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, etc.) (Tinto 1986, 1993; Chickering 1969, Chickering and Reisser 1993, Miller 1978, Moore and Carpenter 1986.

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⁵ An exception to this is Harvard University, which was founded “To advance Learning and perpetuate it to Posterity...” (The Harvard Guide, 2001:2).

⁶ The terms "socialization" and "enculturation" are often used interchangeably by anthropologists according to Wolcott (1976:476)

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Noel 1986, Upcraft 1989, 1991). Persistence studies suggest that more students leave their college or university prior to graduation than stay to completion (Tinto 1993). These factors have caused unprecedented competition for prospective students. As a result, higher educational institutions are keenly interested in research that may shed some light on factors that influence student persistence through graduation. It is clear from research on college attrition that freshmen and first-generation college students are especially vulnerable to dropping out. Therefore, improving the persistence of freshmen and first-generation college students could have a significant impact on college persistence rates.

The freshman year, as noted above, is considered critical to student persistence. In fact, researchers have found that approximately one-fourth of entering freshmen will not continue in the same institution one year later, and that the majority of those who leave college will leave in the freshman year (Postsecondary Education Opportunity 2001, Tinto 1993).

It has also been determined that students whose parents have graduated from college from either a two- or four-year institution (including community college7) will, in all likelihood, persist to graduation (Noel 1978, Tinto 1986). (It is assumed that parents with college degrees are better able to help their children make the transition from high school to college because they understand and provide the emotional, psychological, physical and financial support necessary to graduate.) Consequently, first-generation

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7 Community colleges are two-year higher educational institutions. They usually offer the Associates Degree along with other specialized training and programs.
college students are generally more susceptible to dropping out than those whose parents have earned a degree.

Other factors that affect first-generation student persistence include a lack of information about the college experience and the need to negotiate the two worlds of college and home (Piorkowski 1983, London 1989, 1992; Padron 1992): students are often required to function differently in college than they do at home. For example, first-generation students may change their behavior and attitudes as a consequence of their experiences in college. Once the student returns home, these changes may result in resentment toward the student by friends and family members who did not attend college. Statements that communicate a fear on the part of the speaker that the student is not the same, such as, “You’ve changed; you’re not the person I knew,” or “Going to college doesn’t make you better than or smarter than me” are sometimes uttered and may add a tremendous amount of pressure to first-generation students to “remain the same” so that family members and friends will be comfortable with them. This pressure may be added to the pressure they may feel as a result of their academic studies. This is generally not the case for second-plus generation students because their parents, having experienced and graduated college, not only expect changes in their children, they often discuss the kinds of changes with their children that they or their friends underwent in college.

As previously stated, researchers have become increasingly more interested in studying student attrition in order to improve college persistence; much of the research on colleges in the past forty years has been focused on institutional and curricular reform

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8 First-generation college students are defined by the U.S. Department of Education as “an individual both of whose parents did not complete a baccalaureate degree; or in the case of any individual who regularly resided with and received support from only one parent, an individual whose only such parent did not complete a baccalaureate degree” (Federal TRIO Program Sec. 402A.20 U.S.C. 1070a-11)

Accordingly, researchers have found several personal factors necessary for college persistence: developing academic and intellectual competence, establishing and maintaining personal relationships, deciding on a career and life-style, maintaining personal health and wellness, developing an integrated philosophy of life, managing emotions, developing purpose, moving from autonomy to interdependence, and developing integrity (Upcraft 1989, Upcraft and Gardner 1989, Chickering and Reisser 1993). Researchers have also found that the development of self-identity is a key component in student persistence in college (Chickering and Reisser 1993, Upcraft 1989). The relationship between self-identity and college persistence is consistent with cultural theorists like Hallowell (1955) who proposed a link between self-identity and success within a sociocultural environment. Hallowell and others have asserted that self-identity is tied to the process of cultural knowledge acquisition or enculturation of an individual to a particular environment (Hallowell 1955, Holland, Lachiocotte, Skinner and Cain 1998, Eisenhart 1995, Gering 1976, Chu 1985, Marsella 1985, Harris 1989, Gergen 1991a, 1991b; Schweder 1984, Bruner 1986a, 1986b; Miller 1994).

And while a great deal is known about factors that influence a student's persistence in college, what is missing is the realization that colleges and universities do
more than just socialize students to their roles in the larger society; college campuses themselves are also cultural systems to which students must be socialized or enculturated, which, in turn, may not only affect the self-identity of students, but may consequently influence their persistence in college.

Further, I believe that socialization to new sociocultural roles occurs at a much deeper level of the individual--it affects how individuals identify themselves to themselves; it involves more than simply performing or acting out a social role, as has been suggested by social scientists (e.g., Goffman 1959), instead enculturation or cultural knowledge acquisition involves a change in self-identity. Like Gergen (1991a:55), I believe that there is a tendency for individuals to identify with the role they play and to develop an identity based on that role. For example, during my tenure as a freshman advisor, I noted that by the end of the freshman year, many students had experienced a significant shift in how they defined themselves: they began the year talking about themselves in third-person as if someone else were executing their actions, but ended the year speaking of themselves in the first-person instead. This shift seemed to be consistent with my theory that during the transition from high school to college (i.e., from one educational environment to another), students initially performed the role of college student, but later assumed the identity of college student, or according to Turner (p. 4), became a college student.

At issue is how this transition from high school to college is experienced and negotiated by the student. One perspective held by researchers is that students are socialized to the norms and expectations of the new environment--students simply learn how to act and what to do--with no noteworthy associated change in self-concept

Based on my observations as a freshman advisor, I must agree with the social science researchers who suggest that the transition from one cultural environment to another, in this case from high school to college, may result in a change in identity—from high school student to college student—which may significantly affect performance and persistence within the new environment (Bruner 1996, Baumeister 1986, Baumeister and Muraven 1996, Berzonsky 1994, Smith 1985, Marcia 1966, Hsu 1985, Farrell 1994).

Utilizing narrative data from surveys, journals and interviews with freshman at "Charter University," this dissertation will identify key themes in the process of the formation of an identity of "Charter University college student" as a result of the socialization to this new social status or role and will report on any differences in the themes or process for first-generation college students and those who are not first-generation (i.e., second-plus generation students).

Ethnographic methods, to include narrative analysis, have been the staple of anthropological research, and according to Burnett, are relevant to the study of educational settings: "...on every occasion on which an anthropologist undertakes to do

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9 I was a freshman advisor for six years. As a freshman advisor, my role was to assist students with registering for classes, to offer advice (academic and personal), and to act as their advocate and mentor during their first year of college or until they declared a major.

10 The term "second-plus generation" denotes students whose parent(s) or guardian(s) have earned a Bachelors Degree, and whose grandparents may have earned at least a Bachelor's Degree.
an ethnography, he is producing potential data for the field of educational anthropology" (1976:225). "Ethnography is about discovery" (Shweder, 1997:154); it is "writing, the making of texts," and has "emerged as central to what anthropologists do both in the field and thereafter" (Clifford, 1986a:2). Its main goal is to "understand another way of life from the native point of view" (Spradley, 1979:3).

Burnett (1976:222) suggests that the connection between culture acquisition and ethnography probably lies in the discovery of "procedures and processes" more than with the form of the final ethnographic product. Burnett believes that an ethnographer's personal reflections on discovering how a culture works will be of tremendous value to an understanding of how culture is acquired. As a tool for interpreting and describing cultural systems, Wilcox believes ethnography lends itself equally well to school and classroom settings (1982:458).

Bruner (1986:126) says that ethnography is "discourse on discourse"; it "privileges 'discourse' over 'text'... it rejects the ideology of 'observer-observed,'" and instead centers on "cooperative story making," where no one participant has the final word on the form of the framed story. Bruner (1986:139) defines ethnography as a "genre of storytelling."

Cultural researchers such as Eisenhart have viewed storytelling from a different perspective—that of stories of self as a means by which people organize culture. Eisenhart found them key to an understanding of how newcomers learn a new culture:

The stories are schemas that connect individuals to the social and cultural order, and once performed they launch... an individual's identity in a specific context. As individuals express or enact these stories in a new setting, the stories guide individuals' emerging sense of who they are and how they relate to other people and objects in the world... In the educational relationship between old-timers and newcomers (at least
among adults), stories of self mediate what is of special interest to newcomers to learn and what is made important for old-timers to teach... Thus, telling stories of self affects how individuals learn and what they know. (1995:6).

She states that telling stories about self is not only a mechanism to demonstrate membership in a group or to claim an identity within a particular group, they also are a means of “becoming,” a means by which an individual “helps to shape and project identities in social and cultural spaces; and a way of thinking about learning that requires the individual to be active, as well as socially and culturally responsive” (1995:19).

Good (1994:139) states that our primary access to experience is through the analysis of cultural forms, and that narrative studies “re-problemative” the relationship between culture and experience:

We of course do not have direct access to the experience of others. We can inquire directly and explicitly, but we often learn most about experience through stories people tell about things that have happened to them or around them. Narrative is a form in which experience is represented and recounted, in which events are presented as having a meaningful and coherent order, in which activities and events are described along with the experiences associated with them and the significance that lends them their sense for the persons involved.

Polkinghorne (1995: 5,8) says that narrative refers to a “discourse form in which events and happenings are configured into a temporal unity by means of a plot.” Narratives are organized into “plots” (or themes) which establish the “beginning and end of storied segments,” and are integrated through the operation of “emplotment.” It is through emplotment that experiences take on narrative meaning, or are understood as contributing and influencing a “specified outcome.”
Narrative data were analyzed using narrative theory, which describes two aspects of the plot: "plot as the underlying structure of a story, and 'emplotment' as the activity of a reader or hearer of a story who engages imaginatively in making sense of the story" (Good, 1994:144). The "plots" identified in the narrative data were later organized into themes for further study. (A complete description of the methodology may be found in Chapter Three under the heading "Coding and Data Analysis.")

The use of narrative data offered a richer understanding of the transition experienced by study participants to Charter University relative to their cultural knowledge acquisition, and by researchers who study it.\(^\text{11}\)

The ethnographer may be more like the older child or adult undergoing the socialization into a new status at a distinctively new phase in the life cycle; or, in a complex culture, entering into the culture of a new group that is a subculture of the same culture system. Depending on the similarity or difference between this subculture and the individual's primary or "mother culture," his culture acquisition is more or less analogous to the ethnographer's problem. On further thought, it seems that the situation that is most like the ethnographer's is that of older childhood or the adult who has migrated to a new social setting and is undergoing acculturation in that situation. Thus method in ethnography can be used in closest analogy with adult acquisition of a second culture, and may most effectively assist in our understanding of and reason about second culture acquisition (Burnett 1976:225).

For the purpose of this study, I will draw upon Holland, Lachiocotte, Skinner and Cain's (1998:26) definition of culture as "texts" or "forms":

> Anthropology is much less willing to treat the cultural discourses and practices of a group of people as indicative of one underlying cultural logic or essence equally compelling to all members of the group... The objects of cultural study are now particular, circumscribed, historically and socially situated "texts" or "forms" and the processes through which they are negotiated, resisted, institutionalized, and internalized.

\(^\text{11}\) In my case, the situation was one of revisiting a culture to which I had been enculturated two decades ago to view the process from the perspective of entering freshmen.
Conceiving culture in this manner provides a more realistic perspective of society as being comprised of a variety of cultural “worlds” or “culturally figured worlds”:

By “figured world,” then, we mean a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others. Each is a simplified world populated by a set of agents...who engage in a limited range of meaningful acts or changes of state...as moved by a specific set of forces... (p. 52).

Culturally figured worlds also influence self-identity:

Figured worlds in their conceptual dimensions supply the contexts of meaning for actions, cultural productions, performances, disputes, for the understandings that people come to make of themselves, and for the capabilities that people develop to direct their own behavior in these worlds. Materially, figured worlds are manifest in people’s activities and practices...Figured worlds provide the contexts of meaning and action in which social positions and social relationships are named and conducted. They also provide the loci in which people fashion senses of self—that is, develop identities (p. 60).

I propose that a process that develops an identity that is consistent with the “culturally figured world” of the college environment should translate not only into competency, but also persistence within that college environment. And according to Holland, Lachiocotte, Skinner and Cain (1998:51), the development of cultural competence “makes possible culturally constituted or figured worlds” and by extension, the various human institutions.

The importance of studying the process of identity development is supported by Holland, Lachiocotte, Skinner and Cain (1998 vii) as well because identities are “unfinished and in process”:

Cultural studies of the person, in particular, need to move more solidly to process. They must be predicated upon continuing cultural production: a development, or interlocking genesis, that is actually a co-development of identities, discourses, embodiments, and imagined worlds that inform each moment of joint production and are themselves transformed by that moment.
The significance of the study may be found in its departure from most research devoted to the anthropology of education, in that educational anthropologists have primarily focused their attention on the culture students bring with them to an educational setting, the culture of the classroom setting, colleges as institutions that transmit to students the culture of the broader society, and recently the impact of college culture on administrative leadership, faculty and curriculum development, but have neglected the impact of culture on students' self-identity and college persistence. It would also bolster the findings of psychological anthropologists who theorize an important link between self-identity, cultural knowledge acquisition and success in a new sociocultural environment. Finally, the rites of passage framework to discuss the transition from the status of “high school” student to that of “college student” is a new and compelling use of the theory in anthropological discourse.

**The Research Question**

During the freshman year, how is the culturally constructed identity of “college student” a factor in the successful transition of students from high school to college as a result of their socialization to this new social status or role?

**Subsidiary Questions**

- What key themes can be identified as having salience for students within this transition?
- What process can be identified for the formation of this identity?
- How do the themes or process of forming this identity differ between first-generation college students and second-plus generation college students?

**Researcher Assumptions**

As with any study, researchers have a particular frame of reference or particular assumptions that influence how they conduct research and what they report. I assume that
• a self-identity exists and can be changed through the experience of enculturation to a new sociocultural environment or setting;

• a "high school student" identity and a "college student" identity exist;

• colleges are culturally constructed institutions that enculturate new members;

• through the process of enculturation to college, an identity of "college student" is formed; and

• the transition from a "high school student" identity to a "college student" identity may be apprehended through the stories students tell in narrative form about their freshman year. (I will return to this issue under the heading of "Methodology.")

My assumptions are based upon experiences I had as a freshman advisor at a private research university: approximately two years in this position, I noticed that some of my freshman advisees seemed to have difficulty making the transition to college. They appeared confused by the difference between college expectations versus those of high school in terms of ways of thinking, routines, behaviors, personal responsibility, and in what I would term, their participation and membership in the "culture" of college life. For many of these students, self-identity appeared tied to the context of their high school success. As a result, some students had a difficult time identifying themselves as a "college student." Those students who were unable to make this self-identification shift were unable to continue in college and either elected to leave or were asked to leave by the institution.

The characteristics that seemed to determine whether an individual made this transition successfully were observed to include:

• understanding that college is an organized system that must be learned and negotiated;

• realizing that academic and social success are in several respects measured differently in college than in high school (e.g., grade inflation in high school may not have adequately prepared students to perform in college; high school class rank based on grade point averages often causes students to compete against each other for higher
rank. This is not the case in college where students compete less with one another and are instead encouraged to assist one another, etc.);

- becoming familiar and comfortable with academic and social processes (e.g., working with faculty advisors and various departments; living away from home for the first time with roommates, etc.); and

- finding their social and academic niche.

The testing of these characteristics, in light of my assumptions, form the foundation of my research study.

The dissertation is divided into five chapters: Chapter One provides an overview of the study. In Chapter Two, I will expand Victor Turner's theory of "transition as transformation" (1964:5) and its role in self-identity formation. I will also discuss concepts related to attending American institutions of higher education, and in particular the freshman year, as a "rite of passage"; anthropological concepts of self-identity in cultural transition, colleges and universities as cultural systems that mediate self-identity, and the importance of self-identity to the persistence of freshman and first-generation college students, as well as discuss my preliminary study findings. Chapter Three will provide a description of the methodology used in the study. Chapter Four will describe and discuss the results of the study using the themes identified in the preliminary study and new themes that have been identified during the course of this research. Chapter Five will summarize the research findings and offer suggestions for further study.
CHAPTER TWO
BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

This chapter will review literature relevant to the research study. It begins with a discussion of the cultural rites of passage in relation to self-identity. It then introduces the concepts of the freshman year as a rite of passage to college and colleges as cultural systems that mediate self-identity change. The focus will then shift to the role of culture in self-identity formation and the importance of self-identity to student persistence. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a summary of the preliminary study undertaken in 1997 and a discussion of themes identified as meriting further research.

"Rites of Passage," the Freshman Year and Self-Identity

Rites of passage are found in all societies, according to Turner (1964:4), and are considered "transitions between states," where "states" are defined as "a relatively fixed or stable condition," such as legal status, profession, rank or degree. A rite of passage also marks the "condition of a person as determined by his culturally recognized degree of maturation," or can be expanded to refer to "any type of stable or recurrent condition that is culturally recognized." Transitions are different from states; they represent more of a process, or a "becoming," And in the case of rites of passage, transitions are "transformations," in that transitions allow individuals to experience a change in, or to be transformed from, a former identity to a new identity as a result of their socialization to a new sociocultural role.

As described previously, the "liminal period" is the period during which individuals have left their previous state (i.e., "separation") but have not attained their
next state (i.e., "aggregation"). Turner says that this period represents a time wherein the individual's state is ambiguous: "he passes through a realm which has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state...They are at once no longer classified and not yet classified," they are "neither this nor that, and yet [are] both" (author's emphasis) (pp. 5, 6, 9). Turner's theory can be demonstrated by the fact that matriculating students no longer consider themselves high school students, but they may not consider themselves college students yet either.

The liminal period is also a time of learning during which the individual is considered a "transitional-being" and is defined by a name (e.g., "neophyte" or "initiand") (p. 6). As neophytes, they are often treated symbolically as if they are newborn children and are assigned elders to oversee their cultural instruction. In the case of the matriculating student, this notion is represented by the term "college fresh-man," (which connotes newness, as in the term "fresh-baked bread"), and their assignment of faculty and upperclass student mentors to assist them in their transition to college. The knowledge gained during the liminal period is believed to "change the inmost nature of the neophyte, impressing him, as a seal impresses wax, with the characteristics of his new state"; individuals do not simply acquire knowledge -- they experience "a change in being" (1964:11).

Viewing the freshman year as a rite of passage is consistent with van Gennep's (1960) and later Turner's concepts of rite of passage because matriculating college students must relinquish their high school student state in order to undergo a transformation to the college student state. I contend that this transformation in state through the rites of passage ritual entails more than just leaving an old student role and
learning a new student role; it involves leaving one identity and "becoming" a new identity through a process of cultural knowledge acquisition that occurs during the freshman year of college.

It's important to note, however, that rites of passage rituals have an essential function only within a cultural setting. Therefore, it is vital to an understanding of the rites of passage in this context to view the system of education as a cultural process and to revisit the concept of educational institutions like colleges and universities as cultural settings.

**The Anthropology of Educational Institutions**

"...Schools, like other cultural systems, are perpetuated through the process of socializing new members into the statuses which must be occupied" (Wolcott, 1976:448). (emphasis added)

Anthropological research in education has gained momentum in the last 50 years in its recognition that culture plays a significant role within the educational process. The central tenet of research in educational anthropology is the concept that educational systems are first and foremost cultural systems (Wolcott 1976). As such, individuals are always participating in a process of cultural acquisition whenever they are engaged in education. In fact, Hallowell (1959) argued that an individual must be socialized to an environment (i.e., system) in order to successfully participate in it. This is also true for educational systems.

The interest in the anthropology of education existed as early as the 1800s as evidenced by the historical documents that describe Pre-Columbian civilizations and their educational processes (Burnett 1978). From the late nineteenth century until the 1950s, anthropological studies of formal education and education as cultural transmission...
became increasingly more important with the introduction of Herskovits' theoretical construct of "enculturation," or culture transmission, as a function of education, schooling and socialization (p. 64). It was during the decade of the '50s, however, that the study of education and anthropology gained more legitimacy with the convening of two conferences on Education and Anthropology by George Spindler, who, as one of the founders of the field of educational anthropology, is credited with creating a new framework that related "acculturation and personality concepts" to education (p. 67).

The 1960s saw a focus on the education of ethnic groups and minority populations, as well as an emphasis on issues relative to how schools in different cultures influenced mental processes. During the 1970s, several significant books on the subject of anthropology and education were published. There was also an increase in ethnographic descriptions of schools, classrooms and teachers, and the beginnings of discussions of race, intelligence, and cross-cultural testing (Burnett 1978).

Research on formalized educational systems and child enculturation was conducted by several prominent American and British founders of modern anthropology. They include Gregory Bateson, Ruth Benedict, Franz Boas, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Melville Herskovits, Ralph Linton, Bronislaw Malinowski, Margaret Mead, Morris Opler, Paul Radin, Robert Redfield, Edward Sapir, John Whiting, and many others (Eddy 1987).

Researchers who have studied education have used several approaches. They include the processes of cultural transmission (cited above)—which is considered the anthropological definition of education; culture and personality and its examination of cross-cultural differences in learning and socialization; and symbolic anthropology and its focus on the meaning of symbols within the field of education (Comitas 1978).

In order to gain a better understanding of the contributions of anthropology to the study of higher education it is necessary to consider its contribution to the field of education in general.

Harrington defines education as "everything that happens to a person throughout his lifetime" (1979:5) It includes formal and informal learning (Harrington 1979), socialization as the "fundamental basis of education" (Lindquist 1970:xv), and education as "transitional" in preparing children to move into adulthood with "self-understanding" (Nash 1974:6). Education is considered "crucial" to the formation of self, in that schooling is one of the earliest institutions a child participates in outside of the family, and as such, it provides a source for learning cultural definitions of and limits for the self (Bruner 1996:35). Gowin states that, "Every culture, if it is to continue, must form patterns for the education of oncoming generations" (1981:26).

Kneller (1965:11) defines education as the “inculcation in each generation of certain knowledge, skills, and attitudes by means of institutions, such as schools” created for this specific purpose. Kneller suggests that education is a part of the process of enculturation—a method societies use to initiate “the growing person” into the ways of the society (p.12). Enculturation is also the process of the internalization of culture and
allows individuals to "absorb" the "modes of thought, action, and feeling that constitute his culture" (p. 42).

Gearing (1976:194) proposes a "cultural theory of education," which states that every day individuals move into and out of two smaller worlds. The first includes home, neighborhoods, and clubs. The second world involves bureaucratic institutions like colleges and universities. Movement within and between these "localized worlds" requires that individuals participate in the "regularly occurring events," which Gearing defines as the "education system" of these localized worlds. It is through these education systems that successfully enculturated members of the society (i.e., "old hands") assist new members or "new hands" in their socialization to the society (p. 194).

Spindler (1997:301-302) suggests that the major functions of education are for "recruitment and maintenance"—recruitment to membership in a cultural group and into a particular role, status or class; and the maintenance of a cultural system:

The educational system, whether we are talking about societies where there are no schools in the formal sense but where a great deal of education takes place, or about societies where there are many specialized formal schools, is organized to effect recruitment. The educational system is also organized so that the structure of the cultural system will be maintained.


Moore traces the evolution of education from its roots as a community-wide responsibility for socializing members to institutions that are, "corporate in nature, bureaucratic in form," like other major social institutions, and unconsciously function as tools for, "separating children from their families and launching them as adults into an impersonal public world, also composed of bureaucratic corporations" (1976:99).
Spindler (1976) instead sees formal schooling as primarily responsible for mediating cultural change.

All transmission of knowledge is a form of socialization and enculturation, says Hanson (1979). Each is a process that involves training in appropriate behavior relative to other members of the group, including social skills. In this formulation, education is a "subset" of enculturation, and is a "deliberate and systematic attempt to transmit skills and understandings, habits of thought and deportment required by the group of which the learner is a novice member." Spiro (1982:47) believes that education and enculturation are the means by which traditional beliefs or "cultural doctrines" (i.e., ideas about man, society or nature that originate and develop in a social group's history) are transmitted from generation to generation. Holland asserts that expertise in culturally constructed realities, including the identification of self as a member of the culture, is formed in the "learning process" (1992:61, 64).

According to Moore (1976), the study of educational institutions in general as transmitters of cultural information has only occurred within the past twenty years. Initially, anthropologists defined the primary mission of educational institutions as serving as mechanisms for the transmission of cultural knowledge of the broader society to students. This definition is premised on education as a process that enables cultural transmission from one generation to another, the goal of which is to maintain the cultural system by creating newly enculturated members (Boas 1976, Bruner 1996, Burtonwood 1986, Dobbert 1974, Harrington 1979, Kimball 1976, Nash 1974; Ogbu 1978, 1992; Pai 1990, Singleton 1974, Spindler 1974, 1976; Wilcox 1982, Hewett 1976, Bruner 1996, Moore 1976, Gearing 1976, Dobbert 1974, Handlin and Handlin 1970). Burnett states,
however, that cultural transmission always partly "entails culture acquisition" (1976:221) because individuals in the process of learning a new culture, acquire a new cultural ideology and potentially a new cultural identity.

The study of higher educational institutions, in particular, has become more prevalent within the field of educational anthropology due to a shift in focus from the education that takes place in childrearing and in the primary through secondary school classrooms, to the education that takes place in universities and colleges.

One of the earlier studies of college campuses was conducted in 1962 by the Center for the Study of Higher Education. Its primary purpose was to engage the interest of other social scientists in the studies of campus cultures. It also sought to "stimulate the use" of the studies in handling "practical questions" with which the college administrators and teachers had to contend (Tyler 1963:1). The study concentrated on several aspects of campus cultures. Among these were student culture, faculty culture and interactions among academic, administrative, and student subcultures. The researchers suggested that college teachers could gain a better understanding of the kind of learning that was taking place that was not part of the curriculum:

... If I come here as a student to the Berkeley campus, the amount of my time that could be devoted to learning things that were never put down in the curriculum and never thought about by the faculty is far greater than the amount of time that I could spend if I wished to devote myself to the courses that I take (p.6).

Tyler believed that colleges and universities allowed behavioral scientists to view changes over time (or in the terms of cultural transmission, from generation to generation) because every year a new group of students arrive and leave college.
Handlin and Handlin trace the evolution of universities from their earliest formations as institutions for training clergy (particularly Protestant clergy) to their "usefulness" to society and as a vehicle for individual social mobility (1970:3):

...Insofar as the education administered by the college was neither totally religious nor totally professional, it was connected with the desire to adjust the individual to the society within which he would play a part. That is, attendance at college was an aspect of his socialization.

Handlin and Handlin note that the process of socialization depended not only on the college as an institution, but also on the changing structure of the society in which the individual would operate, and the "changing conception the individual held of himself" (1970:3).

Becker's (1963) research centered on better defining the term "student culture" and the means by which students become enculturated. Student culture refers to "a set of understandings shared by students and a set of actions congruent with those understandings." (p. 12); it is a shared perspectives or a group's worldview. Student culture, according to Becker is premised on the "understandings and actions" that occur as a result of the student being a student (p. 12). Becker determined that as students move through their freshman year, their ideas regarding the meaning of college become clearer:

They defined college as a place in which one demonstrates that he has become a mature adult. They decided that now, at last, they were entering adult life. College was the real thing, the big time. Up to now everything had been "kid stuff," having no lasting consequences for one's future. But now they feel that they are embarking on their careers as adults and that what they do in college will have lasting consequences for the rest of their lives. They feel that the main thing they must do while in college is to demonstrate, both to themselves and to others, that they have grown up successfully, that they are no longer kids but are now mature adults (p. 18).
He also found that students place a high premium on their ability to make friends in college as a function of the student culture.

Bergquist (1992) advances the notion of colleges as organizational cultures. He believes that there is a need for cultural analyses of collegiate institutions from the perspective of those who lead and work in them and those who live in the society that is influenced or affected by the activities of the institutions. Bergquist has identified four college cultures—collegial, managerial, developmental and negotiating. The collegial culture "encourages diversity of perspective and relative autonomy of work" (p. 17); relationships are informal, long-term and non-hierarchical. The managerial culture is hierarchical and formal; its' cultural traditions are rooted in the Catholic Church and are modeled in the Catholic college and university. The developmental culture promotes open communication and thought, but unlike the collegial model that is fairly loosely organized, the developmental model encourages deliberate planning and development. And the negotiating culture arose as a response to college administrators having more control over institutional policy. In this model, faculty members believe that, in order to gain more influence in institutional decision-making, they must gain it through collective action.

Rhoads and Tierney (1992: 2) suggest that "every college or university exists as a unique organizational culture":

We suggest that to understand and act reflectively in academic environments administrators need to view the institution as a culture where organizational members both shape and are shaped by the symbols and rituals of the institution. By culture we mean the informal codes and shared assumptions of individuals participating in the organization (p. 1).
Colleges also evolve over time and are influenced by the everyday interactions between students, faculty, administrators, alumni and other constituents (Kuh and Whitt 1988).

The “hidden curricula” in higher education, according to Margolis, et. al (2001:18), serves to socialize individuals who participate in higher education, particularly students, to “valued cultural elements” of society. They note that the hidden curriculum of educational institutions was originally described by functionalists who based their work on the likes of Emile Durkheim and other prominent social scientists. In Moral Education, Durkheim (1961:148) described the method by which primary schools socialized traits, like “duty”:

In fact, there is a whole system of rules in the school that predetermine the child’s conduct. He must come to class regularly, he must arrive at a specified time and with an appropriate bearing and attitude. He must not disrupt things in class... There are, therefore, a host of obligations that the child is required to shoulder. Together they constitute the discipline of the school. It is through the practice of school discipline that we can inculcate the spirit of the child.

(I will argue in chapter four that colleges and universities also socialize students to characteristics that are indicative of a “Charter University college student” identity.)

Social psychologists have researched education from the perspective of its affect on the development of individuals within society (House 1992; Bruner 1996; see Pascarella and Terenzini 1991, for a review of social psychological studies of education). Important topics include the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement (Byrne 1986; Vollmer 1986; Bachman and O'Malley 1986); school-based efforts to increase student self-perception (i.e., self-esteem, self-awareness, self-concept, etc.) in relation to academic achievement (Beane 1994); changes in personality during the college years (Stewart 1964); changes in self-ratings and life goals in different college
environments (Skager, Holland, and Braskamp 1972); and effects of varying models of the mind held by educators on curriculum development and teaching expectations (Bruner 1996).

Using interviews and participant observation of high school and college students, Dickie and Farrell (1991) identified five themes that were key in a student’s transition from high school to college: (1) the fact that a transition must or does occur; (2) the recognition of an imminent change in their sense of identity; (3) the realization that there is a difference between a teacher/student and faculty/student relationship; (4) the fact that teachers are held accountable for student progress and faculty members are not; and (5) the assumption that greater freedom for students in college means that they must take more responsibility for their actions and subsequent consequences.

Dickie and Farrell note a change in students’ experience of college related to choice and individual autonomy:

A recurring theme was the realization that once in a program by choice, learning can be rewarding, interesting, and, to their surprise, even fun. Some were almost reluctant to admit they had begun to enjoy the work at college and were feeling a sense of belonging now that the transition was complete (p. 443).

They further note that an “adaptation period” to the “conventions of the college” may require weeks or months (p. 443).

The significance of Dickie and Farrell’s research is found in their statements that students recognized that, in order to succeed in college, change had to come from within themselves.

Additionally, numerous studies have been conducted in social psychology and education relative to colleges and universities (e.g., Becker 1972, Boyer 1987,

Colleges and universities in the past decade have received more attention by anthropologists than in previous years, but most of the studies are still devoted primarily to the broader culture of the institution and its affect on academic leadership, organizational change, faculty enculturation, and curriculum and student development (see Margolis 2001; Rhoads and Tierney 1992; Bergquist 1992; Kuh and Whitt 1988)—rather than its affect on the self-identities of its students. Consequently, research on the acquisition of cultural knowledge in university settings and its impact on self-identity should be an important contribution to the anthropology of educational institutions.

**Cultural Knowledge Acquisition and Self-Identity**

The individuated self, the focus of the proposed research, is not new to anthropological discourse. It has been the subject of numerous articles attempting to more clearly define it in terms of its Western cultural roots (Harris 1989, Dominguez 1989, Rosaldo 1984, Gaines 1982, Marsella 1985, Hsu 1985), and as a combination of multiple "self-understandings and identities," including gender, "race," social position, etc. (Holland, Lachiocotte, Skinner and Cain 1998:8). Several metaphors are used to describe the self including person, individual, character, soul, mind, ego, personality, psyche, role, and particularly relevant to this study, identity (Whittaker 1992).

Elvi Whittaker states that the anthropological self was "born" about 20 years ago as a consequence of the late interest by anthropologists in the cultural formation of the self. The anthropological self is theorized as located in a social structure and culturally determined. As a result, the anthropological self is posited to be in "continual
transformation" (Whittaker 1992:204). Additionally, other researchers have defined the self as: a "sense of socio-personal identity" that is different from the object world (Marsella 1985:286); an orientational process that orients people to psychocultural themes that are relevant to participants in their specific culture, resulting in a "person" who has a "cultural identity or a set of identities" (Csordas 1993:ix,5); being "cultured" throughout (Shore 1996:5); providing an explanation for social and cultural processes (Robbins 1973:1199); an individual's perception of who they are as a distinct person, and which answers the question, "Who am I" (Pedersen 1994:1155); and undergoing continual "construction and reconstruction" (Gergen 1991b:7).

The self has also been viewed as consisting of a number of identities (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain 1998:127, 129, 170). They include: (a) "positional" or "relational" identities that signal or mark how an individual positions themselves relative to another in social interactions (e.g., gender, class and "race"); (b) "narrativized" or "figurative" identities that involve the "stories, acts, and characters that make the world a cultural world"; and (c) "authoring selves," through which the self describes the world using words to which it has been exposed from others. Relational identities and authoring selves have salience within figured worlds; and figured worlds have specific relational identities and authoring selves associated with them.

The notion of a change in self-identity due to the acquisition of cultural knowledge in a new sociocultural setting and its connection to persistence within the new environment have increasingly become the topic of social scientific research (Baumeister and Muraven 1996, Hsu 1985, Berzonsky 1994, Chu 1985, Gergen 1991b, Grindal 1974). For example, Hallowell (1955), in his seminal work, "The Self and Its Behavioral
Environment," proposed that a link existed between cultural knowledge acquisition and self-identity or self-awareness. Hallowell theorizes that the self is a cultural and social product, and that each society provides templates for self-orientation to its members. Hallowell defined self-awareness as key to an individual's adjustment to a sociocultural environment (1955:75). Correspondingly, Baumeister and Muraven view self-identity as an "adaptation to a social context." They advance that self-identity grows out of the context of history, culture, and the immediate structure of social relations. Baumeister and Muraven suggest that individuals actively choose or change their identities based on what will allow them to successfully participate in a particular context (1996:405).

Self as "socially constructed" is the focus of Farrell’s study, in which he states that selves may change, expand, contract, appear, disappear or reappear over the course of a person's life. He believes that during adolescence, the individual is trying to integrate "emerging selves" into a single identity. As Farrell’s research was conducted on high school students, the emerging selves he proposes consist of a career self, a sexual self, a self-among-peers, a family self, an affiliating self, and of particular interest to this study, a student self (1994:3). The student self was found to be the primary self of Farrell’s informants. Through the integration of these emerging selves, especially the student self, he believes students are able to succeed in high school and matriculate to college. Farrell's findings support my theory that an identity as a "student" in a specific educational setting, such as high school or college, is a necessary factor in student persistence in that setting.
Self-Identity and College Student Persistence

While the educational anthropology literature has not focused on the impact of self-identity on college persistence, several studies by social scientists and educators indicate that the experience of college affects self-identity and that self-identity is an important factor in student persistence. For example, in his influential book, Education and Identity, Chickering (1969:92) advocates for a new role for universities and colleges given the changes in American society in the twentieth-century in relation to cultures and identity:

The basic point is that in the twentieth-century American society, in contrast to earlier times and more homogenous cultures, identity is no longer simply "given."...Once the principal task of education was "socialization" and the problem of individuals was to learn the attitudes, actions, and skills necessary for a satisfying and productive fit with "society."... In twentieth-century society, where change is the only sure thing, not socialization but identity formation becomes the central and continuing task of education...(emphasis added)

Chickering's theory is founded on his belief that the industrial and technological changes over the past two centuries have created the adolescent period, something that did not exist prior to these revolutions. The adolescent period extends from the age of seventeen or eighteen into the middle or late twenties. The adolescent period is regarded as a time of change, and "a period during which certain kinds of experiences may have substantial impact" (p. 2). Furthermore, because many young adults move through this period in a college setting, Chickering believes this period deserves special attention, especially by colleges and universities.

Researchers Ernest Pascarella and Patrick Terenzini (1991) have synthesized 20 years of social psychological research on how college affects college students. They report that the vast majority of the research pertaining to self-identity has found an
identity-status change during the college years, which they describe as a shift toward as well as an eventual commitment to, a particular identity as a result of a period of crisis. This period of crisis is consistent with the liminal state in which freshmen find themselves once they matriculate to college. Students must pass through the liminal state in order to proceed to the final phase of the ritual of rites of passage—aggregation—where they achieve their next state. Freshmen achieving the state of "college student" may be perceived as having successfully aggregated to their new status, and I contend that this aggregation is a key element in student persistence.

Student persistence, however, is often discussed in terms of becoming a "competent" member of the college or university community. This competence entails not only learning the values, rules, procedures, and language (i.e., the culture) of an educational institution, but also the requirement that the students become "integrated" in the college community academically and socially (Tinto 1986:35). Without this competence and integration, students may choose to withdraw or may be asked to leave the institution for academic reasons.

Non-persistence in college has also been attributed to a number of factors. Significant among these are students who: "resist the acculturation college demands" (Anderson 1986:49); are unable to identify with college life (Kowalski 1977); experience adjustment difficulties in their transition from high school to college (Noel 1986); and lack self-identity which is considered a "critical component" of choices they make. It is generally believed that students who are able to resolve their identity issues while in college are more likely to persist to graduation (Gordon 1986).
Noel (1986:13) provides the clearest and most concise description of a student who is caught in the transition from a high school identity to a college identity.

Recent high school graduates have spent four years putting into place a series of support systems in their high schools. There they were known, they performed, they were rewarded; suddenly, overnight they are in a new environment. They have to start all over. It is not difficult for them to become lost—to say, “I'll just retreat to my past group”....

Noel states that the only way these students will persist is for colleges and universities to provide comprehensive and ongoing orientation programs and activities before the first classes and throughout the first year. This orientation of the freshman, or “neophyte,” to the college campus is considered a significant phase in the ritual of the freshman year as a “rite of passage” because it is during this time that new students begin their training in the cultural rules and expectations of the campus environment. I propose that this cultural training will result in the formation of a new identity, that of college student.

In order to test the validity of this theory and to identify possible themes that may be important in this transition, I undertook a preliminary study in 1997.
PRELIMINARY STUDY

The preliminary study was conducted at a private, nondenominational, research university in the Midwest, which was created by the federation of four independent colleges in the 1960s. Two of the four colleges date back to the early 1800s. The University offers programs in the arts and sciences, engineering, health sciences, law, management, and social work. Its students are drawn from 50 states, the District of Columbia, and approximately 10 countries. It offers undergraduate degrees in engineering, humanities, social sciences, nursing, management, mathematics and natural sciences, and graduate and professional degrees in medicine, nursing, dentistry, social work and law. The University enrolls 9503 students, 3500 of whom are in undergraduate programs. Approximately two-thirds of all students are enrolled full-time.

The preliminary study was undertaken in September 1997. A total of five students participated (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>ETHNICITY*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Korean-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>German/Serbian/Polish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White (German/Irish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Self-reported by students.
The data were analyzed at the end of the first semester using narrative theory to determine common themes that could be associated with changing self-identity. Bruner asserts that people "create meaning" from school experiences through narrative (1996:40):

It has been the convention of most schools to treat the arts of narrative...as more "decoration" than necessity, something with which to grace leisure, sometimes even as something morally exemplary. Despite that, we frame the accounts of our cultural origins and our most cherished beliefs in story form, and it is not just the "content" of these stories that grip us, but their narrative artifice. Our immediate experience, what happened yesterday or the day before, is framed in the same storied way. Even more striking, we represent our lives (to ourselves as well as to others) in the form of narrative.

Narrative data have been used extensively in anthropological research (Bruner 1986, Bateson 1989, 2000; Belenky, et al. 1986, Eisenhart 1995, Good 1994, Harringer 1995, Holland and Kipnis 1994, Honigman 1973, Linde 1987) as the "organizing principle for human action" (Riessman 1993:1). Eisenhart maintains that individuals organize culture through the "stories of self" that they express or act out when they join new social settings. These stories help mediate the "changing forms of individual participation (i.e., learning) in context," and are seen as contributing to identity formation (1995:3). Narrative also: (a) allows people to make sense of difficult life experiences and transitions (Reissman 1993:4); (b) is "inseparable" from the self, in that it is "born out of experience and gives shape to experience," and constitutes a "crucial resource for socializing emotions, attitudes and identities" (Ochs and Capps 1996:19); and (c) "concretely portrays characters in the process of struggling toward" cultural ideals and goals (Honigmann 1973:632). Bateson says that we "practice the art of living" through narratives (2000:22).
The preliminary study yielded the following themes for further research: (1) self-concept was experienced narratively in specific relation to the past, present and the future; (2) independence and control (including issues of freedom and responsibility) was salient; (3) friends or relationships figure in prominently; (4) self-talk was important for defining or re-defining self-definitions; and (5) personal versus relational coping strategies play a role in the adjustment to college. Each of the five themes is further elaborated below.

**Self-Concept Relative to the Past, Present and Future**

The transition to college was significantly affected by their high school identity, whether positive or negative. Three of the five students spent the first three months describing themselves in terms of who they were in high school (e.g., popular, happy, outgoing, shy, withdrawn, sensitive, etc.) If a student liked his/her identity, the transition to a college identity seemed slower. If a student did not like his/her high school identity, the transition seemed to occur much faster. This may be explained by the notion that individuals who liked who they were in high school felt that college was too much of an unknown relative to their former life, and were, therefore, reluctant to give up their high school identity. While those with identities they did not like in high school saw college as a "fresh start."

**Independence and Control**

Having control of their lives for the first time was a heady experience for these students. All recount feeling free to make decisions (e.g., to go places, do and say things, etc.) they wouldn't ordinarily have been allowed previously.
**Friends and Relationships**

Friends and relationships seemed to take up an inordinate amount of students’ waking hours, according to journal entries. The first few months of college for three of the five students was a time of trying to recreate their high school friendships in the college environment (each one longed for good friends and confidantes like those in high school). In some cases, the search for friends was more intimate, in that two students were very focused on a love interest in their past or finding a replacement in the present.

**Self-Talk**

For many, self-talk, or statements specifically directed at themselves, played an important role in maintaining or re-defining their self-definitions.

**Personal versus Relational Coping Strategies**

There also appeared to be a difference in how the students were relating to college: four were relationally focused, meaning that they are looking to someone (or something) outside of themselves to help them adjust to college life.

One was personally focused, in that they highly valued their individuality -- while they would have liked to have had meaningful relationships (male and female) -- they didn’t appear to be looking to others to help them make the adjustment.

Each of these themes reflect what Eisenhart found to be important in the transition from one sociocultural category to another -- the individual’s interpretations of past experiences -- which include how they position themselves in the situation (e.g., as victim or as in charge), how they feel about what is happening, and how past experiences are connected to “possible selves” within a cultural context (1995:21).
Additional Findings

Furthermore, students increasingly made definitive statements regarding college coursework (e.g., detailing their schedule, noting what tests took place, how well they did and feelings associated with performance, reminding themselves to study for particular exams or to study in general, etc.) over the course of the semester. These statements were often missing or very scarce in the first two to three months of the fall semester.

SPRING SEMESTER

Three (of the five) students participated in the spring semester. Their journals were notable for how they viewed themselves as having “changed” as a result of attending college:

- Two continued to note feeling free to be and become whatever they want.

- All three described feeling in control of their lives for the first time, and feeling comfortable at college (two described college as their “new” home, and better than their “old” home; the other described home as a place they are not ready to return to yet).

- All evidenced more intellectual involvement with coursework and schedules from first to second semester.

- All had either: (a) shifted their emphasis from issues that were salient upon arrival to college (e.g., trying to recreate high school relationships, struggling with family problems, etc.) to issues that revolved more around the quality of campus and academic life; or (b) had de-emphasized these issues and had instead focused more of their energies and attention to their academic lives in college (e.g., still looking for relationships, but not as important as they were when they arrived.)

Student Interviews

Two students were interviewed. Student #4 stated that they felt good about someone reading their journal, believing that if they were in trouble, someone would be in the position of helping them as a result of reading their journal entries. Student #1 said that the journal entries were always “stories that had come to an end,” meaning they only
wrote about those things they felt they had resolved in their own mind. For each, the process of writing was helpful in allowing them to work out their problems and issues in a “safe” place, and providing them a mirror to gaze at their reflection and determine what, if anything, they wanted to do with it. Also during the interview, student #1 stated that they were looking for a partner to recreate their “ideal” family from home. The student did not mention this “ideal” family in any of the journal entries, however. It was only during the interview that the importance and influence of family was described.

What was interesting throughout the study was how student’s stories revolved around one or more themes or “plots.” The plot organizes the story by connecting events in such a way as to make them appear to be sequential and related. Narrative theory involves two aspects of plot — plot as an “underlying structure of a story,” and “emplotment” as the “activity of a reader or a hearer of a story who engages imaginatively in making sense of the story” (Good 1994: 144). For example, student #4’s plots included escape from an all-consuming illness in the family, the self they were in high school as a result of the illness, and the freedom college provided them in being able to “start over again”:

... My mother was diagnosed with Type I Insulin Dependent Diabetes Mellitus when she was 37 years old. Five years later she had her first hypoglycemic episode. As a twelve-year old with limited knowledge on the human body and my mother’s disease, the first episode and several thereafter left me frightened and confused...Since that time, I have learned a lot about this disease and its future effects on my mother’s life. — My questions have been answered — all the fear of so many of the initial unknowns are gone...But the emotional and psychological, psycho-social effects of diabetes stay with me today. I’ve overcome a lot since I got to college, but I know that a lot was missing in my life as a result of this disease — more than had to be ...

...I’m at “home” now. Life is hell. I want to go home... “Charter University”... Nothing’s changed here. It sucks as usual... I saw [name]
at K of P and talked to her for 20 minutes. She doesn’t seem different, but I’ve changed — oh, how I’ve changed. Thank God! ...Life is hell here. This house is so empty... It seems impossible here. Everything becomes near impossible here...I hate it. I want to go home... I miss [name] and everybody in ENGL 150, and all of my friends. Here there is nothing — only parents and a family whom I have hardly anything in common with...I want to go HOME —“Charter University.”

Student #1’s plots focused on relationships, parties and fun:

...Wow, I feel really good today. I am not sure why. I have been skipping classes, I am not sure if I can trust the girl I am seeing, and I am failing chemistry. But I feel GOOD. I have been getting a lot of sleep lately and most of my grades are on their way up, so that’s good. The semester is almost over and I can’t wait to get home and see the family. I’ll be even happier then, but for now I am good. Maybe it’s because I only have two finals this semester. So it will be easier for me to concentrate on the material for those two tests. That could be it. As for [name], well whatever goes, goes. I don’t really care at this point. I really do care, but I am happy right now...

...I am: happy, [a] boy, efficient, carefree, happy-go-lucky, satisfied with myself, uninterested in drugs, sober, working, hungry, excited, trustworthy, moving on, understanding, caring, sentimental, bored, somewhat tired, unsatisfied with my roommate, happy to be here, looking for a significant other, Sig Ep, a partier, friendly, not self-centered, a good listener, goal-setter, goal-seeker, a golfer, basketball player, a tennis player, trendy, a prep,[looking for] a nice girl, a man who knows how to treat the ladies....

It was evident in the preliminary study that many of the characteristics I believed to be important in an individual’s successful transition to college and which all relate to learning the "culture" of the educational institution -- (a) understanding that college is an organized system that must be learned and negotiated; (b) realizing that academic and social success are measured differently in college than in high school; (c) becoming familiar and comfortable with academic and social processes; and (d) finding their social and academic niche-- were salient for students during their freshman year. For example, the characteristic involving finding their social and academic niche was seen as part of
the students' need to define themselves in relation to their past, present and future. It allowed them to "place" themselves socially and academically in terms of peers and possible career professions.

Becoming familiar and comfortable with academic and social processes can be seen within the context of students recognizing the control they have over their decisions and their subsequent consequences, including decisions relating to courses of study and career, and the importance of establishing friendships and relationships to the quality of their college experience. And finally, understanding that college is an organized system that must be learned and negotiated was evident in their increasingly definitive statements and reminders regarding college coursework. Their statements demonstrated an early struggle with how one "does" college (e.g., course schedules, homework, quizzes and exams, faculty interactions, peer relationships, extra-curricular activities, etc.)

The preliminary study was helpful in identifying a few key concepts for further study and allowed me to determine the utility of the research methods employed. It also helped to further refine the study, in that I neglected to address the broader concept of the institutional culture to which students transitioned. (In the preliminary study, I primarily focused on how learning and negotiating the institutional culture affected students' self-concepts.) As a result, the research design has been modified to include this as well by conducting an ethnographic study of the freshman-year experience as detailed in the chapter that follows.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA ANALYSIS

Chapter Three will describe the design of the study (including issues related to its intended goals, participant recruitment and the coding of data), the use of various ethnographic methods to collect and analyze narrative data, and research limitations.

Research Design

The study was undertaken in September 2000 after receiving Institutional Review Board approval. A computer programmer was secured to create a website that would be used by students to complete an on-line survey and to submit journal entries.

Research Goals

It was the goal of this research to:

• Conduct an ethnographic study within a Midwestern American private research university of college freshmen to determine how the culturally constructed identity of “college student” is a factor in the successful transition of students from high school to college as a result of their socialization to this new social status or role;

• Identify key themes that are salient for students within this transition;

• Identify a process for the formation of this identity; and

• Determine possible differences in the themes or process of forming this identity between first-generation college students and those who are considered second-plus generation college students.

For purposes of the study, the successful transition of students, or their persistence, is defined as students’ completion of the freshman year with intent to return to the university the following year.
Research Site

The study site, hereafter known as “Charter University” or “Charter,” is a private research university in the Midwest which was founded in the early 1800s as a liberal arts college to train clergy. In the mid-1960s, the college merged with an engineering school (founded in the late 1800s).

Seventy percent of its enrolled freshmen for the 2000-2001 academic year (N=837) graduated in the top 10% of their high school class, and close to 90% graduated in the top 20% of their high school class. Approximately 43% of the freshmen admitted indicated they intended to major in engineering, 37% in arts and sciences, 3% in nursing, 4% in management, and 13% were undecided. (See below for a comparison of demographic information between the freshman class and study participants. See also Chapter Four for additional information regarding the research site.)

Participant Recruitment

Students were recruited through presentations to freshmen-dominated courses and through phone calls based on students’ responses to the on-line survey. As a result of the addition of a survey of freshmen and incentives offered by various faculty and teaching assistants to encourage student participation in the study (i.e., one extra credit point or an excused absence from class), three consent forms were created (Appendices A, B and C). The incentives produced a change in the original benefits provided by study participation, which necessitated submission of an addendum to the Institutional Review Board detailing the addition of these incentives. Addendum approval was received in October 2000.
The research study provided two opportunities for freshmen to participate. The first involved the completion of an on-line survey (Appendix D). Students were asked to log onto the study website to answer 21 demographic and open-ended or qualitative questions in order to provide baseline information regarding a number of variables such as age, gender, ethnicity, intended major, total family income, and mother’s and father’s education. Students’ responses to the qualitative questions were used to identify current self-definitions, to assess their previous adjustment strategies to new environments, to ascertain their reasons for attending college, and to learn their existing beliefs regarding the definition of a “college student.” It was anticipated that the qualitative information would also be useful in the interpretation of the journal and interview data collected from the participants. Students who opted to participate in the survey were finished once they completed the survey. (All surveys were completed during the first two weeks of the study.)

The second portion of the study, or the “primary-study,” (hereafter known as the “study”) was conducted throughout the academic year, and was comprised of

- **Survey**: completing the survey of general information (cited above) on-line at the study website (Appendices E and F);

- **Journal**: providing weekly written information in the form of a journal at the website to use as data for the study during the fall semester. The minimum requirement was two postings per week;

- **Interviews**: participating in two (1) one- to two-hour audio taped interviews—one at the end of the fall semester and one at the end of the spring semester (See Appendices G and H, respectively, for interview scripts).²

² The original design of the study called for participants to complete another on-line survey one week before finals; however, as a consequence of the inconsistent participation of students in the on-line journals and the limited accessibility to students as a result of course and exam schedules, the design of the study was modified—the survey questions were instead included in the second interview.
Each of the participants had access to a computer for their personal use throughout the study. All data were saved on hard and disk drives to prevent their loss and hardcopies were printed as backup and for placement in study files (data were kept in a secure location away from the campus.)

- **Survey**: 122 students² completed the survey—approximately 14% of the freshman class (N=837);
- **Journals**: 33 of the 122 students submitted journals;
- **Interviews**: 39 students³ participated in both interviews (i.e., 33 students who submitted journals and six additional students from the survey.)

The original goal was to have the study participants (N=39) approximate the demographics of the campus in terms of gender and ethnicity. Twenty females (51%) and 19 males (49%) agreed to participate. This is in contrast to the demographics for the freshman class (N=837), where males are 61% of the total and females are 39%. However, the ethnicity of study participants was relatively close to the total freshman class in four of seven categories—White/Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American and Native American (Table 2).

² All participants were at least eighteen years of age.

³ To effectively manage data, the committee recommended that N≤40.
# Table 2

## Study Participants by Ethnicity

(N=39)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Study Participants (%)</th>
<th>Freshmen Class (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>73.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown/Other</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

4 From "Charter University" report on Student Retention By Ethnicity, Fall 2000

5 Student self-identified as Hispanic/Caucasian

Another of the goals was to have one-half of the participants as first-generation college students and the other half second-plus generation. I was able to recruit 14 first-generation students, or 36% of participants, which is slightly higher than the university's average of 33% for the freshmen class as a whole. As noted, first-generation college students have been found to be more susceptible to dropping out of college than students who are not first-generation as a result of a number of factors including: (a) college being a "significant and intimidating cultural transition" for students (Terenzini et. al 1994:62); (b) higher education being of less importance to the parents, thereby negatively affecting the amount of encouragement and support students receive (London 1989, Padron 1992); (c) parents more likely to be low income -- students, therefore, are more likely to have attended a public school with few resources for college preparation, and are more likely to have difficulty paying for a college education (London 1989, 1992; Terenzini et. al 1994, Tinto 1993); and (d) difficulty having discussions with family members and friends who can not identify with their new experiences (London 1989:146).

All participants in the study lived on-campus. In contrast, approximately 80% of undergraduates (N=3500) reside in dormitories at the institution under consideration. Commuting students were excluded from the study.

**Data Collection**

As noted above, students who opted to participate in only the survey were finished once the survey had been completed. A total of 122 surveys were received. In addition, printed materials provided to freshmen relative to their selection of and matriculation to the University were collected from departments that have the most interaction with freshmen (i.e., admissions, financial aid, academic affairs, academic...
support and orientation) as well as the University department responsible for the collection and dissemination of general and statistical information regarding Charter University. In all, 103 documents were collected. Printed materials were considered relevant as "artifacts" of the culturally figured world of Charter University (Holland, Lachiocotte, Skinner and Cain 1998:60-61). Artifacts allow figured worlds to be "evoked, collectively developed, individually learned, and made socially and personally powerful."

It is through artifacts, like printed materials produced by Charter University, that freshmen apprehend the figured world of the college.

Journals

Once consent forms were completed, students were given the website address and were asked to login and complete the survey. The website required that students create a unique screen name that would become their identity for the purposes of the study. In order to access the website in subsequent logins, students had to type in their unique screen names. (To protect student anonymity on-line, all responses received by me were stripped of the sender's email address.) Journaling was considered a valuable tool, in that it is through the process of journal writing, writers become "conscious of who they are, what they stand for, [and] how and why they differ from others" (Fulwiler 1987:3), and it provides them a method through which to narrate their lives.

Students who agreed to participate in the study with the journal were expected to log into the website at least twice a week during the fall semester and discuss whatever was on their mind. The first semester is important because, according to Levitz and Noel (1989:66), the first two to six weeks of the freshman year are considered the "most critical transition period." Unfortunately, after the first three weeks of the study (which
coincided with mid-term exams), it was clear that the 33 students who agreed to participate in all three portions of the study were not submitting journal entries at the level I had hoped and that had been required for the study. Consequently, it became necessary to send email reminders each Monday and Thursday with the website link included in the message to make it easier for students to login. These biweekly reminders increased journal participation somewhat, but not to the extent anticipated---of a maximum of 24 entries, students provided the following (Table 3):

**TABLE 3**
**JOURNAL ENTRIES (N=33)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Journal Entries</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5</td>
<td>13 (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>8 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>7 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 or more</td>
<td>5 (15%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By late October, it was apparent that the journal portion of the study would not yield the kind of data that had been collected during the preliminary study. (Participants submitted a total of 282 journal entries.) It was therefore determined that the emphasis shift from the journals to the interviews.

**Interviews**

Students were interviewed over a one- to two-hour period prior to finals in late November and early December and again in late March through early May. Thirty-nine students were interviewed in the fall and 37 were interviewed in the spring. One of the two students who did not participate in the spring withdrew from school after the first semester and the other student did not respond to repeated requests for an interview.
All interviews were audio taped. During the fall semester, students were given several options for the interview location (e.g., dorm, office, library, etc.) in order to give them some control over the process. Spring interviews were primarily scheduled in the library, which was considered a central location and a neutral space. A testing room in the library was secured through a university staff member as an interview site.

I posited that participants' responses would elicit deeper insight to the freshman experience that neither the survey nor the journals could provide because

- survey data, while helpful, provided little opportunity to evaluate changes in students' experiences over time—it was a "snap shot" of students' current beliefs and opinions at the beginning of the semester without the benefit of their reflections over the first semester.

- journal data allowed me to narratively track students' experiences and changes over the course of the first semester. And because students chose the topics of their journal entries and student participation was sporadic, many of the questions I had regarding a "college student" identity were not addressed.

- interviews enabled me to ask students for more detail regarding their journal entries, as well as to gain insight to their acquisition of cultural knowledge over the academic year in the formation of a "college student" identity. It also allowed me to identify themes that may not have been apparent during the survey and journal portions of the study. Using interviews to identify themes is consistent with Harkness' (1993:115) view that the "analysis of discourse" that results from interviews is useful in research on cultural models of the self because it allows the researcher to "derive patterns of propositions, themes and metaphors that constitute cultural meaning systems."

Interview tapes were transcribed, entered into a computer database for analysis, and a copy printed for the study file. Approximately 83.25 hours of audio tape was recorded.
Coding and Data Analysis

Coding

The demographic information requested in the survey were quantified for both survey participants (N=122) and study participants (N=39) according to the categories of age, ethnicity, gender, geographic location, intended major and family income (see Appendices E and F, respectively). The survey also asked for the educational attainment of participant's parents in order to determine first-generation and second-plus generation student status.

Responses to qualitative questions included in the survey, journal entries and interview transcripts were analyzed using NVivo qualitative software to assist in the identification of themes.7

Initial categories were established based upon student responses to the qualitative questions included in the survey. This was accomplished by creating a comprehensive list of responses. Next, journal entries were coded according to the categories that were already established. New categories were also identified and incorporated into the list. Then, interview data were coded and placed in appropriate categories. Again, new categories were identified and incorporated into the list.

Six major categories were identified based on the frequency of responses attributed to that category (see Appendix I for inclusion criterion). They include "adjustment," "college," "independence," and "relationships." For example, journal and interview statements regarding class schedules, homework, possible transfer, and survey responses relative to students' reasons for attending college, their definitions of the term

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7 Although qualitative software was utilized, all categories and themes have been determined by me.
“college student,” and the characteristics they ascribe to college students, were all coded under the heading of “college.”

Within these major categories, subcategories were also identified (Table 4) based on specific student responses (e.g., “I am more comfortable at ‘Charter University,’” was coded as Adjustment/Comfortable; “Making friends makes all the difference in your college experience” was coded as Relationship/New Friends. It was also coded as Adjustment/External to denote that the student identified someone or something else as important in their adjustment to college in comparison to students who identified personal characteristics such as having an “open mind” as key in their adjustment to college.) This process is supported by Colby and Peacock (1973:618) who state that the frequency of particular words or themes is a valid method of identifying a “culture-using group’s expectancy pattern.” They argue that these frequencies may indicate the strength of “psychic investment” in the message by group members or the salience of particular themes to group members.

Themes were later identified based on the salience of the theme for students--if a particular category was referenced by students in each of the three sections of the study (e.g., survey, journal, interview), I identified it as a theme. For example, the category “Relationships” included the subheadings of “Dorm,” “Greek Life,” High School Friends,” “Intimate,” “New Friends,” “Parents and Family,” and “Sports.” Within this category, the theme of “Making New Friends” was identified as being especially relevant to students in each of the portions of the study. Themes were also generated by the number of responses attributed to a particular category (e.g., the theme of “comfortable, comfortable/fit” was identified because 44% of first-generation (N=9) and 50% of
### TABLE 4
NARRATIVE ANALYSIS BY CATEGORY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADJUSTMENT+</th>
<th>COLLEGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College as camp</td>
<td>Classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>Culture--campal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable/fit</td>
<td>High School vs. college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>Definition of college student+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Talk</td>
<td>Lifestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Possible transfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study skills</td>
<td>Traits of college student+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDEPENDENCE</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choices</td>
<td>Dorm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom from parents</td>
<td>Greek life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom in general</td>
<td>High school friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Intimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maturity</td>
<td>New friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical appearance</td>
<td>Parents and family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bold** denotes categories that were created based upon words used or statements made by participants (e.g., “I thought college was just like camp…”)

+ denotes categories I created based upon specific survey questions, like “What traits are characteristic of a college student?”

The remaining categories were based upon themes I identified within the narrative data.

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second-plus generation students ($N=25$) who submitted journals made reference to establishing a comfort level at Charter University.

Data Analysis

Ethnographic methods, in this case the interviews with study participants, the analysis of narrative information provided by students and printed materials furnished to freshmen by Charter University—admissions booklets, housing brochures, course registration materials, University policies and procedures manual, and orientation schedules and workshop information—were analyzed in order to describe the context in which students were situated and to explicate the process of cultural acquisition and identity formation in freshmen. Narratives were considered invaluable to this undertaking because, according to Holland, Lachiocotte, Skinner and Cain (1998:22), “self-discourses and practices” provide important “clues to...the culture—that shapes the malleable self.” Narratives also are tools for “collaboratively reflecting upon specific situations and their place in the general scheme of life”; narratives can show the structure or coherence of discourse, and it can demonstrate the complexities of discourse as well (Ochs and Capps 2001:2-8). Moreover, narrative analysis allowed me to describe the process of the incorporation of a new self-identity, to identify the role of self-identity in an individual’s successful transition to a new sociocultural environment, and to provide insight into the everyday lived experiences of freshmen. As noted above, survey, journal and interview data were analyzed in relation to one another.

Data obtained from surveys, journals and interviews were analyzed using narrative theory. Narrative theory is premised on the notion that individuals actively organize culture through “stories of self” (Eisenhart 1995:3). Eisenhart theorizes that

Additionally, individuals are assumed to "construct past events and actions" in personal narratives in order to "claim identities and construct lives" (Reissman, 1993:2). Polkinghorne states that narrative psychologists and philosophers believe that cultures maintain and communicate their "identity answers in storied form," and that members retain them in storied form (1996:365). Moreover, Colby and Peacock theorize that as social scientists focus more attention on psychological and social processes, the search for "cultural and symbolic correlates" of these processes could be found through narrative (1973:632). Narrative data collected through interviews and journals have been used extensively in social science research (Bell, 1988; Kluckhohn, 1945; Gannett, 1995; van den Broek and Thurlow, 1991; Baumeister, Wotman and Stillwell, 1993; Baumeister, Stillwell and Wotman, 1990; Fulwiler, 1987; Becker, 1964; Bunkers, 1993; Baldwin, 1977; Bateson, 1989; Belenky, et al., 1986; Eakin, 1985; Holland and Kipnis, 1994; Linde, 1993; Olney, 1972, 1980; Rosenwald and Ochberg, 1992).

Specifically, the narrative data were analyzed (a) to identify indicators or criteria that relate to the cultural construction and identification of a college identity, (b) to determine the role of the college student identity in student persistence, (c) to identify a process for the development of a college student identity, (d) to compare the data of first-
generation and second-plus generation college students relative to this process, and (e) to assess the relevance of the five themes identified in the preliminary study\(^8\) (N=5) to this process (i.e., self-concept was experienced narratively in specific relation to the past, present and the future; independence and control (including issues of freedom and responsibility) were salient; friends or relationships figured prominently; self-talk was important for defining or re-defining self-definitions; and personal and relational coping strategies played a role in the adjustment to college.) The results of the preliminary study demonstrated the value of narrative data.

Printed materials were analyzed in reference to the themes identified through data analysis to determine if the same themes were incorporated into the information the University provided freshmen. It was found, for example, that admissions materials introduced prospective students to concepts that the University considered important, such as the freedom to choose their majors. This concept was consonant with the theme of students having the freedom of choice in several aspects of their college experience (e.g., courses, housing, activities, etc.)

Furthermore, the data suggest that several characteristics influence whether an individual makes a successful transition to college (as measured by their completion of the freshman year with intent to return the following year). The characteristics involve students

- understanding that college is an organized system that must be learned and negotiated;
- realizing that academic and social success are in several respects measured differently in college than in high school.

\(^8\) The preliminary study was conducted in September 1997 to identify themes for further research regarding self-identity, enculturation and student persistence in a college environment.
• becoming familiar and comfortable with academic and social processes (e.g., working with faculty advisors and various departments; living away from home for the first time with roommates, etc.); and

• finding their social and academic niche.

First-generation and second-plus generation data were compared for particular variables to determine significance. (Chi-square calculations were conducted on cells of two or higher. Calculations and interpretations of data based on cells smaller than five may, therefore, warrant caution. These data have been included as a means of comparison for specific variables.)

**Limitations of the Study**

Several limitations have been identified. First, the 122 survey participants represent 14% (N=837) of the freshman class, and the 39 study participants represent 5% of the freshman class, and may not be generalizable to larger populations. Secondly, students gave multiple reasons for participating in the study: eighty-three of the 122 students who participated only in the survey portion of the study cited faculty incentives of earning an extra credit point or being excused from one class. Of those who continued in the study (N=39):

- 31% journaled previously or were interested in self-discovery through journaling;
- 28% wanted to participate in a college research project or to help future freshmen by sharing their experiences;
- 23% responded to the faculty incentives;
- 10% desired a written record of their freshman year; and

9 While more than one response was possible, the principal responses of participants have been reported (mean responses=1.8).
Consequently, generalizations to larger populations are limited, and they may represent a small sample of students who were relatively (1) inclined toward self-awareness through journal-writing and (2) oriented to social participation and cooperation in this context. These limitations provide an interpretive context for the findings which might vary, for example, in relation to students not similarly included to academic participation or personal reflection through the medium of journal writing. Third, as previously noted, relative to the demographics for the total student body, there was a tendency for females to be somewhat over-represented in the study sample. And finally, commuting students were excluded from the sample.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter Four will report the findings of the study and will introduce concepts identified by the research. The Chapter is divided into four major sections—Research Site and Subjects, The “Charter University College Student” Identity, College Persistence and Attrition, and the Chapter Summary.

Section one will provide an overview of the historical and cultural aspects of the research site, Charter University, as well as situate study participants within the context of Charter University. Section two will describe and discuss (a) the characteristics participants identified as representative of having a “Charter University college student” identity, (b) the influence of the cultural environment, or the “culturally figured world” of Charter University on the development of these characteristics, and (c) the process by which these characteristics were formed within the figured world of Charter University. A comparison will be made between the responses of first-generation college students and second-plus generation college students relative to the development of a “Charter University college student” identity. Section three will describe the factors identified by participants and me as key to their transition to and persistence in college. I will argue that these factors are consonant with an identity of “Charter University college student” as defined by study participants.
RESEARCH SITE AND SUBJECTS

Research Site

Charter University was originally founded in the early 1800s as a liberal arts college to train Presbyterian and Congregationalist ministers for a Midwestern region of the United States. In fact, the first seven presidents of the college, who together represent 103 years of its history, were themselves members of the clergy. This arrangement would remain in place until the mid-1930s. Although religious education was its primary mission for the first twenty-two years of its existence, its charter by state mandate was secular.

The educational philosophy of the liberal arts college was consistent with the belief that "the purpose of education was not to turn out individuals who were alike, but to develop their differences." The curriculum of the liberal arts college of Charter, in addition to theological courses, offered what it considered at that time to be a general education, which included courses in Greek, Latin, and the classics. The theological and general education classes were the primary courses of study required by every student at Charter. The general education courses were required because the trustees believed them to be foundational to the creation of an "intellectual aristocracy," a term used by many in reference to the men who attended college. Over time, however, and with the addition of other courses of study, the college began to encourage students to pursue their personal interests through the selection of majors. According to the University's historian, the first non-clergy president did not advise a classical education for everyone, he believed that the "selection of one's major interest should depend on taste and capacity." This was a shift in terms of the philosophy of the institution from one of limited support for the
development of students' individual interests and choices in their educational program, to
one of freedom to pursue a program that was more consistent with their interests.
Inherent in this shift was the notion that a general education was no longer "the" only
education students could receive; students were now encouraged to engage in greater
intellectual and personal discovery at the level of the individual.

The engineering school of Charter was founded in the late 1800s, almost a century
after the liberal arts college. Its primary mission, according to one of its early leaders was
to "produce engineers." Unlike the liberal arts college which struggled at various points
in its history with its academic reputation, the school of engineering had a reputation for
high admission standards and academic excellence. It also had a reputation for
"hardworking" students. For example, one of the institution's early presidents stated that
the academic program was so demanding that students didn't have time for athletic
activities. This president also expressed the opinion that a student who attended what was
then the liberal arts college of Charter was a "rather irresponsible young man who goes to
college to get a general education. He has no definite idea as to what he is going to do
after he gets out; he frequently selected the studies which are the easiest, and he is greatly
interested in the outside activities of the college." In contrast, he said that the engineering
student "is thinking all the time of the profession for which he is being trained." For him,
an engineering student was a "professional student" compared to a "collegiate student"
who attended the liberal arts college and who did not "intend to do anywhere near as
much work as the professional student."

As noted, the federation of these two institutions—the liberal arts college and the
engineering school—was accomplished in the 1960s. The federation meant more than the
combination of academic and material resources; it also meant the joining of two very
different traditions and value systems, in that the legacy and the philosophy of the liberal
arts college encouraged student choice and the exploration of individual interests, while
the engineering school fostered an environment where students were expected to work
hard and to primarily focus on the pursuit of a career. According to study participants,
these traditions and values are still very much in evidence in Charter University today.

The liberal arts and engineering traditions also required that students be
responsible members of their respective schools. In the case of the liberal arts college,
students were required to adhere to a strict code of conduct known as the “Rules of
Order.” Violation of the rules resulted in fines, “marks,” suspension or expulsion. By
comparison, the school of engineering assumed its students were responsible relative to
liberal arts students who, as noted above, were described as “rather irresponsible.” Today
at Charter University, students are told that they must take personal responsibility for
their “behavior and their work” in order to “safeguard the standards” on which the
University community depends. Two statements taken from the 2000-2001 Handbook for
Undergraduate Students, which was given to all incoming students, serve as examples of
the ways in which Charter University communicates two tenets of its value system to
freshmen—individual rights and responsibilities, and freedom to pursue and to express
individual interests (the second statement may also be found in the Faculty Handbook):

Universities seek to preserve, disseminate and advance knowledge. At
“Charter”, as elsewhere, we recognize that to fulfill these purposes
requires a norm of expected conduct shared by all in the University
community, governed by truthfulness, openness to new ideas, and
consideration for the individual rights of others, including the right to hold
and express opinions different from our own... The culture of the
university also requires that the rights of all be protected...
Fundamental to the purposes of the University is the belief that progress in social and individual welfare is ultimately dependent on the maintenance of freedom in academic processes. Especially vital is the protection of expression which is critical toward conventional thought or established interests.

These examples from the Student Handbook relative to the University's expectations for its members, or as Charter defines them, the institution's "norm of expected conduct," include support for the "openness to new ideas, and consideration for the individual rights of others," for the "rights of all" to be protected, and for the "protection of expression."

(The University reinforces its message during orientation, where freshmen are required to attend a session on the "Academic Issues and Values at 'Charter' University.")

I submit that the process of enculturation to the values and cultural norms of Charter University is equivalent to an individual becoming an "actor" or participant in Charter's "culturally figured world" (Holland, Lachiocotte, Skinner and Cain 1998:41):

...figured worlds are historical phenomena, to which we are recruited or into which we enter, which themselves develop through the works of their participants. Figured worlds, like activities, are not so much things or objects to be apprehended, as processes or traditions of apprehension which gather us up and give us form as our lives intersect them.

And that it is through this enculturation process that a new identity of "Charter University college student" is formed:

...The identities we gain within figured worlds are thus specifically historical developments, grown through continued participation in the positions defined by the social organization of those worlds' activity.

I will discuss in section two how this figured world is communicated to students. I will also describe how the figured world of the University assists the development of characteristics students' identified as representative of a "Charter University college student" identity.
Additionally, the history of colleges and universities in general is thoroughly tied
to the notion that college attendance is the beginning of the transition from adolescence to
adulthood in terms of preparing individuals to take their places in society as responsible
citizens (Dobbert 1974, Moore 1976). For first-generation and second-plus generation
students who responded to the survey (N=122), their first year in college was often
described in terms of (a) learning to live away from their families and to be self-reliant
(Table 5):

... It’s exciting, I am an only child so I have never really shared a room or
been on my own. It’s also really stressful, I feel overwhelmed a lot, but
I’m sure that is just normal. It feels like I have to succeed now, not just
because I want to but because there is so much riding on whether I fail or
not. (Survey: Sarah, female, first-generation)

I would describe this phase of my life as difficult, but a lot of fun too. I
had a hard time meeting people when I first got here, but now I have a few
people I can hang out with and I usually have fun when I am with them. I
like being able to do what I want to do when I want to do it. Even though
I miss my parents, I am enjoying being in charge of my own life. (Survey:
Joan, female, second-plus generation)

(b) becoming independent-agents who were free to make their own decisions:

... This period of my life is awesome in the fact that I have freedom to do
things, and the freedom not to do them as well. In many ways, I think this
is definitely going to be the best period of my life. (Survey: Allen, male,
first-generation)

... AWESOME, so far college has been great. The freedom and people
have made the transition to college life very easy and fun. (Survey: John,
male, second-plus generation);

and (c) feeling as if they were in a transitional phase of their lives:

... Hectic, in transition, and under construction. (Survey: Jerry, male, first-
generation)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase of Life</th>
<th>First-Generation N=32</th>
<th>Second-Plus N=90</th>
<th>χ²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Transition</td>
<td>20 (63%)</td>
<td>58 (64%)</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stressful, Demanding, Challenging</td>
<td>18 (56%)</td>
<td>28 (31%)</td>
<td>6.35*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn to Live Away From Family</td>
<td>13 (41%)</td>
<td>29 (32%)</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence and Freedom To Make Decisions</td>
<td>11 (34%)</td>
<td>35 (39%)</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exciting, Interesting, Fun</td>
<td>6 (19%)</td>
<td>29 (32%)</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Exploration/Discovery</td>
<td>5 (16%)</td>
<td>23 (26%)</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet New People and Make New Friends</td>
<td>5 (16%)</td>
<td>19 (21%)</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find or Pursue Career</td>
<td>5 (16%)</td>
<td>13 (14%)</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less “Smart”</td>
<td>3 (9%)</td>
<td>8 (9%)</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Beginning, Fresh Start</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>3 (3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05
I think that this is a transition time where I can recreate and [sic] myself and truly discover who I am. It's a very exciting time and I am thoroughly enjoying all of the new experiences. It's really great to be on my own and to finally be my own person. (Survey: Joanne, female, second-plus generation);

First-generation students were more likely to describe this as a time of stress and challenge (p ≤ 0.025). Students in both groups also defined this period as a time to find or pursue a career.

Less obvious, perhaps, were the comments of first-generation and second-plus generation students in regards to various aspects of college that may be less visible than others, but that are supported by the figured world of Charter University. (The following discussion will provide a brief overview and will be expanded in section three under the heading “College Persistence and Attrition.”)

First, for both first-generation and second-plus generation students meeting new people and making friends was a factor in their adjustment to college:

...The best adjustment is when there are friends that you can make to help you get through it. It is horrible to be alone without friends in a new environment. It is comforting when there are nice people to help [sic] the adjustment period. (Survey: Brandon, male, first-generation)

...Since I have never moved anywhere in my life or really experienced a major change in environment until now, I guess I could comment on how I have been adjusting to “Charter” University...Basically, the people you are around and become friends with help you adjust. Your friends help you to become more comfortable in a strange environment. Without making new friends, I don't think I would have been able to adapt here. (Survey: Nathan, male, second-plus generation)

Secondly, first-generation and second-plus generation students also found college to be a time of self-exploration and self-discovery; this was particularly true for second-plus generation students:

...I wanted to go to college primarily to further my education. I also wanted to go to experience a new place, new people, and new culture.
Being in a bigger place offers many more things to do and see, and I wanted to be a part of that. I also thought that it would help me develop myself better and solidify my convictions. (Survey: Natalie, female, first-generation)

...I wanted to go to college to get out of my house. It was becoming far too stressful. And as cheesy as it sounds, I wanted to go to college to find out who I really was, what my purpose was in life. (Survey: Bob, male, second-plus generation)

For an equal proportion of students, this self-exploration or discovery involved them confronting a change in their identity from that of “smart” to that of “less smart” as a result of Charter's academic environment and its requirements:

...It is actually pretty smooth other than getting used to not being one of the smartest people around... (Survey: Allen, male, first-generation)

...I’m having a hard time adjusting to the fact that I am not one of the smartest people here like I was in high school. I am struggling with some of my classes, which is difficult for me to handle, but I’m getting through it. I think when I look back at this period of my life, I will see it as a very positive time... (Survey: Joan, female, second-plus generation)

One of the cultural artifacts of the figured world of Charter, (i.e., the Undergraduate Instructor’s Manual), contains a statement that recognizes the salience of this particular experience to students who are new to the University:

Although all students deserve focused attention and guidance, first-year students may need special assistance in adjusting to the demands of the university...students new to “Charter University” will encounter new demands and difficulties in academic performance... One of the challenges new students face is adapting to the rigorous academic demands of “Charter”... (Taken from the Undergraduate Instructor’s Manual of “Charter” University, in the section entitled “Teaching Students To Be Students.”)

And finally, the concept of college as a “new beginning” or “fresh start” was cited by several students. These students remarked that attending college allowed them to recreate themselves in their new social environment as reflected in statements such as
"I consider this time in my life to be a new beginning. I have a chance to start over in a new social environment and not make many of the same mistakes I have made in the past..." (Survey: Richard, male, first-generation)

"I have become who I want to become; at home I had a personality that followed me around and I could not become who I want to, but here I got to start all over again." (Survey: Kai, female, second-plus generation)

"This stage of life is a metamorphosis for me. Coming to a college that is so far from home provides me with an opportunity to forget the past. I came here without knowing a single person, and this gives me the chance to be my own individual. I don't have to try to act a certain way or conform to a certain image like so many people do in high school" (Survey: Nathan, male, second-plus generation)

Participants stated that attending Charter University allowed them to think differently about themselves in a new social environment because 36 of the 39 study participants arrived knowing no one. As a result, these students were able to explore other aspects of themselves and their identities. According to 57% (N=8) of first-generation study participants who completed the interviews (N=14) and 68% (N=17) of second-plus generation participants (N=25), this kind of self-reflection prior to attending Charter was difficult because their high school culture was one of conformity among students, and of sanctions imposed upon individuals who did not conform to a group's cultural norms:

...Yeah, like when I was a senior in high school, I pretty much got the impression that it was like [sic] just a lot better than high school 'cause [sic] my high school was really cliquey. And I was very cliquey, I'll admit. But it was just that people were forced that way. And when I was a senior, I got the impression that everyone's open and everyone just wants to be friends with everybody, which is kind of the case, but it's...I mean, you've got frats and stuff and you've got cliques and...but it is a lot better than high school... (Interview: Colin, male, first-generation)

Participants also related that their new experiences at Charter enabled them to view college as a "new beginning" because of the diversity in the student body relative to ethnicity, gender, class, political and religious viewpoints, and the exposure to new ideas.
in and outside of the classroom. Many students said that contact with people that were
different from and unfamiliar to them caused them to see themselves from a different
perspective, and to not only question their values and beliefs, but also their personal
identities.

Research Subjects

Seventy percent of Charter University’s freshmen who enrolled for the 2000-2001
academic year (N=837) graduated in the top 10% of their high school class, and close to
90% graduated in the top 20% of their high school class.

To better attract high achieving students, Charter University implemented an
automatic scholarship program in the late 1980s and increased its financial aid to
qualifying students. Both of these measures were designed to make the University more
attractive to students who might not otherwise consider it an option. According to both
first-generation and second-plus generation students (Table 6), this strategy has proven to
be very effective. (Second-plus generation students who noted the University’s cost as a
factor in their decision to attend, stated that Charter was less expensive than other schools
as a result of either the scholarship or the financial aid package they received.)

Furthermore, both first-generation and second-plus generation students stated that
Charter’s reputation as one of the best private universities in its region, especially in
science and engineering, was a major factor in their decision to attend. As a result, the
majority of the freshmen, approximately 43%, admitted in the 2000-2001 academic year
(N=837) planned to major in engineering. (Thirty seven percent planned to major in arts
and sciences, 3% in nursing, 4% in management, and 13% were undecided.)
The intended majors of first-generation and second-plus generation students who participated in the survey were fairly consistent with those of the freshman class as a whole relative to their interest in a particular academic concentration (Table 7), particularly engineering. For first-generation students who continued their participation in the study, engineering was their primary choice, followed by courses in the arts and sciences (Table 8). Second-plus generation students in the study, however, indicated that engineering was a distant second to arts and sciences; 11 of the 17 second-plus generation students who expressed an interest in arts and sciences planned to major in biology or psychology, and the remaining students planned to major in anthropology, music education, physics, history, communication disorders, and literature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHOICE OF CHARTER UNIVERSITY* (N=39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*More than one response possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mean =4.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FIRST-GEN.</th>
<th>SECOND-PLUS</th>
<th>( \chi^2 )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=14</td>
<td>N=25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation</td>
<td>14 (100%)</td>
<td>23 (92%)</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship/Financial Aid</td>
<td>14 (100%)</td>
<td>20 (80%)</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Expensive</td>
<td>13 (93%)</td>
<td>24 (96%)</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intended Major</td>
<td>12 (86%)</td>
<td>22 (88%)</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>11 (79%)</td>
<td>19 (76%)</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment Visit</td>
<td>6 (43%)</td>
<td>13 (52%)</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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TABLE 7
INTENDED MAJORS*
SURVEY PARTICIPANTS (N=122)
*More than one response possible
(Mean=1.1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIRST-GENERATION</th>
<th>SECOND-PLUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>19 (59%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Sciences</td>
<td>13 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Med*</td>
<td>3 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided/Unknown</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 8
INTENDED MAJORS*
STUDY PARTICIPANTS (N=39)
*More than one response possible
(Mean 1.2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIRST-GENERATION</th>
<th>SECOND-PLUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>8 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Sciences</td>
<td>6 (43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Med</td>
<td>2 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown/Undecided</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As previously noted, the cultural values of intellectual exploration, academic choice, personal expression and personal responsibility, high academic standards, hard work and career preparation are very much in evidence today as stated by study participants, and continue to be perpetuated within the University community.

* Charter University does not have a pre-med major. As a result, students who designate pre-med as their intended major are asked to designate one of the majors offered by Charter instead. Study participants were not subject to this limitation in the survey.
Section two will expand on these topics in light of the data obtained from survey and study participants regarding the identity of a “Charter University college student”—the characteristics associated with it, and the important role of the figured world of Charter University in the formation of its characteristics. The section will close with a discussion of a process by which these characteristics could develop.

THE “CHARTER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE STUDENT” IDENTITY

I proposed that a “college student” identity that is consistent with the cultural environment, or the culturally figured world, of a particular college, like Charter, is an overlooked factor in a student’s persistence in that environment. This section will describe and discuss (a) the characteristics participants identified as representative of having a “Charter University college student” identity, (b) the influence of the Charter’s figured world on the development of these characteristics, and (c) the process by which these characteristics were observed to be formed within the cultural setting of Charter University.

Characteristics of a “College Student”

Participants in the survey were asked to list the traits associated with college students (Table 9). First-generation and second-plus generation students agreed not only on the list of characteristics, but also on their relative importance. The only characteristic that appeared to be of more significance to second-plus generation students was the characteristic associated with becoming independent from parents; 87% (N=78) of second-plus generation students referred to this characteristic compared to 63% (N=20) of first-generation students (p≤ 0.01). (See also Table 12- “Reasons for Attending College” [p≤ 0.05]).
TABLE 9
SURVEY SUMMARY
CHARACTERISTICS OF COLLEGE STUDENT* (N=122)
*More than one response possible
(Mean=3.5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>FIRST-GEN. N=32</th>
<th>SECOND-PLUS N=90</th>
<th>χ²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independence From Parents And Personal Responsibility (e.g., no supervision, independent, responsible for themselves, maturing, etc.)</td>
<td>20 (63%)</td>
<td>78 (87%)</td>
<td>8.72*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom To Choose (e.g., “free to make decisions.” “fate in own hands.” “choices.” etc.)</td>
<td>19 (59%)</td>
<td>57 (63%)</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn About Self (e.g., “finding identity.” motivations, interests, etc.)</td>
<td>9 (28%)</td>
<td>26 (29%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make New Friends, Meet New People</td>
<td>8 (25%)</td>
<td>28 (31%)</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Management (e.g., “ability to balance social and academic.” stays up late studying, busy, etc.)</td>
<td>7 (22%)</td>
<td>24 (27%)</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare For Career</td>
<td>7 (22%)</td>
<td>21 (23%)</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart/Intelligent</td>
<td>6 (19%)</td>
<td>14 (16%)</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studious (e.g., enjoys learning, dedicated to knowledge, etc.)</td>
<td>6 (19%)</td>
<td>20 (22%)</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardworking (e.g., diligent, focused, determined, etc.)</td>
<td>5 (16%)</td>
<td>18 (20%)</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Characteristic Characteristics</td>
<td>5 (16%)</td>
<td>12 (13%)</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stressed, Confused, Tired</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td>9 (10%)</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor/In Debt</td>
<td>3 (9%)</td>
<td>13 (14%)</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open to New Experiences (e.g., adventurous, curious, inquisitive, open-minded etc.)</td>
<td>3 (9%)</td>
<td>7 (8%)</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05

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### Table 10

**Study Summary (N=39)**

*Characteristics of College Student*

*More than one response possible*  
*(Mean=5.1)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>First-Gen.</th>
<th>Second-Plus</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First-Gen.</td>
<td>N=14</td>
<td>N=25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence From Parents and Personal Responsibility</td>
<td>12 (86%)</td>
<td>22 (88%)</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g., no supervision, independent, responsible for themselves, maturing, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom To Choose (e.g., “free to make decisions,” “fate in own hands,” “choices,” etc.)</td>
<td>10 (71%)</td>
<td>20 (80%)</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make New Friends, Meet New People</td>
<td>10 (71%)</td>
<td>19 (76%)</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn About Self (e.g., “finding identity,” motivations, interests, etc.)</td>
<td>9 (64%)</td>
<td>20 (80%)</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Management (e.g., “ability to balance social and academic, etc.)</td>
<td>9 (64%)</td>
<td>16 (64%)</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare For Career</td>
<td>6 (43%)</td>
<td>13 (52%)</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardworking (e.g., diligent, determined, etc.)</td>
<td>4 (29%)</td>
<td>9 (36%)</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart, Intelligent</td>
<td>4 (29%)</td>
<td>6 (24%)</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Characteristics</td>
<td>3 (21%)</td>
<td>5 (20%)</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First-generation students often communicated that attending college was something that they did in order to fulfill not only their dream, but also their parents' dreams of earning a college degree—because the parents did not attend or were unable to complete college, their hope and expectation was that their child would earn a degree in lieu of them. Consequently, first-generation students felt a special bond with their parents in this regard; establishing their independence from their parents, as a result, was not as much of an issue as it was with second-plus generation students. Alternatively, second-plus generation students expected to go to college and to pursue a specific career, such as engineering or medicine. Second-plus generation students described their desire to "live on their own," to be away from home and those things that were familiar to them.

Interviews with study participants yielded similar results to those obtained from the survey in terms of nine characteristics first-generation and second-plus generation students stated characterized college students (Table 10). Four characteristics were not mentioned by students in the study (i.e., "studious," "poor/in debt," "stressed, confused, tired," and "open to new experiences.") One trait, in particular, that of learning more about themselves (including self-identities, motivations, and interests), though not significant (p < 1.0) was considered by second-plus generation students in the study to be more representative of college students than it was for first-generation students.

What is notable about the characteristics obtained through the survey and the study interviews was that the same top six characteristics were cited in the same order by participants:

- Independence From Parents And Personal Responsibility
• Freedom to Choose
• Meet New People and Make New Friends
• Learn About Self
• Time Management
• Prepare for Career

The characteristics of "hardworking" and "smart, intelligent" were mentioned by both groups as well.

Approximately 16% (N=5) of first-generation students who participated in the survey (N=32) and 13% (N=12) of the second-plus generation students (N=90) believed that college students were too diverse to be stereotyped:

…There are not [sic] really any traits characteristic of a college student. Like all people, all college students are different. Some are more dedicated than others. Some like to party more than others. Some are more intelligent than others. Some are leaders and others are followers. You have to avoid stereotyping people, and trying [sic] to name typical characteristics of a college student is like stereotyping. (Survey: Richard, male, first-generation)

…Again, that depends on the student. A college student should do whatever they want with their 4 years. If that means partying, so be it. If it means slaving over textbooks, so be it… (Survey: Joanne, female, second-plus generation)

While 21% (N=3) of first-generation study participants (N=14) and 20% (N=5) of second-plus generation students (N=25) agreed that college students could not be stereotyped:

…There's so many different...like I think on this campus there's just a lot of different people because there are the people that stay in their rooms and like that don't come out and you only see them when you have a fire alarm one morning (L) and then there's the kids that play the sports and you see them out throwing the Frisbees and talking in the dining hall and stuff so... (Interview: Andrea, female, first-generation)
It's pretty close I think. The traits may be similar but vary with each person because I feel a lot of similarities between people here...
(Interview: Linda, female, second-plus generation)

Each of the characteristics will be discussed below.

**Independence From Parents And Personal Responsibility**

As discussed previously, participants viewed college as a time wherein they became more independent of their parents and more responsible for their lives. Eighty-six percent (N=12) of first-generation study students who completed interviews (N=14) and 88% (N=22) of second-plus generation students (N=25) mentioned this as well:

...A lot of freedom and a lot of responsibility at the same time...a lot of new people to meet, things to do...Well, freedom can go two ways. I mean [sic], a lot of it is being responsible, and then a lot of it is social life...but you've got to deal with different aspects of it. But, yea [sic], you're definitely aware of it. I mean within the first week, actually when they [parents] first left, you were kind of aware of it...Yea [sic], it did happen suddenly...it kind of happened over the course of the first week, I think I realized...there were just certain days that I didn't have to call them and tell them I was going somewhere, just stuff like that... (Interview: Colin, male, first-generation)

...Transition meaning going from your old life to this new life which you really don't know what to expect. Like [sic] you know you're going to live there and you're going to go to class and stuff, but it's completely different living in a dorm first of all, with all these people around you, and getting to know a whole different group of people. And you're here on your own, like [sic] having to motivate yourself—your parents aren't hanging over your back saying, “Do this, do that,” you know [sic], “You have this appointment that you have to do”...You're really on your own in terms of living your life, and just adapting to it and being able to adjust and say, “Okay, I can do this,” you know [sic], “My mom's not here, but that's okay, I'll manage my own stuff, manage my own appointments, and come up with it on my own.” (Interview: Lillian, female, second-plus generation)

Both first-generation and second-plus generation students talked a great deal about the fact that they were looking forward to being away from home and starting their “adult”
lives. The difference between the two groups was primarily in the degree to which they wanted to leave home—as noted, second-plus generation students appeared to be more intent upon leaving home than first-generation students. A possible reason might be that second-plus generation students seemed to have more of their lives ordered for them in terms of lifestyle and academic expectations; many of these students discussed living in “good” or “wealthy” suburbs, where strict social conformity was the rule, and where their parents’ expectation was that their child would go to a “good” college and pursue a particular career, like medicine or engineering. However, this did not appear to be the case for first-generation students. While their parents wanted and expected them to go to college, first-generation students did not appear to have the same pressure to go to a “good” school, rather it was hoped that they would go to college and earn a degree. The motivation for a particular career seemed to be coming from the student instead of their parents.

Additionally, first-generation students made comments that suggested that because they were considered the “smart one,” their parents expected them to attend college (this did not appear to be as much of an issue with second-plus generation students, who were simply expected to attend college):

...I think the whole family... like, [sic] I don’t know, like [sic] I guess I’m the smart one of the family... you know [sic]... it was just sort of... they’ve always talked about, so it was like it wasn’t really a choice... it was something I wanted to do... but, you know... (Interview: Brandon, male, first-generation)

As a result of the high degree of social conformity and parental oversight of second-plus generation college students, attending college for them seemed to be more of an escape from a fairly restrictive life to one that allowed them to make their own
decisions and to live life on their own terms. Whereas, for first-generation students attending college appeared to be less of an escape from home and more of the next step in the learning process for someone who excelled academically.

Furthermore, Charter University supported students’ independence from their parents and personal responsibility with the first packet of information a prospective student received from the undergraduate admissions office because with few exceptions, Charter communicated directly to students. This direct communication sent a subtle message to students and their parents that the University viewed students as having control over where they would attend college. Subsequent mailings, including financial aid information (and later in the semester, grade reports), were also addressed to students. (In contrast, information from high schools was primarily addressed “To The Parent(s) or Guardian(s) of...”)

The University’s initial contact with students was mainly in the form of a glossy booklet (i.e., viewbook) that highlighted the programs, activities and a number of features of the college. It also included the application for admission to Charter, its deadline for submission, and the deadline for submission of the financial aid application. (Financial aid applications were sent to students under a separate cover letter by the financial aid office.) Students, not parents, were expected to submit the appropriate forms and to adhere to all deadlines. Failure to do so could jeopardize the student’s admission to Charter University or their financial aid award.

There are four exceptions to this: (1) parents of prospective students are sent a newsletter entitled “Staying Connected” that addresses the most frequently asked questions of parents; (2) parents are sent an envelope as part of the freshman orientation packet. The envelope includes a letter from the Dean of Students, a parking voucher for orientation, a list of the first-day activities, a list of hotels, and a registration card for the Family Orientation; (3) parents of current students are contacted by letter to request their participation on Charter’s parent advisory board; and (4) parents of current and graduated students receive solicitation letters and phone calls for donations to the University.
Upon acceptance to the University, students received another packet of information detailing the enrollment process. Included in this packet was a housing application. For students who planned to live on-campus, the housing contract had to be read and signed by the student, who now had the legal status of an adult as confirmed by their ability to sign a binding contract without their parent or guardian’s signature. The contract obligated the student to Charter’s residence hall policies. An excellent example of the adult status conferred on freshmen, as well as the University’s expectations of freshmen can be found in another of its publications it sent to students:

The Office of Housing and Residence Life realizes that students are adults and treats them as such. The students, in turn, are expected to act responsibly and safely, while following University rules.

Once students selected Charter University, they were sent a series of forms for completion. Students were expected to read and to complete their registration materials by a certain deadline. The responsibility for the completion and return of all forms and the observance of all University policies and procedures fell solely on the students. The 2000-2001 Handbook for Undergraduate Students, which was included in the registration material, was also very clear in its message to students as well:

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the requirements, regulations and deadlines that pertain to their academic programs and activities. Ignorance of these is not justification for exceptions or exemptions.

(During orientation, students were required to attend a session where this information was communicated to them by Charter administrators.)

The second phase in the socialization of freshmen to Charter began during orientation, which occurred one week prior to the return of upperclassmen. Orientation consisted of a week of comprehensive activities (parents were encouraged to leave after
the first day of orientation) that were designed to acquaint students to the campus; to afford them opportunities to meet new people and build new relationships with other freshmen; and to better inform them (and their parents) of their rights, privileges, and responsibilities as members of the campus community.

One of these rights is the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). FERPA is a federal law that applies only to students 18 years of age and older, and mandates that student information be kept confidential unless the student gives written permission to have the information shared. Under this law, parents are legally prohibited from accessing any of their child’s information (e.g., academic, psychological, medical, etc.) without their child’s written consent. Furthermore, Charter is required by FERPA to notify students of their “rights and the University’s policies and procedures” on an annual basis. This federal legislation is also a primary focus of the orientation of all University faculty and administrators who interact with students; FERPA conveys to students, parents and University faculty and staff that students are independent agents, who are fully responsible and accountable for their actions, their personal information, and their decisions relative to their attendance at any college or university in the United States, including Charter University.

By the time students arrived on campus, they had been told in a number of subtle and not so subtle ways that Charter University viewed them as adults, and that as adults, they would be held responsible to not only read, understand, and complete all forms (including binding contracts), but also to adopt attitudes and behaviors consistent with the “norms of conduct,” or the cultural norms of Charter University.

_________________________

*Exceptions can be made in the event of certain kinds of disciplinary actions, medical emergencies or death.*
Furthermore, the status of "adult" in America generally confers upon the individual the freedom to make independent choices. Consistent with this, the University communicated to freshmen that they were independent-agents who were expected to make their own decisions.

**Freedom to Choose**

Forty-three percent (N=6) of first-generation students and 52% (N=13) of second-plus generation students in the study discussed having the freedom to make independent decisions:

...It was...good to be away from home, to have independence, you know, not have someone hovering over you...telling you what to do, when to be back...do your chores, do this, do that...So it was a lot of freedom and just the ability to do whatever you want...And to know that you don't need someone telling you what to do to fulfill your responsibilities... (Interview: Richard, male, first-generation)

...Still getting comfortable living on my own, you know, making all the decisions...deciding when I eat and not just when my mom says dinner's ready...getting comfortable with balancing all the time with all the work I have to do because I'm still trying to get a job, and I haven't been able to do that this semester either because like [sic] I'm still figuring out how to get all my homework done... (Interview: Joan, female, second-plus generation)

The freedom to choose is fundamental to the experience of attending Charter University. Freshmen were given a variety of options that did not exist prior to attending college (e.g., academic and social activities, housing, course selection, majors, careers, etc.) Consequently, they had to make choices that they had not had to make in the past. For example, in high school, students had three academic tracks: college preparation, basic education, or vocational. Once the track was selected, the courses were fairly prescribed; students had relatively few courses or electives from which to choose as a
result. Charter University, though, offers over 100 majors and minors; therefore participants were able to choose from a substantially larger menu than that offered in high school.

Having so many choices was new to both first-generation and second-plus generation participants; they each recounted a story about having to figure out what to do, how to do, and when to do a particular thing. Some were exhilarated by the notion that they could leave or return to their dorm any time of the day or night, while others enjoyed the fact that they could stay up all night or visit other dorm rooms without having anyone tell them that it was time to go to bed. Most felt as if they were finally in control of their lives—they truly were the "captains" of their ships and they were excited about the choices that were available to them at Charter and as adults:

...Well, it's a little bit more relaxed because, like again you don't have pressure from your parents like, "Go do you work." It's about your own choices...and you do have more time to like just mess around with your roommates, it's a little bit more relaxed in that sense, that you're like on your own and you can take your own breaks and stuff...(Interview: Colin, male, first-generation)

The downside to having and making choices, first-generation and second-plus generation students related, was the fact that there were so many choices to be made, and that if they made the wrong ones, the consequences would be their consequences.

Meet New People and Make New Friends

During the first four weeks of classes, 71% of first-generation students (10 of 14) in the study and 76% of second-plus generation students (19 of 25) stated that they focused a tremendous amount of energy on finding new friends. Friends were viewed as
helpful in allowing students to establish a social foundation that would more quickly connect them to the flow of campus life:

...So, I met like [sic] a really cool group of friends and I just love being around them. And they’re kind of different, like [sic] the things we have in common or the humor we share or, you know...our personalities, the way they mesh, are a lot different from the way I was with my friends at home. So that definitely, I think, it defines my college identity, because I can feel myself...I feel different when I’m around them, like [sic] I can express myself in a certain way that like [sic] back home, my friends wouldn’t be able to understand the context of it all because they’re like [sic] not up here and maybe...not as much of an inside joke, but just like [sic] the way we talk about things. (Interview: Natalie, female, first-generation)

...I think that I expected...it was kind of interesting to come and have...meet people who are just all of a sudden my friends. And like, this is my group of friends, these are people who I trust all of a sudden. Whereas, at home it took me years and years to build up relationships like that. And I never really expected that right off the bat [sic] I would have really close friends that I was able to talk to. (Interview: Linda, female, second-plus generation)

For 4 of the 10 first-generation students (referenced above) for whom finding a friends was important and 6 of the 19 second-plus generation students (referenced above), the search for friends was more intimate, in that they were looking to establish a romantic relationship with someone; or as one student put it, “an intimate other.”

According to these participants, a romantic partner accomplished two goals: he/she helped them to become comfortable in their new setting or eliminated their need to search for friends:

...It was actually before I came here. I was thinking life [sic], “I don’t want to bother making friends again and whatever, I’ll just find some girl and just hang out with her all the time.” But then, nothing happened. So, now I have some good friends and we [sic] just chill...(Interview: Larry, male, first-generation)

...So, yeah, the first week was like, “Wow! Who are all these...”...[name] and myself [sic] was kind of drawn into something, where like [sic] ...I was really good friends with this guy, and then all of a sudden, you know
[sic], we’re becoming closer and... and it was strange... And I realize now looking back that... it may have gave me a sense of security... (Interview: Mary, female, second-plus generation)

However, 14% (N=2) of first-generation students who completed the interviews (N=14) and 16% (N=4) of second-plus generation students (N=25) stated that they had a difficult time trying to find friends compared to their peers. One student, in particular, described it as not feeling “close” to anyone:

...I don’t know, I don’t trust... it’s not that I don’t trust people, but you know like [sic], I don’t know... I don’t feel close to anyone here really... so I’m still talking to all my friends from home, so it’s sort of like [sic]. I do need some people here, but I don’t know. Like [sic] I’m okay with my friends at school... but they’re moving... they’re sort of moving on, and I’m trying to, but it’s like [sic] I can’t from here for some reason, just because... everyone is gone on the weekend or everyone is doing something... there’s really no one... and that’s hard too... (Interview: Brandon, male, first-generation)

Forty-Four percent (N=4) of students who submitted journals (N=9) and 50% (N=12) of second-plus generation students (N=24) stated that making friends allowed them to become comfortable in college; they demonstrated that finding their social niche, or a place where they “fit” was important:

...So far college is not all of [sic] what I expected it to be. The people around here aren’t too sociable. Most of them seem to have found their own little clicks [sic] already and are sticking to them. I have met a lot of people but not really any who I would consider to be friends. Sure. I talk to them when I see them or sit with them when I go eat, but that’s about it... I guess I just haven’t met any group where I really fit in. At first I got along good with a couple of frats and was assured that I would get a bid to join. But when the time came, the bids didn’t. I don’t know what happened. So, all I have to do is concentrate on my work, which is what I came here for anyway. The friends will come with time. Hopefully... (Journal: Richard, male, first-generation)

... (a girl in my study group) is fast becoming one of my best friends. I’m so glad that I chose the group that I am in!! They have turned out to be my closest and truest friends so far... (Journal: Adrienne, female, second-plus generation)
There is something very gratifying about making new friends. They are always fascinating to talk to until very late hours into the night. I seem to be wandering around my dorm until well after 3 a.m. chatting with people with whom I'm beginning to form close relationships... (Journal: Linda, female, second-plus generation)

Roommates, residence hall members, fraternity brothers, sorority sisters, and sports team members were also considered by students as being the principal individuals who helped them to adjust because they were often upperclassmen, who introduced students to their friends and included them in their social activities. They were also instrumental in dispensing advice and referring students to others who could provide assistance. The upperclassmen were the "old hands" that Gearing (1976:194) described--they helped to enculturate freshmen who were the "newcomers" to Charter through sharing their perspectives on the formal and informal rules in operation at the University, the strategies and resources that were available to students, and their personal insights based on their experiences as students at Charter.

In the quest for finding friends and establishing a comfort level quickly, I wondered if students had unconsciously attempted to recreate their high school relationships in college. Forty-three percent (N=6) of first-generation students who completed the interview (N=14) and 52% (N=13) of second-plus generation students (N=25) believed that students unconsciously try to find people like their friends from home:

...Yeah, I think that's true... they're not consciously... because everyone had a lot going on at school, no matter what people said, but they always want to go back to the same things that they did when they were in high school because it was so much fun or because that's what they're used to. But I don't think that it's something consciously that they do, but I think everyone else is doing it. (Interview: Colin, male, first-generation)
...I felt myself doing that with people. I almost felt that they look like, you know [sic], my friend here, and I would be like [sic], “Wait a second.” Almost now [sic] I realize it because I’m not friends with them anymore...that I probably kind of [sic] gravitated towards them because they reminded me of people back home just in the way that they acted, or the way that they looked, or stuff like that. But, I think it’s mostly just finding people who you’re comfortable with. (Interview: Lillian, female, second-plus generation)

Fourteen percent (N=2) of first-generation students and 12% (N=3) of second-plus generation students did not believe that recreating high school relationships was an important part of the transition to college and the remainder (14% [N=2] first-generation and 12% [N=3] second-plus generation) weren’t sure.

While making friends was considered by participants as an important part of establishing a comfort level in college. I noted that 21% (N=3) of first-generation students who completed the interviews (N=14) and 24% (N=6) of second-plus generation students (N=25) mentioned the affect that meeting new people in college had on their self-identity:

...Part of it was that...just starting at the beginning...like [sic] you go to high school...you’re kind of with like [sic] the same group of friends your whole life, and you’re not really...I was around the same people, you know [sic], and not really exposed to a lot of different things. And then I come here, and then I’ve met a lot of people that are more like me, and then since they’re more like me, I can kind of grow in those areas. Whereas like you know by communicating you grow and you can exchange ideas. But back home maybe there weren’t people into those things like [sic] whatever I’m into or...People at home wouldn’t have the same beliefs or thoughts I had, so I wouldn’t get to expand on it. I would just have what I thought about it, and I wouldn’t hear feedback. So I come here, and I would strengthen my convictions because I hear what other people say or maybe I change my convictions ‘cause [sic] I interact with more people. And so I feel more mature because I’ve heard...I’ve seen from a lot of different people just [sic] a lot of different things. And people are so real it’s just...talking to people and just hearing about their life and about what they think about things now. It makes me like...it’s different from what I’ve heard before. ‘cause [sic] you know [sic], I’ve known all these people before, so these are all new people. And it like [sic] helps me
Like [sic] it shifts things around and shapes things in my mind and kind of makes me reconsider things or you know... (Interview: Natalie, female, first-generation)

One student said that in her effort to meet people, she had to explain herself more because people didn’t know her the way her high school friends knew her. Consequently, the act of explaining herself to others caused her to reevaluate her old self-image and her possible new identity:

...I think it might a little bit... because even when I got here, I like [sic] wondered if I should change or not... because everything was new here, and so I was thinking, you know [sic], maybe I'd have to change in order to adapt to everything around here and my identity wasn't what it should be anymore... Everything's new and so you look at yourself a little differently and wonder if that's the same person you're going to be... because I realized that they haven't experienced like [sic] everything I have. So, you kind of have to think of it on different levels... they don't know what you're talking about... you more have to explain it and so... they don't understand everything that you've gone through like your friends would back home, you know, you'd say one word, and they'd understand. Here, you'd say the word, and they'd have no idea. So you have to think about that more, and kind of change your view... like the way you explain everything so that they'll understand... (Interview: Rhonda, female, second-plus generation)

Both first-generation and second-plus generation students stated that developing friendships at Charter played a crucial role in helping them to adjust to the University's cultural environment because their new friends provided them training in the cultural rules and expectations of the campus environment, and they often helped them to create a network of support.

The importance of establishing friendships in a new environment is not specific to a college setting; it can also apply to participants' high school and elementary school years, as well as any number of contexts. However, both first-generation and second-plus generation students stated that most of their high school friends were also their
elementary school friends. Therefore, when they left for Charter University, they left behind the friends they had grown up with; they found themselves in the position of having to establish, for the first time in several years, a new social network. Because the pool of potential friends was more diverse at Charter than in participants’ high schools, students had greater exposure to people they may not otherwise have come into contact with. The act of living on-campus in a dormitory, unlike their high schools, required students to learn how to live with someone who was not related to them, which caused students to learn new social skills and to establish relationships quickly.

Learn About Self

Sixty-four percent (N=9) of first-generation study participants and 80% (N=20) of second-plus generation participants commented that during their first-semester of college, they felt free (from parental and peer pressure from high school friends) to revisit their high school identities. Participants found that they could independently decide to either maintain the identity they had, portray their “true” identity or take on a new identity:

...Your identity shifts to a lot, and yet it’s also like [sic]... because if you don’t have anyone telling you where you need to be, there’s no right way. You either do this and you become what you need to or, you know [sic]... (Interview: Allen, male, first-generation)

...College definitely does make you, you know [sic], find who you are... In high school, you knew people from when you were a little kid, so you come to college and you can decide, you know [sic], “Did I like myself in high school?” “Do I want to change the way people saw me in high school?” So, it’s like you have a whole new slate to begin with. So, the first time you meet someone, you can become a whole other person. (Interview: Henry, male, second-plus generation)

---

4 No participant attended boarding school.

5 This is not to suggest, however, that having a roommate automatically translates into establishing a friendship.
...I know that I'm much more confident now and I feel like I'm much
to myself than I am when I go back... because I've lived where my
home is... since fourth grade. So, it's like [sic] I've been with the same
people all the way up through elementary, middle school and high
school... And when I was in elementary school, I was very shy after I'd
moved after 3rd grade. The school I went to was very mean, and the people
who we were around a lot they put you down if you were different... and
they'd put you down, and stuff like that [sic], if you didn't wear the right
clothes... they were like [sic] in the cliquey group who wear the
Abercrombie clothes and stuff like that [sic]... most of the people, a good
majority of the people in my high school, they mostly came from my
elementary school. So that was kind of a shock... I used to be like I am
now; I was very outgoing and talkative, and then I wasn't anymore. And
so that kind of traveled with me all the way up into high school... So when
I came here, I've completely broken away from any expectations people
had of me before, like how to act or "How did I always act?" or "What did
I always do?" I can do anything I want here and be whoever I want...
(Interview: Lillian, female, second-plus generation)

Students stated that high school required conformity, whereas college allowed for
freedom of thought, expression, speech, and dress. As a result, students' did not feel
condemned when they began acting or thinking in ways that they believed to be
indicative of who they "really" are:

... I think you've got to find your identity through the changes that come
because the person that you were in high school is fine. I mean, you were
that way because you were that way since day one, and you don't really
change. But once you get to college, you're out on your own; you can be
your own person. You don't have to worry about what somebody thinks of
you because they're all gone now; it's just all new people... So you can be
the person that you want to be. And to some degree, you're going to be the
person that you were... and with all these changes, you learn to find your
own identity... (Interview: Colin, male, first-generation)

However, one freshman had a different experience from the other participants—
rather than college helping him to find, to "become" or to recreate himself; it instead
caused him to lose the primary identity he had from high school:

... I know when I came here, my whole sense of self had become: "I am a
druggy. I do drugs and that's me." That's what I was pretty much known
as, like [sic] the person who is in the honors classes and does drugs. And
then I come here and tried to stop doing drugs and start over again. And now I'm like, "Who the hell am I now?" I don't know... (Interview: Larry, male, first-generation)

Moreover, both first-generation and second-plus generation students described their surprise at their exposure to new experiences and new people, and their affect on their personal views and identities. I observed that students were sometimes struggling with the opinions and values that they held prior to attending college—many had not been in a position of having their views challenged before. Others were confronting the prejudices they held, which may not have been apparent to them, because of their lack of interaction with or not having lived in close proximity to students who, in many cases, were completely different from the people they were historically more comfortable with.

Charter's cultural tradition of valuing personal exploration and expression provided students a means of self-orientation, in that students were constantly evaluating their identities in relation to Charter University's culture to determine if they "fit" within it. Another cultural value of Charter's—academic excellence—also provided students a mechanism for self-orientation. One important identity orientation of Charter students, according to study participants, was that of "smart student." In fact, the "smart student" identity was the primary high school identity of 8 of the 14 first-generation study participants and 14 of the 25 second-plus generation participants. For these students especially, socialization to Charter University may have necessitated not only a reevaluation of their identities, particularly that of "smart," but also a possible shift in their identities.

Having the identity as the "smart students" was very important to participants in terms of their self-definitions in high school as noted above. Participants related that their
high school years were spent working hard in challenging courses, earning excellent grades, and participating actively in their communities or in extra-curricular activities to ensure their admission to schools like Charter. By the end of the study, 21 students who had originally defined themselves as “smart” (7 of 14 first-generation and 14 of 25 second-plus generation) found it difficult to maintain this identity, and only one was able to maintain his “smart student” identity. (This student had been accepted into Charter’s medical school as a freshman on the condition that he maintains a grade point average of 3.5 as an undergraduate. By his acceptance into the program [fewer than 20 students are selected each year], he was considered one of the top students in his freshman class.) Consequently, these students began to change this portion of their identity because they were unable to attain the same level of success academically that they had come to expect of themselves:

...The shock basically of like trying to keep a “C” because I’m like [sic],... I don’t know; I’m smart but I’m not even close to some of these people here, so I have to try a little harder; things don’t come to me quick so... It’s kind of weird actually, because it’s completely different. In high school, I mean [sic], you sit there and sit back in class and explain everything to everybody else, and now you’re, “What do I do now?” you know?... (Interview: Christian, male, first-generation)

...I think especially as freshman you’re still set on the high school level, where you’re like [sic] okay, “A’s” equal good grades, A’s only. And then you figure “A’s”... and you’re a good student, and everybody loves you and you’re doing well and everything [sic]. And then when you get here, you realize that you’re not going to get all A’s and it’s kind of hard

1 Both first-generation and second-plus generation students described their surprise at their exposure to new experiences and new people, and their affect on their personal views and identities. I observed that students were sometimes struggling with the opinions and values that they held prior to attending college—many had not been in a position of having their views questioned before. Others were confronting the prejudices they held, which may not have been apparent to them, because of their lack of interaction with or not having lived in close proximity to students who, in many cases, were completely different from the people they were historically more comfortable with.
because for me to realize that a “C” was a good grade... (Interview: Ashley, female, first-generation)

As noted previously, faculty members were informed that one of the “greatest challenges” for many of Charter’s new students’ would be adapting to the University’s “rigorous academic demands.” Charter primarily attributes this to a lack of study and time management skills:

Students entering “Charter” University are among the most intelligent you will encounter; in recent years, three-quarters of the students have been in the top ten percent of their graduating classes, and SAT combined scores range from 1240 to 1440 for the middle 50% of the class. However, because they are so intelligent, many have not had to work very hard for good grades before arriving at college. Students for whom academic achievement has come easily may not have learned the study skills and habits that will be necessary for success in university courses. The relative freedom of the college environment, where some students are removed for the first time from the discipline they have known at home, will tempt many to spend their free time idly and skip classes without strict attendance requirements. The lower grades that inevitably result from such behavior will be a rude shock to students who have been accustomed to earning high grades with little effort.

**Time Management**

The issue that dominated the discourse of 100% of the first-generation (N=9) and second-plus generation students (N=24) who submitted journals was learning how to manage their time more effectively (i.e., balancing their academic requirements with their social interests):

... That night I tried to write a paper for the next day, but I was too tired to write plus I had to go to a review session for a math test...I went back to my room, instead of psychology, to try to finish the paper. The topic was trash and I wrote a bad paper. The printer was having trouble, so I had to email it to her. This whole process made me very late to class. After class was practice. The other tight end couldn’t be at practice today, so I had to take all the reps [sic]...So this is where I stand. I’m trying to relax but it’s not working. I really need a day to myself (that will never happen. I don’t have the time.) (Journal: Mark, male, first-generation)
...When it rains, it pours. One thing I don’t like about college life is the way things always happen to fall on the same day, or the same week. Tests, concerts, homework, projects, social events, it all falls together at the absolute worst times. Not that this never happened in high school or anything, but it has reached a new extreme here. I hate having to choose between sitting and studying for 3 hours or going out and rehearsing, or practicing, or joining some club or something. Weeks like these, with tests in every class plus a few projects thrown in, I just feel like I’m going one day at a time. Focusing on just a single thing really helps me keep my sanity. I figure I can worry about everything else when I absolutely have to... (Journal: Bob, male, second-plus generation)

For 56% (N=5) of first-generation who submitted journals (N=9) and 54% (N=13) of second-plus generation (N=24) the issue was also learning how to study. Students stated that they did not need to study much in high school to earn good grades (also recognized by Charter University as discussed above.) Therefore, college represented their first challenge in learning how to study:

...I’m very excited today. I took my chemistry exam in this morning and I’m feeling good about it. I’m happy because the last one I took, I completely bombed :-) I got a good feeling for this one though. This weekend is going to be jammed packed with studying. I’ve got plenty to do: calculus (test on Tuesday), history (paper due Monday), chemistry (homework due Monday), Spanish (paper due Monday), and last but not least English (paper due Tuesday). I’m going to have so much fun :-) ...I have realized that I miss high school. Life just seemed so much easier then. I want to go back, back to the teacher giving notes on the overhead and telling you exactly what you need to know for the test and nothing else to confuse you. And teachers being [sic] changing test dates around because you just aren’t ready yet. I miss it so much. College is just full of stress!!!! That’s all it is. My goal is to get through college without having a heart attack, a stroke, or getting ulcers! (Journal: Ashley, female, first-generation)

...From what I saw on my midterm grades, there are [sic] a class or two that I could seriously be doing a better job in. They happen to be my weak spots academically, but I should be able to do better. But overall, I am pleased with my grades. Not too bad for not knowing how to take notes, or study. I think I’m catching on though, so I’m anxious to see how I do on the next tests... (Journal: Bob, male, second-plus generation)
In addition, 64% (N=9) of the first-generation study participants who completed the interviews (N=14) and 68% (N=17) of the second-plus generation (N=25) study participants talked about the “hard work” Charter required of its students:

... ’cause [sic] I remember kids would come home for Thanksgiving and like [sic] say “Hi” to teachers, but we had to do... or something that was a real easy ... and we’re saying how hard it is or something, and kids would just like [sic], “If you think that’s hard, you should see college...” I just didn’t want to think about it. I just put it off like. “Yeah, I’ll worry about that when it comes.” I didn’t think it was that big of a deal. I didn’t realize how much it is... (Interview: Colin, male, first-generation)

... Just because you don’t go to class everyday, doesn’t mean you won’t have a whole bunch of homework, you know [sic]... [you say to yourself] “It’s got to be the same as high school, only you don’t have to go to class everyday, so it will be better.” But, no, it’s not... And that was... I mean, [sic]... ’cause [sic] that way you can prepare yourself then... I mean, like [sic] you know [sic], just be ready to... I mean [sic], I knew it was going to be hard, but I think it’s a little harder than I expected. It’s harder than I expected. (Interview: Joan, female, second-plus generation)

As discussed, Charter has a long-standing tradition of hardworking students, especially in engineering. And according to 57% (N=8) of first-generation students who completed interviews (N=14) and 68% (N=17) of second-plus generation students (N=25), this cultural tradition remains intact:

... There’s an ongoing joke at least among my friends about, you know [sic], the “Charter” student... mostly in the form of “Only at Charter...” Like [sic], for example, people taking glasses from [the dining commons] to the dining area and, you know [sic], making a pyramid and then someone else seeing that and makes [sic] a pyramid that’s more stable, and things like that... It’s very... it’s a very intellectual and technical college, and it attracts you know that kind of person... (Interview: Jerry, male, first-generation)

... I think that in coming to “Charter,” it’s important to realize before you get here that this school is like the exact opposite of [school name]... that we are nerdy, engineer [sic] people, and to accept that with, you know, with a sense of humor... Like just the other day at the physics pumpkin drop, like [sic] what do people at “Charter” do on Halloween? They watch
pumpkins drop to compare velocities...there were like 500 people there...I was looking at it...I just looked at them and I just like [sic] started laughing in the middle of this crowd...I just started looking around, and I just burst out laughing. It was hilarious! And I looked at my brother, and I like [sic], “Does this seem strange at all to you?”...I mean, just like that, you have to realize the humor in it, don’t you?! This is why we’re here! So, I mean, if you’re not that kind of person that on Halloween goes to a pumpkin drop to reaffirm the laws of physics, maybe “Charter” isn’t the place for you! (Interview: Adrienne, female, second-plus generation)

Fourteen percent (N=2) of first-generation and 24% (N=6) of second-plus generation students also described Charter’s culture as a mix of talented and intelligent students; 16% (N=4) of second-plus generation students (no first-generation students) viewed it as open to differing opinions and religions; and 7% (N=1) of first-generation and 4% (N=1) of second-plus generation students perceived it to be multicultural and diverse:

...It’s hard to say because I haven’t interacted with a whole lot [sic] of different groups, but if I had to say something from what I’ve encountered, I see a lot of like[sic] political beliefs, like a lot more than I’ve been exposed to before...and of course there’s like [sic] fraternities and sororities, and I don’t really get into that stuff. But I think there’s a certain kind of culture to an extent...like there’s [sic] a lot of smart people, so that definitely adds to it, in that it’s not a shallow culture. Like [sic] everything is really thought out...the different groups...have strong beliefs and people are really into what they’re into. (Interview: Natalie, female, first-generation)

...Very, very computer oriented. Extremely...if you don’t have a computer, you’re nothing on this campus. But, other than computers...I don’t know, it’s really quiet and...that’s the only way I can really describe it, it’s quiet...And another aspect of the culture...it seems like everyone is okay, like there’s no one who’s just kicked off to the side. You can be who you want to be...if you don’t run into the wrong people...no one will really have anything good or bad to say about you...no one really cares that much. (Interview: Mark, male, first-generation)

What was interesting about the comments students made was the fact that many believed that they would not need to work as hard at Charter as they had been led to
believe by people they considered authorities on college: their counselors and/or their parents. For others, their comments took for the form of, “I knew that college would be hard, but I didn’t think it would be this hard!” Overall, the students who appeared to have the most difficulty with learning how to manage their time and to study were those who graduated as the valedictorians or salutatorians of their high school classes, or who had earned very high grade point averages for most of their academic lives. These students felt that they had already perfected their time management and study skills as measured by their success in high school. Students who recognized quickly that adjustments were needed in their approach to classes and activities, were the students who said that they had to “work hard” in high school for their grades, or who had already experienced earning a grade of “C” or lower prior to college.

Prepare for a Career

Twenty-five percent (N=8) of first-generation students who completed the survey (N=32) and 48% (N=43) of the second-plus generation students (N=90) stated that their primary reason for attending college was to prepare for a career (Table 11). However, when study participants were interviewed (Table 12), 14% (N=2) of first-generation (N=14) and 44% (N=11) of second-plus generation students (N=25) cited it as their primary reason:

...I think, like[sic], it’s always been like [sic], “Okay, high school--time for college” I think, so...“Okay, I’m going to college now,” and like [sic]...but there was the aspect of, “Okay, I have to center my classes around what I want to do with my life”... (Interview: Ashley, female, first-generation)

...I see college primarily as a means to prepare me for my career... (Interview: Adrienne, female, second-plus generation)
TABLE 11
SURVEY SUMMARY
REASONS FOR ATTENDING COLLEGE* (N=122)
*More than one response possible
(Mean=2.7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>FIRST-GEN.</th>
<th>SECOND-PLUS</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepare For Specific Career</td>
<td>8 (25%)</td>
<td>43 (48%)</td>
<td>5.03*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful Future</td>
<td>15 (47%)</td>
<td>31 (34%)</td>
<td>1.55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secure Good Job</td>
<td>14 (44%)</td>
<td>25 (28%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learn</td>
<td>8 (25%)</td>
<td>30 (33%)</td>
<td>0.76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Next Step After High School,</td>
<td>7 (22%)</td>
<td>27 (30%)</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected By Family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Meet New People, Have</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td>24 (27%)</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursue Goals and Dreams</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td>23 (26%)</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earn Good Salary</td>
<td>5 (16%)</td>
<td>17 (19%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become Independent of Parents</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>20 (22%)</td>
<td>-4.07*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Discovery, Self-Exploration</td>
<td>5 (16%)</td>
<td>15 (17%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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*p < .05

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TABLE 12
STUDY INTERVIEW
REASONS FOR ATTENDING COLLEGE* (N=39)
*More than one response possible
(Mean=1.5)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
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<th>SECOND-GEN.+ N=25</th>
<th>( \chi^2 )</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Next Step After High School, Expected By Family</td>
<td>9 (64%)</td>
<td>11 (44%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepare For Specific Career</td>
<td>2 (14%)</td>
<td>11 (44%)</td>
<td>3.57</td>
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<td>Secure Good Job</td>
<td>4 (29%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>1.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Successful Future</td>
<td>4 (29%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>4 (16%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet New People, Have New Experiences</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursue Goals and Dreams</td>
<td>3 (21%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earn Good Salary</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Second-plus generation students in both the survey \( (p \leq 0.025) \) and the study cited preparing for a specific career (i.e., engineering and medicine) as their primary reason for attending college. It is interesting to note, however, that second-plus generation students, who stated that their primary reason for attending college was to prepare themselves for a specific career, did not rate this higher on the list of characteristics of college students (see Tables 9 and 10).

The characteristics participants associated with a “Charter University college student,” according to study participants, have been cultivated and encouraged by interactions primarily with other freshmen and upperclassmen. Less obvious, perhaps, are the subtle cultural messages students received through the various communications (i.e., cultural artifacts) from Charter that they received prior to and shortly after their arrival to the University that served to reinforce certain characteristics, like independence and responsibility. The development of some of the characteristics may have occurred prior to students’ matriculation to Charter; however, for the majority of students, many of the characteristics developed during their freshman year.

**Process for Developing a “Charter University Student” Identity**

I have proposed that developing a “Charter University college student” identity that is consistent with the culturally figured world of Charter should translate into cultural competency and persistence within the University.

One model relative to a process of identity formation, particularly cultural or ethnic identity formation, has been theorized by Helms (1987:242-243) as occurring in four psychological stages. The first stage, or the “pre-encounter” stage, involves the identification of individuals with the dominant culture and the disparagement of their
own. Stage two is the “transitional” stage, wherein individuals may feel confused or anxious about the loss of their former cultural identity, but excited about their decision to become a member of their own cultural group. Stage three, the “immersion-emersion” stage involves individuals limiting their social interactions to members of their cultural group, and possibly expressing anger at racism. The “transcendent” stage completes the process. During this stage, individuals have internalized their cultural identity or “biculuturality” (relative to their membership in their own culture and the dominant culture), and are able to use their experiences with both cultural groups to craft an identity that “fits” their lives. (See also Helms 1994, Phinney 1993, Phinney and Rosenthal 1992).

Myers, et al. (1991:59-60) proposed a different model of identity development and worldview. In Phase Zero, individuals have no awareness of being individuals. This phase is usually associated with infants and is known as the “Absence of Conscious Awareness.” In Phase One, “Individuation”—individuals only have the awareness that has been communicated to them through family values, and usually do not assign any particular meaning or value to any part of their identity. Phase Two involves “Dissonance”: individuals begin to explore aspects of themselves that may be devalued by others; conflict may arise between what individuals believe themselves to be and images of themselves as inferior that are false. Phase Three—“Immersion”—finds individuals spending time and energy on people like them who are devalued. During this phase, people learn to appreciate their devalued cultural identity. Phase Four, or “Internalization,” is a time during which individuals begin to feel good about themselves: they feel they have worth and they feel a sense of security as a result. They recognize that
the "salient part of self" is "one of many components of self-identity," and that they can be more tolerant of those who do not threaten their sense of self. Phase Five, "Integration," involves individuals changing their assumptions about the world as a consequence of their new-found sense of self and security; they recognize that oppression is a reflection of an individual's worldview. They also recognize that anyone can oppress or be oppressed, depending upon their assumptions of themselves relative to others. The final phase, "Transformation," is the phase during which individuals have an expanded view of themselves as a people who are connected to their "ancestors, those yet unborn, nature, and community." This phase culminates in individuals having a spiritual awareness instead of one that is connected to their external circumstances.

While both models are described as stages through which individuals move, researchers have also suggested that the stages could be concurrent (Helms 1987), and that some people may "stagnate" in one of the stages or may "recycle" through stages as a result of traumatic or difficult life experiences (Parham 1993:39).

Another identity development model is Holland, Lachiocotte, Skinner and Cain's (1998:270) concept of "practiced identities." Practiced identities are understood in relation to four contexts: (1) figured worlds, which are socially identified "frames of meaning" within which individual's actions are played out; (2) "positionality," which is linked to power, status and rank within a figured world; (3) "the space of authoring," wherein individuals arrange and give voice to the cultural discourses of figured worlds; and (4) "making worlds," where individuals through "free expression" can create new figured worlds.
The identity model I have proposed as most applicable to the development of a "Charter University college student," is the three-phase model of rites of passage: (1) the individual separates from a previously held role in the sociocultural environment and the identity associated with it; (2) the individual has an ambiguous identity relative to their former or future identity; and finally (3) the individual has been "transformed" into their new identity, which is consistent with their new role in the cultural environment. (I expand this discussion under the heading "Summary and Conclusion," and the subheading "Process of Developing a ‘Charter University College Student’ identity.")

The process of developing the characteristics of a Charter college student— independence from parents and personal responsibility; freedom to choose; make new friends; time management; smart/intelligent; and hardworking—appeared to have involved the following steps:

Step One: Smart, Intelligent — students were usually identified in their high schools as the "smart students." As a result, they were more likely to find a place like Charter University attractive because of the University's academic reputation (see Table 6).

Step Two: Independence From Parents and Personal Responsibility—students began to receive information directly from Charter University. Prior to and after matriculation, students were considered independent agents who were responsible and accountable for their decisions and their actions. They were also expected to adhere to all University policies and procedures. In addition, the University communicated to students and parents the students' rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Step Three: Freedom to Choose—Prior to and after matriculation, students were required to select from a larger menu of options relative to courses of study, housing, activities, etc. than was available to them in high school. Students also were able to determine their daily activities without parental permission or oversight.
Step Four: Make New Friends—once matriculated, freshmen were given a number of opportunities during Charter’s orientation and through other University-sponsored activities in order to meet and to “bond” with other freshmen, and to interact with upperclassmen. Participants viewed developing friendships as a key component in their adjustment to college.

Step Five: Time Management/Hardworking—students were confronted with having to manage a number of activities and assignments during the first week of classes. For most students, time management and study skills were a “learn-as-you-go” activity because, even though they had had academic success in high school, many stated that their grades were easily attained with little effort.

Step Six: “Learn About Self”—over the course of several weeks, students began to realize that attending Charter allowed many to “be who they truly are,” “to recreate” themselves, or to “find out” who they are because few knew anyone at Charter prior to their arrival. As a result, they did not feel constrained to retain their high school identities.

The process appeared to begin with the students having an identity as “one of the smart students” prior to attending Charter. These high achieving students were the University’s “target audience,” and they were the students most likely to find Charter of interest. Steps two and three were the students’ realization that they were independent agents with full responsibility for their lives and their decisions (including the consequences.)

Making friends on campus—or finding their social niche—was either step four in the process or was also concurrent with steps two and three. Making friends and finding their social niche were often the same issues in the minds of students because, having friends in their new environment helped them to adjust more quickly; friends allowed them to establish a niche or a comfort zone or a place where they “fit” on campus.
Friends, especially upperclassmen, were very instrumental in enculturating the students to
the University. Step five followed or ran parallel with steps 2-4. Step five was the
students' recognition that they were required to juggle an increased number of personal
and social activities, classes, faculty expectations, and course requirements. Learning
how to study was also part of step five: 56% (N=5) of first-generation students who
submitted journals (N=9) and 54% (N=13) of second-plus generation students (N=24)
were put in the unenviable position of having to learn how to study while adapting to
their new environment because they had little need to study in high school in order to do
well. The students who had developed excellent study habits were able to skip this step.

Step six involved students learning about themselves. Participants described
feeling free (a) to be the person they believed they had been hiding away from family and
former friends; (b) to explore their identities, their values, and their motivations in an
environment that did not judge them as harshly as high school; and (c) to recreate their
identities by virtue of the fact that "no one knew" them in college—they felt they could
begin to build a different identity as a result. One student summarized her process in the
following manner:

...it's so hard adapting to new professors. Like [sic] when you're in high
school, at least in my high school, I had the same teachers, you know [sic]
the whole four years basically. So, you know what they're going to be
like, you know what they want to do. And so you come to college and you
don't...you're so new with like [sic] professors and like [sic] having a
syllabus and not having your teacher tell you everyday, "Okay, for next
class, you have this due." And so for me finally getting into the college
student thing, it had a lot to do with study habits...finally getting set in my
study habits and like [sic] knowing how to study. And another part was
time management...my time management thing [sic], and balancing that
out with like [sic] my friends. So, I met a really cool group of friends and I
just love being around them. And they're kind of different; like [sic] the
things we have in common or like the humor we share, or you know, our
personalities, the way they mesh, are a lot different from the way I was

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with my friends at home. So that definitely, I think, it defines my college identity, because I can feel myself... I feel different when I’m around them, like [sic] I can express myself in a certain way that like [sic] back home my friends wouldn’t be able to understand the context of it all because they’re like [sic] not up here and maybe... not as much of an inside joke, but just like the way we talk about things. (Interview: Natalie, female, first-generation)

As reported by participants, this process within the context of Charter's cultural environment, enabled students to develop a “Charter University college student” identity. Furthermore, the process did not appear to be significantly different for first-generation or second-plus generation students relative to their identification of characteristics that they associated with a “Charter University college student” identity—both groups identified the same characteristics for college students in the same order, and with few exceptions, to the same degree.

The process as detailed above provides a general overview of my observations. It does not suggest, however, that all of the students who participated in the study followed this particular pattern, or that the pattern or the characteristics would be the same at a different college. For example, of the 39 students who participated in the study, one first-generation and three second-plus generation students stated that they had a significant amount of independence or responsibility prior to college. For these students, the process may have occurred in a very different way. (The remaining students found college to be their first opportunity to experience life on their own.)

I have advanced the theory that a college student identity that is consistent with the cultural setting of the college is an important factor in persistence within that college. I described the characteristics participants believed to be representative of college students at Charter University, and I discussed the affect of Charter's cultural traditions...
on the development of a "Charter University college student" identity and the process by which it was formed. In section three, I will argue that the development of a "Charter University college student" identity promoted students' persistence at the University.

**COLLEGE PERSISTENCE AND ATTRITION**

Charter, like other colleges, is interested in retaining its freshmen through graduation. Freshmen are provided detailed information about the people, information and technical resources that are available to them at the University.

During the first semester, it was clear from journal and interview statements that some students were struggling with not only the management of their academic and social lives, but also their personal identities within their new environment. The journals collected from study participants (N=33) and through the preliminary study (N=5) revealed themes that appeared to be salient to students during their first semester at Charter. They include:

- Students' self-concepts were experienced narratively in relation to the past, present and the future;
- Self-talk was important for defining or re-defining self-definitions;
- Personal and relational coping strategies played a role in the adjustment to college; and
- The engineering-oriented cultural environment of the University was a factor in students' successful transition to the college;

Each theme will be further elaborated below.

**Self-Concept Relative to the Past, Present and Future**

Approximately 33% (N=3) of first-generation students who submitted journals (N=9) and 38% (N=9) of second-plus generation participants (N=24) spent time talking
about who they had been, who they are now, and their hopes for the future. Much of their writing focused on the changes they or their friends were either undergoing or had undergone as a result of attending college. For example, students described the changes they had made, especially in terms of having become more mature (i.e., less silly and more responsible), more comfortable with themselves, less willing to maintain the same identity as high school (particularly if they believed that their high school identity was not an accurate reflection of them); more outgoing, more studious, etc. Two students described events that helped them to realize that the identities they had in high school had changed:

...I also realized some changes in myself. When I went to a party on Saturday night, I was forced into my old role of myself. It felt weird. It was like trying to place a square peg into a round hole or something. I can’t really define exactly what was so disturbing about this, but it was. I was forced to become more timid socially, as I guess I was in high school, and all of my friends wanted me to find the same things hilariously funny—even though they weren’t even when we were in high school. The only thing refreshing was seeing the jerks I always hated in HS [sic] and being able to not care what they thought of me... (Journal: Brandon, male, first-generation)

...I didn’t care to be back at home, but I missed my family and friends and I missed the good times I used to have. This would happen periodically, especially when things were slow here, but I was never depressed. Then I went home for fall break, and it happened to be my high school’s homecoming. Now I was a lot of things in high school. I was president of my class a few years, then senior year I was a student government officer for the whole school... and senior year I had been a part of what could be considered the homecoming king court... but I had also been a starter on the varsity football team... So homecoming had always been a big thing for me. When I was back there the other weekend, it finally dawned on me how [sic] that wasn’t who I was anymore. Life goes on there without the people from the year before. I have to start anew. I had realized this all before, but I guess it really sank in that weekend. Before, I had more of a summer camp mentality where this is temporary, and I’d always be able to return to things as normal. But they’re not. That has really helped me out in the long run, though. It makes me want to work hard to do many of the things I had done in high
school. I miss my friends from high school, but I don’t miss high school. I’m glad I’m in college now and getting to grow more and expand by experiencing these things on my own. It’s great and I look forward to how the rest of this year and all the others turn out. While I’ll never turn my back on where I came from [sic], it’s exciting to have the chance to start a new life and meet new people. (Journal: Seth, male, second-plus generation)

Another student shared her concerns about the changes her friends’ experienced while attending other colleges:

...I’m liking [sic] college for the most part. I really miss my two best friends who go to other colleges. I haven’t really found any one like them here. I think the reason I miss them is because, out of my group of friends, they’re the only ones to [sic] stay the same. I have several friends who have suddenly changed. Three of my friends have become promiscuous. I’m worried about their health and safety. And two of them have turned to alcohol. This wouldn’t seem shocking in some circles, but my group was the smart, clean cut group in high school. And now, our numbers are dwindling. I don’t see why people feel the need to massively change when they get to college. I understand that it’s a turning point in your life, but everyone knows all of the bad things that can come from promiscuity and drinking. I don’t know...(Journal: Joanne, female, second-plus generation)

Students’ interview statements seemed to focus a great deal on how surprised they were with their changes. Most stated that these changes were fairly subtle, like being more open to meeting people or walking up to someone they didn’t know and beginning a conversation. Others said that the changes were fairly dramatic—they were more talkative and no longer considered themselves the “quiet” students, they were more willing to try new things that they would normally not have attempted at home (including drugs and alcohol), and they were more forceful in offering and defending their opinions. Many were surprised at how well they were able to get along with their parents during their various holiday breaks. Two students described being able to sit down with their parents and having an “adult” discussion. They said that they felt differently toward their
parents and that their parents viewed them differently. The students’ said that “being away at college,” and having new experiences that changed the students’ perceptions of themselves and their capabilities, caused them to communicate the maturity they believed themselves to have attained only three months away from home. They felt that they could connect with their parents “on their level,” which the students noted was not possible prior to attending Charter.

Self-Talk

Self-talk was used by approximately 56% (N=5) of first-generation students and by 54% (N=13) of second-plus generation students to remind them of who they were or what they needed to do, it also motivated some to do better. This was confirmed by students during the interviews, in which they talked about having to motivate themselves to study, to remind themselves of the successes they had already achieved in high school, and to remember who they were and their academic capabilities:

...I can’t relieve this stress! It’s horrible. Wait, I just have to alter my mindset...now I’m all better. It’s weird how you can totally change your outlook on things. Like just now, I thought to myself, “I know this math, I don’t have to study THAT much longer,” and now I feel better... (Journal: Natalie, female, first-generation)

...So no crying tonight Andrea, you have a big test tomorrow that you are going to kick ass on...Is being positive what needs to be done, or do I be [sic] realistic and say, “Well I hope things go well, but if you don’t get your shit together they won’t”? But usually I’m just like ahhhhhhhh [sic] this is horrible and I suck and I need help and yadda, yadda [sic], no more complaining... (Journal: Andrea, female, first-generation)
Personal and Relational coping strategies

Sixty-seven percent (N=6) of first-generation students and 54% (N=13) of second-plus generation students talked about how important it was to have other people to help them adjust to and cope with the demands of college. Their comments seemed to indicate that having someone who cared about them or someone they felt connected to was important in their establishing a comfort level in college:

...I've been in the hospital the past few days. My left lung spontaneously formed a hole and partially collapsed. It was quite an experience, can I just tell you. It opened my eyes to a few things too, like who came to visit me; a lot of people actually, which was a real ego booster. Some people from the dorm, some friends from out of the dorm. My parents even came up too. It seemed like a lot of people were generally concerned. One of my friends here even stayed overnight with me in the hospital. Then, under the influence of all those really nice drugs that hospitals have, I didn't realize how out of the way [sic] people went to see me and help me out. Anyways, this is a long winded way of saying [sic] I think I have some friends on campus who sincerely care about me...It's nice to know that people are investing emotional time and sincerity [sic] in me just as I do for them... (Journal: Bob, male, second-plus generation)

...I have never done anything with random men before and I'm really wondering why I agreed (and I was sober, by the way. I knew exactly what I was doing) [sic] to go home with a guy who I have known for a few weeks and had never had any relationship with before that time. My guess on the situation with both of the men is that I am trying to compensate for my loneliness, missing home and my friends, with the most physical form of comfort. I don't know. I still, however, believe in myself and know that I have the ability to be successful here... (Journal: Linda, female, second-plus generation)

During the first interview, two students—one who planned to withdraw at the end of the semester, and one who had not yet decided if he would return for the second year—were very upset with what they believed to be insensitivity on the part of University faculty and administrators. Both commented that they perceived Charter
officials to be rude and uncaring, which was in sharp contrast to their experiences in high
school where their teachers and counselors were helpful, kind and supportive:

...I understood like [sic]...that college is not only a time to build like [sic]
the individual you, but at the same time it forces you to because for the
first time you realize your professors like [sic] don't care about you. And
like the administration, the University, like [sic] as harsh as it sounds,
really doesn't care about you as an individual...the only person that is
going, you know [sic], fight the good fight for you is your parents and you
and like [sic] literally a hand full of people because beyond that, you
know, [sic] because of the level of intensity at this University and the
academic stress that everyone feels at this University, everyone is out for
themselves and that's just like [sic] reality. (Interview: Andrew, male,
second-plus generation)

For the majority of students, they assumed their support would come from their peers or
their families; they did not have the same expectations that these two students had
relative to the role of University officials in their adjustment to Charter.

Engineering-Oriented Cultural Environment of Charter University

As discussed previously, students defined the cultural environment of Charter
University as very science and engineering oriented, meaning that students spent a great
deal of time at their computers and working hard with little time for social activities.
These students stated that they were disappointed with Charter's lack of social life,
especially in comparison to other colleges they were hearing about from their friends:
56% (N=5) of first-generation students and only 33% (N=8) of second-plus generation
students viewed their life at the University as “all work and no play”:

...Well, I guess I'm just writing because I'm frustrated. I'd always thought
college was supposed to be the time of your life (well. I came to that
conclusion after someone said high school is supposed to be that, but it
wasn't). So far, college has been nothing but work, and no fun. There is
absolutely nothing to do at this boring school!!...Just for once, I want to be
truly happy, even it is for a millisecond or something. I'm soooooo [sic]
afraid that that time will never happen, especially if I'm stuck here for the
next four years. Transfer?? Maybe... (Journal: Brandon, male, first-generation)

... I'm having a really bad week. I am feeling really stressed out because I have all this work to do and I feel like I have no time to do it in. Everything is piled on me at once: chemistry test, calculus test, history paper, English paper, and a Spanish test all in the same week!!! You are supposed to look forward to the weekends, a time to relax and rest up. But [sic] not me. I have work to do every weekend. It never stops!!! But I guess that is what college is all about. Study, study, and study some more to learn all that we can, in the shortest time possible. I just need a brief vacation....(Journal: Ashley, female, first-generation)

Students' statements during interviews revealed that a few were longing for an idealized version of college life that they had seen on television or in movies. For students who expressed an interest in fraternity, sorority or varsity sports involvement (approximately 29% [N=4] of first-generation [N=14] and 32% [N=8] of second-plus generation [N=25]), they revealed what I called an “Animal House” mentality. According to this storyline, college life was supposed to be fun, exciting, and full of adventure; students should be playing Frisbee, and just hanging around. Students with this perspective were invariably dissatisfied with their life at Charter.

I also had two students compare Charter University to Ivy League schools, like Dartmouth and Harvard. In their minds, the Ivy League schools had the perfect mix of academic and social—students were encouraged to involve themselves in social activities and in social activism, while maintaining their academics. These students began their comments with “They don’t have this problem at Harvard...” Only one student in the study was disappointed in Charter because of its lack of “intellectual rigor”; in his mind, Charter was too easy and the students weren’t serious enough about their studies.

The students, who were dissatisfied with Charter (except for the one mentioned above), blamed the University for creating an environment that rewarded what they...
considered to be bad behavior in students (i.e., focusing only on classes) by making
courses so difficult that all a student could do was work.

For 33% (N=3) of first-generation students who completed journals (N=9) and
46% (N=11) of second-plus generation students (N=24) this was not a problem—they
selected Charter University hoping to find an academically challenging environment:

...Speaking of high school, you know when I was in high school they told
me that college was completely different, and maybe it is in other places,
but here it really isn't. Also, I think another thing about Charter University
that I like is that the guys around here, even the frat guys, aren't interested
solely in partying... (Journal: Allen, male, first-generation)

...I don't miss home much. I really hated high school and couldn't wait to
leave. "Charter" University was actually a good place for me to choose. It
happened to be random, but I love it here. I don't know how happy I
would be anywhere else. The other schools I looked at were not as good of
[sic] schools. I like having to work hard, especially when everyone around
me is also working hard. I know there are some people here that don't like
it, but I think they are planning on transferring next year anyway. The only
thing I would like to change is to have more of a social life, especially on
weekends. I guess a lot has changed. Oh well. I love it here... (Journal:
Regina, female, second-plus generation)

The difference in attitudes between those who found Charter's cultural
environment helpful and supportive and students who found it difficult and demanding
seemed to be centered primarily on the life they had envisioned prior to attending college.
Their visions were often based on something they heard from their college friends, family
members, high school counselors and teachers, or on the images of college in movies.

The importance of these four concepts—past, present and future self-concepts;
self-talk; personal and relational coping strategies; and the engineering-oriented cultural
environment of Charter—to participants during their first semester at Charter was
demonstrated by their frequency within the journals and during the interviews. Each
student provided examples of the salience of these concepts to their adjustment to Charter University.

**Keys To A Successful Transition**

Participants were asked to identify what they believed freshmen needed in order to achieve a successful transition to college (Table 13). The principal response of 64% (N=9) of first-generation students and 68% (N=17) of second-plus generation students was to establish friendships at college:

...I think they’re really important like, I still don’t understand the kids that like [sic] don’t...like you see them with like one person and that’s it...and they’re just like going together; they go everywhere together...but like [sic] it’s just nice to have friends that are...you’ll be studying for like an hour or something and then you just walk out and people will be around and you just talk for like fifteen minutes about nothing...like [sic] I think that that is the big difference. If nobody wanted to talk or have any interaction then, I don’t think I’d be here anymore...there’s no way that I could just like [sic], you know go to my classes and then right to my room, study the rest of the night and go to bed; like [sic] I would have been gone the first two weeks... (Interview: Natalie, female, first-generation)

...I think your friends are like...I found a best friend real quick and...we lived right next to each other...but still, like...I don’t know [sic], it just gives you somebody to waste time with and like...like parents, I mean [sic], they’re important because you know they’re behind you and stuff. ...but they don’t play as much as an active role anymore...you know they’re there and you know they’re like [sic] back home, you know they’re totally supporting you...but you know because they’re not around, obviously, they don’t have as active a role. I think getting a close group of friends is real [sic] important... (Interview: John, male, second-plus generation)

...It’s very important because you don’t know anybody, well you might, but it’s most likely you’re not going to know anybody and you want someone to eat with, you want someone to talk to, you want someone to study with. If you want to go somewhere, you want someone to go with you; you just don’t want to be the odd one, that’s anybody, you don’t want to be the odd ball out. Friends can help you through the transition because they’re going through...especially the other freshman...they’re going through the same thing and you have fun together, tell [sic] each other
your experiences... friends are very important, very important... (Interview: Lindsey, female, second-plus generation)

TABLE 13
KEY TO SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION TO COLLEGE* (N=39)
*More than one response possible
(Mean=2.1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FIRST-GENERATION</th>
<th>SECOND-PLUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=14</td>
<td>N=25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish Friendships</td>
<td>9 (64%)</td>
<td>17 (68%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Management</td>
<td>6 (43%)</td>
<td>9 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Skills</td>
<td>4 (29%)</td>
<td>9 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support of Family/Old Friends</td>
<td>4 (29%)</td>
<td>6 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in Campus Activities (e.g., student organizations, sports, etc.)</td>
<td>3 (21%)</td>
<td>7 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Traits (e.g., flexible, personable, open-minded, etc.)</td>
<td>2 (14%)</td>
<td>5 (20%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Approximately 43% (N=6) of first-generation students and 36% (N=9) of second-plus generation students included time management as important to a successful transition to college:

... Time management... I'd say time management is more important because if you can manage your time, whenever your friends want to do something, you can do something... (Interview: Jerry, male, first-generation)

... It's probably time management, that's something that you need in order to do well in college. And something that I learned also [sic] is that if people don't manage your time here, you're going to feel out of control... (Interview: Ashley, female, first-generation)

Twenty-nine percent (N=4) of first-generation participants and 36% (N=9) of second-plus generation students cited study skills as key to a successful transition to college; 29% of first-generation (N=4) and 24% (N=6) of second-plus generation...
students identified family support and the support of old friends as important; 21% (N=3) of first-generation students and 28% (N=7) of second-plus generation students cited involvement in campus activities as significant; and 14% (N=2) of first-generation and 20% (N=5) of second-plus generation participants identified personal traits (e.g., personable, open-minded, adaptable, etc.) as valuable in the successful transition to college. It is noteworthy that two of the factors students listed as important to their successful transition were also identified by participants as characteristics associated with college students—establishing friendships and time management. (I identified the theme of mastering study skills as relevant to participants who submitted journals. See discussion under the subheading “Time Management” in section two.)

Interestingly, 57% (N=8) of first-generation students who completed interviews (N=14) and 72% (N=18) of second-plus generation students (N=25) associated learning time management with a change in their identities as well; while they still strived to achieve good grades, the grades were no longer as important as having a social life or doing what they most enjoyed. Students discussed this in terms of having established a good balance between their academic expectations and their social lives:

...That's weird like [sic]...I was thinking about that last week, how I think I've matured and am different now, I don't know...I think sometimes when you...like [sic] I used to think being mature was always to be the best or always succeeding, but now I think its more like, if you're not succeeding, then it's failing gracefully, I guess...or, you know [sic], like doing things...being more moderate instead of being always the best like [sic]...it's just not showing when you're upset or...or letting things get to you, I guess...just being more focused on yourself and what's important for you instead of what's more important for everyone else. (Interview: Brandon, male, first-generation)

...I always had...I always just had [sic] that I have to get an "A" in this class so I can...so I have to do that. And suddenly, like [sic], it's become okay to not get an "A" in classes. And it's been really hard to do work
sometimes because I don't have that huge overbearing sense that if I don't do this, my life is going to be crashing down upon me. Like, [sic] it just doesn't really matter...it's just more...it doesn't really deal as much with the classes and the grades. It really has nothing to do with that. It's more of a personality issue...I think about things differently...I don't always have the perfect answer or the perfect reason for the things I do. I usually do them because I feel like I would be happy doing them. (Interview: Linda, female, second-plus generation)

...I think that it's because I realize that it's not permanent. I mean [sic], I realize that I'm learning new things all the time, and I realized that the first semester of college was going to be difficult academically anyways. So I pretty much gave myself an allowance, not to do poorly, but...you know [sic], the whole balancing thing. I was like, "Oh, yes I can go out sometimes instead of studying." And so I did end up getting three "B's." (Interview: Adrienne, female, second-plus generation)

...Because you're no longer, like [sic], in high school—you're expected to get up, go to class, do this and that, take everything so that you can graduate the highest in your class if you possibly can, get the best grades you can, be involved in this, this and this, so you can go to college. And as soon as that's lifted away from you, like [sic], you're at college, now you're supposed to do what you want to do. You're supposed to be creating your life, you're supposed to be, you know [sic], searching for the thing that makes you happy. You're supposed to be pursuing it. And I realized that that was not what I was doing in college. (Interview: Linda, female, second-plus generation)

This change in identity, in conjunction with the other factors previously discussed, allowed these students to persist in Charter University.

According to Tinto (1986:35), student persistence is related to students becoming "competent" members of the college or university community in terms of not only learning the values, rules, procedures (i.e., the culture) of an educational institution, but also the requirement that the students become "integrated" in the college community academically and socially. Participants indicated that to become a competent and fully integrated member of Charter University involved not only the factors that the participants' and I identified as assisting the transition of freshmen to college (e.g.,
friendships, time management, independence, choice, etc.), but also the development of a "Charter University college student" identity that was consistent with the University's cultural environment. I found that the students, who experienced difficulties integrating themselves within the figured world of Charter University, were more likely to transfer.

**Student Attrition**

Approximately seven weeks into the fall semester, one first-generation female student withdrew from Charter citing academic and family difficulties. Ashley came to the University having earned 21 credits from a community college through a state supported program that allows high school students to attend college and earn college credit prior to graduation. Nevertheless, Ashley felt unprepared for the workload of Charter University and the time management skills her new college required:

...I feel like that I'm realizing it...I don't think it's the time for me to be in a university. I think that I would feel more comfortable if I spent a semester or two at the community college...just to help to prepare myself on the college level...like [sic] here, everything is overwhelming for me...it's such a high standard...[I need to] prepare myself more, like [sic] mentally get myself prepared for the fact that I'm leaving home for the first time...I'm going to be away from my friends and my family. I'm going to college and I have to...manage my time better so that I can handle all the workload that I'm going to have... (Interview: Ashley, female, first-generation)

She also stated that having to confront the fact that she was no longer one of the "smart" students was very difficult for her and that it added to her sense of feeling overwhelmed by the experience:

...because like [sic] in school, everybody knew everybody type thing [sic], and I was in all the "smart" classes...there was like [sic] that group of people who we had to take classes all the time together [sic] because we were the "smart kids."

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students of their classes, and now you have the top 1% and then there's the top, you know [sic], the 10% level... and you find out how you're smartness [sic] compares to everybody else... (Interview: Ashley, female, first-generation)

While Ashley was not the only first-generation student who expressed a concern with having to compete with the other accomplished students at Charter University and with learning time management and study skills, her story differed somewhat, in that, unlike the other 13 first-generation students in the study. Ashley was the only one who stated that she had no family members with whom she could discuss her concerns because none had attended or graduated college. (Eight of the remaining 13 first-generation students stated that they discussed their concerns with their siblings and cousins who had attended and/or graduated college; the other five students stated that they talked with their college-educated uncles and aunts.) Consequently, when Ashley earned her first "F," she felt that she had let herself and her family down. She later decided to leave Charter University and to return to the community college wherein she experienced academic success that was reminiscent of her high school success.

Two students, in addition to Ashley, did not return for the second semester—one first-generation male and the other a second-plus generation female. The first-generation male student did not respond to repeated attempts to contact him, so I was unable to confirm his reasons for departure. During the fall interview, however, he seemed to suggest that he was reconsidering his choice of major; he entered Charter University intending to major in engineering, but later wondered if becoming a writer would suit him better. The second-plus generation female student left because she felt that she did not receive the kind of support from faculty, administrators or other students that she needed in order to feel a part of the campus community.
During the spring interview, five students indicated that they planned to transfer.

In all, three students did not return for the second semester and five planned to transfer at the end of their freshman year (Table 14):

**TABLE 14**
**ATTRITION SUMMARY (N=8)**
*More than one response possible (Mean=2.0)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FIRST-GENERATION N=2</th>
<th>SECOND-PLUS N=6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too Far From Home, Missed Family</td>
<td>2 (100%)</td>
<td>4 (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missed Old Friends, Unable to Make New Friends Similar to Old</td>
<td>1 (50%)</td>
<td>4 (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmet Expectations</td>
<td>1 (50%)</td>
<td>2 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed Major</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (33%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The major reason given by 100% (N=2) of the first-generation who left or planned to leave the University and 67% (N=4) of the second-plus generation students (N=6) for transferring was their dissatisfaction with being too far away from home. (This finding relative to first-generation students demonstrates the strong connection between these students and their families as discussed previously.) The second reason involved 50% (N=1) of first-generation and 67% (N=4) of second-plus generation students' disappointment with their inability to have good friends on campus or friends similar to their old friendships. Students in this group were the students most likely to have had very strong ties to high school friends and to their families. The issue appeared to be that
they were diligently holding onto their former friends or were, in some cases, having a difficult time establishing independence from their parents. For example, one student decided to leave to be closer to home and to her very good friends from high school:

...more just on the lines of I haven't really clicked with many people here...um...you know, I'm a pretty solitary person as it is, like [sic] almost no social contact is a little bit depressing at times and both of my best friends go to...Well, actually one goes there now and another one is transferring...No. I mean I tried but it just...you know, I couldn't really have more than the obligatory, "Oh, how are classes going?" kind of conversation. And then once that's done, you know [sic], there wasn't really anything else to say...Yeah, I mean, I have really deep relationships with my best friend, but I couldn't find anything even somewhat comparable to that here...I wouldn't really say I even really [sic] have any friends or at least not close ones here. I mean, I have acquaintances who I talk to and stuff, but I mean... (Interview: Joanne, female, second-plus generation)

Ashley left partly as a result of wanting to spend more time with family and friends at home that her schedule would not allow for, and partially because she never established a comfort level at Charter University:

...That was part of it, like [sic] I couldn't figure out how to manage my time where I could study and be with my family and be with my friends and have time for myself...that was a comfort level or it had been. It was the fact that, when I went home, I knew my family was going to be there and my friends were going to be there...You have to feel comfortable in your environment and that strongly influences your fellow students. You have to be able to feel like you belong... (Interview: Ashley, female, first-generation)

The third reason given by 50% (N=1) of first-generation and 33% (N=2) of second-plus generation students involved students' unmet expectations of what college should be and the kinds of experiences they wanted to have: one student expected college to be more intellectually challenging, but found students at Charter University to be more interested in a "career and making money" rather than in pursuing learning for its intrinsic value. (This student seemed to long for a college that had a predominate culture...
that valued learning for learning’s sake.) Another student expected college to be more “fun” similar to what he saw on television and how his friends who were attending other colleges described as their experiences. And the fourth reason given by 33% (N=2) of second-plus generation students, but no first-generation students, for transferring was that their majors had changed (mostly from engineering and science to non-engineering or liberal arts), and they no longer felt that Charter University could meet their needs.

For all study participants, dependence on family and former friendships were viewed as important to approximately 31% (N=4) of first-generation students who completed interviews (N=14) and 24% (N=6) of second-plus generation students (N=25). Fourteen percent (N=2) of first-generation students and 12% (N=3) of second-plus generation students expressed that they were trying to strike a balance between keeping their old friends and incorporating new ones. Fourteen percent (N=2) of first-generation students and 28% (N=7) of second-plus generation students stated that they felt the need to loosen ties to former friends in order to make the transition to their new environment:

...I felt like at this school and the school, they were like pulling me forward, and the people at home were pulling me back, and they didn’t want...I could go back there...I didn’t want to go back because I realized that I had to go forward, but they didn’t want to go forward...so it was sort of like I was stuck... (Interview: Brandon, male, first-generation)

...you know when you first get here you still email all your friends at all their schools and stuff [sic], or you’ll talk to them on instant messenger all the time. And then, like I found myself this semester, I almost never email my friends from home like [sic]...every once in a while... (Interview: Nathan, male, second-plus generation)

Attending Charter was as much an exercise in acquiring cultural knowledge at the University, as it was a process in transforming students into “Charter University college students.” according to the data. Students stated that their choice to remain at Charter was
contingent upon a number of factors, including a change in self-identity; that allowed them to integrate themselves within Charter's cultural environment.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The issues students dwelt upon the most in the surveys, journals and interviews included: (a) being in a state of transition; (b) possessing control of their lives for the first time; (c) having the independence to do what they wanted, when they wanted, including being responsible for themselves; (d) having freedom to be who they wanted to be; (e) having the opportunity to choose identities, friends, majors, careers, etc.; (f) understanding the importance of and the need for time management; (g) confronting the issue of no longer being the “smart kid” in school; and (h) needing to becoming fully integrated into Charter's cultural environment, primarily through establishing relationships with upperclassmen, as well as other freshmen. And as noted, 36 of the 39 students began their college life with the realization that they were entering a new and different environment where they would be unknown to everyone and where they could choose to maintain their identity from high school or could actively choose another one.

This time period was also marked by tremendous intellectual and emotional change. Participants (especially first-generation students) often cited it as a time of transition, confusion, and stress because they were trying to figure out how to “do” college, and especially how to balance their time between social and academic activities. They were also learning about coursework, majors, professors, grades, exams, academic resources, social outlets and, finally, what it meant to be a freshman at Charter University.

Overall, the freshman year represented:
• A time of establishing independence from their families and the first opportunity to be relatively self-reliant for an extended period of time;

• A time of choice, in that students found themselves having to chose their identities, courses of study, career paths, friends, etc); and

• A time of becoming fully enculturated to Charter University.

I have proposed, and the data appears to support, the theory that an important factor in the enculturation and integration of study participants to Charter was the formation of a “Charter University College Student” identity.

A process by which students developed a “Charter University College Student” identity was identified (see Chapter Five for an expanded discussion of the process). The process appeared to be fairly consistent between first-generation and second-plus generation students in terms of the relative importance of the themes and characteristics considered salient to both groups of students in the formation of this identity. Moreover, the study is notable, in that students discussed not only their transition from high school to college and the experiences and/or people they considered central to their persistence or lack of persistence in the University, but they also provided insight to the cultural formation of a “Charter University College Student” identity and its role in freshmen persistence.

Chapter five will summarize the study and offer recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In chapters one and two, I stated that college is a rite of passage, and that a rite of passage signifies the time during which an individual experiences a change in their role or status in their sociocultural environment (Turner 1964). A rite of passage also marks the maturity level of an individual as determined by his/her culture, and is seen as a transition or a process that allows individuals to experience a change in, or to be transformed from, a former identity to a new identity as a result of their socialization to a new sociocultural role.

I also stated that an individual who attends college experiences two rites of passage. The first involves the general notion of college attendance as the beginning of the transition from adolescence to adulthood; individuals are taught how to be responsible and contributing members of society, and they receive career training. The second rite of passage is the freshman year, in that it represents a student’s entrance into a new cultural status or role, that of a “college student.” I then proposed that during the process of learning their new cultural role, a new identity would be formed called a “Charter University College Student” identity. Finally, I theorized that developing a “Charter University College Student” identity was an important factor in whether the student chose to remain at the college.

I defined culture as a “culturally figured world” (Holland, Lachiocotte, Skinner and Cain’s 1998:26, 52), which denotes an expanded view of culture as being comprised of many socially and culturally constructed domains of meaning and interpretation. It takes into account that there is no one cultural perspective to which a person is socialized.
or enculturated; it instead suggests that the study of culture is really the study of the particular—particular points in time, particular events and occurrences, particular institutions and settings, particular environments, etc.—that are historically and socially located, within which individuals and objects are recognized and their activities are assigned meaning and value. This view of culture as a figured world is process-oriented; figured worlds constantly change and are not static; individuals “act” within and are acted upon by individuals and objects within figured worlds. Figured worlds may be apprehended by their cultural artifacts that are regarded as “mediators in human actions” (p. 60), and they are the places in which identities develop.

And lastly, I defined the research site of “Charter University” as a culturally figured world that influences the development of an identity of “Charter University college student,” and that through the development of this identity, an individual is able to persist at Charter through graduation.

The questions the study sought to address include:

- During the freshman year, how is the culturally constructed identity of “college student” a factor in the successful transition of students from high school to college as a result of their socialization to this new social status or role?

- What key themes can be identified for the formation of this identity?

- What process can be identified for the formation of this identity?

- How do the themes or process of forming this identity differ between first-generation college students and second-plus generation students?

In the following pages, I will address each question, and I will recommend topics that warrant further study.
The "Charter University College Student" Identity and Freshman Persistence

Study participants identified the following as characteristics they believed to be representative of college students:

- Independence From Parents And Personal Responsibility
- Freedom to Choose
- Meet New People and Make New Friends
- Learn About Self
- Time Management
- Prepare for Career
- Hardworking
- Smart/Intelligent

Having independence from their parents (including learning to be responsible for themselves) and having the freedom to make their own choices may be considered two-sides of one coin, in that these characteristics appeared to be associated with living on their own. For example, an individual who moves away from home is generally expected to take over the responsibility for their day-to-day lives; their parents are no longer supervising them and telling them what to do, how to do, and when to do anything; they are now required to figure out how to function in areas that they may have taken for granted while under their parents' supervision. This scene was described repeatedly by study participants, some of whom stated that they had to figure out how to wash their clothes because they were not required to do so at home. Additionally, living in a dormitory at Charter required that students also figure out how to complete University-

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1 These characteristics are not representative of all college students.
required forms and follow University guidelines, how to live with someone they weren't related to, when to eat, where to eat, where classes were located, how to study, when to study, where to study, how to work with faculty, and a myriad of other activities related to college life.

As reported, second-plus generation students primarily described this time as exciting, while first-generation students described it as stressful. I observed that the difference in their perspectives had to do with their motivations for attending college: second-plus generation students' primary motivation for attending college was to have a life that was separate from their parents; they were looking forward to the independence that attending Charter afforded them. Second-plus generation students were also more interested in preparing for a particular career, mostly engineering and medicine. First-generation students, however, were more interested in college because it was the stepping stone to having a "successful" life as measured by finding a "good" paying job. Their issue was preparing for the lifestyle they wanted, rather than independence from their parents. This is not to suggest, though, that first-generation students were not interested in gaining independence from their parents; it was just not their main priority as it was with second-plus generation students.

Most first-generation students saw attending Charter as something that they did for themselves and their parents, because their parents were unable to either complete or to attend college. One student described how important it was to her to not only come to Charter, but to finish her degree: her parents could not go to college due to a lack of money, and her two older sisters had personal problems that prevented them from attending or completing college—one sister became pregnant during the summer before
she was to start college, and the other became pregnant shortly after her arrival to college. Both never returned. So, for this student, she was her parent's last and best chance for one of their children to earn a degree. She was also the “smart” child in the family, and was, therefore, expected to do great things because she had the academic intelligence and the experiences of her sisters to better inform her actions. For this student, especially, the burden of college was enormous—her failures, whatever they may have been, were not just hers; they were her family's as well.

Time management and working hard were the same issues in the minds of most students because their University courses and commitments required a great deal of time and psychological, emotional and physical energy. The students talked about having to learn how to prioritize their activities in order to complete their coursework, while at the same time establishing a social life. For many, this was one of the most difficult things to do because they had been very successful in high school maintaining good grades while participating in a number of extra-curricular activities.

Several students, though, talked about not having to work hard in high school to get good grades; teachers didn't require much of them and often made allowances for them because they were considered the “smart” students. They admitted to “getting away” with not turning in assignments or turning them in late because of these allowances. In Charter, however, these students learned that University faculty required much more of its students; faculty considered students adults, and as such, they were expected to take full responsibility for all course assignments and to meet all deadlines, with very few, if any, exceptions. They were also expected to learn at a more rapid rate. In fact, one of the biggest complaints expressed by study participants was that they were
required to learn more material in one week in college, than they may have been exposed to in four years in high school. Consequently, the students who had not developed good study habits and had been given special favor by high school teachers, found themselves having to learn how to study at the same time they were being challenged academically.

Learning about themselves was a significant surprise to most of the study participants. Many had assumed that they "knew" who they were in high school—they were one of the "smart students." This identity appeared to be the primary identity for more than half of the students. The "smart" identity, according to students, benefited them somewhat in primary and high schools because they were considered the "cream" of the educational crop—they were given special opportunities to learn; and teachers, counselors and school administrators nurtured and protected them. Students said that their parents took pride in their accomplishments, and by most accounts, they were considered the "golden children" in their families.

With few exceptions, these students hung out with the other "smart" students because they were all in the same classes. The few who did not spend most of their time with the other "smart" students, involved themselves in sports and in other extracurricular activities like band. These students considered themselves fortunate to be identified as one of the "smart kids," who also had "regular" students as friends. For study participants whose primary social activities were confined to the other smart students, their friends were almost mirror images of them in terms of the interests they had in common, the way they thought, the way they dressed, the way they talked, and the fact that they were "smart."
For the exceptionally bright student, high school was difficult because they felt that they had to "dumb down," meaning that they could not have the kinds of discussions with other students they wanted because others were not as intellectually inquisitive, technologically savvy, or did not share their interests. For example, one first-generation student said that he felt comfortable at Charter University because he found people who were "just like him"—they enjoyed a game called Dungeons and Dragons, and they were Star Trek (the science-fiction movie) fanatics and knew the Klingon language (from the movie). These students flourished in Charter's educational environment. They were the ones who more frequently described Charter as "home" during the first semester.

As discussed earlier, attending Charter allowed study participants to view themselves in a different light; some students said that they thought about the fact that going to college would enable them to remake their identities. One second-plus generation student, in particular, talked about the identity she had in high school as that of the "female jock"; the males saw her as one of them, and the females saw her as "tomboyish." She said that, as a result, life in high school was very difficult, and that college gave her a chance to "start fresh." But, according to her, during the first semester, she experienced the same problem in college—she only hung around the males because they were engaged in activities she enjoyed, like touch football, so much so that one of them said that she was like a "dude chick." She said that she attempted to find female friends, but she wasn't as "girly" as they were, so she made few female friends; she instead depended upon her former high school friends for support—they communicated every night by computer.
Many students were amazed by the changes in themselves; few expected to change in any significant way. When asked to what they attributed the changes, they said that meeting new people, being exposed to different perspectives and new information, and being able to do things that they could not have done at home (because of restrictions imposed by their parents), made them think about who they were and why. One second-plus generation student said that college made her change because, in introducing herself to others, she had to explain herself more; and in explaining herself, she actually heard what she was saying and had a chance to evaluate it differently, or to look at it from someone else’s perspective.

The first semester was a time of tremendous upheaval for many students because of the self-lessons they were learning, in addition to their coursework and social activities. One of the most difficult self-lessons was learning or recognizing that they were no longer one of the elite few in the school who could be labeled the “smart students” because, as a number of students stated, “everyone at Charter is one of the ‘smart’ kids.” This was a struggle that few study participants were prepared to engage in, especially those for whom good grades were easily attained in high school with limited effort. The question they asked themselves was, “How can I maintain my ‘A’ average (from high school) and remain one of the smart kids when I don’t know how to study?” Few successfully answered this question in the first semester.

Making friends and meeting people had a tremendous impact on the experiences of students at Charter. First, meeting new people during orientation allowed study participants to interact with people from different parts of the country, who had different perspectives and worldviews. Every student in the study commented on the diversity in
the students at Charter: some saw it as positive, in that they could learn something that they may not have learned had they stayed closer to home; others saw it as dangerous, because they were concerned that exposure to other opinions or value systems might make it difficult for them to maintain their value system. This was especially true for students who espoused strong religious beliefs. This finding is consistent with Perry’s (1968:4.6) observation that for college students, the “confrontation with pluralism of values has become inescapable, not only in his courses but in his daily life with his peers.”

In our daily counseling with students whose presenting concerns centered on their academic work, we had been impressed with the variety of the ways in which the students responded to the relativism which permeates the intellectual and social atmosphere of a pluralistic university. Among the students who consulted us, a few seemed to find the notion of multiple frames of reference wholly unintelligible. Others responded with violent shock to their confrontation in dormitory bull sessions, or in their academic work, or both. Others experienced a joyful sense of liberation. There were also students...who seemed to come to college already habituated to a notion of man’s knowledge as relative and who seemed to be in full exploration of the modes of thinking and of valuing consequent on this outlook.

Overall, the majority of study participants found the exposure to new people allowed them to reevaluate their opinions, including the opinions they held of themselves.

The University also provided students daily opportunities to introduce themselves to people through “ice breaker” activities that were designed to quickly acquaint students with one another, and to force students outside of their social comfort zones by requiring that they initiate personal introductions.

Making new friends, both freshmen and upperclassmen, played a pivotal role in allowing students to find their social niche, which students described as “feeling
comfortable” or “fitting in” at Charter University, and in providing them (a) fellow sojourners who were new to Charter as companions, (b) other freshmen who had different social networks through which they could learn about new strategies and resources that they could share with one another, and (c) upperclassmen, to whom they could direct their questions, and who could also share their insights, strategies, resources, and their social network with the students. Almost two-thirds of both first-generation and second-plus generation students viewed making friends as critical to their successful transition to Charter.

Moreover, the fact that students were able to identify specific characteristics suggests that a Charter college student identity is distinguishable from their notions of a “high school student” identity.²

The data suggests that the development of a “Charter University college student” identity (as evidenced by the development of the characteristics associated with this identity), was a factor in the successful transition of students from high school to college because:

- Admission to Charter University required that students have a record of academic excellence during high school in challenging courses. Once admitted, Charter University required its students to function independently of their parents relative to their day-to-day activities at the University. Students were expected: (1) to adhere to all of Charter’s policies and procedures, (2) to behave in a manner consistent with the University’s values, (3) to accept full responsibility for their decisions and their consequences, (4) to determine an academic field of concentration, and (5) to demonstrate progress towards the completion of a degree.

  - Therefore, socialization to this aspect of Charter’s culture supported or promoted the development of the following characteristics:

²Participants (N=39) stated that high school students are silly and immature (33%); dependent on parents (26%); judgmental and critical (21%); cliquey (10%); insulated (8%); and trendy (5%).

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- Smart/Intelligent
- Independence From Parents and Personal Responsibility
- Freedom to Choose
- Time Management
- Hardworking
- Prepare for Career

- The successful transition of students to Charter was contingent upon their socialization to Charter's cultural environment. This was accomplished through various means throughout the course of the freshman year:

  o Students' initial introduction to Charter was through publications (as cultural artifacts) that described the University's cultural value systems.

  o The second level of socialization was during the freshman orientation week, which introduced students to Charter in a more direct, hands-on manner, by introducing and explaining to students the policies and procedures to which they would be required to adhere, and by allowing students to meet, to dialogue, and to "hang out" with freshmen, who hailed from around the United States and several countries. During this phase, students began to question their personal value systems and assumptions, and their personal identities.

  o The third level of socialization came in the form of the return of the upperclassmen and the beginning of classes. Students were now in the position of having to practice the academic and social skills they had prior to Charter, to apply those they had learned during orientation, and to learn new skills from other freshmen and upperclassmen. Students were also confronted with their inability to maintain the high grade point averages that identified them in high school as "smart."

  o Therefore, socialization to this aspect of Charter's culture promoted the development of the following characteristics:

    - Meet New People and Make New Friends
    - Learn About Self

Without the development of a "Charter University college student" identity, it was found that students were more likely to leave Charter than to stay.
Key Themes in the Formation of a “Charter University College Student” Identity

Four general themes were considered salient to the formation of a “Charter University college student” identity. They include:

- Understanding that Charter University is an organized system that must be learned and negotiated;
- Realizing that academic and social success are measured differently in Charter than in participants’ high schools;
- Becoming familiar and comfortable with Charter-specific academic and social processes; and
- Finding their social and academic niche in the University.

Several others were identified as relevant to the process of developing a “Charter University college student” identity:

- Students’ self-concepts were experienced narratively in relation to the past, present and the future;
- Self-talk was important for defining or re-defining self-definitions;
- Personal and relational coping strategies played a role in the adjustment to college; and
- The engineering-oriented cultural environment of the University was a factor in students’ successful transition to the college;

For example, participants’ reflections on their former and present identities, their efforts to find their niche, their “fit,” or their comfort zone—socially and academically—and their search for a major or a career, were viewed as part of the students’ need to define themselves in relation to their past, present and future. It allowed them to “place” themselves socially and academically relative to Charter’s cultural environment, their peers, and their possible career professions. Students often described how important friends at Charter were in helping them to adapt to the University. Learning how to study
and to manage their time, as well as determining their majors or careers were also factors in the successful transition of students to the University. Once established, each of these factors provided students a foundation upon which to develop a “Charter University college student” identity.

Realizing that academic and social success are measured differently in Charter than in participants’ respective high schools may be found in the difficulties many students experienced confronting the fact that they were no longer defined as being “one of the smartest students in school,” and in students’ recognition that Charter University provided them an opportunity to revisit and to recreate the identity they had prior to attending college because Charter valued diversity and openness in a number of areas, including identities.

Becoming familiar and comfortable with the University’s academic and social processes was demonstrated by participants’ realizing that they not only had control over their decisions and the subsequent consequences—including decisions related to courses of study and careers—but also that the establishment of friendships and relationships were fundamental to the quality of their college experience, and as noted above, the development of a “Charter University college student” identity.

And finally, students appeared to realize (through their interactions with University administrators, other freshmen and upperclassmen) that to be successful they needed to view the University as an organized system that must be learned and negotiated; their statements demonstrated an early struggle with how one “does” Charter University (e.g., course schedules, homework, quizzes and exams, faculty interactions, peer relationships, extra-curricular activities, etc.) Gaining proficiency in negotiating the
culturally figured world of Charter—in mastering its routines, for example, (e.g., time management, study skills, etc.)—also provided students a foundation upon which to develop a “Charter University college student” identity because these factors, in addition to those discussed above, allowed students to become competent members of Charter University’s cultural environment.

**Process for the Formation of a “Charter University College Student” Identity**

The process of developing the characteristics of a Charter college student appeared to involve six relatively concurrent steps:

**Step One:** Smart, Intelligent—this was the primary identity of most of the study participants. As result, they were more likely to find a place like Charter University appealing.

**Step Two:** Independence From Parents and Personal Responsibility—certain processes followed by the University, as well as students’ introduction and socialization to the cultural norms and expectations of Charter, served to assist in the development of this characteristic.

**Step Three:** Freedom to Choose—students quickly learned that they had choices not available to them prior to college, and that the consequences of those choices were their responsibility.

**Step Four:** Make New Friends—students were encouraged to interact with other freshmen and to develop relationships with upperclassmen. Participants viewed this step as crucial to their adjustment to Charter because it was primarily through these relationships that students were socialized to Charter’s cultural environment.

**Step Five:** Time Management/Hardworking—learning time management and developing study skills were considered very important to a students’ academic and social success at Charter. Students acknowledged that, while they expected college courses to be difficult, they were often not prepared for the degree of difficulty of many of their courses and the amount of work they required.
Step Six: Learn About Self—students were able to revisit their former identities in this new sociocultural environment values diversity in thought and expression.

The process as described is a generalization; it does not suggest that all study participants followed this pattern, or that the pattern or the characteristics would be the same at a different college.

The study was undertaken to explore the connection between self-identity, enculturation, and college persistence. The theoretical basis for the study is Victor Turner’s (1964) concept of “rites of passage.” A rite of passage occurs within a cultural context and indicates a “transition between states” (p. 5). It is through this rite of passage that students detach from their former identity, and by a process that Turner defines as a “transition,” students are able to “transform” into or take on a new identity (p. 5). Rites of passage have three phases: separation, wherein the individual detaches from an earlier state (or status); margin or limen, during which the individual’s state is considered ambiguous; and aggregation, which denotes a completion of the process.

I originally theorized that the freshman year would be defined as the liminal period because students had left their former state or identity of a "high school student" that was consistent with their respective high schools (i.e., separation), and through a process of enculturation—that began shortly before their arrival on campus and continued throughout the academic year--they would transform" into or "become" a “Charter University college student” (i.e., aggregation) by the end of their freshman year. Instead, the data suggests that the freshman year is itself the rite of passage rather than just a portion of it, in that “separation” occurred for most students when they graduated high school but had not yet matriculated to college. The liminal period, rather than
representing the freshman year, instead represented the period of time wherein students could no longer define themselves as high school students but were reluctant to define themselves as having "Charter University college student" identities. "Aggregation," or the completion of the process of forming a "Charter University college student" identity, was achieved when students were able to confidently identify themselves as "Charter University college students." The liminal phase as experienced by participants' was consistent with Turner's description of the liminal period for neophytes:

...neophytes are withdrawn from their structural positions and consequently from the values, norms, sentiments and techniques associated with those positions. They are also divested of their previous habits of thought, feeling and action. During the liminal period neophytes are alternately forced and encouraged to think about their society... Liminality may be partly described as a stage of reflection (p. 14-15).

The liminal period varied for each student; approximately 14% (N=2) of first-generation participants (N=14) and 28% (N=7) of second-plus generation students (N=25) defined themselves as having attained a "Charter University college student" identity within weeks of their arrival at Charter. An additional 79% (N=11) of first-generation and 64% (N=16) of second-plus generation considered themselves "Charter University college students" by the end of the second semester, and only 7% (N=1) of first-generation students and 8% (N=2) of second-plus generation students had not achieved this identity by the end of the spring semester.

For the majority of students, the process of developing a "Charter University college student" identity occurred during their freshman year; however, the students who were unable to form this identity cited several obstacles, among these was their inability to establish meaningful relationships with their peers that were similar to or better than
relationships with their friends from home. And as discussed, friends were more than just companions; they were also the “instructors” of Turner’s (1964:9) theory, who were the most responsible for enculturating new members to Charter’s cultural environment. Consequently, these students were more likely to leave or to transfer than those who established good relationships.

Also consistent with Turner’s theory, neophytes who are engaged in a rite of passage are usually designated by a name. In the case of neophyte college students, that name is “college freshman.”

The data also supports Tinto’s (1986) theory that, in order for students to persist in an educational institution, they must first become competent members of the institution. According to Tinto, if students are unable to “integrate” (p. 35) themselves within the University academically and socially, they are more likely to withdraw, to perform poorly, or to be “separated” (i.e., asked to leave the institution). It was found that study participants integrated themselves within the University primarily by developing friendships with other freshmen, and especially with upperclassmen, that enabled them to find their academic and social “niche” at Charter University and to become fully enculturated members of the University community.

Differences in the Themes or Process Between First-Generation and Second-Plus Generation Students

Neither the themes nor the process appeared to differ significantly between first-generation and second-plus generation—both groups identified the same issues as relevant to developing a “Charter University college student” identity and in the same order, and with few exceptions, to the same degree. The only notable differences appeared to be in
participants': (a) descriptions of this phase of their lives: first-generation students described it as stressful, while second-plus generation students described it as exciting; (b) views of college students as gaining independence from their parents: there was a significant difference between second-plus generation students, who cited this as characteristic of ‘Charter University college students’ relative to first-generation students; (c) reasons for attending college: second-plus generation students cited preparation for a specific career (e.g., medicine and engineering) as their reason for attending college, and first-generation students cited a successful future as their primary motivation for attending college.

Finally, I proposed that the change in status students’ experience when going from the cultural environment of high school to that of college requires more than just learning the role expectations of a college student in that sociocultural environment, it instead may require a change in identity to that of a university-specific college student. The distinction is a very subtle one, in that, students do more than just learn what is expected of them in their new cultural environment, such as the “how” to or “when” to do something; they also acquire certain personality characteristics that are consistent with their new cultural environment and are indicative of a “college student” identity in that environment.

**College Student: Identity or Role**

The question of whether a Charter University “college student” is an identity students incorporate or is instead a role students perform was considered by me to be one of the most important in the study, because it addressed the issue of how participants viewed being a student in college. The role was posited to include what I called, learning
"how to 'do' college" or "learning the ropes"—students learn how to act and what to do.

In contrast, a "Charter University college student" identity involves "becoming" or internalizing that role.

Forty-three percent (N=6) of first-generation students in the study (N=14) and 48% (N=12) of second-plus generation students (N=25) believed that a "Charter University college student" identity is something that must be internalized:

...I think it's more so that you internalize it without even realizing...but I think...I think a lot of it depends on the person too, but if you're put in a certain atmosphere...it's almost as if you can't help taking in certain parts of it...and I also I think it depends on the college like [sic] each college has it's own kind of personality... (Interview: Mary, female, second-plus generation)

...I think it's becoming...I mean [sic], if they said to me like, "Okay, this is college life". I'd say just put me back in high school...I think it's much more becoming because you're the one that has take this...you're the one that has to initiate the experience and take in the experiences and make something of them. And, I mean [sic], if you don't do that, then what's the point?...(Interview: Bob, male, second-plus generation)

Twenty-nine percent (N=4) of first-generation and 28% (N=7) of second-plus generation students viewed it as both a role and an identity:

...It's kind of a little of both. I mean [sic], you become the part to an extent... in learning how to act... You get certain ideals and ethics, like [sic] a work ethic; you know you need a work ethic to get through college. I mean, you can't just go the whole way on partial credit. So in learning how to... in learning the knowledge and the skills and stuff like that, you also learn how to accomplish these things, and that becomes a part of who you are. But you also, you know [sic], act in the professional sense, because when you go out and you get your job, I mean [sic]. 9 times out of 10, you're not going to be the job, you're going to have a persona outside of work. So, in that sense it's acting and then the other sense you actually become... it becomes a part of you... (Interview: Jerry, male, first-generation)

...I think those two go pretty hand in hand. I think by learning the ropes of college and learning how to adapt to a new environment and to function.
you kind of take on a new role and change your persona a bit…
(Interview: Seth, male, second-plus generation)

Fourteen percent (N=2) of first-generation and 16% (N=4) of second-plus generation students thought that it is first a role that later becomes internalized:

...you can’t just come in owning it, like you have to start by doing what they tell you...you take your impressions of that and then make that yours. Like [sic] everybody doesn’t see college the same...you’ve got to start off by doing what they tell you to do, like you know [sic], you start off doing what they tell you, and going the way you’re supposed to, and now you can...so you’ve got a base, you can’t just start out being, “Well, I’m just going to do this” for no reason...and then you get to make it your own, I think... (Interview: John, male, second-plus generation)

And 14% of first-generation (N=2) and 8% (N=2) of second-plus generation students viewed the Charter college student identity as primarily learning about themselves or being who they “always wanted to be”:

...I think you’d have to learn the ropes...there are things that you have to do by learning the ropes. I think you have to learn things about yourself, I guess...It wasn’t becoming like a new Brandon and studying the ropes, it was like by learning the ropes, I guess, I’m learning myself... (Interview: Brandon, male, first-generation)

...It could change who you are maybe...like with me I’ve been a lot more open...with my friends here, I’m a lot more open about things, like I’ll just talk about...like I have a bunch a [sic] guy friends and I’ll talk about girl stuff, and all those people who are not open about things...’cause [sic] you’re starting...it’s really, it’s like you’re starting all...you’re starting over, and and I don’t know...and I think it’s something I always wanted to be like... I always wanted to be really open to like to everyone about everything ’cause [sic] I just feel a lot better, and I feel like you learn more and grow more if you’re open...it’s just more than that, like with your friends, like [sic]...there’s one time over break, I went back home...and I was talking to some of my old friends from high school and I was like, “You know what you guys? I really appreciate you.” And they didn’t take me seriously... (Interview: Natalie, female, first-generation)

Overall, 86% of first-generation (N=12) students and 92% (N=23) of second-plus generation students considered internalizing a Charter “college student” identity an

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important factor in a student's successful transition from high school to college.

Participants stated that the internalization of a Charter "college student" identity occurred through the process of learning the culture of the University (e.g., what to do, how to act, how to speak, how to study, etc.) This finding supports researchers who have also argued that developing a self-identity that is consistent with the new sociocultural environment is important not only to an individual's ability to be effectively enculturated into a new sociocultural environment, but also to their persistence within it (Hallowell 1955; Whittaker 1992; Csordas 1993; Gearing 1976; Hsu 1985; Gergen 1991a; Bruner 1986a; Baumeister and Muraven 1996; Farrell 1994; Noel 1986; Chickering and Reisser 1993; Upcraft 1989).

In summary, the data collected through the survey, the study journals and the interviews have demonstrated not only the important role played by the cultural environment, or the culturally figured world, of Charter University in the development of a "Charter University college student" identity, but also the importance of this identity to freshman persistence at Charter. An integral part of the Charter college student identity were the formation of specific characteristics participants' cited as representative of college students at the University—gaining independence from parents and personal responsibility; having freedom of choice; making new friends and new acquaintances; learning time management; working hard, and confronting their high school identity of "smart" student.

This study is considered the beginning of a discussion of the importance of self-identity to successful transitions to other environments (e.g., a new employer, a new job within the same company, a new career, etc.) or any number of events in new
sociocultural settings. This difficulty in self-identity transition occurs in many situations and may significantly affect an individual's ability to succeed in his/her new sociocultural environment. And, though the research model was fairly effective in explicating the process of cultural knowledge acquisition and self-identity formation, the voluntary journal portion yielded very limited data. In contrast, the preliminary study utilized journals that were assigned as part of a course requirement and resulted in excellent narrative data.

It is hoped that the knowledge gained by this study will: (1) engage others in a discussion of the important role played by the culture of institutions of higher education relative to student self-concepts and student persistence support the search for more effective student persistence models; (2) encourage research on student populations and educational institutions not covered by this study (e.g., “smart” students at less academically challenging colleges, commuters, non-traditional students; public and community colleges, etc.); and (3) motivate further study in this area regarding self-identity and cultural acquisition and their importance to successful transitions from one sociocultural setting to another.

The significance of the study may be found in its focus on the impact of the cultural environment of Charter University on self-identity and college persistence, which is a departure from most studies devoted to the anthropology of education (e.g., the culture students bring with them to an educational setting, the culture of the classroom setting, the impact of culture on administrative leadership, faculty and curriculum development, etc.) It also supports the findings of psychological anthropologists who theorize an important link between self-identity, cultural knowledge acquisition and
success in a new sociocultural environment. Finally, the theory of rites of passage as a conceptual framework to understand the process of the transition from the status of a "high school" student to that of a university-specific "college student" adds significantly to the anthropology of education discourse.

The results of the study contribute to the educational anthropology as well as the psychological anthropology literature in its findings on the connection between the acquisition of cultural knowledge at Charter University and the formation of the "Charter University College Student" identity. It also contributes to the educational literature in its findings relative to the cultural construction of this identity and its role in freshman persistence at Charter University.

The study also yielded answers to important questions that will, it is believed, shed much needed light on a process that is known to occur each academic year on college campuses throughout America but which has received limited attention by anthropologists—the role of cultural knowledge acquisition on the formation of a "college student" identity, and the impact of this new identity on college persistence.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A
FULL STUDY CONSENT FORM—ENGLISH COMPOSITION

PLEASE READ PAGES CAREFULLY

You are being asked to participate in a research study of the changes students’ experience during their first year in college and their impact on retention. By signing below, you are consenting to participate in this study.

If you are at least an 18-year old, U.S. born entering freshman, and living in a dormitory during your freshman year, you are invited to participate in this research study. Please read the following information to help you make an informed decision about whether or not to participate.

Purpose of Study

The principal investigator, Jacklyn Chisholm, is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Anthropology at Case Western Reserve University. The purpose of the project is to study changes students experience during their first year in college, specifically, the developmental processes of self-identity formation. It is hoped that this information will enable a better understanding of the impact of self-identity formation in the freshman year on student retention.

Procedures of Study:

As a participant in this study you will need to:

- Complete a questionnaire of general information on-line at the study website:

- Provide weekly written information in the form of a journal at the website to use as data for this study during the Fall semester. The minimum requirement is two postings per week;

- Participate in two (1) one- to two-hour audiotaped interviews -- one at the end of the Fall semester and one at the end of the Spring semester;

- Complete a questionnaire in the spring semester regarding your reflections of the freshman year on-line at the website.

Known Risks or Discomforts

There are no major risks for you if you participate in this study. However if you become distressed during the course of the study, you may choose to discontinue your participation in any or all portions of the study. No penalty will be assessed by me or any faculty any employee now or in the future if you choose not to participate or discontinue
your participation. In extreme cases of distress and in consultation with you and my faculty advisor Janis Jenkins, a referral may be made to an appropriate University resource.

Benefits to be Expected

You may find it helpful to express your thoughts and feelings regarding your experiences. You may also benefit from the knowledge that you are helping in a scientific study of the development of self-identity and its impact on student retention. And, if you are enrolled in an English composition class and agree to participate in the full study during the fall semester, you will earn one excused absence from class.

Confidentiality

All research data are completely confidential. When you submit your information on-line, your initial message will be stripped of all email addresses and you will create a unique identification name or number to be used with all submitted information on-line. To further protect your personal privacy, the website will have password access (you will need to create a password in order to log onto the website), and no names of study participants will appear in any report or publication resulting from this research, and any information that could identify you will be excluded. Strict confidentiality regarding audiotaped materials and journal data will be maintained at all times. All audiotaped materials will be erased upon the successful completion of the dissertation defense. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and only researchers will have access to the records.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your participation is voluntary, and your refusal to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Any significant new findings that develop during the course of the research, which may relate to your willingness to continue participation, will be provided to you.

Contact and Questions

The researchers conducting this study are Jacklyn Chisholm and Janis Jenkins. If you have questions about this project, you may contact the primary investigator, Jacklyn Chisholm at email robochis@aol.com or her advisor Janis Jenkins at (216) 368-2264 or email jhj4@po.cwru.edu.

If you have questions about the security of the data on the University server, you may contact John Sully at email jms20@po.cwru.edu or phone him at (216) 368-6514, or Pam Hlavin at email pjh@po.cwru.edu or by phone at (216) 368-5153.
Answers to questions regarding the research and the research participants' rights (e.g., concerns regarding this study, research-related injuries, other human subjects issues, etc.) should be addressed to the Office of Research Administration, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, 44106-7015 or you may call (216) 368-4510 or write:

Case Western Reserve University
Office of Research Administration
4 Adelbert Hall
10900 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44106-7015

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

I also request that you talk with other freshmen about participating in this study. The more students who participate, the more accurate our results will be. If you would like to receive a summary of the results of this study, it can be made available to you in Fall 2001.

Your active participation in the study is appreciated! Thank You!!

I acknowledge that I have been fully informed of the above-described procedures with possible risks and benefits. I understand that my responses will be maintained in a confidential manner by the researcher. I give my permission for participation in this study and I know that the investigator and her advisor, as well as University computer support technicians will be available to answer any questions I may have. I understand that I am free to withdraw this consent and discontinue participation in this project at any time without penalty by not submitting information on the website or not following through with the other portions of the study. I acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age, that I have read and agreed to information presented on this page, and that I understand that information I provide will be used for the purposes of research at Case Western Reserve University and will be kept confidential unless required by law to do otherwise.

Participant Name (Print)  Email address

________________________  ______________________
Signature of Participant  Date

Proposed identification name or number

________________________  ______________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent  Date
APPENDIX B
FULL-STUDY CONSENT FORM—INTRODUCTORY CHEMISTRY

PLEASE READ PAGES CAREFULLY

You are being asked to participate in a research study of the changes students’ experience during their first year in college and their impact on retention. By signing below, you are consenting to participate in this study.

If you are at least an 18-year old, U.S. born entering freshman, and living in a dormitory during your freshman year, you are invited to participate in this research study. Please read the following information to help you make an informed decision about whether or not to participate.

Purpose of Study

The principal investigator, Jacklyn Chisholm, is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Anthropology at Case Western Reserve University. The purpose of the project is to study changes students experience during their first year in college, specifically, the developmental processes of self-identity formation. It is hoped that this information will enable a better understanding of the impact of self-identity formation in the freshman year on student retention.

Procedures of Study:

As a participant in this study you will need to:

♦ Complete a questionnaire of general information on-line at the study website: http://www.cwru.edu/artsci/anth/freshmanID/sps092000_a.htm.

♦ Provide weekly written information in the form of a journal at the website to use as data for this study during the Fall semester. The minimum requirement is two postings per week;

♦ Participate in two (1) one- to two-hour audiotaped interviews -- one at the end of the Fall semester and one at the end of the Spring semester;

♦ Complete a questionnaire in the spring semester regarding your reflections of the freshman year on-line at the website.

Known Risks or Discomforts

There are no major risks for you if you participate in this study. However if you become distressed during the course of the study, you may choose to discontinue your participation in any or all portions of the study. No penalty will be assessed by me or any faculty employee now or in the future if you choose not to participate or discontinue your
participation. In extreme cases of distress and in consultation with you and my faculty advisor Janis Jenkins, a referral may be made to an appropriate University resource.

**Benefits to be Expected**

You may find it helpful to express your thoughts and feelings regarding your experiences. You may also benefit from the knowledge that you are helping in a scientific study of the development of self-identity and its impact on student retention. If you are in Introductory Chemistry, you will receive one extra credit point if you complete the questionnaire.

**Confidentiality**

All research data are completely confidential. When you submit your information on-line, your initial message will be stripped of all email addresses and you will create a unique identification name or number to be used with all submitted information on-line. To further protect your personal privacy, the website will have password access (you will need to create a password in order to log onto the website), and no names of study participants will appear in any report or publication resulting from this research, and any information that could identify you will be excluded. Strict confidentiality regarding audiotaped materials and journal data will be maintained at all times. All audiotaped materials will be erased upon the successful completion of the dissertation defense. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and only researchers will have access to the records.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study**

Your participation is voluntary, and your refusal to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Any significant new findings that develop during the course of the research, which may relate to your willingness to continue participation, will be provided to you.

**Contact and Questions**

The researchers conducting this study are Jacklyn Chisholm and Janis Jenkins. If you have questions about this project, you may contact the primary investigator, Jacklyn Chisholm at email robochis@aol.com or her advisor Janis Jenkins at (216) 368-2264 or email jhj4@po.cwru.edu.

If you have questions about the security of the data on the University server, you may contact John Sully at email jms20@po.cwru.edu or phone him at (216) 368-6514, or Pam Hlavin at email pjh@po.cwru.edu or by phone at (216) 368-5153.
Answers to questions regarding the research and the research participants' rights (e.g., concerns regarding this study, research-related injuries, other human subjects issues, etc.) should be addressed to the Office of Research Administration, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, 44106-7015 or you may call (216) 368-4510 or write:

Case Western Reserve University  
Office of Research Administration  
4 Adelbert Hall  
10900 Euclid Avenue  
Cleveland, OH 44106-7015

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

I also request that you talk with other freshmen about participating in this study. The more students who participate, the more accurate our results will be. If you would like to receive a summary of the results of this study, it can be made available to you in Fall 2001.

Your active participation in the study is appreciated! Thank You!!

I acknowledge that I have been fully informed of the above-described procedures with possible risks and benefits. I understand that my responses will be maintained in a confidential manner by the researcher. I give my permission for participation in this study and I know that the investigator and her advisor, as well as University computer support technicians will be available to answer any questions I may have. I understand that I am free to withdraw this consent and discontinue participation in this project at any time without penalty by not submitting information on the website or not following through with the other portions of the study. I acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age, that I have read and agreed to information presented on this page, and that I understand that information I provide will be used for the purposes of research at Case Western Reserve University and will be kept confidential unless required by law to do otherwise.

Participant Name (Print)  
Email address

Signature of Participant  
Date

Proposed identification name or number

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent  
Date

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APPENDIX C
MINI-STUDY CONSENT FORM

PLEASE READ PAGES CAREFULLY

You are being asked to participate in a research study of the changes students’ experience during their first year in college and their impact on retention. By signing below, you are consenting to participate in this study.

If you are at least an 18-year old entering freshman you are invited to participate in this research study. Please read the following information to help you make an informed decision about whether or not to participate.

Purpose of Study

The principal investigator, Jacklyn Chisholm, is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Anthropology at Case Western Reserve University. The purpose of the project is to study changes students experience during their first year in college, specifically, the developmental processes of self-identity formation. It is hoped that this information will enable a better understanding of the impact of self-identity formation in the freshman year on student retention.

Procedures of Study:

As a participant in this study you will need to:

♦ Complete a questionnaire of general information on-line at the study website: http://www.cwru.edu/artscl/anth/freshmanID/sps092000_a.htm.

Known Risks or Discomforts

There are no major risks for you if you participate in this study. However if you become distressed during the course of the study, you may choose to discontinue your participation in any or all portions of the study. No penalty will be assessed by me or any faculty or CWRU employee now or in the future if you choose not to participate or discontinue your participation. In extreme cases of distress and in consultation with you and my faculty advisor Janis Jenkins, a referral may be made to an appropriate University resource.

Benefits to be Expected

If you are in Introductory Chemistry, you will receive one extra credit point if you complete the questionnaire. You may also benefit from the knowledge that you are helping in a scientific study of the development of self-identity and its impact on student retention.

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Confidentiality

All research data are completely confidential. When you submit your information on-line, your initial message will be stripped of all email addresses, and no names of study participants will appear in any report or publication resulting from this research, and any information that could identify you will be excluded. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and only researchers will have access to the records.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your participation is voluntary, and your refusal to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Any significant new findings that develop during the course of the research, which may relate to your willingness to continue participation, will be provided to you.

Contact and Questions

The researchers conducting this study are Jacklyn Chisholm and Janis Jenkins. If you have questions about this project, you may contact the primary investigator, Jacklyn Chisholm at email robochis@aol.com or her advisor Janis Jenkins at (216) 368-2264 or email jhj4@po.cwru.edu.

If you have questions about the security of the data on the University server, you may contact John Sully at email jms20@po.cwru.edu or phone him at (216) 368-6514, or Pam Hlavin at email pjh@po.cwru.edu or by phone at (216) 368-5153.

Answers to questions regarding the research and the research participants' rights (e.g., concerns regarding this study, research-related injuries, other human subjects issues, etc.) should be addressed to the Office of Research Administration, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, 44106-7015 or you may call (216) 368-4510 or write:

Case Western Reserve University
Office of Research Administration
4 Adelbert Hall
10900 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44106-7015

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

I also request that you talk with other freshmen about participating in this study. The more students who participate, the more accurate our results will be. If you would like to receive a summary of the results of this study, it can be made available to you in Fall 2001.

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Your active participation in the study is appreciated! Thank You!!

I acknowledge that I have been fully informed of the above-described procedures with possible risks and benefits. I understand that my responses will be maintained in a confidential manner by the researcher. I give my permission for participation in this study and I know that the investigator and her advisor, as well as University computer support technicians will be available to answer any questions I may have. I understand that I am free to withdraw this consent and discontinue participation in this project at any time without penalty by not submitting information on the website or not following through with the other portions of the study. I acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age, that I have read and agreed to information presented on this page, and that I understand that information I provide will be used for the purposes of research at Case Western Reserve University and will be kept confidential unless required by law to do otherwise.

Participant Name (Print)  Email address

Signature of Participant  Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent  Date
APPENDIX D
"MINI"- AND "FULL-STUDY" SURVEY

STUDY IDENTIFICATION NAME ________________________________________________
(This is the only identifier you will use throughout your participation in the study.)

1. AGE: ________________________________

2. ETHNICITY: __________________________

3. GENDER: ______________________________

4. CITY, STATE: __________________________

5. U.S. CITIZEN: (please circle) Yes No

6. INTENDED MAJOR: _______________________

7. HOUSING: (please circle) Commuter Residence Hall

8. TOTAL FAMILY INCOME: (please circle)
   Below $10,000 $10,000-20,000 $20,000-30,000
   $30,000-40,000 $40,000-50,000 $50,000-60,000
   $60,000-70,000 $70,000-80,000 $80,000-90,000
   $90,000-100,000 Above $100,000

9. MOTHER'S EDUCATION: (please circle)
   Some High School High School Graduate Some College
   Associate's Degree Bachelor's Degree Master's Degree
   Terminal Degree Other ________________________
   (Ph.D., Ed.D., M.D., J.D., D.D.S.)
Mini- and Full-Study Survey—Page2

10. **FATHER'S EDUCATION:** (please circle)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Some High School</th>
<th>High School Graduate</th>
<th>Some College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>Master's Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminal Degree</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Ph.D., Ed.D., M.D., J.D., D.D.S.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. With whom do you reside? (please circle)

- Parents
- Mother
- Father
- Other ___________________

12. Where were you born? ____________________________

Where was your mother born? ____________________________

Where was your father born? ____________________________

13. Have you ever attended a "college experience" or pre-college program on a college campus? (please circle) Yes No

Did you receive college credit hours for your participation? Yes No

14. Have you ever enrolled in or completed a college course while a student in high school? (please circle) Yes No

15. Total college credit hours earned prior to your freshman year: ___________

Questions

1. If you were asked to introduce yourself to someone, how would you describe yourself?

2. How would you describe this phase or period of your life?

3. If you've ever had a time when you had to adjust to a new environment, who and/or what helped you to adjust? Please explain.

4. Why did you want to go to college?

5. What is your definition of the term "college student"?

6. What traits are characteristic of a college student?
# APPENDIX E
## MINI-STUDY DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION (N=122)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Status:</th>
<th>FIRST-GENERATION</th>
<th>TRADITIONAL</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32 (26%)</td>
<td>90 (74%)</td>
<td>122 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<th>FIRST-GENERATION</th>
<th>TRADITIONAL</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>13 (10.7%)</td>
<td>52 (42.6%)</td>
<td>65 (53.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>19 (15.6%)</td>
<td>38 (31.1%)</td>
<td>57 (46.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity:</th>
<th>FIRST-GENERATION</th>
<th>TRADITIONAL</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian/White</td>
<td>21 (17%)</td>
<td>58 (48%)</td>
<td>79 (65%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td>5 (4%)</td>
<td>7 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>3 (2.5%)</td>
<td>3 (2.5%)</td>
<td>6 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (2.5%)</td>
<td>3 (2.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian/European</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European American</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>1 (0.8%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (0.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican/Hispanic</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish/Jewish/Amer.</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brit./Lith./Croatian</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Taiwanese</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>Korean/Irish</td>
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<td>Puerto Rican/Black</td>
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<td>Mixed</td>
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<table>
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<th>Family Income:</th>
<th>FIRST-GENERATION</th>
<th>TRADITIONAL</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≤60,000</td>
<td>23 (18.9%)</td>
<td>27 (21.1%)</td>
<td>50 (40.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;60,000</td>
<td>9 (7.4%)</td>
<td>62 (50.8%)</td>
<td>71 (58.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1 (0.8%)</td>
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## GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mid-West</th>
<th>East</th>
<th>West</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>New York</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>Idaho</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>Missouri</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Nebraska</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>New Jersey</td>
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APPENDIX F
“FULL-STUDY” DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
N=39

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Status:</th>
<th>FIRST-GENERATION</th>
<th>TRADITIONAL</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14 (36%)</td>
<td>25 (64%)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Gender:</th>
<th>FIRST-GENERATION</th>
<th>TRADITIONAL</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
<td>16 (41%)</td>
<td>20 (51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>10 (26%)</td>
<td>9 (23%)</td>
<td>19 (49%)</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity:</th>
<th>FIRST-GENERATION</th>
<th>TRADITIONAL</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian/White</td>
<td>11 (28.2%)</td>
<td>18 (46.2%)</td>
<td>29 (74.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1 (2.6%)</td>
<td>1 (2.6%)</td>
<td>2 (5.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (2.6%)</td>
<td>1 (2.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Caucasian</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish/Jewish/Amer.</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>European American</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Family Income:</th>
<th>FIRST-GENERATION</th>
<th>TRADITIONAL</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>20,000-60,000</td>
<td>10 (25.6%)</td>
<td>10 (25.6%)</td>
<td>20 (51.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60,000-100,000+</td>
<td>4 (10.3%)</td>
<td>15 (38.5%)</td>
<td>19 (48.7%)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
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<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
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<td>New Jersey</td>
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<td>Virginia</td>
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<td>West</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX G
FALL INTERVIEW SCRIPT

1. Why did you decide to go to college? Why XYZ University?

2. What were your first impressions of college life?

3. What most surprised you?

4. What issues are most pressing to you?

5. If you've had an opportunity to return home, have you noticed anything different about yourself in relation to how you react or how others react to you?

6. What comments have those who knew you before made about you since attending college?

7. Do you feel that you've changed in anyway? If so, how have you changed?

8. When you first arrived on campus, your definition of a "college student" was...... has this changed? How so?

9. According to your original definition above, did you consider yourself a college student when you arrived? If not, why not? If yes, how so?

10. In what ways do you consider yourself a "college student" now?

11. Do you think that your transition to college was made easier by your high school experiences or more difficult? In what ways?

12. If you were asked to provide future freshman information about changes in self-identity that may help them in their transition from high school to college, what would you tell them?

13. How would you describe CWRU?

14. What kinds of adjustments have you made intellectually or otherwise since being here?

15. How would you define the culture of CWRU?

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APPENDIX H
SPRING INTERVIEW SCRIPT

1. Do you plan to enroll in this institution next year? If not, why not?

2. If not, do you plan to enroll in another college or university next year? If yes, why there?

3. What kinds of things do you think were important during this year that enabled you to continue while other students left?

4. How would you describe this phase of period of your life?

5. How does this semester compare with last semester?

6. Based on your experiences this year, what traits do you believe are characteristic of a college student?

7. If you had to describe this past year to someone, what would you say?

8. If you were asked to introduce yourself to someone, how would you describe yourself?

9. Do you feel that you've changed in anyway? If so, how have you changed?

10. Based on your experiences of this past year, how do students behave or think that demonstrates that they are not college students even though they attend college?

11. In your opinion, what has been the most challenging part of your transition to college? The easiest?

12. What are your impressions of college life?

13. What has most surprised you?

14. What issues were most pressing to you this year?

15. Have you noticed anything different about yourself in relation to how you react or how others react to you when you returned home?

16. What comments have those who knew you before made about you since attending college?

17. If you were asked to provide freshmen information that may help them in their transition from high school to college, what would you tell them?
18. In what ways do you consider yourself a "college student" now?

19. Choose the statement that most represents your thinking:
   
   a) I know that I’m not a high school student, but I don’t feel like a college student yet;
   b) I know that I’m in college, but I’m not yet comfortable here;
   c) I know that I’m in college, and I feel that I’ve mastered or am “in the swing” of things now.

20. Is college more like learning how “to do” college or learning a new role, or is it more internalizing a role?

21. What do you consider a fundamental first step in successfully persisting in college in the freshman year?

22. Please share any thoughts or insights you may have about participating in this study.
## APPENDIX I
### MAJOR CATEGORIES (TABLE 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAJOR CATEGORIES</th>
<th>INCLUSION CRITERION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ADJUSTMENT</strong></td>
<td>Statements related to students: comparing college to camp (&quot;college as camp&quot;); feeling comfortable or uncomfortable in college (&quot;comfortable&quot;); feeling as if they “belonged” on campus or alienated from campus (&quot;comfortable/fit&quot;); feeling as though they were in a transition period (&quot;transition&quot;), including how they defined themselves (&quot;identity&quot;); motivating themselves through pep talks (&quot;self-talk&quot;); commenting on their level of intelligence (&quot;smart&quot;), learning how to study (&quot;study skills&quot;), and utilizing personal traits—&quot;internal&quot;—(e.g., open-minded, flexible, etc.) or other people—&quot;external&quot;—(e.g., friends, roommates, family, etc.) to help in establishing themselves in college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COLLEGE</strong></td>
<td>Statements related to students: discussing courses and coursework requirements (&quot;classes&quot;), describing impressions of the college (&quot;culture--campus&quot;), in some cases comparing it to high school (&quot;culture/high school vs. college&quot;); defining (&quot;definition of college student&quot;) and characterizing college student identity (&quot;traits of college student&quot;); discussing the reasons for college attendance— to pursue a career (&quot;goal/career&quot;) or to establish or maintain a particular lifestyle (&quot;goal/lifestyle&quot;); and transferring to other colleges (&quot;possible transfer&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDEPENDENCE</strong></td>
<td>Statements related to students: having greater choices or having to make decisions (&quot;choices&quot;); gaining freedom from and being independent of parents (&quot;freedom from parents&quot;) or general statements about freedom and independence (i.e., &quot;freedom in general&quot;); defining college as fun (&quot;fun&quot;); changing physical appearance (e.g., body piercing)—&quot;physical appearance&quot;; being more mature (&quot;maturity&quot;); responsible and accountable for themselves (&quot;responsibility&quot;), and having to learn time management (&quot;responsibility/time management.&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RELATIONSHIPS</strong></td>
<td>Statements related to students: commenting on dorm life and roommates (&quot;dorm&quot;), Greek social</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
activities ("Greek life"), and sports participation and teammates ("sports"); discussing high school friends ("high school friends"), new college friends ("new friends"), boy/girlfriends ("intimate"), and parents and family ("parents and family.")
BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Baumeister and Mark Muraven

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Berzonsky, Michael D.

Boas, Franz

Boyer, E.L.

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Chu, Godwin

Colby, Benjamin N. and James L. Peacock

Comitas, Lambros

Cope, Robert G.

Cramer, C.H.

Csordas, Thomas

D'Andrade, Roy


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Farrell, Edwin W.

Feldman, K.A., ed.

Friedman Hanson, Judith

Freshman Year Experience
1998 Conference Announcement.

Friday, Robert A.

Fulwiler, Toby

Gaines, Atwood D.

Gallimore, Ronald

Gannett, Cinthia

Gearing, Frederick O.

Gergen, Kenneth

Goffman, Ervin
Good, Byron

Gordon, Virginia

Graff, Gerald

Grindal, Bruce T.

Grodin, Debra and Thomas R. Lindlof, ed.

Hallowell, Irving H.

Handlin, Oscar and Mary F. Handlin

Harkness, Sara

Harrienger, Myra

Harrington, Charles

Harris, G. H.

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Heath, D.H.

Helms, Janet

Herron, Jerry

Hewett, Edgar L.

Holland, Dorothy C. and Margaret A. Eisenhart

Holland, Dorothy and Andrew Kipnis

Holland, Dorothy, William Lachicotte, Jr., Debra Skinner and Carole Cain

Honigmann, John J.

House, J. Daniel
Hsu, Frances

Kempner, Ken and William G. Tierney, eds.

Kneller, George F.

Kowalski, Cash

Kronovet, E. and E. Shirk, eds.

Kuh, George D. and Elizabeth J. Whitt

Levitz, Randy and Lee Noel

Linde, Charlotte

London, Howard B.

Lunsford, Terry F. (ed.)

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1962. Co-sponsored by Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, Center for the Study of Higher Education of the University of California (Berkeley), Committee on Personality Development in Youth of the Social Science Research Council.

Marcia, James E.

Margolis, Eric, ed.

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