The Center for Research
on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy

Student Standpoints About Access Programs in Higher Education

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Introduction

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This monograph is dedicated to students. The editors picked this monograph's theme to highlight students' standpoints and discuss their centrality in our work in higher education. Students have a great deal to say about their present and past education, and they certainly have a right to be heard, consulted, and even featured for their energetic and innovative ideas. When identified and honored as subjects, collaborators, or co-authors, their experiences, advice, and opinions can and should be brought into the forefront of our research and teaching.

The other theme of this monograph is students' views specifically about access programs they attend or have attended. Access programs, sometimes called developmental education or learning assistance, include a wide variety of services, courses, pedagogies, and programs that feature a mission of support and inclusion. "Access" is a word describing the entry point for students into college from a position that may have been considered marginal by the institution. These programs are designed to enhance and support students' access to college and transitions from high school toward success in graduation and lifelong learning beyond the doors of the institution. These programs value students' prior knowledge, multicultural backgrounds, social and academic skills, languages, and their motivation to succeed in the future. Access programs support the widest range of students possible in the benefits and activities of postsecondary education. Students who participate in these programs have a lot to say about their experiences, and this monograph is dedicated to learning more about their views. It is also about valuing research and writing that gathers data and advocates working alongside students to bring their ideas to the ears and minds of postsecondary educators who can benefit from listening.

In editing this monograph, we took the idea of student voice seriously and confronted some interesting challenges. First, to feature the real voices of students, whose words are gathered through qualitative means such as email, interviews, or surveys, there are some conventional questions to ask ourselves as writers, researchers, and editors. What do we mean when we say we "honor" their voices? What is the final purpose and intention in showing their words to others who would most likely be our colleagues? Depending on the means used to generate the words, does this imply that we should keep the language as intact as possible? Should we edit their writing with the same respect we might show our staff and faculty co-authors? We would not, for example, leave misspellings in the text of otherwise edited manuscripts, knowing that the authors did not likely intend those to appear. Students who are providing their words as opinions, for example, in a research study or who are describing their experiences in interviews (transcribed by someone else) may or may not say or write the same things if they knew how their words

might sound once put into print with an academic readership in mind. (Students technically do give consent to participate in institutional studies, but they may not be familiar with the conventions and audiences for academic publications.) However, in editing their words in any of these formats, are we removing the essence of the way their words sound and actually taking away something from them? Or conversely, is it a sign of respect to edit their words with the same treatment as any author submitting language for a publication? It may depend on the purpose of the final publication and a serious consideration for how the language was written. What would students have to say about the use of their words in publications such as this?

We have several examples of student voices in this monograph that offer some different ways to approach these dilemmas. There is probably not a concrete or right answer to these issues, but there are choices with different outcomes. These choices may vary as much as the students themselves, each with something slightly different to offer. First, to "hear" the sound of students' voices, it is probably best to keep as much of the language and even spellings and grammar intact as possible. This provides a true sound and does not take away anything from their original delivery. As an example, Higbee's chapter "Student Perspectives on College Readiness" takes this approach, and we decided as editors to keep the words directly as they were delivered in the study in an online format. As another example, Lundell, Beach, and Jung's chapter "Facets of Access: Students' Impressions and Experiences in the General College" takes a different approach. This two-year study involved a number of people on the research team, including a student worker and a professional staff member who transcribed numerous hours of interviews. There were variances in the transcribing styles, and ultimately in bringing the interviewees' words to the page, the authors and transcribers chose minimally to edit them for minor grammatical features where it might be appropriate or provide clarity for an external publication. In other words, where a detailed linguistic translation was not possible in this study, it was possible to edit slightly with the outcome of an outside audience in mind while still keeping their words intact.

Then there is the example of the chapter by Schmitt, Bellcourt, Xiong, Wigfield, Peterson, Halbert, Woodstrom, Vang, and Higbee that features undergraduate student writers discussing their ideas in an academic publication. Higbee favored this approach in co-authoring a piece with these students and merging together their writing styles. The students wrote their pieces, and Higbee edited them, as any other author would be subjected to grammar and style editing. As with any author, the students then had the opportunity to review their edited work prior to publication. The editors point to these three chapter examples to explain that our monograph features this range of voices, and we took the approach of editing and student voice on a case-by-case basis. Our position is that students' voices must be honored, and there is more than one possible way to do this. Because there are no strict or standard editing rules addressing this issue that also goes further into a realm of ethical considerations for researchers and editors, we will continue to pursue this issue as it arises and seek reasonable solutions in the future. We will also ask students directly what they think about this process and whether or not they might intend for their words to be conveyed directly or whether they see the editing process as another layer that may enhance their originally worded items for another audience.

This monograph features 13 chapters featuring a diverse range of perspectives centralizing student standpoints about their experiences in higher education and access programs. It begins with Higbee's "Student Perspectives on College Readiness" where students were asked to provide advice to high school students and reflect on their own experiences with college preparation. This is followed by Dominick, Stevens, and Smith's "Transition From High School to College: A Qualitative Study of Developmental Students," a project featuring student standpoints on their experiences. This high school-to-college transition is critical for students whose prior experiences may or may not have focused solely on college readiness.

The next access point for students is in college courses themselves, and the first and second years of students' experiences are very important in influencing their retention and success toward graduation. The chapter by Smidt, "Race, Class, and Gender: Immigrant Identity in an English as a Second Language College Writing Class,"

explores identity issues in a classroom study focusing on immigrant and refugee students. The next chapter, "Sharing our Experiences: General College Students Give Voice to Their Perceptions of GC," is a reprint of a student-authored chapter that appeared in a recent book about the General College and is written by Schmitt, Bellcourt, Xiong, Wigfield, Peterson, Halbert, Woodstrom, Vang, and Higbee. This team of authors examines their perceptions and experiences in the University of Minnesota's General College and how it supported their educational transitions.

Looking further into the nature of students' thinking about their own success and motivation in college, Moore and Jensen's "Developmental Education Students' Views of College" features a study that investigates why students' self-perceptions about their success do not always match their outcomes in terms of achievement. Lundell, Beach, and Jung's "Facets of Access: Students' Impressions and Experiences in the General College" features a second report from a longitudinal study on students' perceptions of their transitions to college through the General College (GC) program. Carranza's chapter "Student Perceptions of the Factors That Influence Academic Success" also offers some insights about the range of factors that contribute to student success and challenges in college.

Specific programs and course models can be helpful in assuring access and success for students in higher education. In "After the Program Ends: A Follow-Up Study with Generation 1.5 Students Who Participated in an English Support Learning Community," Christensen examines the impact of a learning community for English Language Learners. A chapter by Stone, Jacobs, and Hayes, "Supplemental Instruction: Student Perspectives in the 21st Century," provides students' views about the impact of a Supplemental Instruction program. Dreyfuss and Gosser also feature student voices on the subject of becoming a peer leader. In an interesting dialogic approach to research and writing, Jacobs collaborated with undergraduate student teaching assistants in a discussion about a first-year developmental course and the roles these students played in working with their own undergraduate peers.

The experiences of alumni are also important to research and share broadly as they can offer direction and advice for future teachers and students about what works or does not work effectively in supporting student access. Barajas, Howarth, and Telles co-authored the chapter "I Know the Space I'm In: Latina Students Linking Theory and Experience." They explore the kinds of social and racialized spaces existent in their educational settings—spaces that are frequently and inaccurately considered as neutral by many educators. Finally, Eaton's piece "Their Own Voices: Alumni Perspectives on the Special Admissions Experience" brings forth the results of a telephone survey conducted at one institution with alumni of a developmental education program. Collectively, these 13 monograph chapters bring together a wide range of students as authors, speakers, researchers, teachers, and informants. The process of working with students and honoring their words in educational research is rewarding and enriching.

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Student Perspectives on College Readiness

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This chapter provides the results of a survey of developmental education students regarding college readiness. Students were asked whether high school graduation is synonymous to college readiness, as well as what advice they would give to high school students interested in attending college. To the extent possible, students' exact words are used to give voice to their opinions.

In summer 2003 the Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy began work on a new developmental education initiative for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Higher Education Consortium (Lundell, Higbee, & Hipp, 2005). The purpose of this project was to examine issues related to access to postsecondary education for traditionally underserved populations, including students of color, students who are English language learners, students who represent the first generation of their family to attend college, and students who are immigrants, many of whom have also spent a portion of their young lives as refugees without a country. Two invited meetings and a conference were held to address the needs of these students. At the May 2004 invited meeting, which included participants from Twin Cities postsecondary developmental education programs, high school teachers and counselors, and representatives of a variety of community-based educational organizations, a survey was conducted to explore educators' perspectives on college readiness (Higbee, Siaka, Lundell, & Hipp, 2005). The results of that research were not surprising; for example, 86% of the respondents did not equate high school graduation with college readiness. The purpose of the study presented in this chapter was to explore how students participating in a postsecondary developmental education unit might respond to some of the same questions posed to educators.

An open-ended questionnaire was administered online to 68 first-semester University of Minnesota General College (GC) students enrolled in GC 1086: "The First-Year Experience" during November, 2004. Although students were required to complete this assignment to earn course points, participation in this research study was voluntary. Forty-one students (65%) signed consent forms providing permission to report their responses, which were submitted confidentially and tabulated anonymously.

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In this discussion of the research results, to the extent possible students' exact words are provided to give voice to their opinions. Because this was an online assignment, one might expect grammatical and typing errors, as well as variations in dialect and usage in oral styles, just as we find them in our own e-mail messages. It should be noted that the student quotations provided are verbatim, without additional editing, cut-and-pasted from their electronic submissions.

High School Graduation as Preparation for College

The first item asked, "Do you think that graduating from high school means that you are ready for college?" Four students (i.e., 10%) responded yes, or at least that this should be the case. One student even indicated that preparation for college should be the purpose of high school. Another student wrote,

> I think that graduating from High School ideally means that one is ready for college. From my experience, high school is the preparation grounds for college life. Almost all of my classes were very focused on building writing and thinking skills. History and English classes were, from my experience, especially designed to prepare one for college. The way things are analyzed on many levels portray college intellectual style.

Some students, like the student quoted below, answered on a personal level about their own readiness:

> Yes, because I was a motivated student. I did my best in school to keep my academic GPA by finishing all my homework and assignment. I rarely missed a day of school unless I got sick. I involved in school activities such as Track Team, Talent Show, Educational Talent Search, Admission Possible, volunteer for my school community, Year Book, and worked two part-time jobs. I visit College and Career Center once a week during my senior year and I made appointment with my counselor about the colleges and the majors that I want to continue to study. These have helped me to get ready for college.

High School Graduation Not Seen as Equal to College Preparation

Seventeen students (41%) were emphatic in indicating that high school does not provide adequate preparation for college, making comments like "High school is only the basics and nothing compared to college" or "Some students go to high school only because they have to." Many students discussed differences between high school and the college experience. The following student's writing is representative of this point of view:

> I don't believe that graduating from high school means that you are totally ready for college. No matter how much preparation you have and no matter what level of education you are at, I don't think that anyone can be fully prepared for what college will throw at you. There is a lot more to college then just the basic things you learn in high school. The environment totally changes, friends change and so do your studying habits. So by going through high school one way doesn't necessarily mean that you will follow that exact path through college. Everything is different and you just have to be ready for change I guess.

Another student wrote,

> I think that graduating form high school doesn't mean I'm ready for college. Why? Is because high school and college is different in many ways. In high school students just have to stay in one building. As for college students they have to move form building to building. In high school it seems to me like the teachers are still baby-sitting the students by telling them they have missing assignments or they need to do this for extra credit, the students don't learn how to be independent. College is different.

Several students who did not believe that high school graduation is synonymous with college

readiness also commented on the likelihood that high school habits would impact college success. For example,

> No, I don't think that just graduating from high school means your ready. It takes a lot more to be prepared for College. You have to take entrance exams, and apply first off, but moreover, you have to be willing to do the work. If you were not very studious in high school, you're not going to be in College most likely, and that can cause some problems when it comes time to do homework or go to class. When you're on your own, it's totally different from high school, and you need to prepare yourself for that.

But this student proposed that even A students in high school will not necessarily be A students in college, although they will be better prepared than others:

> I think that graduating from high school does not necessarily mean that you are ready for college. College is a big change from high school even for the people who graduate with a 4.0 grade point average. College is a lot more work and a lot harder work then high school where most kids just did the minimum to get by. Some of the people who graduate from high school are more ready for college then other people but that doesn't mean that they are prepared for the amount of work and out of class studying you have to put into it. It's unfortunate but a lot of kids in high school pass their classes by cheating and when they get to college they see that cheating is a serious issue and they are then unable to do the work.

Similar sentiments were voiced by this student:

> It is my belief that graduating from high school does not mean that a student is ready for college. Graduating from high school just means that a student has completed his education from pre-school or kindergarten through senior year in high school. High school curriculum is very different from college curriculum. Some students with the best grades in high school go on to receive horrible grades in college for many reasons including time management and different methods of assigning homework and studying.

Seven students (17%) specifically mentioned time management somewhere in their responses, as well as other skills and habits necessary for success:

> While high school graduation or a GED is a prerequisite for acceptance into college that alone is not enough. Two additional things are needed. First one needs to have developed adequate skills to be able to be successful in college. Many students graduate from high school will inadequate reading, writing and math skills and poor study skills. A student would need to have strong skills in these areas to be ready for college. The second thing a student would need is a strong desire to be successful in college. This is needed because college requires a lot of hard work. The student needs to give up time with friends and recreation to attend classes and study. Without a strong motivation to succeed the student is not likely to be successful in college and thus would not be ready to attend.

The following student's comments address other issues related to student autonomy, a topic covered in GC 1086:

> In high school you are told to do your homework and when to study but in college you're on your own on everything. I believe that is the big different between college and high school. In college there are lots of help but you must put in the effort to find it and use it to your advantage. In high school your teacher and other people tell you to do your homework and to study for a test which make you lazy. In college no body cares if you do your work or not because you're paying your money so it all on your own. Also family plays a big role in high school but not in college because your family can't

be there for you because you don't live with them any more.

Similarly, another student wrote,

> Graduating from high school does not mean that a person is ready for college. College is a large step in a teenager's life. First off, it is probably that person's first experience moving out of their house and away from their family. Going to college takes a lot of self-discipline and self-motivation in order to be successful. Just because a student made it through high school where each student was practically walked with doesn't mean that person is ready for the physical and metal changes that college brings with. A person can be extremely successful in high school but if they lack the specific study habits or ability to keep track of their assignments they will have major difficulties in college. In college, assignments and due dates are given ahead of time and the students are not usually reminded about tests, quizzes, or deadlines . . . it's all up to the student to come prepared.

This was a familiar theme, as noted in this student's comments as well:

> I think that even after you graduate from high school, it doesn't necessarily mean that you are completely ready for the college setting. Many things are different from high school, and you may not be ready face them yet. For example, the amount of freedom a person has can be an overwhelming sense to loose track of responsibilities and to procrastinate more. In high school you had teachers reminding you of things many times. They had a day to day schedule and for many people it could have been easier to have to do things for the class everyday. People many times think the workload is overwhelming also. They haven't had to do as much work in a week to week basis. This can be harder when students realize how much work piles up.

With autonomy comes responsibility, as voiced by this student:

> I personally do not think that graduating from high school prepares you for college. When you are in high school and you forget a book or an assignment in your locker, your teacher will let you go and get it. In college, you can't just run back to your dorm or even back home. High school never taught me the value of responsibility. In order to succeed in college you have to be responsible and make responsible decisions. You also have to learn to be independent. While you are in college you can't schedule all your classes so that you have them with your friends. You have to learn to be independent and go to class by yourself and meet new people all on your own.

Thus, many students like the one quoted in the following passage linked readiness to maturity as well as academic preparation:

> I do not believe that graduating from high school means one is ready for college in all cases. Some students that graduate from high school did not take classes that were intended to prepare them for college. Also some people that have graduated from high school have still not matured enough or are just not cut out to go to college.

A student concluded, "I feel that there should be something in between high school and college so that students are better prepared for what they are getting into."

"Yes and No"

Three of the students (7%) specifically answered "yes and no" to the question, "Do you think that graduating from high school means that you are ready for college?" They proceeded to address aspects of high school that assisted college preparation and other aspects that could be improved. Here is one example:

> Yes and no because high school is preparing you for college. High school is helping you learn basic course in college such as math, writing, history, reading, and science. High school is helping you get the feel of college and to visualize it. I would say if you could

> handle the pressure in high school then you'll have a big chance of making it. You'll have to obtain confident and want to reach that goal you set for yourself.

Readiness Can Depend on the Student

Ten students (24%) in some way conveyed that whether or not graduating from high school prepared one for college depended upon the individual student and the choices the student makes. For example,

> I do think that high school prepares you for college in hope that you will be ready. You have to ask yourself if you are ready or not, it depends on how well you worked throughout your high school years. High school has college courses like AP [advanced placement] and IB [international baccalaureate], those classes include college materials. So depending on what classes you took, you will graduate and be ready for college.

Another student explained that some students "cruise" through their high school years and "meet the minimum graduation standards" but that those "low standards" are "the graduation requirements for students who are not going to attend college."

One student wrote not about student choices as much as about sense of direction, and distinguished between being "ready" to attend college and being "prepared":

> No, I do not think that graduating from high school determines if an individual is ready for college or further education. I think that attending college is a big decision and that it really depends on an individual if he or she is ready for college. It might just be that the person is still lost in what he or she wants to do after graduation. Graduation, I think, is just another way of saying you made it this far and learned a lot not you have learned a lot and you most certainly are prepared to go to college. Again, depending on the person's situation he or she may not be ready for college right away and may not be prepared for college.

Preparation Can Depend on the High School

Two respondents (5%) thought that it depended upon the high school attended; for example: "Certain high schools aren't challenging enough to prepare a person for University learning."

Some Students Benefit From Waiting to Attend College

Finally, one student wrote that taking a year off between high school and college made all the difference and contributed to valuing the college experience:

> Personally I took a year off after high school and it made a huge difference. Had I gone right after high school I would never have the same appreciation I do now and I can guarantee you I would not have done as well as I am doing. Also during that year off I went to see family in Europe and Europe. I learned more about the responsibilities that I had when I am not living with my parents. On top of that it showed me where I want to go—I want a job that allows me to work and live internationally if I choose. That is how I found out about the major I am going for and it is also what gives me the desire to do well in school! Most people aren't ready to live on their own and then adding the extra and main stress of studying makes it harder.

Another student, who had already stated that "just because a student graduates from high school does not mean that they are ready to conquer the college world," commented,

> Mentally, some people will need a break from the entire educational process. Many other people will need time to figure out exactly in what area they wish to further their education. Sadly, some people are not the college type and succeed without further education.

Another student wrote,

> I do believe you are ready for college right after high school. If you do not have that drive then I suggest you wait for when you

> know you are going to take on all the tasks by yourself. If you have the drive go for it otherwise think it through.

And one student concluded,

> I do not think graduating high school means you are prepared for college. If I would have gone to college right after high school, I would not have done well in my classes. I would have continued all the bad habits I had while I was in high school. After being in the Army for four years, I am much better prepared for college. I know how to manage my time better, and I know how important it is to get everything done.

Advice for High School Freshmen and Sophomores

The second item on the survey asked, "What advice would you give to high school freshmen and sophomores to help prepare them for college?" Typical answers from educators for this question included advising high school students to (a) enroll in rigorous college preparatory classes such as advanced placement (AP) courses, (b) take 4 years of high school math and science, (c) develop different types of writing skills, and (d) start preparing for college during the freshman and sophomore years of high school (Higbee, Siaka, Lundell, & Hipp, 2005). The students' responses mirrored many of the same ideas. From their responses, it was also clear that the GC students took this question very seriously; their answers often "wandered" because they had many important pieces of advice to convey.

Focus on Grades

Fourteen student respondents (34%) advised high school freshmen and sophomores to get good grades and begin building a high grade point average (GPA) early, as illustrated by this student's response:

> I would tell them that although college may seem far away its important to do well in your classes now because colleges look at your grades for every class no matter what year you were in. I would tell them its important to build up your grade point average now and to keep it high so you can get into a good college. Last, I would tell them to enjoy the easier work now because they will need to do a lot more work when they are out of high school.

Another student advised,

> When you are a freshman you start an accumulative GPA for your high school years. If you start out with a low GPA, it's very difficult to bring it up. However, if you start out with a high GPA and sometimes it decreases, it's not as hard to bring it back up.

Another GC student reflected,

> They say that your junior year is the most important year, but I also think that your freshman year is important also. During your freshman year, you will start of new and that determines your GPA and where it will stand. If you did badly, it will affect you along the way and is much harder throughout the year to bring that GPA up. So, I would say that they may want to get to class even though they might be in that stage where they want to get the joy of ditching classes. I would also say to join some kind of club or sport or take electives that you are interested in or just so that you would have an idea of what you want to do and enjoy and think of what you might want to major in.

Finally, one student concluded,

> Definitely get good grades and stay on top of your G.P.A. Whether students realize it or not the things you do as a freshmen and sophomore in high school, affect every decision you make regarding school there after. It's not always about having fun, "what's popular isn't always right, and what's right isn't always popular."

Take Challenging Courses

Three students (7% of respondents) urged taking high school classes more seriously, and 13

students (32%) wrote about enrolling in difficult and challenging courses and taking advantage of opportunities to take honors, writing-intensive, and advanced placement (AP) courses as early as possible. Two specifically mentioned taking as much math and science as possible. One student, whose advice resembles "do as I say and not as I did," lamented,

> I would stress not to slack off in high school because it pays off big time in the end. Do not screw off in your classes because when you take more advanced classes in your last two years of high school they will help get you ready for the AP tests. If you pass those tests you may not have to take certain classes in college which will help with the cost of school and help you get out in four years without a huge rush. By preparing yourself for college in your earlier years will make college not such a huge adjustment and seem so difficult. I did not go this route but when I look back I wish I would have because I could be ahead in my schooling instead of starting from the beginning. Work hard now and see it pay off later. It is totally worth it.

Another student provided the following advice:

> I would advise high school freshmen and sophomores to take advantage of classes that are very writing intensive, and thought-provoking. It is good to be inspired. Learning begins only after one realizes something worth investigating. In light of this, I would also advise them to be optimistic about new ideas and keep a watch out for what might be of interest to them in the future. Other, more obvious advice, would include working hard and keeping good grades. Getting good grades doesn't just get someone into a good school; it also programs discipline and coordinates good study habits for the future. Learning good study skills is mostly about learning what works best for you.

Similarly, another student asserted,

> The advice I would give to freshman and sophomores is to try and take more difficult classes so that when you go to college, you don't just get this big bang of information you've never even heard about. The higher educated you can get yourself by the end of your high school, the better. Also be prepared for change. In high school things are much different then they are in college. Try getting ideas about what you want your career to be, so that as you get older you can really narrow down to those few specific ideal jobs. So that when you approach college you can go into it with a good start on what you need to do in order to acquire that career choice.

Develop Good Study Habits

Ten first-year college students (24%) urged freshmen and sophomores to work hard and develop good study habits and wrote that a strong work ethic is important. This student linked taking hard classes with developing good habits:

> My advice is to freshmen and sophomore students is to start your study habits as early as possible. Some other advice would be to take high school seriously. Take hard classes, because that is the only way that you will be prepared for college level classes. . . . I cannot stress enough to take harder classes because that is the only way you can learn your study habits early. Another thing to think about is to take your schooling seriously because now your grades are recorded on your high school transcript.

This GC 1086 student embellished the "two-for-one" rule (i.e. studying two hours outside of class for every hour spent in class), which is also the foundation of the University of Minnesota's standards for effort per credit, and a topic covered in the course text (Gardner & Jewler, 2005):

> An advice that I would give to a high school freshmen and sophomores would be to work hard and to try and study at least 5 hours for each class every week. Also I would tell them to read anything that they can get their hands on. The reason I would tell them to work hard and study is because that's what college is all about. College is about working hard and studying like you never study before.

> In college we must at least study 10 hours per week for a two credit class. Now if you have a four credit class you must put at least 18 to 20 hours of studying time per week. So for high school students to study at least 5 hours per week for one class which is about an hour a day would help them prepare for college level studying compare to those who don't put in any time to study. I would also tell them to read anything they can get their hands on because that would prepare them for college in which you practically read all day. So if they get use to reading a lot then they would have little or no problem in college. I believe reading, studying, and hard work is the key to success in college.

Several students focused their advice to freshmen and sophomores on avoiding the need to play "catch up" as seniors:

> Do your work, and get into the habit now. It will make it much easier to work when you have more freedom . . . Don't let yourself fall behind, and risk not graduating either. Why would you want to waste your senior year catching up on what you didn't do earlier?

Similarly, one student encouraged freshmen and sophomores to work hard now because they may not want to later:

> The advice I would give to current high school freshman and sophomores is do not slack academically. It will be way more beneficial to you if you compete take as many classes as early as you can, that way you can enjoy you last year in high school with as few classes as you wish. When you are a senior you will not want to be sitting in a classroom in the afternoon during springtime. You will want to be out enjoying what is left of having little to no responsibilities. You will be able to drive and basically do what you want, and school will make this next to impossible. Also, try hard in all your classes, regardless of how useless you think they are. Your grades you earn the first three years of high school, lead you to Your college path. If you earn good grades you will find an easier road in which you can travel, having acceptance to almost anywhere of your choice. If you slack and earn poor grades, it may be difficult to be expected into a college you would like to attend, or even any college. Take school serious, it will set up your future.

Research Colleges and Financial Aid Early

Three students (7% of sample) wrote generally about planning ahead while two students (5%) wrote more specifically about saving money and exploring financial aid options early; eight (20%) suggested researching colleges early. One student noted, "make sure that you have applied to all the schools that you want to go with and watch for the deadlines because people aren't going to care if you miss them because they expect you to be the adult." Another reflected,

> Ironically I have thought about this a lot. I think if I were to go back to my high school and give them a speech about college what would I say? For starter I would tell them to start earlier. I mean research colleges and narrow it down to 3 or 4 that they would be interested in. Also find out the application fees and such and start saving money. In their junior year they need to start applying. They should do there financial aid as soon as possible and get everything they need to do done. Another very important thing is to take high school serious. GPAs are a very big factor in colleges' decisions, choose classes that they are interested in and also credible. I would tell them to take a language and really try to learn it. I know that I slacked off in my German class, and now I am taking it in college and it would have been very helpful if I had actually paid attention in high school.

Another wrote,

> Information that I would give to high school freshmen and sophomores to prepare for college is to have a strong GPA, and to start thinking and researching schools (colleges) that they would like to attend. Furthermore, I would tell them to develop strong study habits as well as a good work ethic, because in college those two things along with good

> time management will make them very successful. If you don't start developing those skills now it will be even harder to build them up later when you get to college. As for thinking of what college they would like to attend, starting now and researching schools won't hurt them, because in junior and senior year things get busier and the pace picks up plus your time will be limited and it will be more difficult to research schools.

Two college freshmen also encouraged preparing for the SAT or ACT and taking admissions tests early.

Get Involved in Extracurricular Activities

Seven GC 1086 students (17% of respondents) discussed the importance of getting involved in extracurricular activities; students "need to be involved in school with sports, clubs and any other interests." One student explained, "Every thing a student does in high school from academics to extracurricular activities will affect whether or not a student is accepted into the college they want to attend or into any college." Two GC students specifically mentioned engaging in volunteer work. One suggested, "Get involved in sport clubs, organization and volunteer programs to build up self-confidence and get more friends."

Do Homework

Six students (15% of the sample) wrote about "staying on top of" homework and articulated the importance of doing high school homework assignments in preparation for being accepted to and succeeding in college: "I would stress how important it is for them to do homework. I rarely did mine and I have a hard time looking at my transcripts. I am amazed that any college accepted me." One student remarked,

> If I were to talk to a group of freshman and sophomores in high school right now, I would tell them first of all to learn how to manage their schedules. I would tell them to use their planners for all homework, school events, and big events in their lives. I would also tell them that homework is very important, and that they should devise a schedule for themselves which includes time for homework, which would be used for homework, no matter what.

And one student urged, "they should always do their assignments early so they don't stay up all night the day before the work is due."

Explore Careers

Three others (7%) discussed the importance of exploring career options in preparation for choosing a major and to "take courses that you believe will help you in your future career." But one student wrote not to get worried "if you don't know yet what you want to do."

Other Advice for High School Freshmen and Sophomores

Four (10%) of the responding GC 1086 students advised enjoying free time. Two (5%) addressed attendance issues with advice like "Don't ditch classes." One wrote,

> Some advices that I would get to high school freshmen and sophomores are to stay focus in class. No ditching with friends because in college, if you get the habit of ditching then there is no point of coming to college at all. And if you missed one day of class you're eventually fall behind and don't know what the professor's talking about.

One student said, "Read, read, read!" Another urged using a planner. One wrote that high school gym is "irrelevant." A student proposed, "be prepared for change." And one student suggested, "Take classes that inspire you!"

Advice for High School Seniors

Of the 41 students responding to the online survey as a whole, 37 students answered the third question, which was "What advice would you give to high school seniors to better prepare them for college?" Once again, students' responses were not significantly different from those of educators, who gave advice like (a) take rigorous classes, including math and science; (b) get good grades,

don't "slack off"; (c) go on campus visits; (d) know deadlines; and (e) apply for financial aid (Higbee, Siaka, Lundell, & Hipp, 2005). Much of the guidance provided by the college students for high school seniors built upon the advice given to freshmen and sophomores. However, in this set of responses less attention was paid to involvement in high school activities, which was discussed by only one student respondent, and there was a greater emphasis on researching colleges and academic programs (mentioned by 4 of the 37 students, or 11%), visiting colleges and taking campus tours (19%), taking standardized admissions tests as early as possible (19%), keeping abreast of deadlines (11%), applying early (21%), and saving money (5%) and pursuing opportunities for financial aid (24%). For example, a college freshman noted,

> I would give high school senior advises on preparing for college by knowing what size of college you want to go to. Search about different colleges. Do a lot of scholarships. Visit colleges and take tour, learn about different programs.

Another student provided advice for both high school seniors and the high schools themselves:

> For seniors my main advice is that they find out deadlines and they meet them before the deadline. Just from my experience and that of my friends we were all not sure of how to actually apply for college. We had the information and the application, but as for deadlines or scholarships, and even the little things they were things we had to find out ourselves the hard way. Personally I think that high schools should have a moment for juniors where they take a short session on something of that nature to find out what application procedures will be like. That is something I would have found very useful. I know as a senior in my school they gathered all of us up to talk about graduation. I wish they would have done the same about college apps and college information.

And, about saving for college, one student wrote, "I would remind them that money is a big issue and you will need to save it up in order to have some because you will need it."

Enroll in "College Courses" in High School

Two students (5%) advised taking difficult courses, while six (16%) specifically focused on taking advantage of AP classes and the State of Minnesota's Post Secondary Education Option (PSEO). The PSEO program enables qualified Minnesota high school students to take courses free of charge at Minnesota public postsecondary institutions. These courses "count" for college credit, as discussed by this GC student:

> I would tell a senior in high school to take post secondary classes. Post secondary classes not only prepare you for college but also you can get some free credit. This is a big thing for a high school senior because he or she will enter the college with an experience and a head of all freshmen in college who didn't take post secondary. On top of that the credits are free and will be counted for a college credit. That would be a big step for high school students because it would help them determine where their levels are in college and it will prepare them for college. They will see how much they'll need to work in college which can be a stress reliever because people always talk about how hard college is how hard you must work. So if they already have some idea about what college is all about they will be better off.

Take Your Senior Year Seriously

Of the 37 students responding to this question, 9 (24%) discussed working hard, doing homework, and studying hard, and 4 (11%) urged seniors to "develop good study habits." Seven students (19%) specifically mentioned developing time management skills. Another 24% used phrases like "don't slack off" and also advised against "cutting classes." The following quote from one of the GC students is representative:

> Well, everybody knows that your senior year is basically "slack time." All seniors take courses that are easy A's and don't really require much effort. Probably half their schedule consists of gym activities and the other half is probably an early release schedule. I know that's how my senior year

> was. Yeah it was nice at the time, but when college came around I was totally behind in subjects and couldn't really recall anything I had learned because it had been so long since I actually had a hard course. So I guess what I am trying to say is that you should take some difficult courses throughout your senior year as well, to keep your brain thinking and going for college. Trust me it will be a lot easier to be able to just keep going then having to go back and try to relearn things in college.

Another college freshman wrote, "learn to start practicing some self control . . . when to, and not to party." Some students gave academic advice that was wise but also cute or endearing. For example, one wrote, "I would tell high school seniors to get folders for every class, and give their computer a pet name because they will be using it a lot."

Other Advice for High School Seniors

Other advice for seniors mentioned by several respondents included "become more independent." Three GC 1086 students (8%) urged high school seniors to enjoy their last year of high school and living at home. Two students discussed setting goals, and two others advised against worrying too much about choosing a major. One wrote,

> My advice for high school seniors is to be willing to try new things. If you don't try new things you will have a hard time succeeding and adjusting to college. You also have to realize that even if you were the "coolest" person in high school, no one is going to care in college. You should also have a good study habit down by the time you are a senior in high school and you can add to that when you get to college. Also, learn how to balance your social life with your academic life and list your priorities accordingly.

Another advised,

> Seniors, on the other hand, enjoy your last year at home. Take advantage of having little responsibilities. If there has been something you always questioned about yourself, find out about it. Don't let anyone get in the way of reaching your goals. While you taking advantage of your freedoms, don't forget to finish school so you can graduate. Hang out with your friends, this will be the last time in which you most likely be together and that things will be the same between everyone. When you are applying to colleges, apply early so you have plenty of time to decide and will have an increased chance of being accepted. Make sure you make your decision based on what you want to do, not what other people are doing or tell you to do.

And another reflected,

> If I were to talk to a senior student in high school, I would tell them to have their fun senior year, but not to loose track that their future is coming up. I would tell them not to loose track of things that they hold dear, and the morals they want to follow. I would explain to them that they may change their mind about their future goals, and that was okay, but I would tell them never to loose track of goals. I would explain to them that they should always try their hardest and to never give up. I would make sure that they understood that it was okay if they were lost as to what they wanted in their future. I would share with them that even the beginning of college is when you start to learn about yourself.

Finally, two students recommended learning where to get help, and another emphasized not being afraid to ask questions.

The Most Important Thing for New Freshmen to Know

The final question on the survey, answered by 36 students, asked, "What is the one piece of information that you think it is most important for an incoming college student to know? Why?" The most common theme was time management, which was discussed by 10 students (28% of those responding). The following response is representative:

> The most important piece of information I could give to an incoming college student would be to use your time wisely and work hard. If this is done, your work will all pay off in the end. Another piece of important advice is the same thing my father told me before I came to college which is, if you work your hardest these next four to five years of your life, you will be able to work easier and have many things come to you. If you "sluff off" and party in these college years, you will have to work hard for the rest of your life just to stay afloat. So in comparison, working hard now in college is way less in terms of a person's life.

Be Ready to Work Hard

The other most common theme, addressed by eight students (22%), was that college is hard work and requires self-discipline, as illustrated by the following quote:

> The most important information for an incoming college student to know is that college requires a lot more academic discipline. It requires a degree of concentration and dedication that is a lot different then high school. They will need to know how to manage their time and make good decisions. If you can find time to study and do assignments for your classes then you will have plenty of time to have fun with your friends.

Another student wrote,

> I think that biggest thing that is informative that most if not all students should know something into college is that the work load may be more than any work load you had in high school, but they should understand that they have to keep with it. As long as they stay on track and try their best then they will pick it up soon. The work load and freedom to study whenever you want is something that you must get used to and not abuse.

Three students (8%) wrote that college is about "getting serious," four (11%) specifically talked about "getting priorities in order," and two (6%) discussed making "good decisions" or "healthy choices":

> I think the most important thing for an incoming college student to know is that college is about getting serious. It is about getting serious about learning and getting serious about life. This isn't to say, of course, that college life can't be fun. This is just about getting priorities in the right order. Part of a high school education is mandatory, unlike college, where it actually costs. In college, it would be a waste of time and money to not push oneself academically. In this respect, it becomes the student's responsibility to earn good grades and to keep in check with making healthy choices.

Three students wrote about taking responsibility for one's academics and one's life, and one individual discussed having to do everything on one's own while another argued that one must be focused.

Four students (11%) mentioned attending classes. One urged,

> Go to class. The best way to mess yourself up is to start off not going to class. It's important even if you think your professor doesn't know or doesn't care. They do know, and it can definitely help you fail.

Another noted,

> Attend your classes. Have a regular attendance because if you fall behind it is really hard to catch up. In one day the professor shares so much information that is very important for your assignments or test or just general knowledge of the material. It also helps your grades because you know what is going on and the professor knows that you care enough about your education.

Other students discussed looking at maps and getting to know the campus in order to allow enough time to get to each class (one student), getting organized (two students), and getting to

know professors (two students). Faculty members would surely welcome this student's advice for freshmen:

> I think the most important piece [of advice] that I would give to incoming freshmen in college is always a good thing to get to know your professor. If you don't get to know your professor then it's harder for you. Your professor is the one that you will go and have meetings with and the one that if you have problem with then he or she is the one that you go and asked for help.

One student advised attending orientation. Two discussed the importance of starting out with a high grade point average. The following student elaborated,

> I would advise incoming College Freshman that, from this point forward, it all counts. What I mean by that is that as a student begins college he or she starts with a clean slate. Each student has a fresh start at their academic career with no mistakes in it. One's high school class rank or GPA doesn't matter any more. They simply bought the ticket into college. However, from this point forward, every class that is attended or skipped and every assignment that is done well or poorly or not at all will contribute to a grade and each grade will be part of one's college GPA. The accumulation of those choices will determine if a student will graduate. That diploma, or lack thereof and GPA will determine what job position the student will obtain on leaving school or whether the student will be accepted into graduate studies. All these will ultimately affect the quality of life the student will have. Thus, it all counts.

One student noted that is not necessary to know your major right away, and two suggested that it is okay to wait a year or two before starting college. One of these students reflected,

> I think an something important that incoming college students should know is that he or she does not need to have a major when entering college and that they can figure that out during college while exploring different courses. I also think it is important for an incoming student to figure out his or her position in life before making the choice of attending college. It is ok to wait a year or two to sort things out before attending college.

The other shared,

> The one piece of information that is most important to incoming college freshman is to make sure they will be successful in college. If they do not think they can succeed, look into another option until they feel they are ready. Some options might include taking core classes at a community or technical college, taking a year off and joining the workforce, or joining the military. Succeeding in college is not that hard, but you have to be focused.

Three students urged asking questions, and two advised learning where to get help, as illustrated in the following response:

> One important information is basically where to get help. I'm still learning where many of the things I need are. I guess it depends on the school size. I mean one small liberal arts school might have everything you need in one section, while another school such as the U has all spread out. Also I would tell them to not be afraid to ask questions. Coming there is still the high school mentality for awhile, such as if you do this what will this person think, or will you look stupid. After getting use to the surrounding and becoming comfortable that mentality will disappear; but the first few months are difficult.

One student concluded,

> The one thing that I think all incoming college students should know is that to be successful in college you do not have to be the smartest. You just have to be willing to do what needs to be done in order to succeed.

Be Open to New Experiences

Three students considered the importance of being ready for change. One wrote,

> The one piece of advice that I would give to incoming college students is to be ready for good and bad change in everything. College is supposed to be the best time of your life, you make it what you want it to be.

Another advised staying positive:

> Don't expect too much, be open-minded and be prepared to take whatever comes your way with a positive face. I was really overwhelmed the first two weeks because I couldn't handle all the work that was thrown in my face already. It got me frustrated and scared. I didn't want to fall behind by my procrastination, so I tried to defeat that by pushing myself to stay focused and take it one by one, day by day. So be ready, it is another experience you can't get anywhere else.

Four students (11%) had suggestions related to meeting new people and making new friends, such as:

> The most important thing any incoming freshman should know is to get out there and meet new people. You college experience will not be the same if you constantly sit in your room and don't put yourself out there to try new things and meet new people. Everyone comes from such a diverse background, and there is so much to learn from everyone. Take the time to get to know people, despite how much you are scared and don't think you could enjoy their company, you can! There are hundreds of people who want to be your friend, and will take time to sit and talk in which you can share previous experiences with. It will make the weekends go by much faster if you have a wide variety of people in which you can hang out with.

Three specifically addressed diversity, as illustrated in the following quote:

> The one piece of information that I think is most important is diversity. I know when I came to the University of Minnesota I was expecting different cultures and different types of people, but it's still shocking to be immersed in it. You should try and get to know people of other cultures and races. This will help you understand the world's differences. Be willing to listen to other people and always give them a chance.

Finally, one student summed up by writing,

> Be prepared to be a little lonely. Do not think that college is all about parties and all that. Yet it can be but you have to be responsible and keep your studies up. Hopefully your study habits were good in high school and will be very good to carry into college. Do not be overwhelmed but excited to study hard. Also be patient with classes because things will start to get easier. Also don't forget that you are a freshmen so you are back on the bottom of the scale once again. Don't forget to have fun and be prepared to have the best times of your life. Get ready to gain a lot of memories and learning experiences.

Discussion

It was difficult to pick and choose what to include in this article from among the many rich quotes provided by GC 1086 students. It was clear that most of them took this assignment very seriously and had significant words of wisdom to impart to their future peers. The majority did not equate high school graduation with college readiness and expressed legitimate concerns.

It was heartening to note that much of the advice that college freshmen would provide for prospective college students is very similar to what many of us who work as faculty members or in student services in higher education would have to say. Given that high school students are not always receptive to advice from authority figures, whether parents, teachers, or other adults, we would be wise to let college freshmen do some of this work for us. Perhaps the most important conclusion to be drawn from this research is that college freshmen can be a valuable resource.

Colleges and universities do not hesitate to recruit their undergraduate students to participate in fund raising and other activities, and they often pay competitive wages to students making calls to parents and alumni on behalf of the development office. These expenditures are considered important to the future financial health of the institution. Similarly, colleges and universities might consider spending more to provide undergraduate student contact with prospective students. This activity is also an important investment in the institution's future, as well as a meaningful way to employ students.

This research supports the need for higher education institutions to take a more active role in helping prospective students understand what "college readiness" really means and how to make decisions that will impact their future college success. Two ideas that emerged from a survey of developmental educators (Higbee & Siaka, 2005) that would not cost an excessive amount but could have far-reaching results are the creation of a video of college students providing advice for high school students and their parents, as well as an alumni fund for remunerating college students who present programs or speak to classes in their own high schools during college breaks. We can employ our students to assist in this work and accomplish three goals simultaneously: (a) reach new and broader audiences, (b) enhance the likelihood that prospective students will listen and heed the advice provided, and (c) provide a meaningful source of income and leadership experiences for current undergraduates.

Too often all the responsibility for college readiness is put on elementary through secondary (K-12) educational systems. Institutions of higher education must bear some of this responsibility as well. It is time for postsecondary institutions to investigate additional mechanisms for communicating college expectations to prospective students and their parents. Creating roles for undergraduate students in this process can have positive outcomes for both institutions and their students.

Providing accurate information about the college experience is particularly important for prospective students from traditionally underserved populations. Many of these students are the first in their extended families to pursue postsecondary education or the first to experience college in the U.S. These students do not have the advantage of knowledgeable advice from parents, older siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, and other relatives. Preparing for and applying to college are complicated processes. First-generation college students will benefit from as much information from as many reliable sources as possible.

This research illustrates that, given the opportunity, first-year college students have many valuable insights to share on the topic of college readiness. If they were not aware before coming to college, by the end of their first semester they do know and can articulate those factors critical to college achievement. Unfortunately, for some it may already be too late—they may have learned "the hard way" what it takes to succeed, or they may have missed out on opportunities because of information they did not have in high school. It is imperative to be more proactive in communicating with prospective college students and their parents early enough about college readiness, regardless of what institution they may later choose to attend.

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Transition from High School to College: A Qualitative Study of Developmental Students

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This study investigates the nature of the transition from high school to college for developmental education first-year students at a large doctoral-granting public university located in the Midwest. Through the use of reflection papers written by 34 students, the researchers (a) sought insight into the transitional experiences of students who are underserved in the educational system, (b) identified factors that helped or hindered these students, and (c) highlighted the support that a study strategies course can provide in the transition phase between high school and college.

The importance of the first year of college has become a focus in recent years. Higher education administrators have realized that the transition into the first year of college impacts the persistence of students to graduation. According to Gardner (2001), students decide within the first few weeks whether or not they will pursue higher education seriously. The first year is especially critical for students who are underprepared for college-level work because they are less likely to persist when faced with obstacles (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

According to Arendale (2001), critics argue that remedial courses for underprepared students weaken academic standards, that they are costly to implement, and that they cover information that should have been taught in the secondary schools. Those who advocate for postsecondary remediation argue that it is essential in order to guarantee that everyone has access to higher education. Without the opportunity for remediation, those who are underprepared will not be admitted to college or will lack the skills to complete college courses successfully. Approximately 41% of incoming community college students and 30% of incoming students at 4-year institutions are in need of remedial coursework (Breneman & Harlow, 1998; Saxon & Boylan, 2001). Many of these students only need one or two courses and tend to be older students who have been out of high school 5 or more years (Illinois Board of Higher Education, 1997). Students needing three or more courses are at the most risk for attrition (Illinois Board of Higher Education). According to Knopp (1996), a proportionally larger number of African American, Hispanic, and Asian American students than White students enroll in remedial courses.

Research indicates that developmental programs that integrate placement testing, coursework, and counseling are the most successful in retaining students and preparing them for academic coursework (McMillan, Parke, & Lanning, 1997). These integrated access programs are ideally suited to promote student involvement. Astin's (1993)

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theory of involvement suggests that involvement with academics, peers, and faculty enhances students' learning, satisfaction, and retention. Involvement is "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (Astin, p. 518). Also, for the majority of traditional-age students, making friends is an important developmental task (Chickering, 1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993). By actively incorporating academics into students' lives, it is hoped that they will be able to make friends more easily and bridge the gap between the "mind and recreation, between intellectual and social life" (Altschuler & Kramnick, 1999, p. B9).

We, the researchers, wanted to learn about the transition issues that developmental education students face during their first year of college. This information is valuable to us because we teach developmental reading courses to first-year students. All students face adjustment issues when they come to college; however, we noticed that the students in our classes seemed to face more serious obstacles. Informally, some of our students spoke to us about the challenges they faced as young parents, their experiences with violence, or their struggles to pay for school. It also seemed to us that the access admissions program provided support to help the students overcome these obstacles.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of the transition from high school to college for developmental students enrolled in this access program?

2. What kind of support do they receive during this transition?

3. How can the College Reading and Study Strategies course support students in this transition?

Method and Sample

Research for this study was based on qualitative methodology. Specifically, researchers used a constructivist inquiry approach. The purpose of constructivist inquiry is to provide an in-depth understanding of an experience from multiple points of view (Manning, 1999). This model assumes that reality is socially constructed and that there is no single, absolute truth about an experience. Instead, constructivist inquiry assumes that there are multiple truths, each equally valid. Data was collected through document review of reflection essays completed by students enrolled in College Reading and Study Strategies. Document review was selected because it provides the opportunity to learn about students' perspectives in their own words (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

The course, College Reading and Study Strategies, is a three-credit, college-level literacy course for students who are admitted to the university through an access admission program. Students participating in this program demonstrate a strong motivation for success, but do not meet one or more of the criteria necessary for admission. The access program provides students with placement testing, counseling, tutoring, and peer mentoring. Placement testing is used to determine whether or not students need to enroll in developmental English, mathematics, or reading. The purpose of the college reading course is to help first-year students improve their reading, study strategies, and metacognition. Metacognition is the understanding students have about their learning and their ability to regulate this learning (Bruning, Schraw, & Ronning, 1999). In order to improve reading and study strategies, students engage in reading assignments, cooperative group activities, and study strategy applications. Students are asked to write a number of reflection essays about these experiences, as well as their experiences in college, in order to help them become metacognitively aware of their learning. For one of these assignments, students in four sections of College Reading and Study Strategies were asked to write a reflection essay about their transition from high school to college. They were asked to address the following questions:

1. How did you think college was going to be different?

2. How can you use the information covered in this class to help you be successful in the rest of your college career?

3. Has the transition to college met your expectations? Why or why not?

4. In what ways have your expectations differed from your transition experiences?

5. Who or what supported (helped) you in this transition?

6. What support did you expect to receive that you have not?

The questions were intentionally left open-ended so as not to influence students' responses. Specifically, we wanted to determine whether or not students would identify the access program, the course, or student affairs offices as sources of support in their transition to college.

Students completed the assignment during the 8th or 10th week of the spring 2005 semester and received a grade on the assignment by the following week. Approximately 1 month after students had received their grades on the assignment, the study and its purpose were explained to the students during a regular class meeting time. Students were invited to participate and asked to complete an informed consent form giving permission to us to use their transition essays. A total of 36 students completed the essay, and all but one of these students agreed to participate in the study. In addition, one student's essay was removed from the study because it was determined that he was a second-year student, which left a total of 34 essays. Women wrote 27 of the essays, and men wrote 7. In terms of ethnicity, 26 participants were African American, 4 were Caucasian, 3 were Latino(a), and 1 was Middle Eastern.

To ensure confidentiality, we assigned participant numbers to the essays and removed the students' names. Five essays were selected to identify typical responses. These same five essays were read independently by each of the three researchers. Each researcher identified common themes within the five essays. The researchers then came to consensus about the major themes. The remaining essays were divided up equally among the researchers who identified instances of the major themes.

Responses included in the results section are indented and written as they appeared in the students' essays, including the students' errors in spelling and grammar. Words that were added by the researchers in order to clarify a response's meaning are enclosed in brackets (American Psychological Association, 2001). The responses from participants were checked for school and program identifiers. The researchers substituted the school name with [the university] and program name with [support program]. Responses were selected for inclusion by using purposive sampling (Manning, 1999). Several cases were selected for each major theme to represent the range of responses included in the essays.

Results

The researchers identified five major themes: Expectation Versus Reality, Support From Family, Support From Friends, College Academic Life, and College Social Life.

Expectation Versus Reality

Oftentimes it is the description of college by others and the portrayal of college within the media that shapes the expectations of first-year students of the whole college experience and atmosphere. In a paper presented at the Annual Conference on the Freshman Experience, Cross (1997) equated the whole new college experience as being similar to a very large jig-saw puzzle without the picture of what the assembled puzzle would reveal. Additionally, she went on to explain that the perception of college for many is found on the pages of the college recruitment catalogs, which to a new student looks perfect:

> The grounds are lovely with traditional college buildings, a beautiful green lawn with students strolling down broad walkways toward the library, books in hand, smiling and talking easily with one another. Other students sit studying by the lake—or in desperate situations, a fountain—in the middle of the bucolic campus. And students are seen at their state-of-the art computers with a kindly white-haired professor giving

> them very personal attention. And there are plenty of social activities pictured to suggest that college is a barrel of fun as well as serious preparation for a good job. (Cross, p. 4)

Thus, these marketing pieces create an ideal situation for any high school student looking for a place to begin higher education.

It is in the students' best interest to get a realistic view of college. Twenty of the students made references in their essays to images about college that they had prior to attending the school. Several students identified the sources of these images, which included the media, family members, friends, and high school teachers. One student described how contemporary films portray college life:

> In the movies, college was people of so many different races, backgrounds, and interests all at one big school. All of the students within the big school would spend all of their time either studying or partying. They didn't study in libraries either, they studied on a grassy knoll in the heart of campus. In the movies college never had bad weather. The sun was always out. Everyone seemed happy and appreciative of getting the opportunity to go to college. In the movies, everyone met new people instantaneously, usually move-in day, and these people would become the best of friends. Parties were throun seven days a week. . . .

Another student focused on the college catalog:

> When I first came to school I was very excited because the catalog the we received in the mail made it look like the university was that best place to be. So when I got here I wanted to see and do everything that it had said in the book.

So the "view book," according to Cross (1997), "gives the picture of what the college looks like—at least to its enthusiastic salespeople" (p. 4). It unfortunately lacks in the ability to show the students how they will fit in and what they will get out of their college experience in terms of knowledge and academic advancement. One student wrote,

> I thought college was place of wonders. A place that would be fun and hard. You know the place where I would have the best times of my life. I felt that college would differ from high school in the way that we would all be adults and could hold our selves in that manner with a few goofy acts on the side of course.

These preconceptions about college were altered when students arrived on campus. Twenty-nine students discussed the reality of what they experienced within their first year. One explained,

> Going into college, I expected to change instantly. I thought that I would, all of a sudden know exactly what to do. I would be this responsible person that turns in my homework on time and manages my time and money well. In reality, I had the same bad habits that I had in high school. I still waited until the last minute to do assignments, and I had no idea of how to spend my money efficiently.

Another student reflected,

> Now that I am here in college I realize, looking back, that I never understood what college was. I was not prepared for the responsibilities and the classes and the hardships and trials that I would have to go through. But I don't think that if I knew that I would have come to college at all. I'm happy that I didn't know, because finding it all out on my own has made me a better student as well as a better person.

Whatever the image was when they started their first year, in most cases that image was replaced with the reality that they were now in charge of their lives on campus and their own academic futures while attending classes, whether or not they were actually prepared for these responsibilities.

Support From Family

Families appear to be an integral part of the transitional experience for college students. Out of 34 students, 30 wrote about family experiences that

shaped the way they looked at college life. Not all experiences were positive; however, all experiences influenced the transitional experience.

The effect of family involvement on first-year college students is substantial. In fact, Hurtado, Carter, Spuler, Dale, and Pipkin (1994) postulated that family support benefits emotional adjustment within the first year. According to Saggio (2001), family influence may determine the degree a student chooses to pursue. One student wrote, "I had my dad's support before I changed my major. Then now that I changed it he supports me but not as he was when I was going to the whole computer thing." Also, family support influences students' decisions to either continue or drop out of school, as illustrated in this student's writing:

> When we finally arrived my sister, father, and cousin were so excited. My sister and father were so proud of my accomplishments and sad that they didn't reach theirs. My cousin was just hoping she could maintain in high school to reach college. They were jabbering on and on like a crowd cheering their favorite team.

Family influence was not limited to immediate family. Extended family also played an important role in student perceptions of college life as well as the students' desire to attend college (Saggio, 2001). In one student's words, "What made me come to college is seeing my cousin who is now in college; believe that she can pursue her dreams." Students also felt a desire to be a good example to young siblings and cousins, which replicates research by Saggio (2001). One student asserted, "My younger siblings really made me go to college because I want to be the one to influence them to do something positive with their life, which go to college," while another student wrote that, "setting a positive example for my little brother and sister means so much to me that no one can make me not do what I promised to them." Students felt a tremendous pressure to be successful and to stay connected with their families (Jackson & Smith, 2001). One student disclosed:

> The only reason I came [to college] was to satisfy my parents. When they found out that I got in they were so happy for me that I could not let them down. The reason my transition was so hard was because had never been away from my parents for more than a day. . . .

Another student shared, "My parents supported me all the way with college and maybe sure I had everything I needed. My parents wanted me to do better than they did and become someone they can be proud of."

The influence that families have on first-year students is not always a positive one. Some students reported feeling abandoned, neglected, and overwhelmed. Most of these students had not been away from home for an extended period of time until "move-in day" when parents dropped them off to begin their college careers. For example,

> Now that I am in college I don't get the attention I have always been getting before I left. I feel I am doing this all on my own and my family is not there to support me in times. I call them all the time but they don't make time to just call and see how I am doing.

Another student shared similar sentiments: "My family isn't showing one ounce of support financially or physically. When they dropped me off they said they were always going to be doing this and that but any of these plans has been put into action."

The first year of a student's life in college is full of transitions. Families are needed as a source of strength and reassurance as students work their way through the first year of college.

Support From Friends

According to Bonner (2001), incoming students often look to their friends for advice, guidance, and support. The relationships students develop in college expose them to a wider scope of academic-related experiences, such as study groups and tutoring labs, naturally increasing their desire to succeed. Students also reflect upon themselves and their surroundings due to the interpersonal relationships they develop with their peers. Twenty-

four students mentioned the impact their friends had on their first-year college experience. One student shared,

> Jesscya told me to never give up and keep trying to get into to [the university]. I had a bad ACT score and [the university] had a [support] program that I could get into. She had already been accepted and she tried to get me to go to [the university]. I did the whole run around and never received a reply letter. I wanted to give up, but Jesscya kept telling me that I would get in.

Another student for whom friends provided an important source of support wrote, "My four friends Hannah, Qiana, Afua, Melvin, who always had my back, kept me inspired, and made sure I was still living." And in the following quote a student describes making new friends:

> While in my second semester I have met a lot of new people just like first semester. There have been a lot of parties and good times. I also met my boyfriend here at school and he is great. A few friends and I joined an intramural volleyball team at the rec center.

Several students wrote about how they had expected to receive more support from their friends back home. Paul and Brier (2001) found that students who were overly preoccupied with precollege friends had poorer adjustment to college. One reason may be illustrated in the following quote:

> I also thought I would get more support form my friends at home. I thought they would understand that I'm not going out with them because I have homework but I guess I was wrong.

College Academic Life

There are many factors that affect the academic life of first-year students. In addition to the students' new living situation, they also embark on a journey into higher education. Classes are now college-level with instructors who differ from high school teachers. Twenty-three of the essays reviewed mentioned some form of academic change. One student noted,

> I also thought my classes were not going to be that hard. After a while I found out that I have to put so much more effort into the work I do. I can't just read something or listen to a professor lecture; but I have to be interested in the material to understand and learn it better.

Similarly, another student wrote,

> I thought it was going to be easier that what it is. Meaning that yes I would have to write papers and take exams, but I didn't think hat the exams were going to cover more than one chapter. They actually cover three to five chapters, this blow my mind when it came time to study.

A 2003 study by Jackson, Weiss, and Hooper found that "lower levels of procrastination and less overall time engaged in social and recreational activities were associated with higher grade point average" (p. 322). Several students noted the impact of procrastination on their academic lives. For example:

> I think the biggest lesion I have learned so far about college is that there is not enough time in the day to take care of all your work and take care of the necessities of life in college. If I wait until the last minute for anything, I am already behind and I will never catch up. My grades will show these things.

Another student urged, "In college it's good to get ahead in your work, because when you are behind, it's hard to catch up with your assignments."

Many of the things that the first-year students needed to change in their study habits were things that the College Reading and Study Strategies course covered. Some students included specific information on what they changed in their academic lives: "The studying techniques will really help me because college is all about studying and instead of spending a lot of time studying I could cut my time in half with what I've learned in LTRE." This student provided another example: "I enhanced

my study skills as to do with time management, preparation, and concentration. I spend more time sitting, preparing and concentrating on my studies."

While many students spoke of how the College Reading and Study Strategies class helped them in general terms, several mentioned specific course topics that were the most helpful. The three topics that were mentioned the most often were note taking (discussed by 10 students), time management (8), and learning new vocabulary (4). Hurtado, Carter, Spuler, Dale, and Pipkin (1994) found that for Latino students, time management was the third most difficult aspect of the first year after academic adjustment and maintaining social relationships. Students specifically mentioned nine additional topics; however, only one or two students indicated each. The additional course topics included stress management, visual learning, listening skills, study environment, reading, organization, goal setting, working in a group, and preventing procrastination.

College Social Life

Another major theme identified in the essays related to college social life. Twenty-three participants discussed college social life related to their new friendships, roommates, or student organizations; however, partying was a consistent theme throughout the essays. Among college students, drinking is viewed as a rite of passage (Wechsler et al., 2002). According to Kuther and Timoshin (2003), some college students believe that alcohol use results in positive outcomes such as lower social inhibitions, better sexual performance, and lower stress levels. Students also tend to overestimate the number of people who drink and the amount they consume (DeJong et al., 1998; Mattern & Neighbors, 2004). These social comparisons lead students to attempt to match their drinking behavior with other students in order to fit in (Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce, & Radosevich, 1979; Bruffee, 1999; Perkins & Weschler, 1996; Robinson, Gloria, Roth & Schuetter, 1993). The misperception that "everyone drinks" was evident in the essays. "I had expectations about the parties at [the university] I thought that everyone would go and have fun, but it turned out that all they do is fight and argue at every party and someone ends up hurt." Another claimed, "To me I really don't care about the parties or the whole parents not being there." These students and others were "turned off" by the party environment. In the following quote, the student draws attention to the institution's role:

> I am sickened to see that most of the students around here all weekend drink or they get high. I think that students do this because the University doesn't provide a place for the students to go and let go.

Another student concluded, "The parties, alcohol, drugs and fighting and etc. . . I really enjoying the college life until all of these started to come my way."

Several students also discussed how they learned to take responsibility for themselves and started to manage their social lives in order to support their academic lives. In the words of one student,

> When I first started school everyone on the floor was getting to know each other. We would play cards all night and on weekends we would drink and go to parties. After a couple of weeks I changed my life around because I know I wanted to be here next semester.

Another reflected,

> I thought [the university] was a big party school, but it's not. The parties are boring most of the time and the people always want to start fights. There isn't a lot to do in [the town] and not enough of people around. I like [the university] a lot, but I thought it would have been different. In college if you want things to happen you have to do it yourself. [The university] is turning me into an independent person, Because I see the changes as months pass. When I get bore now I go to the movies, hang out with friends, and just stay busy to fill out my time.

In their writing, these students have shared important insights regarding their individual growth and development.

Discussion

Social support was an important issue for the participants of this study. The researchers were surprised that students reported families as important to their adjustment to college, but not the university staff members; however, in conducting the literature review the researchers found that other studies on college student adjustment had similar results. Hurtado et al. (1994) found that Latino students reported that college peers, family, and non-college friends provided the most support to them in their adjustment to college. Arulrajah and Harun (2000) found that support from family, spouses, and friends were positively correlated with psychological well-being. Social isolation was the biggest predictor of college dropout in a study conducted by Martin, Swartz-Kulstad, and Madson (1999).

Although the results of this study are limited to these students at this particular point in time, the findings suggest several ways that a college reading course can support developmental education students in the transition phase between high school and college, as follows:

1. Educators should provide opportunities for new students to establish relationships with upperclass students. Because peers are a major support system for new students, it is important to provide them with opportunities to interact with successful students. This can be accomplished by inviting upperclass students to present information on note taking, time management, and vocabulary building to the students currently enrolled in the College Reading and Study Strategies course.

2. Promote counselors, academic advisors, and faculty members as additional members of new students' social support networks. The purpose of these positions is to act as social support for students; however, few of the students identified them as such. Farquhar (2000) argued that it is important for university staff to provide this social support because students' original support is not there. Arulrajah & Harun (2000) argued that social support must be in close proximity to students' problems in order to be helpful. It is also important that staff members are representative of the diversity of the students served so as to provide students with role models and mentors (Redden, 2002). Course instructors can attempt to establish a supportive relationship with their students and encourage them to add counselors, academic advisors, and faculty members to their personal support networks.

3. Families need to be informed about ways to support their students so they can face the challenges of college on their own. Because many of the students served by this program are first-generation college students, their families did not know what the demands of college are and may expect that students continue the same level of family responsibilities as before (Hurtado et al., 1994). One way the families can be informed about the demands of college is during the summer orientation conducted by the access program.

Conclusion

This study focused on the transitional experiences of first-year college students participating in a developmental education program. Students' expectations about college life were challenged when they arrived on campus. They were surprised when the idealized portrayal in the media and promotional materials did not meet the reality of college life. Support from family and friends, but not college personnel, was essential to the students in making their transition to college. Specifically, students were seeking emotional support from family and friends. Adjustment to rigorous academic demands and the need to make new friends were also major transitional issues experienced by students. Given the opportunity, the researchers would like to expand this study by conducting interviews with a small group of the participants to clarify themes and expand on specific issues. Future studies need to investigate the effects that access program counselors have on student transition, how to encourage positive family support, and ways to expand the students' social support networks on campus.

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Race, Class, and Gender: Immigrant Identity in an English as a Second Language College Writing Class

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This chapter investigates how immigrant students of color engage with the multicultural content of their developmental, English as a Second Language (ESL), first-year college composition class. Specifically, it investigates four students' reflections on their own identities in terms of race, class, and gender. Data sources included field notes, a mapping exercise, student and instructor interviews, taped in-class discussions, and class artifacts. An inductive thematic analysis was conducted on the data. Results suggest that students' racial identities are more salient to them than gender and class, and that participants deal with cultural and gender conflicts as well as religious discrimination in their educational experiences and daily lives.

There has been a rapid increase in the U.S. immigrant population, especially of immigrants of color, since the enactment of the Immigration Act of 1965, which discontinued admittance into the United States based on national origin (Center for Immigration Studies, 1995). However, the admittance of immigrants of color into institutions of higher learning does not reflect the racial breakdown of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). They enroll in lower numbers than their population ratio would suggest. Explanations for these disparities can be traced in part to social issues such as institutional oppression, language difficulty, and urban living with the attendant problems of high poverty rates, educational inequity, and the influence of the disenchantment of minority youths (Haberman, 1991; Portes & Zhou, 1993). Because of this, college departments that offer developmental education and operate out of a multicultural education framework with the goals of "educational equality" (Banks, 2004a, p. 3) and "emancipatory practice" (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 62) are essential. One such department is the one in which this research was conducted. More specifically, the research was carried out in a college first-year composition course within an English as a Second Language (ESL) program that was housed in a developmental education college of a large research university. This study aims to examine the ways in which the all-immigrant members of the class engaged with a deliberately multicultural content. This course was designed to enable the students to engage with issues of race, class, and gender in order to give them a forum for improving their literacy skills as well as an opportunity to reflect on some broad issues of social justice that are likely to play a role in their educational experiences.

Literature Review

This study draws upon work from multiple areas of theory and practice, including multicultural education and developmental education.

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Multicultural Education

Because multicultural education has been defined in many ways in the literature, researchers have asked that definitions be clarified in multicultural education research studies (Grant, Elsbree, & Fondrie, 2004). Therefore, in this study, I use Grant's (1994) definition:

> Multicultural education is a philosophical concept and an educational process. It is a concept built upon the philosophical ideals of freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity. . . . Multicultural education is a process that takes place in schools and other educational institutions and informs all subject areas and other aspects of the curriculum. . . . It confronts social issues involving race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, homophobia, and disability. (p. 31)

The paradigm undergirding this study is the pluralist paradigm, which focuses on the "races, classes, genders, or intersection of race, class, and gender" (Grant et al., 2004, p. 187), while the approach of interest is the transformation approach (Banks, 2004a) to multicultural curriculum, which "enable[s] students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspective of diverse ethnic and cultural groups" (Banks, 1994, p. 25). More specifically, these views of multicultural education aligned with and were the basis for the content developed by Pam (pseudonym), the instructor in the present study.

Multicultural Curriculum

Multicultural curriculum studies are crucial because, first, theory formulation in multicultural education has outpaced its practice (Gay, 1992), and second, as the area of practice that has been most implemented, it is important to examine the effectiveness of multicultural curricula in the classroom, especially as they relate to the interaction and intersection of race, class, and gender (Banks, 2003, 2004a; Grant et al., 2004). For example, researching Black women is not the same as researching a combination of Black people and women (Henry, 1995). In this example, the examination of the interaction and intersection of race (Black) and gender (women) produces results not found in the investigation of race and gender in isolation. Thus, in the present study, I took care to investigate the interaction and intersection of race, class, and gender as they occurred in the four participants.

Race, Class, and Gender

Within multicultural education research, there has been a tendency to focus on race, and within race, on African Americans (Banks, 2004a; Grant et al., 2004) and the Black-White dichotomy (Banks, 2004a, 2004b). Elsewhere, Ladson-Billings (2004) mentioned the "ethnoracial pentagon" (p. 51), referring to "African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and European Americans" (p. 51). With regards to immigrants of color, the possibly demeaning labels of "Black, Brown, and Yellow" (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 62) are used. Even though there has been a 2000% increase—standing at 2.5 million people in the year 2000—in the phenotypically Black immigrant population in the last 40 years (Camarota, 2001), relatively little research has been conducted on this population. This need is especially pressing because, first, this population is very different from the native-born African Americans, and second, there is tremendous internal variation even among the Black immigrants—only one-third is African-born; the other two-thirds are Caribbean-born (Rong & Brown, 2002). Therefore, I took care to include all racial groups found in the composition class, namely Asian and African immigrants, in this research study.

Identities

Since the 1990s, in addition to research on race and immigrants of color, there has been an increase of multicultural education research on identities (Grant et al., 2004). Researchers in the field of multicultural education have rejected an essential, unitary, and fixed identity in favor of a socially-constructed, anti-essentialist identity (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998), which is defined as "social, discursive, narrative options offered by a particular society in a specific time and place to which individuals and groups of individuals appeal in a attempt to self-name, to self-characterize, and

to claim social spaces and social prerogatives" (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p. 19). Pavlenko and Blackledge have further divided this anti-essentialist identity into three types, namely "*imposed identities* (which are not negotiable in a particular time and place), *assumed identities* (which are accepted and not negotiated), and *negotiable identities* (which are contested by groups and individuals)" (p. 21).

Implicit in this description of identities is the idea of power (Bourdieu, 1991), especially as it pertains to imposed and negotiable identities. Identities are imposed on individuals who do not have the power to negotiate the identities at the particular sociohistorical moment (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Conversely, individuals who are able to struggle for power are able to negotiate their identities, which is defined as "an interplay between reflective positioning, i.e. self-representation, and interactive positioning, whereby others attempt to position or reposition particular individuals or groups" (Pavlenko & Blackledge, pp. 20-21).

There is, however, a tendency to comply with the positioning of others, with interactive positioning. Bourdieu (1991) explained this tendency through the concept of symbolic domination, where individuals undergoing interactive positioning misrecognize the socially constructed nature of the position, instead believing that the position is imposed by those socially, intellectually, politically, and morally superior to them (Gal & Irvine, 1995). Bourdieu's (1991) explanation for the supposed superiority utilizes the market metaphor of capital. Cultural capital, namely the knowledge and skills possessed by an individual, is converted into economic, social, and symbolic capital. Thus, individuals whose cultural capital is valued have the power to impose subject positions or identities. Furthermore, research on identity becomes important in the context of immigrant students of color where schools are seen as sites of reproduction and production of dominant socioeconomic structures. As sites of cultural reproduction, schools replicate existing systemic structures by legitimizing current dominant socioeconomic structures (Bourdieu, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976), thereby marginalizing students of color.

However, it is possible to resist interactive positioning and to contest the imposed identities. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) identified this as the poststructuralist theory, which "highlights the fact that identities are constructed at the interstices of multiple axes, such as age, race, class, ethnicity, gender, . . . whereby each aspect of identity redefines and modifies all others" (p. 16). Therefore, individuals have access to multiple identities depending on context (Ladson-Billings, 2004). In other words, different identities are salient at different times to different individuals. Dealing specifically with immigrants, Portes and Zhou (1993) explained that they are assimilated in three ways:

> One [that] replicates the time-honored portrayal of growing acculturation and parallel integration into the white middle-class; a second leads straight in the opposite direction to permanent poverty and assimilation into the underclass; still a third associates rapid economic advancement with deliberate preservation of the immigrant community's values and tight solidarity. (p. 82)

The first form could be seen as the imposed position, and the second and third forms as the negotiated position. It should be noted that the second form could also be seen as the "oppositional stance" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 132), and the third as a hybrid position or third space "which enables other positions to emerge" (Rutherford, 1990, p. 211). This suggests that the imposed position does not always have to have negative consequences, as implied by the term "imposed," and the negotiated position can have both positive and negative consequences.

Developmental Education

As mentioned earlier, access to identities is dependent on context (Ladson-Billings, 2004). Therefore, the context of the study becomes important. I conducted this study in Central Academy (pseudonym), the developmental education college of a large Midwestern research university. Central Academy admits freshmen who later have to transfer to other colleges within the university to further their education (Beach, Lundell, & Jung, 2002). Beach et al. further elaborated that the mission of an institution like Central Academy is to provide access to students

from diverse socioeconomic, educational, and cultural backgrounds who show evidence of being successful in college but who are ineligible for admittance into the other freshman-admitting colleges of the university. According to Beach et al., a unit like Central Academy no longer practices the traditional deficit or remedial model of developmental education. Rather, it practices a model that focuses on developmental education students' life experiences and the many, and often competing, worlds they inhabit. This distinction is important in view of the marginalization experienced by immigrant students of color, as explained by the possibility of imposed identities and interactive positioning mentioned earlier, especially at a site of reproduction and production such as an educational institution, and their attempts to negotiate their identities through reflective positioning.

Methodology

Because of the increasing population of immigrant students of color and the social problems they face (Grant, 1994), research on students' identities in terms of race, class, and gender as they attend a multicultural course that focuses precisely on race, class, and gender is timely. This is especially true in an academic setting that is arguably a site of cultural reproduction and production (Bourdieu, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. How do students perceive the relevance of the course content to their background knowledge and experiences?

2. In what ways does the content of a multicultural writing class help students reflect on their own identities in terms of race, class, and gender?

Participants

The participants consisted of four students (all pseudonyms) Heidi, a Somali female; Siad, a Somali male; Ai, a Vietnamese female; and Mustafa, a Bangladeshi male. These students were "recent arrivals to the U.S. . . . first-generation college students with many of the family and economic stressors that come with being refugees/immigrants in a new culture" (delMas & Murie, 1997). All four students attended the second of a two-course developmental education English as a Second Language (ESL) first-year college composition class, which met three times per week, twice in a computerized classroom for 75 minutes, and once in a regular classroom for 50 minutes. The class used Rothenberg's (2004) *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States* as their text and studied the following articles during the duration of this study: "Wal-Martyrs," "The Wage Gap," "Asian American?," "Yes I Follow Islam," "Los Intersticios," referring to being interracial, of mixed races, or in between races, and "The Case of Sharon Kowalski and Karen Thompson."

Researcher's Role

I am a Chinese Malaysian female. The instructor is a White female, and the undergraduate writing consultant, with the role of providing writing assistance to the students both in the classroom and during office hours, is a Somali female. My role in the class was not one of strict observation. I spent part of my time providing help to the students; I functioned as an additional writing consultant. I also taught two of the nine classes observed when the instructor was ill. However, I was not in control of the class in the sense that I did not assign grades. I also took care to be vigilant about my own biases: that as an Asian female, I might be more intrinsically interested in Asians or females. In summary, I believe that my role as a participant observer enabled my participants to know me better and to feel comfortable with me during the interview process.

Data Collection and Analysis

I conducted this study during the first 3 weeks of the semester because most of the content of race, class, and gender was introduced during these 3 weeks. Data collected included field notes written during all nine class sessions observed, a mapping exercise where the four participants drew circles representing the worlds they were a part of, an interview of approximately 45 to 60 minutes with each of the four participants (Figure 1), an interview with the instructor (Figure 2), taped in-

class discussions, and artifacts that consisted of all material produced by the participants as part of class during this time, namely a diagnostic writing sample, worksheets, and assignments.

This study used a multiple case study methodology, chosen because the case study is an appropriate methodology to use with research questions that sought to discover how and why something occurred (Yin, 2003)—the research questions in this study are "how" questions—and "when the investigator [had] little control over events" (Yin, p. 1). Yin also recommends using a multiple-case design, where each participant is a case, for increased generalizability.

I transcribed verbatim all audio taped interviews and in-class discussions, and imported these and all text documents into NVivo (QSR International, 2005), a software tool for qualitative research analysis. I coded the data inductively (Merriam, 1998) using NVivo nodes, "[objects] that [represent] an idea, theory, dimension, and characteristic etc. of the data" (Gibbs, 2002, p. 243). The same portion of data was coded multiple times according to participant cases, document types, and arising themes. Thus, I coded the data inductively in the first instance. Thereafter, I tabulated the nodes and discovered that there were 77 nodes altogether, divided into nine categories (Merriam), in descending order of occurrence: (a) race; (b) gender; (c) race, class, gender; (d) immigration experience; (e) schooling; (f) class; (g) education; (h) self perception; and (i) cultural differences. It should be noted that while my research questions and literature review informed my data coding, I did not limit my coding to the interests I had upon entering the data analysis phase. To ascertain category occurrence rankings, I used the number of characters in each node because it offered a more accurate representation of the quantity of text in each node than the number of documents or references. These categories were also the basis for my node rankings and a way to

Figure 1. Student interview questions.

1. You were asked to draw circles representing the different worlds in your life. Could you tell me more about what you've drawn? Could you tell me what you were thinking as you drew these circles?
2. Could you tell me about yourself?
3. Could you tell me more about your family?
4. What languages do you feel comfortable in?
5. Could you tell me about your experience at school (K-12)?
6. How did you come to be at the University?
7. Could you tell me about your college experience?
8. What comes to your mind when you think of race, class, and gender? What do race, class and gender mean to you?
9. What did you think about these topics before attending our class?
10. What feelings arise when you are in Writing Laboratory: Communicating in Society?
11. What do you think about the topics covered in our class (race, class, gender)?
12. Among the articles we have read, which ones do you like best? Why?
13. Which articles got a strong reaction out of you? Why?
14. Did you discuss these topics before taking this class?
15. What are your personal experiences about the topics covered in our class?
16. If you were to meet a person that you had never met before, what five things would you tell that person about yourself in terms of who you are?

reduce data—to "winnow and sift" (Stake, 1995, p. 124) voluminous data in a rigorous manner.

After discovering that the average number of characters coded at a node for all participants was 4,480, I decided to primarily analyze codes above 4,480 characters, in descending order, namely, race, gender, religion, gay-lesbian, "Yes, I Follow Islam," "Asian American," "Los Intersticios," class, self perception, "Wal-Martyrs," systemic, "The Wage Gap," and "Sharon Kowalski." At the participant case-study level, besides analyzing the codes mentioned above, I also analyzed codes above the average for each participant. I looked for participants' identity with regard to race, class, and gender, where each of these was considered a node, and the interaction and intersection of race, class, and gender as they existed for participants. After completing a within-case analysis, I conducted a cross-case analysis of the participants (Merriam, 1998). After the analysis, I chose quotes that I thought were an accurate representation of the findings for discussing the cases.

Discussion of Cases

In the following paragraphs I will present salient themes for each of the four students included in this research.

Heidi, a Somali Female

Heidi was born in Somalia to a Somali mother and a Somali and Egyptian father. Her parents were born in Somalia, too. Her mother was "kinda sick," as Heidi phrased it. Her family moved to Kenya when she was 4 years old because of the civil war in Somalia. The experience of being caught in a civil war and being a refugee was "not so good," Heidi revealed during the interview. Her brother's wife was able to sponsor her brother for immigration into the United States. He then sponsored Heidi and her family. They came to the United States in 1997, when she was 13 or 14 years old.

Having taken a sociology class the semester prior to this class, Heidi was very aware of the related, systemic, and socially constructed nature of race, class, and gender. Prior to the sociology class, Heidi said, "I swear to you, I can definitely say I did not know anything about racism, or sexism, or how they co-related or how it exists in our society today." Because of this awareness, she said,

> It changed me. It changed the way that I look at the world, the way I look at things, because I would always say like "Yeah, this person is racist" but I would never look at it as in the system. I would always blame the individuals who were racist. I would have a completely different point of view about racism than I do today.

Figure 2. Instructor interview questions.

1. What are your impressions of your students?
2. What were your initial impressions of . . .?
3. What are your current impressions of . . .?
4. If your impressions have changed, how did they change? What kinds of things made you change your opinions of . . .?
5. What are your impressions about this population as a whole?
6. What types of identities do you think your students bring with them into the classroom? What makes you think that way?
7. How do you think their identities affect their experience of your classroom activities, and vice versa? What makes you think that way?
8. What do you hope to get out of this class, especially in terms of its content for your students?

It is worth noting, as suggested by the mention of racism and sexism in the quotation above, that race and gender were more salient than class to Heidi. For Heidi, there were 29,992 characters within the race node, 9,798 for the gender node, and 2,225 for class. The race and gender nodes were ranked first and second respectively for Heidi. However, Heidi's mention of class was far less, and this is reflected in the fact that the class node ranked 18th in size.

A possible explanation for the salience of race is that Heidi's ethnic identification as a Somali was very closely linked to that of Islam, which is borne out by the third position of the node count of 9,363 for religion. As Farid and McMahan (2004) stated, "Islamic teaching is so integrated into the fabric of Somali society that it is often difficult to see where religious influences end and where local culture begins" (p. 1), a local culture that has an ethnic and racial origin. Heidi chose to wear American clothing instead of the traditional Muslim clothing because, as she put it, "I was really influenced by my surroundings and you know, being young, you just wanna fit, you just wanna be cute, just wanna be like everybody else, you just don't want to be put down."

The consequences of this action within the Somali community, however, were considerable. According to Farid and McMahan, because the Somali identity is a collective one, and one tied very closely to their Muslim identity, the decision of young Somalis to adopt an American identity is seen as a religious failure on the parents' part, and "[t]he consequence of failure is an afterlife in hellfire" (p. 24). Complicating this ethnic and religious issue is that of the "traditional gender roles" (Farid & McMahan, p. 8) found in Somali society. Because Somali society is a patriarchal society, Somali women who want to take up the more emancipated role played by American women find themselves at odds with the traditional female roles circumscribed by Somali society. Heidi wrote in an assignment of her belief that "[i]f more females protest and advocate, the system could change." Heidi found that her family did not support her. In her interview, Heidi said that

> My family [is] so judgmental. I don't want to speak to my brother because he doesn't accept the fact that I'm different and the fact that I'm more American. He don't accept me for who I am. He wants to just like make a choice for me or make me do things that he likes it.

The Somali community, both her family and the Somali society at large, did not support Heidi; they gossiped about her. She found her support from her friends and her mentor. Of her three best friends, she said "one is White, another one is from Nigeria, and another one is Black. So I don't care. . . . My friends are not Somali." Her mentor was a counselor in her high school, of whom she said,

> I call her my mom because she is there for me all the time. . . . She inspires me. She tells me I can do anything that I set my mind to and I call her whenever I'm feeling down or I'm stressed out and her words are so powerful and it helps me to look forward into new things.

The fact that Heidi did not wear traditional clothing did not mean that she was not a Muslim, causing additional identity conflicts. As a result of the September 11th terrorist attack, Muslims face a lot of discrimination. During her interview, Heidi revealed that her sister was likened to Osama bin Laden and told "she needs to go back where she came from." She said of another occasion:

> When I take the bus and I see some Somali girl who dress traditionally Muslim walk in, people would just like stare at her, give her that evil look. When the whole society goes against you, you just don't feel like you have a sense of belonging. You just want to disappear, vanish, go back to a place where you can find people who will accept you for who you are.

However, because the general population did not know that she was Muslim, Heidi said,

> People talk to me; they acknowledge me like they [don't] acknowledge my family members or my friends who dress traditional. They treat me differently, so that's how . . . they have something against

> us. They don't treat me the same way. People are so extremely nice to me and it hurts because I am who I am. I don't think clothes should reflect my personality or my personal beliefs at all.

It is worth noting, however, that Heidi also stated that she planned "on being good Muslim one day."

Siad, a Somali Male

Siad left Somalia with his family when he was 4 years old because of the civil war and lived in Egypt for 9 years, where he was mistaken for an Egyptian at the private school he attended. Siad and his family came to the United States 5 or 6 years ago, when he was 13 or 14 years old. Siad lived, as he put it, "in the United States and Egypt more than I lived in Somalia." In Somalia, Siad's father owned his own business, and here in the United States he worked in a company owned by a Somali friend, one with whom he had had business dealings in Somalia. Even though Siad did not come from a refugee camp like Heidi did, he stated that "[they had] been through a lot of struggles over the years because there was civil war in Somalia."

Race appears to be more salient to Siad than gender, as illustrated by his statement, "I know the basic stuff, like racism, what is it, and how it's used, and all of that, but I never thought about gender that much, because I don't know, I just didn't," which is supported by his node count rankings: race (6,699), and gender (4,876). In fact, his comments about race suggest a sense of alienation:

> It's kind of hard to not live in your hometown because you're kind of feel something missing in you . . . When I came to the U.S., I feel a little bit different, I feel like I am away from my home because they have kind of segregation but it's not like exact segregation but kinda, because they have the people who are not from native here in one place and the people who know English or usually native Americans on other side.

Siad traced his sense of alienation to religious and phenotypic causes:

> In Egypt, it was Islamic country, so I kind of related to it, and also in Egypt, they had people who like dark skin like me, so most of them are like school or students that think I was Egyptian, until I came here.

In contrast he characterizes his experience in the United States:

> I really like tell them where I'm from, and even though sometimes when people ask me directly, I'll say "Oh, I'm from Somalia" but when I think about it, I say why he ask that? Why didn't he ask like something else like "How are you doing?" like something else like "What's your favorite sports?" why he ask that because after living here for a while, I know that it's part of society in here, so it's kind of alright with me if people ask me. I don't feel like that person is letting me down or anything like that.

Thus, Siad believed that his race led to alienation and not feeling at home here in the United States. He thought that he was not viewed as an American as evidenced by questions about where he was from (Tuan, 1998). In contrast, he was accepted as an Egyptian when he was in Egypt even though he was not one. This feeling of alienation was succinctly summarized in his revelation that to him, Somalia was home, Egypt was his second home, and in answer to my question about where the United States stood, he said "third home probably, even though not much."

It is worth noting, however, that Siad made little mention of class in his interview, illustrative of its rank in 15th place (1,245). A possible explanation could be the fact that he came from a middle-class background as evidenced by his attending a private school in Egypt, his father being a business owner in Somalia, and working for a Somali businessperson here.

In the final analysis, what Siad had to say about race is sobering—Siad believed that the situation would not change: "My feelings like it couldn't change a lot because I know that's how it is."

Ai, a Vietnamese Female

Sponsored by her grandfather, Ai and her parents came to the United States a year ago because "they wanted [her] to study." Ai herself had 2 years of university education in Vietnam, where Ai's father worked as an engineer and her mother was a teacher. Here, both parents worked in the post office stamping mail. In Vietnam, Ai and her parents lived in a five-bedroom house. Here, eight people lived in a smaller four-bedroom house.

In terms of identity, unlike Heidi, Siad, and later, Mustafa, for Ai the salience and the top four rankings in terms of node counts of the different identities of race, class, and gender rank as follow: gay-lesbian issues (9,122), race (5,980), gender (5,928), and class (2,680). Ai dealt with gay-lesbian issues primarily in her assignments (7,560). A reason for this salience could be that of novelty—the fact that she was unfamiliar with the issue of homosexuality prior to coming to the United States.

Indeed, perhaps because of her recent arrival, Ai did not believe that there are gender inequities in the United States. She said

> Gender, I was really surprised. . . . Because women they have less pay than men, I don't think that way. . . . I don't believe that . . . I see here everybody like treat equally, the men and the women don't have any . . . I think men and women just the same.

Ai possessed a "dual frame of reference" (Schmid, 2001, p. 75), which allowed her to compare gender inequities between Vietnam and the United States, and the obvious inequities in Vietnam caused her not to believe that there were gender inequities here, too.

Having lived most of her life in the patriarchal society of Vietnam, Ai appeared to experience a conflict of gender roles. At one stage of the interview, Ai said, "[a woman] can go out to work, but most of work of house, she should do that." Later, she said that

> Like my aunt who've been here for a long time, men should be share everything with women . . . the woman [in Vietnam] have to do everything, housework, and take care of the children. The men just work . . . I don't like it.

She was aware of the contradiction herself and clarified that "I think I should change a lot, I should keep some of the old culture. Here, lots of things very good." This is suggestive of the ambivalence she felt with regards to the gender roles of Vietnam and America, in effect crafting a hybrid position or third space (Rutherford, 1990) for herself that combined what she liked of both her "old" and "new" cultures.

With regard to race, Ai related a very interesting incident, where she was accused of hiding her ethnicity. This recounting arose as a result of reading the article, "Los Intersticios":

> I just think it's really funny when somebody ask me where you came from and then I say "Does it matter?" I think it's ok because even me sometimes, I wonder where my friend is come from, but even when I say I came from Vietnam, my friend don't believe me, he say "No, you don't came from Vietnam." I say "Why?" He say "You came from Chinese." "No." "You look like Chinese." A lot of people told me like that. "No, I Vietnamese.". . . kinda mad because they don't believe me, look like I'm liar. "Why you don't believe me? Why have to hide it?" Some people they try to hide their nation, like some Vietnamese, they don't say they Vietnamese, they say they Hmong. . . . "You just hide it, you liar, you Hmong."

Thus, Ai ran into the "forever foreigners" (Tuan, 1998, p. 1) syndrome whereby Asian Americans, irrespective of their length of time in the United States, are perceived as foreigners by the general American population. Ai also faced the misperception of the general populace whereby Asian Americans are synonymous with the Chinese because they are the biggest Asian group in the United States. However, in this Midwest city, the Hmong make up the largest Asian ethnicity, which explains why Ai claimed that some Vietnamese would try to hide their ethnicity by claiming they were Hmong instead. This suggests that there may be a subconscious inclination to avoid the "forever

foreigners" syndrome, especially if one is of a smaller minority group, hence denying one's true Vietnamese heritage in favor of the more common Hmong one. Furthermore, the synonymy between Asian Americans and Chinese Americans suggests that the general population cannot differentiate between the different ethnicities subsumed under the Asian American label, which is in itself "one of the predicates of racism that 'you can't tell the difference because they all look the same'" (Hall, 1996, p. 444).

Ai showed the same lack of awareness of class that Heidi and Siad demonstrated. She said, "Class, I think, I have no idea about class."

Mustafa, a Bangladeshi Male

Mustafa immigrated to the United States in January 2001 as a result of winning the immigration lottery in Bangladesh, and applied for American citizenship in 2005. When he won the lottery, he was in the process of completing high school and planning to study mechanical engineering at Berlin University, Germany. He decided to immigrate, knowing that he could always go home to Bangladesh again. He stayed in the United States from January to October 2001, returned to Bangladesh, and came back again shortly after that. He said:

> The first time I came here, everything is different. . . . For me, it's like they're not going to understand me. I'm not going to understand them because they're like different. . . . And when I go back, it's no doubt that I feel so great when I go back …I stayed back for 4 months . . . This place [U.S.] is really not for me, that's what I feel because everything's so like different way, system, style, everything's different. The first I'd say is I really don't like it, the first time, because I'm not used to it. Then I go back to my country . . . Then I say, Oh my God, this is so nice in my country, this is so nice too, great to be with your family and especially like everything like you know but here you don't know, like right now, I know everything but at the beginning I didn't know anything, so it's like unfamiliar to me.

Even though his family did not want him to leave them, and he left a wealthy and extended family environment, Mustafa came back for school, to a country where he is alone and has to work 15 hours per week to support himself.

Like Ai, the other nonrefugee immigrant, Mustafa came from a homogenous society. Therefore, race and racism were new here and salient to Mustafa, as evidenced by the first position of the node count (in characters) for race (31,464). This is different from Heidi and Siad's experience of ethnic persecution in Somalia, from which they fled—racism was not new to them. Mustafa, on the other hand, stated, "First thing, I never hear about race before I come to the United States. In my culture, my society, my country, you don't talk about race. Because here it's multicolor, that's why they have to talk about race." This unfamiliarity did not prevent him from experiencing racism, as he narrated:

> When I go to the restaurant, I always pick the corner to sit most of the time . . . I also think this is kind of impact of the racial impact because when you go to restaurant, you see a lot of like White people everywhere and they'll look at you and you see like you're the only like different color, and this is also like make impact on me to go to the corner to find somewhere.

Taking the class gave Mustafa resources to articulate his experience. He said,

> I look this thing for a long time, when I first come here until now, I always look those things, but I never get chance to discuss. I never get chance to define. Because I'm always facing those thing but I didn't know before I read those article or I didn't know before I take this class. I didn't know what is defined what. When you can call someone racist or when you call someone is like stereotype or when you call someone like doing racism. I have those experience but I didn't know when I have to call it. But after this class, now I can tell, when someone do like this, this, this, this is also part of the racism. When someone do like

this, this, this, this, this is lack information of multiculturalism, this kind of thing.

Part of Mustafa's explanation for his experience of racism was the average American's lack of information about people of color. He wrote in an assignment, "Racism lacks amount of information about other color or ethnicity which is scientifically non-existed."This is notable particularly in conjunction with being labeled Asian American because it does not take into account the variety subsumed under that label. In a worksheet he wrote,

> There are a lot of country in Asia and all country have their own culture. Americans think that all people from Asia is same. China is a part of Asia and Indian culture is totally different from China because of lack of knowledge of Asia.

Like Heidi, Mustafa also seemed to link race with religion, which is ranked second in his node counts (7,990). This race-religion association is illustrated in his interview:

> "Yeah, I follow Islam," yeah, this is the article I really like it. I like it like this can be for use for not only Islam is my religion, but other factor you can use it like for example, in Chinese people, they have to like make ponytail even though for example if America, they don't like ponytail, you can still have the ponytail because this is your culture, you can prove "Yes, I am like Chinese, but I also like American Chinese, I'm like showing my tradition." So this is kind of one example but the basic theme of the article I like.

Like Heidi, Mustafa also faced religious discrimination as a result of the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001. His reaction, however, was different. He said,

> This is like too sentimental for me to talk, especially in America. I told that people are more stereotype . . . when they saw these people, this kind of face, they think they're terrorist, because our name is like Muslim name and we're Muslim. So I don't want to talk about those . . . because it's like too private for me to talk about my religion . . . because already in this society, already too much is spoiled, is screwed up, I would say my religious is totally screwed up, you know, I don't want to shake it more, you know.

Ranked fourth and seventh in node counts for Mustafa were gender (7,487) and gay-lesbian issues (6,884). It may not be surprising that, being a man, gender issues were not as salient to Mustafa as they were to Heidi and Ai, being women. However, gender issues were still more salient than class issues, ranked tenth (4,491). Even then, it is interesting to note that Mustafa's identification as a student is linked to that of class, as revealed in his interview:

> I work in McDonalds for one month, and sometimes they come to me and they order like they'll tell me in Spanish, White people they talking in Spanish to me . . . So that's why I think that basic information is always necessary, like for me, I'm a student, so because I work McDonalds, maybe most White people think I don't know how to speak English . . . This culture, American culture is more of like stereotype culture. That's why like they think "OK, looks like this [gesturing to his dark-complected face] and working in McDonalds, he must be Spanish." "¿Que Pasa? Amigos" something like that, they turn to me, and I say "I don't understand," so when I say "I'm a student," they gonna change their category, you know, even though I'm working at McDonalds, maybe they're going to change it "Oh, I'm a student," so "you're a student." Then they're going to make it, maybe they think in different way. That's why I think this is an important thing for me.

Here, Mustafa was contesting the public's categorization of him as someone who was not educated and therefore working at McDonalds.

Summary of Student Perspectives

An analysis of the four case studies reveals that the participants had different immigration experiences, ranging from being a refugee, sponsored refugee, sponsored immigrant to immigration lottery

winner. Their economic situations in their home countries prior to immigration were different, too. In fact, for several of the participants, their economic situation here was worse than that in their home country. They also differed in terms of their age and educational level on arrival in the United States. They had different levels of familiarity with the issues of race, class, and gender. All the participants, however, did move from being among the majority in their home country to being racialized minorities in the United States. The topic of race received the most attention in the data set for Heidi, Siad, and Mustafa, and was second in importance for Ai after gay-lesbian issues. This is in stark contrast to the lack of importance of gay-lesbian issues to Heidi, Siad, and Mustafa. A reason for this could be the Muslim prohibition of homosexuality, especially in view of the importance of religion, which placed third for all three Muslim participants. The importance of gender issues ranged from second to fourth and class was consistently less salient for all participants.

Conflict is a theme that arose for all participants. Ai experienced gender role conflict between the Vietnamese traditional female role and that of the more egalitarian American role of women. Heidi experienced racial, religious, and gender conflicts in the form of Americanization. Educators need to consider the synonymy of ethnic and religious culture in the patriarchal Somali society as more Somali girls grow up in the American culture, which values individualism and different gender roles. This race-religion synonymy is extended to the Muslim Siad and Mustafa, too, so that the religious discrimination, which was very salient to all three Muslims, especially in the face of September 11th, is conflated with racism based on skin color. To all three Muslim participants, being Somali or Bangladeshi meant being Muslim. Although mentioned previously, Heidi's statement below is a sober reminder of what Muslim immigrants face in the United States:

> When the whole society goes against you, you just don't feel like you have a sense of belonging. You just want to disappear, vanish, go back to a place where you can find people who will accept you for who you are.

Both Mustafa and Siad appreciated the provision of articulatory resources that the ESL course gave them to discuss the discrimination that they faced in the United States.

The Instructor's Perspective

In view of the fact that three of the four participants are Muslim and carry with them its prohibition of homosexuality, I raised the possibility about "conflicts in individuals between what they were brought up with or what they might believe and what the content of the class is revealing" to Pam, the instructor, during the interview. Pam acknowledged that conflict is "very possible" but that these issues, "for example, gay lesbian issues," are important to include

> Because of our students that are in that percentage, 10% of the population, that might feel very isolated, especially if their culture has a very strong taboo . . . So I want to make this sort of a safe spot for people.

Pam stated further:

> Well, we have that statement in the beginning where we say "You don't have to agree with everybody else in the class" and I hope that we're not trying to push a viewpoint on other people in the class, but I do want people to respect differences, and so if somebody has a very strong viewpoint, whether it's religious or whatever, that's fine. I'm not out to tell people they're wrong, but I do expect them to be able to discuss the issues without being disrespectful. So I think that's where we draw that line. It may not be an issue that you can embrace personally, but you should be able to talk about it respectfully with someone who doesn't agree with you. That's kind of where I leave it. They're going to get that in college anyway. They'll come up against different viewpoints. They have to be willing to allow for some differences. You don't come to college to listen to everybody that feels the same way you do.

Indeed, during the interview Pam revealed her ultimate goal for the class:

> To be able to see the difference between personal problem and what's really a social issue [systems of oppression], and so they can do something about it. I also think it builds empathy . . . and how it affects you as a person of a non-privileged position when somebody who's from a privileged position is your ally. More of us need to be allies for social change. That's my ultimate goal.

These data show that the participants understood that the problems of race, class, and gender they experienced were social issues and systems of oppression, and they were able to express what they thought and felt about them, which was the first step towards "doing something about [the issues]."

Implications

This research study has demonstrated that race was most salient to this group of immigrant students of color, followed by gender, with class, by comparison, being of considerably less importance. This finding has several implications. The first implication is that, because a student of color may be disempowered racially and thus silenced, an immigrant's racial identity needs to be taken into consideration in classroom activities, which can be done through the inclusion of a culturally-relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Specific activities that can be carried out in the classroom include the use of multicultural content much like that used in the present classroom, discussions and assignments that foster a deep and meaningful exchange of racial experiences, course sections that provide for these fruitful discussions by reserving a certain percentage of seats for students of color, and a safe environment within which to conduct these discussions, especially if students hold a minority opinion or one that runs counter to the opinions of those in positions of authority in the classroom.

The second implication is that while all immigrants of color may be disempowered racially, male students are privileged in terms of gender and middle-class students in terms of class. If there had been White students in the class, they would have been privileged by race. These students need to be sensitized to gender and class dynamics in the same way that they are presently aware of their racial status. This means that more emphasis needs to be placed on gender and class in future multicultural content and in future multicultural research so that gender and class equity may be established.

The strong link between race and religion with the three Muslim participants raises some questions. Is there a similar link between race and religion with other racial or religious groups? What accommodations should there be for these groups in the educational setting? What would these accommodations mean for the other racial or religious groups? In any case, religious and cultural similarities and differences can be explored in the course of discussions and assignments so that all students have accurate information about the religious and cultural practices of their fellow students, and discrimination and prejudice can be reduced and one day abolished.

Besides focusing on immigrant students' racial, gender, and class identities in particular, educators also need to look into multicultural education in general, recognizing that instructors have a responsibility to ensure that social justice is inculcated in their classrooms, as Pam demonstrated in her classroom in this research study. Instructors need to expose students to the variety of identity options available, and acknowledge that students can contest imposed identities through reflective positioning (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Furthermore, instructors need to validate the cultural capital of all students, and perhaps to introduce students to the cultural capital validated by the group in power so that the range of their cultural capital increases and they are able to access the capital required according to context. In this manner, social justice would have been served.

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Sharing Our Experiences: General College Students Give Voice to Their Perceptions of General College

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Note: To honor student voices in the General College, which closed as a developmental education unit after 74 years, we are reprinting this chapter from: Higbee, J. L., Lundell, D. B., & Arendale, D. R. (Eds.). (2005). *The General College vision: Integrating intellectual growth, multicultural perspectives, and student development.* Minneapolis, MN: Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy, University of Minnesota.

Rather than sharing anecdotes passed along by faculty and staff, we have asked students to write about their experiences in the General College. These first-person accounts have been subjected to the same level of editing as the chapters written by staff and faculty, but otherwise appear as written by the students.

Within the following pages, we will hear from the student co-authors of this chapter. Our first four student authors, Elizabeth Vang, Inge Peterson, Amanda Wigfield, and Sedrick Halbert, entered General College as freshmen in fall 2004 and participated in Jeanne Higbee's freshman seminar course. They wrote their reflections following their first semester at the University of Minnesota (UMN). All four addressed their initial misgivings about being admitted to GC rather than the University's College of Liberal Arts (CLA), but each eventually recognized the advantages that GC has to offer. For Elizabeth, GC assisted with the transition to college and encouraged her to make use of the academic support services important to her success. For Inge, a highly capable student who did not make good use of her time in high school, GC has provided a second chance, and Inge has risen to the challenge. For Amanda, a student with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), GC's faculty, many of whom have participated in training in Universal Instructional Design (Higbee, 2003), provided a more welcoming and inclusive classroom environment than she had experienced in the past. For Sedrick, who was working to overcome his habit of procrastination, the smaller class size and high level of structure within GC has enabled him to excel. Both Sedrick and Inge also wrote about the benefits of being part of a diverse community of learners in the General College.

Our last three student authors have all held positions of leadership within the General College. Khong Xiong served as co-chair of the General College Student Board (GCSB) during the 2004-2005 academic year. Leah Woodstrom was elected as a freshman to represent GC students in the Minnesota Student Association (MSA). During her tenure as senator and member of GCSB, she became very active in correcting student misconceptions

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about GC. Leah reflected on an incident in an MSA meeting regarding the perceptions of a student not in GC.

Our final student author wrote from a very personal level about what General College means to him. Josh's family and educational history, although not so unusual for a student in the General College, certainly are not typical of students in general at the University of Minnesota. Josh's ambitions and hopes are anything but typical, and his motivation and drive to be successful are extraordinary. Josh's story exemplifies the critical role that the General College plays in providing unique opportunities for students who might otherwise never have had the opportunity to attend the University of Minnesota.

Elizabeth's Story

The idea of college made me freeze within the shadow of fear because I could only see myself piled with feverishly working to finish my homework until early dawn. I was told many things about college, like the professors are merciless and their expectations are high. In spite of my fears, I applied for University of Minnesota, Twin Cities' College of Liberal Arts (CLA), but as result I got into General College. At first, I felt like a failure because I couldn't get into CLA. When I read brochures about General College, I realized that General College was right for me because I needed help with the transition from high school to college.

I found General College's staff and professors to be friendly, and, as a result, my college experience to be easier than I originally thought. They encouraged me to receive help from services that will improve me academically. I really love the support I receive from General College. Since the class size is significantly smaller than for many college classes, I was able to get the help I need to get through an assignment. It seemed like high school, because these classes were diverse, which made me feel at ease. General College has truly become my second home because I feel relaxed and comfortable there.

Inge's Impressions of GC as Contrasted to Stereotypes of the College

Initially when I got my letter from the University of Minnesota I was really excited about being admitted. I was a little disappointed about not being admitted through the College of Liberal Arts, but it was after I thought about it that I decided I was simply excited about going to the University of Minnesota. I figured I should be excited that I even got in. It felt like a second chance from high school. I didn't do much studying in high school and this was my opportunity to show that I could do it and could do a far better job. When I applied to the U I truly didn't expect to get accepted, but I definitely feel like General College is giving me that second chance.

GC Provides Opportunity

Over the first semester I have come to the conclusion that I deserve to be at the University of Minnesota. I am using the opportunity that General College gave me. People say that college can be a cold place, but it was the General College that showed heart and is where I am receiving higher grades than I have ever received before. It wasn't that I wasn't intelligent in high school; I simply never did my homework. By being accepted through GC I feel I have something to prove.

What I like most about GC is the opportunity that it offers. During my first semester I participated in a learning community. There were several connections that could be made through the three classes involved in the community. I am not sure that the connection would have been so pronounced were there different circumstances. I also took a logic class, which I found most interesting.

What I dislike about GC has nothing to do with GC. More so it has to do with the people around GC who do not attend. The view of GC to others is so false. Somehow the great opportunity that GC offers is not appreciated by people outside of the college. It is viewed from what I have experienced from others as a lesser college, which it is not at all. It just goes all out and offers its students more than it would appear other colleges do. There are

smaller class sizes, the teachers are very friendly, and there is more diversity. I truly appreciate GC. Maybe other students are just jealous.

I feel that the diverse learning environment is one of the things that really makes GC great. Coming from a small town with very little diversity, I feel I learned more about the world and society through GC. Having friends from diverse backgrounds has been enlightening and also helped my political correctness.

I love meeting the other students and faculty. I stop by some of my former professors' offices just because of the friendships I made with them. My feelings about GC are that people underestimate GC and judge it so wrongly. Also I really do appreciate all of the people I have met through GC.

Amanda's General College Experience

I opened the envelope from the University of Minnesota with a mixture of anxiety and anticipation. After preparing all the application paperwork, transcripts, writing samples, personal statement, and letters of recommendation, the subsequent months of waiting had been difficult. The University of Minnesota was my first choice in colleges. This was important to me; I really wanted to attend the U. I nervously opened the letter and read, "Dear Amanda, Congratulations! It gives me great pleasure to inform you that you have been admitted to the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. Welcome to the Class of 2008!" (W. Sigler, personal communication, February 2, 2004). As I read these opening words I felt a rush of pride and excitement. I had been accepted! I had made it! But, as I read on, something in the fourth paragraph of the letter made my heart sink. "We are very pleased to offer you admission to the University's General College" (W. Sigler, personal communication, February 2, 2004). What? I had applied to the College of Liberal Arts, not General College. I felt confused and disappointed.

I didn't know much about General College (GC). I asked around and got the impression that General College was for students who had academic issues, who needed some kind of remedial help to be successful in college. At this point I felt angry. I felt so angry I did not want to attend the U. To me it seemed as if no one could see past my disability, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and its effects on my grades, to see that I am intelligent, hard working, and would do well in college.

I struggled with the decision regarding whether to attend a community college or General College. To help make that decision I came to General College, toured the facility, and met with one of the Admissions Advisors. I learned more about the General College program. I was told class sizes were smaller in GC than in most University colleges. I learned that the professors and instructors employed more hands-on and interactive teaching methods. I was told these professors and instructors are experts in their fields and many had also received national awards for their effective and innovative teaching methods. However, at this point none of this mattered to me; I was still angry.

Ultimately I was, however, able to put aside my negative feelings and make the decision that was in my best interest. I knew that many of my friends had applied to the U and had been denied admission. I learned how difficult it was to get into the U, even with impeccable credentials. I also understood that if I spent a year or two in GC and maintained a 2.0 average, I could transfer out of GC and into another college at the U where I could complete my degree. GC would give me a foot in the door. I decided that a foot in the door at the U was a better choice for me than a community college. Thus, I accepted the offered admission to General College and became part of the Class of 2008.

Orientation

I attended a 2-day orientation during the summer in advance of starting at the U and GC. This orientation was a turning point for me in terms of my attitude toward General College. We received an overall orientation to the U in a large group. I was there with students from the College of Liberal Arts, Carlson School of Management, the College of Human Ecology, College of Agriculture, and all the other University Colleges. Even though I would be attending General College, this orientation made me feel like I was part of the University student body. After the general orientation, students were divided into groups according their college. I was grouped with other students who would be attending GC.

We received an orientation to General College, and we spent the rest of the night together. Through that experience I came to realize that the other GC students were just like me. I hadn't expected that. I didn't expect them to appear well educated or to be so disciplined and dedicated. As I said, this was a turning point for me. Prior to orientation I had felt like GC wasn't part of the U. It had seemed to me that GC was the place where the U hid away its inadequate students. I equated it with the small building behind the main high school that educated pregnant or delinquent students. After orientation I felt like GC was just another college, another building at the U.

Remedial Versus Developmental

Because of its focus on "high potential students . . . (who) may not meet the competitive standards of other freshman admitting colleges" (University of Minnesota, 2003), I was concerned the GC program would feel remedial. Also, with its small class sizes and with most of the classes meeting in one building, I had feared that GC would feel like glorified high school. I found neither of these to be the case.

Overall, my General College experience has been good. The coursework is challenging. I feel my work and my classroom contributions are respected by my instructors and peers. I feel I am learning. Not having attended classes outside of General College, I cannot fairly compare my GC experience to what I would have experienced in classes outside GC. However, I suspect my GC classes have been a better fit with my learning style than what I would have experienced elsewhere. The classes have been engaging, interactive, and hands-on. For example, rather than simply studying art from a textbook, my General Art class made several trips to the Weisman Museum to view and discuss actual works. We also toured the campus to view and discuss various pieces of sculpture. In writing class, student groups were formed to critique each others' drafts. Through this, we became engaged in understanding the writing process. In General Psychology, my class was part of a research study on teaching methods. My section took multiple tests on each chapter to determine if this strengthened learning over the group who took one test per chapter. I found that the multiple test approach reinforced my learning, gave me a better understanding of areas where I was weak, provided an opportunity to learn what I had missed, and gave me the chance to demonstrate and be graded on what I had learned. I believe my GC classes brought out the best in me as a student and enabled me to demonstrate effectively what I had learned.

I am impressed with the General College instructors. Each is well versed in his or her field and is adept at using multiple modes of teaching in order to reach all students. I found the instructors approachable when I needed additional help understanding course material or when I had another problem or concern. It is clear the instructors care about me as a person and want to do what they can to help me succeed. They focused on what I did well, not what I did poorly, but still gave constructive feedback to enable me to grow.

I found the most difficult and frustrating part of General College to be class work involving groups. Two of my classes involved groups, and in both cases the other group members failed to do their share of the work, failed to do quality work, and failed to meet agreed-upon deadlines. Group members also often failed to attend group meetings and were difficult to contact. I was frustrated that my grade was dependent on the group's work product, which I could not control. Instructors seemed to have inadequate structure to ensure effective group functioning or equity in grading. However, it may be that group work outside of General College would present the same issues.

I have just completed my first semester in General College at the U. I took courses totaling 13 credits and earned a GPA of 3.79. This is the highest GPA I have had in my entire academic career. And I am enjoying school for the first time in my life. Clearly, the decision to attend General College was the right one for me. I feel confident that the remainder of my time at GC will go well and that I will successfully transfer to the College of Liberal Arts and complete my bachelor's degree.

Sedrick on "Being a GC Student"

My first semester in college attending the General College of the University of Minnesota

has gone a lot better than I ever expected. While growing up and being in high school, I always heard that college is extremely difficult. I do not doubt that college is difficult, and I'm not saying that it isn't difficult for me because the truth is that it is. Things have just gone better than I ever imagined.

When I first received the letter that I was accepted into the General College, I was very excited just to be accepted into any college. But at the same time, I was also disappointed that I didn't get into the College of Liberal Arts, the college that I had applied for. At the time, I didn't really know all of the facts or difference between the College of Liberal Arts and General College—all I knew was the College of Liberal Arts was the college that I should be a part of in order to pursue my educational goals of becoming a writer. When I learned that I wasn't going to be in that college, I felt that I would be unable to reach my goals, and that made me sad.

But I soon learned that I was wrong. Just because I was in the General College didn't mean that I would never get into the College of Liberal Arts at all; it simply meant that I wouldn't be entering that college right away. In fact, I soon learned that anyone who was in General College had to transfer out of that college and into another one. So, knowing and learning that information comforted me.

As the semester progressed and I learned more and more information about the University and the General College, I began to feel better about being there. One of my professors for a freshman seminar urged all of us to take advantage of the resources and things that the General College offers. I learned that the General College had a computer lab where any General College student could print for free. Also, just because I was in General College didn't mean that I couldn't take other classes outside of GC. So I applied for a writing class from the College of Liberal Arts and was accepted into it. I learned that it was extremely rare for a non-GC student to take classes in GC, but I felt good knowing that I could take GC classes as well as some classes offered from other colleges.

There are more advantages in being in the General College: (a) class sizes are smaller than those of classes outside of GC so that teachers can focus more on students' individual needs, (b) counselors have fewer students to deal with so that they can offer more one-on-one help to their students, and (c) students receive two progress reports mid-semester so that we can see our progress in each class. (The University a whole has recently implemented a mid-semester progress report also, based on the GC model.) All of these things have helped me a lot. I've never liked classes that are too big, so I feel more comfortable in classes with fewer students. I know that every time I go to see my counselor, I never have to wait. Unless she's out to lunch or on her way to a meeting or something, she always finds time to talk to me. Furthermore, the progress reports help me to plan ahead to improve my grades if necessary.

Diversity in GC

In college diversity is inevitable. There is no way that I'm only going to have classes and be associated only with people with the same nationality as my own. For me, it feels good being a part of a diverse learning place, especially the General College, which has fewer students. I'd like to think that I can learn something from someone else from a different background. Their insights on a subject may help me somehow and even if they don't, it's never hurt me to listen, just to hear something different for a change.

Changing Habits

During the first semester in the General College, I've learned a lot of different things about myself. One of my main problems is that I procrastinate more than I previously realized. I'm not one of those students who doesn't turn in assignments on time. It just means that I spent the previous night, all night, doing it, and this is something that I'm diligently trying to break. During this semester I've learned different ways to manage my time better so that I can finish my assignments and do things that I like to do. I keep an assignment planner that keeps me organized and reminds me of the upcoming assignments that I have to do.

Khong's Insights From a Position of Leadership

As a freshman, I believe General College (GC) has made an immense impact on my life. General College is a place where I believe many wonderful academic resources lie. I have utilized these resources, such as the Academic Resource Center and the Transfer and Career Center, to develop my strong academic skills so I can become successful in life. I have perceived that the GC staff and faculty work hard and closely together to provide the emotional, academic, and leadership support system to enhance my educational learning experience. I have developed a close relationship with the teaching specialists, professors, academic advisors, and many other people I know who work in GC. They are compassionate, devoted, caring, and they work extremely hard to satisfy my needs. They have shown me how to be the best student that I can be by helping me to accomplish my academic, leadership, and personal life goals.

Opportunities for Leadership

As the Co-Chairman of the General College Student Board, I have emerged to become an outstanding leader to my peers and to the rest of the GC community. People have looked at me as a role model. I have established many leadership skills that will help me through my future career. I have attended leadership conferences through GC, including the National Conference for Student Leaders, and Student Activities Office Leadership Conference, to learn what it is like to become an excellent leader to the community. I have acted as the representative from the General College Student Board serving on various GC committees, such as the Multicultural Concerns Committee and Alumni Society Advisory Committee. I have amplified my professional skills and advanced in my communication skills by being involved with GC committees and engaging with the professional GC staff and faculty. I am pleased to thank GC for its leadership opportunity and to enable me to serve as a student leader of the college.

Unique Multicultural Environment

I have witnessed that GC is not like any of the other colleges at the University of Minnesota; I honestly believe it is a distinctive institution unto itself, and I am proud to be a part of it. The moment I came to General College, I knew that I had found myself a home. The one thing I found incredibly appealing was the amount of diversity GC has in its community! It is such a remarkable and welcoming feeling to see students, staff, and faculty from all cultural backgrounds engaging with one another and making an effort to accomplish academic and life goals. I feel my heart is set with GC; it is a warm-hearted and friendly multicultural environment that makes me feel elated, delighted, and motivated to learn in college.

I have discovered, while being in GC, that by surrounding oneself with, understanding, and celebrating individual differences associated with race, ethnicity, gender, disability, language, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic class, I have learned to become more open-minded and appreciate people more. When one acknowledges and appreciates a group of people from a certain group identity, he begins to see what he wants the world to be, and I want people to become more educated about and accepting of others.

I perform well academically in my classes when I am surrounded by a group of people in GC who come from similar backgrounds as mine, such as being a bilingual with English as my second language, first generation born and to attend higher education in the United States, or low to middle economic class student. I find GC a place where I have these similar traits with many of my GC peers; I feel more comfortable and at ease to socialize with them without having the feeling to withdraw because of thinking that they don't understand where I come from or what my background is. I believe I am more easily connected in GC than in any other place on campus. I found that GC is the center of my network, my community, and where many of my incredible relationships with my peers began. I figure that my peers and I all share at least one similar trait through which we can relate to one and another. We understand the hardships that we had to go through in life—whether that was struggling with our education because we have

an English language barrier, financial issues, or personal and family issues. With these struggles, I have learned to appreciate and help my peers. There is a peaceful, relaxing, incredible bond between them and me.

I believe that the one thing that will always stand out the most in my mind about GC is the way its staff and faculty prioritize their work by putting their students first. I have recognized this as a phenomenal and an exquisite act of a true and loyal group of people who have worked to change college students' lives positively, and they have done so for me as well. The staff and faculty have provided me with magnificent ideas on how to achieve my goals in life, and I am proud to thank all of them for their extraordinarily hard work. It is my pleasure to remain a proud supporter of GC staff and faculty and of the General College's mission at the University of Minnesota.

Leah's Role in Changing Misconceptions About GC

General College (GC) is a place where doors are opened for students to enter the University of Minnesota and become educationally set with the tools they need to succeed at a University level. However, this mission or idea gets lost among students outside of General College. My first year at the University of Minnesota, I served on the General College Student Board and as a General College Senator on the Minnesota Student Association (i.e., undergraduate student government).

I can distinctly recall a meeting of the Minnesota Student Association where a College of Liberal Arts (CLA) student argued that the University of Minnesota, as a whole, would have better retention of students and save tuition dollars if General College did not exist. First, the General College retention rate was not falling, and students' tuition is sent to the college in which they are enrolled. College of Liberal Arts (CLA) students' tuition is sent to CLA, and GC students' tuition is sent to GC. Clearly this student had no idea what he was talking about and I felt offended being the only GC student in a room of 60 students. It seemed to me like students in other colleges did not really care to find out what this college is all about. In my eyes, criticizing the college in which I was enrolled felt like a personal attack on me.

Out of my frustration, I went and found out the retention rates and how tuition dollars are allotted. I didn't dwell on this disappointment for very long, but corrected this student's understanding of General College.

Joshua's Story

I was born into a very poor, but loving family in southern Illinois. My family relocated to more than six different states during my youth. As you can imagine, this created a tremendous academic challenge for my parents. In addition, I had severe Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). My parents decided to start schooling me at home.

Being schooled at home certainly had both its advantages and disadvantages. One of the major disadvantages occurred when my mother tried to teach me subjects that she was weak in (i.e., math, chemistry, biology, etc). These difficult subjects proved to be overwhelming for my mother, and I needed to take responsibility to teach myself until I finally graduated at the age of 18.

"Shelving" Dreams of Further Education

My father is a third-generation carpenter, and he strongly encouraged me to learn a trade rather than attend college. His advice was sincere and came from his heart. My mother also felt the same way. But I wanted to have a great career, and I knew that I needed to go to college. Lacking family support and knowledge on how to go about obtaining a college education, I finally shelved my dreams and tried to accept the reality of my situation.

I soon began to pursue various avenues of employment, ranging from ski instructor to assistant manager at a local bike shop. Disenchanted with my situation, income, and also lacking the foresight to make personal change in myself, I soon became very depressed and overwhelmed with feelings of insecurity and helplessness. For a couple of years I foolishly squandered my money, time, and health by living an irresponsible lifestyle. Upon realization that the consequences of my actions today would

impact my future, I sought to fulfill my dream of having a career that would make a positive impact upon society.

Soon after my resolution, opportunity knocked in the form of an insurance direct-sales franchise. While marketing insurance to individuals, families, small businesses, and major corporations, I began to smooth my approach and found myself presenting and selling my product to groups of employees. In addition to selling the product, I also became responsible for recruiting other salespersons, their training, and the management of newly acquired accounts. After recruiting over 80 sales people and sometimes earning double and sometimes triple my father's weekly income in one day, I felt I had finally reached the pinnacle of life. The business I had established created the respect from my parents that I had always longed for.

This feeling made me happy to a certain point, but still I had an unfilled desire in my heart to obtain a college education and to pursue a career that would have meaning. Unlike some of my wealth-driven peers working in my field, I realized that money wasn't making me happy. I often sought the things I had always desired but never could afford. This self-destructive habit started to have a negative impact on my lifestyle. I often found myself driven to work more than 100 hours a week in order to purchase the vanities that appeared so attractive to those who can't have them. This allowed me to achieve great success within my industry. But I was again feeling a desire for something more. I wanted an education and purposeful career of substance.

September 11th brought these dreams to the forefront of my mind. At work in my office, where I was listening to the radio, the classical music was soon interrupted with some news that at first seemed unreal. Quickly finding a television, I watch the tragedy unfold. Flooded with concern for the useless slaughter of innocent people and gripped with the realities of the frailty of humanity, I wept and said a prayer for the victims' safety. 9/11 triggered my thoughts of my own life's purpose. Why should I continue to be unhappy with my career, when I longed for something more? It was something that I realize is a reflection of my compassion for humanity in need. Service to humanity, in some way, became my blossoming dream.

Pursuing Academic Goals

The tenacity within myself drove me to pursue my academic goals. After much research, the University of Minnesota-Twin-Cities became my first choice. I resolved that, no matter what, I was going to attend the University of Minnesota. I was so confident in my academic goal that I moved to Minnesota, prior to knowing the status of my application. I was surprised when my application was quickly rejected. Bewildered, I pursued an explanation of the rejection. Explanations, like many things at the University of Minnesota, were hard to come by. Finally, I learned that my home-schooled background created a hurdle.

Distraught, I sought advice from professors, advisors, and the university Web site. I finally discovered General College. Wanting to find out more about what I had to do to gain admission to their "special" program, I sought out the persons in charge of admissions. My search led me to Rudy Hernandez. He humored me, while I spilled my story to him. I also presented him with a resume, hoping the significance of my entrepreneurial achievements would prove worthy of admittance and also reveal that I was indeed smart enough to succeed in school.

Thankfully, this time spent with Rudy was indeed time well spent. I was accepted into to General College. My realization of what is probably obvious to most high-school students left me astonished. Why hadn't I pursued college sooner? Why didn't I find this out a long time ago? Regardless, I was excited to begin pursuing my academic goal. I became enthralled with each class. Under the advisement of Susan Warfield, my General College advisor and now my trusted friend, I had selected numerous classes that would enable me to fill in the gaps left in my high school education.

In the midst of my happiness in finally attending the University of Minnesota- Twin Cities, I was perplexed by the distinct separation between

GC and the other University student populations. It soon became apparent to me that we were the "outcasts." GC is a conglomeration of students of various underrepresented races, first-generation college students, products of very poor educational institutions, and students from families of low socioeconomic status. We stood out to the rest of the collegiate population as sore thumbs.

Soon I made many new friends with my General College peers. These relationships dispelled any significance in what the outside world thought of us. In fact, it confirmed my theories that General College's population is made up of wonderful people, who are very smart and also wise to the traits necessary to survive in the "real" world. Our ability to overcome tremendous obstacles while striving to obtain an education is exemplary and should truly be recognized.

Many of my GC peers, I have found, have a much greater intellectual capacity than many of the professionals I have met in the business world. Each student at General College is given the opportunity for a career and a way out. They are rejecting the bonds of mediocrity and are striving for a change that will finally break the unfortunate bonds that many generations of repetitive, self-destructive behavior have created. Somehow, we as General College students were supposed to be swept through the cracks, out of sight of the world, and demanded to adhere to the law of our various socioeconomic statuses.

Exploring Opportunities in the Medical Professions

With a passion to assist humanity, I naturally contemplated pursuing a career in medicine. I had researched earlier the admission requirements of medical schools and learned that research and research-related experiences were highly recommended by most medical schools. Inspired by this, and wishing to find an opportunity to gain research experience, I found an advertisement requesting help for cardiovascular research. Without having ever completed any formal high school chemistry, biology, or even algebra, I very humbly approached two very kind physicians, and asked to help out in their lab any way that I could. I even offered to wash the counters for free. They gladly accepted my offer and taught me the terminology of a lab.

The lab team was in need of a perfusion device for bio-artificial vessels. In an attempt to harness my ingenuity, the researchers gave me a box with various items and instructed me to build such a device. In two weeks, the final creation was being put to the test. Everything worked out perfectly on the device. Fully operational, it did indeed replicate the human cardiovascular system and allowed for adjustments and monitoring of perfusion.

New to the research environment, and urged by my mentors, I quickly agreed that we should submit an Intellectual Property application to the University of Minnesota. Prior to our submission, we sought out all the patent information available regarding any similar products. It was great to see that no other patented devices like it existed in either Europe or the United States. Impressive as this discovery was, I was more impressed when our representative at the University Intellectual Property Office became interested in pursuing a full patent. Soon I found myself meeting with the University Intellectual Property Office, the two physicians who took me under their collective wings, and also two patent attorneys. This moment I humbly hoped would certainly help to define General College as an impressive academic institution, worthy of equality by our peers.

Prior to building the device, I followed the advice of my mentors and pursued a Lillehei Scholars Award, offered by the renowned Lillehei Heart Institute, through the University's Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program. This, while making a nice addition to my curriculum vita, would also give me $1,300.00 to pursue the building of the project. Thankfully, I did indeed receive this award. This proved to be an even more spectacular event than I had previously anticipated. I received a request to attend an awards dinner, which is given to congratulate the current Lillehei Scholars, at a very posh local country club. With excitement my wife and I attended the dinner and were met there by one of my physician mentors and his wife. As we sat down at a table, which was off to the side, my mentor tapped me on the shoulder. He quickly pointed out that the Dean of the University of Minnesota Medical School and her husband were

joining us at our table. What a fortunate event this was turning out to be. Soon following a nice dinner filled with wonderful conversation, they presented the awards. I watched as each recipient's academic backgrounds were announced. I was the only undergraduate amongst the M.D.s, Ph.D.s, and master's degrees. I almost laughed inside when I humbly realized that there wasn't much that they could say about me. I was only a freshman and had few academic achievements as yet. I was thrilled when I was announced as a ". . . motivated General College student who was pursuing medical school and who would become a cardiovascular surgeon someday." I truly was proud of my college; General College had created this opportunity for me. It had given me the support, enthusiasm, and the faith in myself.

Spurred by my success thus far, I continued to conduct various research projects with my mentors. One of the more significant projects led me to take on a four-credit, 4xxx-level Neuroscience Directed Research project to be conducted at the University of Minnesota Medical School Neurosurgery and Neuroscience Department. The bulk of the project required sensitive, highly invasive microsurgery on small laboratory animals. After assisting with numerous operations, I was allowed to incise, suture, and assume various other "surgeon" responsibilities. Again, I was sure that this beneficial experience would help to offset the level of skepticism by the majority of the collegiate community regarding General College students. Each of these events was a product of every faculty member with whom I had contact inside of General College. Few of these faculty members will probably ever fully realize how influential they have been in the academic successes that have occurred in my life.

As wonderful as the unity and support of the General College are for its student body, I must further emphasize the outside skepticism that I have experienced by students from different college communities. Even one of my own physician mentors laughingly poked fun at the fact that I wasn't really attending a "real" college yet. He had graduated from the University's College of Liberal Arts prior to receiving his M.D. from the University's Medical School. This, however infuriating, illustrates what we, as students, are faced with on a daily basis. Many of the students who are possibly more sensitive to such harassment, might decide that, after all, maybe it's just not worth going to school here anymore.

Unwilling to become another statistic, I began driving even more aggressively forward toward the attainment of my academic goals. Wanting to make a positive difference within my student community, I ran and was elected for an Alternate Co-Chair position on the General College Student Board. I was also elected to the General College Admissions and Advancement committee, the University's Student Health Advocacy Committee, and the Institutional Review Board, Medical IV Committee. Also, I accepted a position on the University's Finance Committee with Boynton Health Service's $14,000,000 request for funding for the 2005-2006 academic year.

As I continue to gain momentum in my pursuit of my degree, I wish to discredit the presumption that I have less academic potential than my peers in other colleges of the University. Every success that I have had has been a direct reflection of God's blessing on my efforts, General College's support and encouragement, and lastly my own application of hard work and persistence. As a General College student, I seek to follow in the precedent set by the successful General College alumni that have traveled before us, one of whom has won the Nobel Peace Prize, and numerous others who are successful even beyond most people's imagination. Each student within the General College student body has it in him or her to succeed. By abstaining from the quicksand of mediocrity and pressing on towards our academic goals, we will harvest tomorrow's leaders from those society was content to let slip down society's proverbial cracks.

Conclusion

These stories from current and former General College students have several themes in common. First, these students had apprehensions about attending college and about their ability to be successful. Each had the intelligence and motivation to achieve academically, but for a variety of reasons related to circumstances like home language, atypical educational history, or a hidden disability,

there were reasons why the small classes and more personalized instruction offered within the General College would be advantageous for them.

Second, these students have been successful, in several cases earning higher grades in college than ever before. Some have or currently hold positions of leadership at the University. Although not all GC students achieve their goals, these students' stories demonstrate the importance of the educational opportunities provided by the General College. Just as Norman Borlaug's (*Access and Excellence*, 2001) contributions to humankind were made possible through his educational attainment, so may GC's students of today, like Joshua Schmitt, make revolutionary contributions in the future.

Finally, each of these students has become an ambassador for the General College. They volunteered to write their stories for this chapter. They are concerned about general misconceptions about GC and its students, and they wanted to contribute to overcoming stereotypes about the General College experience.

As we noted in the introduction to this chapter, all of us who work in the General College have many success stories to tell. We are very proud of our students' accomplishments. But what is even more important is that our students have faith in themselves and are eager to share their own stories, and that in doing so they become advocates for themselves as well as for GC.

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Developmental Education Students' Views of College: What Uncouples Students' Goals From Students' Outcomes?

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On the first day of classes, most first-year students participating in developmental education programs believe that their effort is the most accurate predictor of their academic success, and are confident that they will work hard and earn high grades. Despite their intentions, many students do not follow through on their expectations, and they earn lower grades than expected. When asked about their academic behaviors, many students provide inaccurate answers. These results have implications for how instructors and learning assistance professionals can optimize the success of students participating in developmental education programs.

Most adults age 18 to 25 see college as a way of attaining financial security and earning societal respect (Feller, 2005), and almost three-fourths of teenagers believe that a college education is essential for achieving the American Dream (Hitti, 2005). To obtain the benefits and choices afforded by a college education, more students than ever are enrolling in college, and these enrollments include increasingly larger percentages of students who are underprepared.

Although today's high school graduates have the highest grades on record, many students who enter college are not prepared for the academic challenges that await them (Marklein, 2003; Sax, Lindholm, Astin, Korn, & Mahoney, 2002; Young, 2002). Indeed, in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, students can earn a high school diploma without acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in higher education (Honawar, 2005). High school prepares only about one in three 18-year-olds for college (Schouten, 2003), and more than three-fourths of students who take the ACT are not prepared for college (Cavanagh, 2004). In light of these data, it is not surprising that nearly half of all college freshmen and, in some states, 30 to 40% of first-year students on academic scholarships, take remedial courses ("Many freshmen," 2002; Olson, 2005; Schouten). Although 48% of first-year students had an A average in high school and felt well prepared for college, more than one-fourth of these students at 4-year schools, and almost half at 2-year schools, never return for a second year of college (Farrell, 2005; Viadero, 2005). Many experts attribute this problem to high schools' low standards (Diament, 2005; Hoover, 2004; Toppo, 2005a). Indeed, many high schools have "institutionalized low performance through low expectations" (Barrett, 2005; p. 13A) and, as The College Board's Senior Vice President for Research has noted, "It's not that kids can't do the work; it's that expectations are too low" (Cavanagh, p. 5). Cynthia Schmeiser, ACT's Vice President for Development, summed up the situation this way,

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"American high school students are not ready for college" (Cavanagh, p. 5).

College freshmen are especially underprepared for science courses. For example, only 26% of high school graduates who took the ACT in 2004 were academically prepared to take college biology (Cavanagh, 2004). This helps to explain why up to half of students at many colleges and universities earn a D, F, or W in introductory science courses, and why many students in these courses have had negative experiences in science courses (Congos, Langsam, & Schoeps, 1997).

The study presented in this chapter extends earlier work on the association of academic motivation and the academic performance of students participating in developmental education programs (e.g., Higbee & Thomas, 1999; Ley & Young, 1998; Moore, 2003a, 2004b). Many students with developmental needs enter college confident of their ability to succeed, yet relatively few graduate (Moore, 2004b). Something uncouples these students' goals from their academic performances. How does this occur? We tried to answer this question by studying how the goals and expectations of first-year developmental education students correlate with their academic behaviors and academic performances. For example, do developmental education students fail primarily because of their aptitude or effort? Do the students who fail have lower expectations or different course-related beliefs than students who succeed? How are students' initial academic expectations associated with their subsequent academic behaviors? And finally, what can we learn from these findings to help developmental education students succeed?

Method

This study was conducted for 3 years (2002 to 2004) in several large sections of a four-credit introductory biology course for first-year developmental education students in the General College (GC) at the University of Minnesota. GC provides access to the university for students from diverse cultural, educational, and socioeconomic backgrounds who do not meet all of the admissions requirements of the University's other colleges. GC prepares students to transfer to one of the University's degree-granting colleges. Students in GC are considered to be "at risk" because they have lower grades, ACT scores, and high school graduation percentile rankings than most other students at the university. Developmental education courses in the General College are content-rich, credit-bearing, transferable courses that count fully toward graduation from the University. Additional information about GC, its mission, its focus on intrusive advising, and its students can be found elsewhere (Higbee, Lundell, & Arendale, 2005).

The introductory biology course in this study covered topics typical of a traditional introductory biology course for nonmajors. Lectures occurred twice per week for 75 minutes per class. All sections of the course met at approximately the same time of day and were taught by the same instructor in the same classroom in the same way (i.e., using the same syllabus, textbook, sequence of topics, grading policy, exams, and pedagogical techniques). The course syllabus included the following statement from the instructor about the importance of class attendance and academic engagement for academic success: "I expect you to prepare for and attend every class. This is important because class attendance is usually a strong indicator of course performance." We also discussed these statements and the importance of attendance and course engagement on the first day of class. Each part of this study included at least 328 students. Additional information about the biology course is presented elsewhere (Moore, 2003a, 2003b).

Academic Behaviors

We measured the following four academic behaviors:

1. Attendance at lectures: We recorded attendance at every class.

2. Attendance at help sessions: Help sessions were held before each exam and were conducted by teaching assistants who had no knowledge of, or input regarding, test items on any of the exams. On exams, students were asked to identify whether they had attended the help session for that exam. Attendance at the help sessions was optional, and students who attended the help sessions received no points or "inside information" about upcoming exams. Attendance was recorded at each help

session, and students were considered attendees if they attended at least one help session.

3. Submission of extra-credit work: Students could earn one-third of the points that they had missed on each lecture exam if they wrote a one-page essay about each of the questions that they missed on the exam. Students had 6 weeks to write and submit these essays, and the extra-credit points were guaranteed for any reasonable effort. Points earned by students who submitted extra-credit work were excluded from all calculations of grades in this study. Students who completed at least one extra-credit assignment were counted in this study.

4. Compliance with reading assignments: The course syllabus, which included information typical for such a course (e.g., exam dates, grading practices), also emphasized that reading assignments were to be completed by the start of each class period. The syllabus stated prominently that "Reading assignments are strict requirements for this course." During the first week of class, the beneficial and compulsory nature of reading assignments was emphasized repeatedly to students. We also emphasized on the first day of classes that, as was noted in bold print in the syllabus, the first assignment was "to read the entire syllabus before the beginning of the next class."

The syllabus included a separate section titled "Your First Assignment" that was printed in a bold font and read as follows: "Your final grade will be raised by 1% if you e-mail the word 'bonus' to [the instructor] before the start of the second class." All students had access to e-mail, but could also have obtained the reward by calling the instructor, coming to the instructor's office, seeing the instructor outside of class, or leaving a message for the instructor stating that they had read the entire syllabus before the second class. We did not distribute syllabi until the end of the first class to ensure that students did not read them during class. Students who did not pick up syllabi on the first day of class were not included in this part of the study.

On the second day of classes, we administered another survey that offered the following statement and question: "Your first assignment was to read the entire syllabus. Did you read the entire syllabus?" All students who had read the entire syllabus would presumably have been eager to earn a bonus point for doing so. Students who missed the first class (i.e., the class at which students were told to read the entire syllabus) were not included in the survey.

First-Day-of-Classes Expectations

On the first day of classes, we gave students a survey that asked the following questions:

1. What grade do you expect to earn in this course?

2. What percentage of classes will you attend?

3. Will you do extra-credit work if given an opportunity to do so?

4. Will you come to help sessions before exams?

5. Do you believe that you will earn a higher grade in this course if you attend class regularly?

6. Should your grade be based entirely on what you learn, or should it also be based on whether you attend class?

7. Should you get academic credit for effort?

8. Will you respond honestly to questions about class attendance and compliance with reading assignments?

9. Which of the following is most responsible for your grades: Your own ability, your own effort, the ease or difficulty of the course, or good or bad luck?

Students were told throughout the semester to keep a record of their class attendance and on the last day of class were told to know their rate of class attendance for the final exam. At the final exam, we asked students to (a) state the percentage of classes that they had attended, and (b) say whether they had attended a help session during the semester.

We tabulated students' responses every semester and then calculated the mean (+ *SD*) responses for the entire study. We used students' *t*-test to compare means (Sokal & Rohlf, 1995). Differences with probability greater than .05 were considered insignificant.

Results

On the first day of class, virtually all (i.e., 96 + 2%) of students believed that they would make a higher grade in the course if they attended class regularly. However, 45 + 8% believed that their final grade should be based only on what they learned and not on whether they attended class, and 88 + 5% believed that they should get academic credit for their effort. Students' responses to the question "Which of the following is most responsible for your grades?" were as follows: (a) my own ability, 12 + 4%; (b) my own effort, 83 + 11%; (c) the ease or difficulty of the course, 4 + 2%; (d) good or bad luck, 1 + 1%. The sample for this part of the study included 864 students.

On the first day of class, 55 + 7% of students predicted that they would earn an A, 40 + 7% predicted that they would earn a B, 4 + 2% predicted they would earn a C, and no students predicted that they would earn a D or F. Final grades in the course were as follows: A = 9%; B = 26%; C = 30%; D = 15%; F = 20%. The sample for this part of the study included 864 students.

On the first day of class, 95 + 3% of students claimed that they would respond honestly to questions about class attendance and compliance with reading assignments. Yet on the second day of class, 74 + 6% of these students claimed to have read the entire syllabus as instructed, although only 1% of the students had submitted the "bonus" e-mail or message. During subsequent years, the percentage of bonus responses rose steadily to 32% as "word got out" about the assignment. The sample for this part of the study included 1,032 students.

Table 1 describes students' intentions on the first day of class about their academic behaviors (i.e., attending class, doing extra-credit work, and attending help sessions) and performances on the first day and last day of classes, as well as their actual behaviors and performances. Students' actual behaviors were significantly different (i.e., $p < .01$) from their predicted behaviors. Most students fell far short of their predicted behaviors and grades.

Table 1
Students' Predictions and Claims About Their Academic Behaviors and Grades

Statement	*N*	Percent Predicted First Week	Percent Claimed Last Week	Percent Actual
I will attend / attended a help session.	328	81	41	25
I will attend / attended approximately __% of classes.	480	89	85	69
I will do an extra-credit assignment if given an opportunity to do so.	341	82		24
My course grade will be__%.	472	92		70

Discussion

On the first day of class, more than 80% of first-year developmental education students participating in this study believed that their academic success would be due primarily to their effort, and not due to their ability, the ease or difficulty of the course, or luck. Students also knew which behaviors are important; for example, they knew that attending class, doing extra-credit work, and attending help sessions would help them make higher grades. This is consistent with the fact that students who predict they will earn an A also predict that they will come to class more often than students who predict that they will earn a C (Moore, 2003a, 2003b). These results indicate that most developmental education students participating in this study understood the importance of course-related work, and knew which behaviors are important for success. They are right; all of these behaviors *do* promote academic success (Launius, 1997; Moore, 2003a, 2003b, 2004a, 2004b; Thomas & Higbee, 2000; Wiley, 1992).

On the first day of class, most first-year developmental education students involved in this study were confident that they would put forth the effort necessary to earn high grades. They believed that they were well prepared for college and predicted that they would attend an average of 89% of classes; most students also predicted that they would attend help sessions and do extra-credit work if given an opportunity to do so. In light of this confidence about their predicted level of effort, it is not surprising that more than 90% of students believed they would earn an A or B (Moore, 2003a, 2003b). These results indicate that most developmental education students are very optimistic on the first day of classes about their commitment toward, and the probable outcome of, their upcoming academic experience. Developmental education students who follow through on these behaviors *do* do well (Launius, 1997; Moore, 2003a, 2003b, 2004a, 2004b; Thomas & Higbee, 2000; Wiley, 1992). For example, the students who earn an A in the course are most likely to be those who have come to class, done extra-credit work, and attended help sessions (Moore, 2003a, 2003b).

Although virtually all developmental education students are confident on the first day of classes that they will work hard and earn high grades, this confidence is often unjustified as the semester progresses. Indeed, many developmental education students fall far short of their predicted effort and grades (see Table 1). These results are consistent with previous reports (Friedman, Rodriguez, & McComb, 2001; McGuire, 2003; Romer, 1993) and indicate that many developmental education students do not follow through on their academic intentions and demonstrate behaviors that are inconsistent with academic success (Pintrich & Garcia, 1994; VanZile-Tamsen & Livingston, 1999; Yaworski, Weber, & Ibrahim, 2000). That is, many developmental education students know that skipping class, not doing extra-credit work, and missing help sessions will probably hurt their grade, yet they choose to ignore these opportunities anyway.

Although many students' efforts (e.g., as measured by class attendance) diminish as semesters progress, the lack of effort reported here regarding reading the course syllabus occurred during the first week of classes when students' optimism and expectations were high. These results are similar to those reported for students in an introductory psychology course (Sappington, Kinsey, & Munsayac, 2002) and indicate that large percentages of college students seldom or never read assignments or do other course-related activities by the due dates, even when encouraged to do so by their instructors (Burchfield & Sappington, 2000; Connor-Greene, 2000; Grisé & Kenney, 2003). This trend is worrisome, for as Burchfield and Sappington have noted, "Behaviors of the majority tend to become norms" (p. 59).

The overwhelming majority (94%) of students indicated that they would respond honestly to questions about class attendance and compliance with reading assignments. These results are consistent with the report by Rooney (2003) that more than 70% of college freshmen describe themselves as being very honest. However, many more students claimed that they came to class, did assigned work, and attended help sessions than actually did come to class, did assigned work, and did attend help sessions. This discrepancy between students' claims about their academic behaviors and their actual academic behaviors probably results from a variety of factors, ranging

from self-delusion and deceit to benign "self-enhancement bias," which is defined as "the tendency to describe oneself more positively than a normative criterion would predict" (Krueger, 1998, p. 505). Regardless of the underlying reasons, these misrepresentations have important consequences, for they greatly complicate instructors' and advisors' efforts to help students succeed. When we try to identify and remedy behaviors that impede their success, many students will mislead us with answers that are not true. Our responses to these misrepresentations (e.g., sending students for tests of reading comprehension, routing students to other developmental courses) may unnecessarily divert resources and impede students' success when, in fact, the underlying problem may be that the students simply have not tried very hard. That is, they have not come to class, attended help sessions, or participated in course-related opportunities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on these results, we offer the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. Most developmental education students know that a college degree is important for ensuring financial security and societal respect (Feller, 2005; Hitti, 2005; Viadero, 2005). They also know which academic behaviors are important for succeeding in college; for example, they know that they will improve their chances of earning good grades if they come to class regularly, take advantage of course-related opportunities (e.g., they will do extra-credit work), and attend help sessions. Instructors should use quantitative data such as those reported here and elsewhere (Moore, 2004a, 2004b) to reinforce these beliefs and emphasize that the academic difficulties that many developmental education students have encountered can often be overcome by taking advantage of opportunities and following directions.

2. Developmental education students know that they control their academic future, and that the most important determinant in their academic success is the effort they expend to succeed. This, too, should be reinforced and emphasized, along with data showing that students' aptitude (e.g., as measured by ACT scores) and high school graduation percentile rankings are poor predictors of developmental education students' academic success (Britton & Tesser, 1991; Higbee & Thomas, 1999; Langley, Wambach, Brothen, & Madyun, 2004; Meeker, Fox, & Whitley, 1994; Moore, 2003a, 2003b, 2004a, 2004b; Ray, Garavalia, & Murdock, 2003; Wolfe & Johnson, 1995). Again, previous academic difficulties are not destiny.

3. On the first day of classes, developmental education students are confident that they will work hard and exhibit the behaviors that are associated with academic success. That is, most developmental education students believe that they will come to class regularly, do extra-credit work, and attend help sessions. Developmental education students who follow-through on their predicted academic behaviors usually earn high grades, regardless of their admission scores and academic histories (Moore, 2003a, 2003b). The most successful developmental education students are usually the most highly motivated; they are the most likely to come to class, do extra-credit work, and attend help sessions. Instructors, advisors, and other learning assistance professionals should use quantitative data such as those shown in Table 1 and elsewhere (Moore, 2003a, 2003b) to reinforce the importance of these behaviors for students' academic success. The importance of effort and motivation for academic success was summarized this way by Thompson (2002): "If a student ever complains about a grade or how tough the course is, one of the first things I look at is class attendance. That usually says it all" (p. B5). Thomas and Higbee (2000) were more succinct when they concluded that "nothing replaces being present in class" (p. 229). The good news is that hard work can help students considered academically at risk overcome obstacles and become successful. As Lauren Resnick has noted (Burke, 2004),

> What people believe about the nature of talent and intelligence—about what accounts for success and failure—is closely related to the amount and kind of effort they put forth in situations of learning or problem-solving . . . Intelligence is incremental. People *get smart*. When people think this way, they tend to invest energy to learn something new or to improve their understanding and mastery. (p. 38)

Although low expectations, poor preparation, and lack of motivation keep many young adults from enrolling in college, a lack of academic motivation also plagues many developmental education students after they enroll in college (Hitti, 2005). Indeed, many developmental education students have motivation-related behaviors that impede academic success, including skipping class, missing deadlines, working only hard enough to "get by," and making their academic work a low priority (Yaworski, Weber, & Ibrahim, 2000). This is why many students' first-day-of-classes optimism about their upcoming collegiate experience is unjustified; these students fall far short of their predicted course-related behaviors (Friedman, Rodriguez, & McComb, 2001; McGuire, 2003; Romer 1993; also see Table 1). The apathy and detrimental academic behaviors that typify unsuccessful developmental education students often begin in high school (Fallis & Opotow, 2003; Gehring, 2003; Peterson & Colangelo, 1996). Because these poor behaviors have been rewarded with the highest grades on record, it is not surprising that many first-year students believe that they are prepared for college, that college is merely the 13th grade, and that the same amount of effort that produced their high grades in high school will produce the same grades in college (Toppo, 2005b; Young, 2002). When it does not, many students do not change their academic behaviors; they continue to miss classes and ignore course-related opportunities and, as a result, often continue to fail. This may be why most developmental education students who repeat courses exhibit similar behaviors and earn similar grades when they take the courses a second time (Moore, in press), and most developmental education students who earn grade point averages (GPAs) less than 2.0 during their first semester continue the same behaviors and, not surprisingly, make similar GPAs their second semester (Moore, 2004a). Indeed, the academic behaviors that are produced by high levels of academic motivation are the most accurate predictors of the academic success of developmental education students (Cavallo, Rozman, Blickenstaff, & Walker, 2004; Ley & Young, 1998; Moore et al., 2004; Ray, Garavalia, & Murdock, 2003; VanZile-Tamsen & Livingston, 1999). These data will not convince all students to improve their behaviors, but it will help some students make better choices, adopt better academic behaviors, and earn better grades (Moore, 2003a).

5. Although input from students can be useful for improving academic programs and procedures, students' responses or other forms of self-report about their own academic performances are often unreliable. Because these inaccuracies can mislead instructors and academic advisors, and thereby hinder our abilities to help at-risk students, instructors, advisors, and other learning assistance professionals should not rely on these responses when designing strategies and interventions for improving students' academic performance.

6. Many developmental education students base their academic behaviors on direct rewards. For example, 70% of students believe that they should get points for attending class, 88% believe that grades should be based partly on students' effort, and fewer than half of students believe that grades should be based only on what they learn and not on whether they attended class (Launius, 1997; Moore, 2003a, 2003b). However, 67% to 84% of students in this study also based their effort on whether they received points directly for that effort (Launius, 1997; Moore, 2003a, 2003b). The belief that effort is unimportant unless it is accompanied by a direct academic reward is harmful, for most instructors base grades on students' mastery of course content and skills, and do not give students points for merely showing up in class (Davis, 1993; Moore et al., 2004). Instructors, advisors, and learning assistance professionals should emphasize to students that the rewards for course-related effort are usually indirect. Although attending class and help sessions may not earn points directly, these behaviors do enhance learning and thereby improve grades on subsequent exams. This is why there is such a strong correlation between class attendance, help session attendance, and other course-related behaviors and academic success, even when these activities are not rewarded directly with points (Launius; Moore, 2003a, 2003b).

7. An important ingredient for the academic success of developmental education students is academic motivation, which is ultimately expressed as commitment and effort. High-performing developmental education students are more willing

to expend the effort necessary to succeed in college (Langley, Wambach, Brothen, & Madyum, 2004). Commitment is essential; without it, students' other traits (e.g., aptitude) don't matter (Burke, 2004).

Although some developmental education students are at risk because they lack some of the academic skills and experiences of other students, data presented here show that lack of academic motivation, as expressed by low rates of class attendance and course engagement, puts many other students at risk. This conclusion is consistent with the facts that most students who enter 4-year colleges cite their poor work and study skills, and not subject-related deficiencies such as mathematics, as their biggest academic weakness (Diament, 2005), and many students' underpreparation for college results from their having spent "far less" time studying than any previous entering class of college students (Marklein, 2003; Sax, et al. 2002; Young, 2002, p. A36).

Of course, the associations noted here are not perfect, and what we report does not explain all academic behaviors and outcomes. Students' academic success has been variously described as influenced by personality (Baird, 1984), stress and social class (Barney, Fredericks, & Fredericks, 1984), self-esteem and critical thinking (Bassarear, 1991; Berenson, Best, Stiff, & Waskik, 1990), scores on standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT (Arbona & Novy, 1990; Harackiewicz, Barron, Tauer, & Elliot, 2002; Moore, Jensen, Hsu, & Hatch, 2002; Neal, Schaer, Ley, & Wright, 1990; Young & Sowa, 1992), and other factors such as cultural background, academic and social maturity, socioeconomic status, institutional commitment, weekly hours worked by employed students, and whether the student or others pay for the student's education (Cabrera, Nora, & Castanada, 1993; Devadoss & Foltz, 1996; Friedman et al., 2001; Tinto, 1975). However, the primary determinant of developmental education students' academic success is academic motivation, which can be expressed in behaviors such as class attendance (Bandura, 1986; Côté & Levine, 2000; Ley & Young, 1998; Lindner & Harris, 1998; Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990; VanZile-Tamsen & Livingston, 1999). This conclusion is consistent with the observation that more than three-fourths of students in the General College who are not retained after their first year have been expelled for low grades rather than leaving on their own accord and in good academic standing (*General College Access and Excellence*, 2005; Moore, 2004a), and why developmental education students who drop out of college list a lack of motivation as the top reason for their failure (Hatfield, 2003). It is a lack of academic motivation that uncouples many students' academic goals from their academic outcomes.

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Facets of Access: Students' Impressions and Experiences in the General College

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The authors interviewed 14 students about their personal, social, and academic experiences during their first 2 years of college in an access program at a research university. A recent analysis of the data focused on the thematic category "General College," including the subcategories of "admissions," "advising," "classes," "teachers," "impressions of GC," and "transfer." Students reported a range of impressions of this program and discussed their perceptions of the college as they shaped and transformed their transition process within the university. Students' impressions can inform debates about access programs in higher education. This study's data offers descriptive insights into these facets of access in the students' own words.

One of higher education's most persistent and heated debates focuses on access for underserved students entering postsecondary institutions. Historically and currently this debate reflects a social and ideological tug-of-war between notions of elitism and equity and the role of institutions in either challenging or maintaining the status quo (Taylor, 2005). Central to this debate are thousands of students who plan to enter U.S. colleges and universities to advance their education and training. Although educators and policymakers have a stake in these issues that affect funding, jobs, and curricular initiatives, as well as support political standpoints, students are most immediately impacted by any decisions and program initiatives or cuts that result from the changing tides of this debate.

National studies have shown that nearly 2 million of this nation's over 12 million students entering college receive some form of developmental education, whether it is tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, or course-based programs designed to provide skill development and preparation for the undergraduate curriculum (Boylan, 1999). Most public 2- and 4-year postsecondary institutions offer developmental courses, including 98% of community college and 80% of public 4-year institutions (Saxon, Sullivan, Boylan, & Forrest, 2005). Despite the fact that there has always been a need for access and learning support for a significant percentage of students entering higher education (Arendale, 2002), the ongoing debate over the role of these programs never ceases because it reflects larger beliefs about the role of education in society. Unfortunately, this debate is also refueled by entrenched stereotypes regarding the abilities and needs of developmental education students and the quality and mission of access programs within larger university systems. Past notions of academic "remediation" implied that students who were not deemed prepared for

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college-level courses did not belong at the center of any college or university curriculum (Boylan, 2002). Residual forms of this stigma continue to impact professionals and students who participate in the work of learning assistance, developmental education, and access programs (Pedelty, 2001). Frequently the first programs criticized or targeted for removal or reduction during higher education budget cuts are the ones that provide additional support for students, specifically those serving the most diverse student populations of this increasingly multicultural nation.

Students participating in postsecondary developmental education programs also have strong opinions about their experiences, but frequently their perspectives are not considered or valued regarding the appropriateness and impact of maintaining access programs within higher education. The debate about students' placement and retention in colleges and universities is often a hot topic that attracts frequent attention in the media, especially at the times policies are formed and budgets are tightened. Because the quantitative measures used to compare students' achievement (e.g., grade point average, ACT and SAT scores, high school rank, college placement tests) partially reflect social inequities present in the American educational system due to a complex range of factors, these numbers often bear more weight with policymakers than other factors that contribute to achievement gaps. As a result, research on developmental education students' beliefs about the strengths and weaknesses of their educational programs, as well as the influence of race, class, and gender differences on their experiences in higher education is given little credence in policy making when it comes time to cut one program to preserve and strengthen another. There is more than one kind of evidence that must be examined when it comes time to making decisions that affect a significant number of this nation's entering college students.

Perceptions of Developmental Education

Although it is well documented in the literature of learning assistance and developmental education journals that academic programs that prioritize the assistance and advancement of students' skills are frequently the target of political debates and resource allocations (Clowes, 1992), fewer articles explore the surrounding issues of perception, student opinion, and stigma and stereotypes that are formed in the midst of this constantly shifting political landscape (Bellcourt, Haberman, Schmitt, Higbee, & Goff, 2005; Pedelty, 2001; Schmitt, Bellcourt, Xiong, Wigfield, Peterson, Halbert, Woodstrom, Vang, & Higbee, 2005). Students, if queried about their perceptions of their programs, have plenty to say about their views of college and their unique experiences in specific programs. In fact, they value the opportunity to voice their opinions to those who evaluate them, make decisions about their future, and fund their programs, particularly to challenge some of the stereotypical notions about their performance and ability that serve to marginalize and stigmatize them within the larger university setting. Our research represents an attempt to garner students' perceptions of the ways in which this positioning within a large university setting influences their self-perceptions and academic performance.

Institutional Priorities

One of the key points used in debates about access and preparation programs for higher education focuses rhetorically on issues such as the location of these programs, the space they or the students occupy, and the resources that are required to bring effective and innovative programs to students who most need them. Examples include ongoing discussions about the economic "costs" of such programs across the nation (Saxon & Boylan, 2001) and whether or not developmental education or learning assistance programs and centers should be located within 4-year or 2-year institutions (Boylan, 2002). When funding resources are in question, most often the first items on the discussion table are the developmental education units and services that support the most vulnerable students. In other words, this often translates more practically into questions about who will be served by the remaining colleges, programs, or university resources. Being at the center of these kinds of debates can sometimes place the students and these programs in a defensive position, having to prove themselves against the prevailing stereotypes and data that reinforce negative impressions about the value of developmental education. This can

both energize and stigmatize those involved in the programs as the points of debate frequently are complex and multifaceted.

Graduation Rates

There are many reasons developmental education programs are targeted in conversations about campus resources and mission. One of the critiques of developmental education programs has to do with discussions over data on 4-year graduation rates and the percentages of students coming through "developmental" programs or participating in course work or support services. The University of Minnesota's General College (GC), which is the location of this research project, was recently voted to be merged into another college on the campus. One of the primary reasons cited for this change was the comparative graduation rates of GC students and their peers in other freshman-admitting colleges of the University of Minnesota, such as the College of Liberal Arts (CLA). GC was designed as a transfer program to other colleges of the University, yet it continued to report lower 4-year graduation rates than the other colleges on campus (General College, 2005a; University of Minnesota, 2005). Graduation rates are a critical issue for all institutions and programs, including developmental education.

This issue is beyond the scope of this report, which discusses students' experiences in a developmental education program, but the changing landscape of developmental education programs certainly impacts students. However, it is important to recognize that the program in this study eventually was merged due to concerns over this issue, among other mission changes overall at the institution that impacted this outcome. Success, specifically resulting in graduation, is undoubtedly the highest priority for most programs, students, and teachers, especially in developmental education. In fact, the irony is that students enter developmental education programs with the same goals as most students attending a college or university—to graduate, learn, get a job, and so on—yet many of these students face significant and disproportionately large barriers to their success and full participation in higher education. They may arrive underprepared in specific content or skill areas, such as in math or writing. Students may face multiple responsibilities, such as being a parent, first-generation student, or any number of factors that can make their persistence and success rates a challenge, especially when compared in a linear fashion with their more affluent and better-served peers. When developmental education policies and institutional priorities are discussed, it is important to recognize the larger context within which these students work toward their goals of being successful students in postsecondary education.

Stereotypes and Stigma

Accompanying the issues of preparation and graduation rates in developmental education is the issue of stigma and its existence in students' perceptions. When developmental education programs are discussed by the public and by policymakers, it is the students in these programs who may begin to perceive themselves as on the periphery of the university community. These students may adopt and internalize the same language and stereotypes about these programs. Because many students in developmental education programs may be considered to be "underprepared" by others, they may assume that their university experience will only be a continuation of their struggles and others' low expectations (Harklau, 2001). Stigma is an important issue to examine as students talk about their perceptions of college, specifically in terms of how they perceive developmental education as a means of access to higher education.

Many first-time teachers and administrators in these programs are taken aback by the range of behaviors and opinions that students may hold or share among themselves or through the grapevine related to how they feel about being admitted to a developmental education or learning assistance program (Bellcourt et al., 2005; Pedelty, 2001). Some students may articulate their low expectations for success in a first-year writing class assignment, shocking a new instructor who may be wondering, "just what did I do?" Students arrive blaming their institutions or blaming themselves, or sometimes attempting to camouflage the fact that they are

enrolled in developmental education programs or campus tutoring (Valeri-Gold, Callahan, Deming, Mangram, & Errico, 1997).

Given the climate and ongoing national debate surrounding developmental education and its status, it should not be surprising that students are influenced by these discussions toward a reflective questioning of their own efforts, roles, placement, and goals in college. Students accepted into or placed in developmental education programs may consequently voice various feelings of stigma upon their entry (Pedelty, 2001) or express ambiguous or divergent reactions ranging from uncertainty to anger or even excitement about being a new college student (Schmitt et al., 2005). Being a new student is confusing enough, and being discussed centrally in the ongoing debates over developmental education programs is certainly more complicated.

Teachers and administrators are also impacted by student and public stereotypes about their programs and their own positioning within the university community. While faculty and staff in developmental education units may provide supportive learning environments, conduct rigorous evaluation research, and implement innovative practices for students toward improving student access and success in higher education, their work may not be perceived as central to the university's research mission. However, in contrast to students' ambivalence about their positions in these programs, faculty and staff are typically committed to and passionate about their work and roles in colleges and universities as developmental educators or learning assistance professionals. At the same time, their efforts in the classroom may be undermined by students' sense of ambiguity about their status and role within the larger university.

Theoretical Facets of Access

One of the most interesting features of stigma and the debates over access for students who enter through developmental education programs is their influence on identity formation and social positioning for students. The context within which students discuss their experiences, as in a qualitative study like ours, is framed by larger social factors that shape their opinions. We will report briefly on some useful theoretical frameworks that inform the concepts of stigma and low public perceptions about students and their developmental education programs.

Social Positioning

Students are often positioned according to categories based on admissions data, test scores, and expectations that may imply certain "deficits" that need to be addressed. Language used to describe students and programs is powerful. A view of students who have so-called skill preparation gaps and are considered "remedial" as opposed to having strengths and potential and who can continue to develop is a powerful rhetorical barricade. This, in effect, creates a kind of social positioning or tracking that is reflected in the stigma and low performance outcomes. In many cases, this positioning conflicts with the ways in which students are positioned in their family, peer group, workplace, prior schools, or community worlds (Phelan, Davidson, & Yu, 1998). Students may be powerful and charismatic leaders in one arena and yet find that same skill and leadership style devalued in an academic context. Students then challenge this official positioning by adopting certain practices that may or may not be consistent with expectations for academic success. Over time, positionings can "thicken" so that a person becomes increasingly defined or labeled in a particular manner, which serves to construct his or her identities (Holland & Lave, 2001). In the case of students who are provisionally admitted through a developmental education program, for example, this positioning is immediate and may have been developed in past educational contexts. Whether or not they had experienced this identity before, they are now labeled as different from their peers.

Racialized Educational Spaces

Another important concept in this study is the notion of educational institutions, and any social arena for that matter, as "racialized" spaces (Barajas, 2001). Theories about social justice and social construction offer important insights about how students, teachers, and institutions are all places where identities such as social class, race,

ethnicity, and home language, as examples, interact and influence each other. The result is that no space is neutral in terms of not having features that reflect these identities and social differences, such as a classroom that privileges a specific kind of prior knowledge that not all students may share based on their cultures and histories. Race centrally impacts all arenas of higher education, creating places of inequity and differing perceptions among students of color, for example, who are in a predominantly White culture (Barajas). Even when a classroom may have a majority of students of color, the White culture prevails in the expectations and setup of activities and assignments. Students perceive this space very differently, and thus it is not neutral in the sense of being the same for all students in terms of accessing what is needed to be successful.

Sundstrom (2003) argued that the systems that construct certain roles or identities such as the economic system creating a working class and the management class also serve to create social spaces related to where people live in a community. He noted that the systems of racial segregation have created racialized spaces in terms of segregated housing and communities, in which Whites associated crime and deterioration to Black neighborhoods, spatial differences that influence differences in the quality of housing, transportation, healthcare, schools, police protection, shopping, and exposure to pollution, which, in turn, influences identity construction in terms of practices of stress, health, employment, and a sense of purpose. Thus, for Sundstrom, "place, through these effects, inhabits us" (p. 92).

Class, like race, impacts students in higher education in the sense that it "inhabits" the students and shapes their experiences and perceptions of being in college. Students who are labeled as "remedial" or marked differently than others upon college admission to a developmental education program are negatively impacted by the effect of this social placement. Developmental education programs that provide multicultural learning pedagogies and support a mission that is inclusive around social identities can support diverse students more effectively than programs that ignore the impact of multicultural identities on students' college experiences.

Negotiating Social and Educational Worlds

In Beach, Lundell, and Jung (2002), we discussed the ways that students in this study negotiated their social worlds within the context of college. In some contexts, such as in social groups with their peers, they may have developed very familiar and successful ways of interacting and exhibited a variety of strategies that bring them success, admiration, and respect. In another context, such as college, students may find a new set of rules operating that they must learn or are expected to have learned previously. The entry to college can give all students the experience of being a "new beginner" (Gee, 1996, 2001) where new rules, "Discourses," and social practices must be learned to be successful. Developmental education programs can explicitly benefit students when these rules are made more explicit.

By adopting and successfully employing certain practices in a new social arena, such as college, a person establishes membership. This movement into new worlds may start with a more tentative kind of participation, on the sidelines so to speak, and then move into a more confident and practiced stance where other people perceive the "beginner" to be more experienced and valued (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Students in a developmental education program are often positioned in a marginal location in the university that requires them to prove that they have acquired the practices associated with being a first-year college student. The challenge with participating on a "peripheral trajectory" (Lave & Wenger, Wenger) is that students in this study may believe that they do not have full access to participating in a new, larger university community. While they are on the university campus interacting with students and attending classes, they are still positioned as engaged in marginal, transitional spaces.

All of this suggests the need for research on student reactions to their own positioning within the context of the shifting status of developmental education college programs and services. The project described in this chapter examines one group of students' perceptions of their participation in a developmental education program. Because this program had been subject to ongoing scrutiny within the larger university community for an

extended period of time and was eventually targeted to be closed, it is useful to determine how these students perceived their status within a program that was subject to such external criticism, as well as their attitudes towards the function and low status of developmental education programs.

Method

Our qualitative study of college students' perceptions about their experiences in college focused on the range of factors that interact in their transitions, such as students, peers, work, and families (Beach, Lundell, & Jung, 2002). This report offered evidence of students' negotiations in a complex process of transitioning into a university through a developmental education program, one that evoked a variety of responses from students during their 2-year transition into a college major. In our first analysis, we discussed the ways students constructed and navigated this transition, noting how their identities as people "becoming college students" and how their notions of "what college is" were influenced by the interactions of their various social, personal, and academic worlds (Clark, 2005). The first report also identified different models for students' self-described trajectories through the new academic culture and program, including insights about their identity perceptions and cultural models for college.

This second report extends that analysis to focus on students' impressions of the specific features of their developmental education program that provided an entry point and transitional academic work toward their future major. The research methods and an explanation of the study's site will be discussed briefly in this report; further details can be found in Beach, Lundell, and Jung (2002). The goal of this second report is to introduce some aspects of the developmental education college as students described it and to represent some of their views about its role and impact in their academic development. Primary theoretical frameworks driving this project's scope and previous analysis also guide this analysis (Beach, Lundell, & Jung). In this report, however, we opted to let students' voices and experiences drive the categories and analysis as they discussed and defined some important facets of access.

Fourteen students in the General College (GC) participated in this longitudinal project. This included a series of five open-ended, qualitative interviews during a 2-year transition period for students who were transferring from GC into majors at the University of Minnesota (UMN) or into other jobs or colleges outside the University. In the analysis of this project's data, we reviewed data for recurring themes, and these were used to organize and interpret students' comments and guide their responses (Beach, Lundell, & Jung, 2002). The first study focused on an analysis of the interactions of the categories of "family," "peers," "high school (K-12)," "General College," and the "University." Students who were academically successful learned to negotiate the competing demands of these different worlds. For example, students who were closely aligned to peer groups who did not value studying or academic pursuits learned to find other peer groups whose practices were more closely aligned with academic pursuits. Students acquire these negotiation practices and commitment to academics through participation in orientation programs or instruction focusing on study skills within the larger context of academic socialization into a university culture. The first report documented variations in students' perceptions of shifts that occurred in this socialization from their high school experiences through their 2 years in the program in which students adopted quite different trajectories with different levels of success (Beach, Lundell, & Jung, p. 88).

The goal for this second report was to examine more closely students' comments in the primary category of "General College," including the subcategories of "admissions," "advising," "classes," "teachers," "impressions of GC," and "transfer." The site of the developmental education college in which these students participated features many aspects of programming designed to prepare students for future academic, degree-granting programs at the University of Minnesota (UMN). In the interviews, we asked students specific questions about the components of the General College. These questions elicited a wide range of reactions and comments about their experiences in the program. We will highlight these experiences further in this secondary analysis of the data.

The Study's Site: The General College

The site for this project is General College, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, an academic unit that has undergone many public transformations in its history, including a recent one. It is primarily a freshman-admitting program for the University that has existed since 1932, providing multidisciplinary courses that embed skill development and student support services for all students. GC also has a multicultural mission to promote diversity and serve students from underrepresented populations who demonstrate potential to succeed in higher education (General College, 2005b).

Policy decisions continue to transform GC. In spring 2005 the University of Minnesota proposed to close the General College and merge it into the College of Education and Human Development as a department starting July 2006. At the time of the proposed merger, many arguments prevailed about GC's past successes, particularly in terms of serving students of color (Taylor, 2005). This situation reflects nationwide trends to eliminate or reduce the functions and services of developmental education programs at public, postsecondary institutions, which also tend to serve greater numbers of students of color and other underrepresented social group identities, especially first-generation college students and students who attended urban, public high schools (Epstein, 2005). Many public universities face budget cuts from state legislatures; rather than continue to raise tuition rates, universities look for ways to reduce costs. The reasons for the proposed closure of GC included the need to retain and serve students who can graduate from the institution in 4 years and to integrate developmental education services more broadly on campus (Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2005). This process also resulted in a publicly-stated renewal of the University's commitment to continuing to serve diverse students and provide access through other means such as scholarships. Reports on national trends indicate a broader set of reasons may also have influenced the UMN's recent planning process, including economics, politics, and assessment data focusing on retention and graduation rates (Bastedo & Gumport, 2003).

At the time this qualitative study was originally conducted, in the years from 1998 through 2000, GC was in a more stable situation despite another attempt to close the College in 1996. The program was undergoing national transformation to become a leader in the field in its teaching, research, and theory (Lehmberg & Pflaum, 2001; Taylor, 2005), and it received a number of national awards in 2000 and 2001. Awards aside, some students entering GC, despite their admission status as entering UMN students, portrayed the General College as a place where they did not want to be or a place where others considered them to be separate from the UMN's other colleges. Of course, GC's mission is to transfer students to another college of the University, so their desires to be out of General College might be looked at as positively reflective of their ambitions to achieve, succeed, and continue at the University, something directly in line with their original goal. The students' negative feelings about being enrolled in the College may also reflect an internalization of the larger national and eventually local discussions of the existence of a developmental education program within the University.

The study's site is an important one, which is why this second report was generated to analyze students' complex and changing perceptions of themselves and the role of their developmental education program in their entry to higher education. Some instances of stigma and stereotyping appeared in the comments from this qualitative study, along with a range of other comments that were positive or neutral about their impressions of the College. We will examine this evidence more closely to interpret and describe the nature of the varied, honest, and complex perceptions of 14 students who were in the GC program during a stable period in its history prior to the recent vote to transform itself again in 2006. Their perceptions will be explored as they related to us their impressions of the College, common myths and metaphors, changes in attitude about the General College, and views they had about the role of its programs in shaping their own college education and skill development. Particularly, it is the underlying impressions of their experiences in a developmental education college that interest us most as they relates to ongoing public views of the General College and the nation's changing landscape related to access in higher education. These impressions will also be discussed as they relate to the final debate over the fate of the GC

program and the stories that current GC students have offered about their own standpoints.

The Students

The 14 students in this study included seven females and seven males. Of the females, one was a 40-year-old Vietnamese woman (Trinh), two were Caucasian females aged 18 (Maggie and Anna), three were African American females (Brenda, 19; Erika, 18; Kenya, 25), and one was a biracial woman named Sarah (African American and Caucasian, 25). The seven males included one Native American male, age 22 (Solomon), and one African American male, age 20 (Luca). There were also five Caucasian males, of whom four were age 18 (John, Scott, Paul, and Jeremy) and one was age 19 (Matt). All names listed in this report are pseudonyms, and any personally identifying details have been removed from specific discussion. For more information about the study's methods and first analysis report, refer to Beach, Lundell, and Jung's (2002) discussion of the project.

Students' Impressions of General College

These students represent a range of GC students who volunteered to be in this 2-year study. The College, however, is diverse in its student demographics and changes from year to year in its admission profile and student body, so these students' experiences are to be viewed as unique when they discuss GC from their own standpoints at the point in time during which they attended GC. They should also be viewed as offering rich details about what it is really like to be a GC student, which is important evidence to explore and capture in this report.

First Impressions of General College

Students expressed a range of opinions about their admission to the University through the General College program. These ranged from negative to uncertain to positive, depending on the student and time of each interview in their progression into the University through GC, impressions that shifted over time. Students voiced feelings of stigma and disappointment, of being physically marginalized on the campus, and of racism or inclusion related to being in a diverse student population. At the same time, they also voiced positive perceptions about the fact that they were being given a second chance and opportunity to succeed by the University.

GC as stigma and disappointment. A common theme among students in this study was a clear sense of stigma or disappointment in being admitted to GC rather than directly into a degree-granting college within the University. A majority of the students we interviewed mentioned some kind of reaction such as disappointment, confusion, concern, or stigma about their admission to GC. The fact that they had been admitted to GC, but not to another college, led them to form self-impressions based on what they perceived to be a rejection.

For example, Matt (M) shared his feelings of stigma and distress about learning he was admitted to GC with the interviewer, Jin (J).

> Jin: You knew you would be accepted by the University?
>
> Matt: I thought so, yes.
>
> J: Did you know about General College?
>
> M: No, I didn't even know what it was.
>
> J: Okay.
>
> M: I applied to CLA [College of Liberal Arts], and I got accepted here.
>
> J: What did you think about it?
>
> M: I was a little upset.
>
> J: You were? Why?
>
> M: I don't know. I was told that it was that it was lower than CLA, and I was a little upset. Just on the scale.
>
> J: You mean the scores?
>
> M: Yes.
>
> J: Anything else?

M: I knew I could do better. It was just a little upsetting. It went over in about a day. I really didn't care, it was like okay, I was accepted. Alright, I will go. That's the way it was.

Matt regarded his admission to GC as a second choice to his desired major on campus. This was fairly typical of students' reactions upon realizing they did not get into their first choice for a college at the UMN.

Some of the students' beliefs about GC were based on misconceptions and misinformation acquired from other students. One student, Erika (E), identified some of the negative stereotypes voiced by other students, including GC peers, which were stereotypes that she challenged based on her positive experiences:

> The only negative thing would be the negative publicity that GC gets because it is so much better than people perceive it to be. I was commenting to one of my friends [in GC], and he feels that he is on a lower status in the University because he is in GC. He thinks that he is not being challenged. I asked him if he was getting all As, and he said no, and I'm like, okay, new topic. Other friends [in GC] call it the "thirteenth grade." I ask them how they are doing in their classes now, and then I'm like, never mind. So it's like that kind of stuff that you have to defend it. I have found myself defending it a couple of times . . . . I think because when people are talking about GC they will say that you didn't even make it into CLA, so you went to GC, and you're not as good or you're not going to get a good education. I think what they should be knowing is that you didn't make it into CLA, and you still have a chance. GC is going to give you a chance rather than saying you didn't get into CLA, so bye bye, go to some community college. That's a good thing for people that were in high school, and they just messed up. To be just as smart as someone in CLA, but they just didn't focus in high school.

Erika's defends developmental education programs as providing students who may not have done well in high school a second chance to demonstrate their abilities. The fact that many students do not have successful high school experiences for personal, social, or cultural reasons (Bettie, 2003) should not necessarily foreclose opportunities to demonstrate success after high school. Students such as Erika who did not do well in high school sometimes appreciate the fact that developmental programs such as GC recognize and support her potential for becoming successful after high school.

GC as physical marginalization and dislocation. Some students shared a sense of dislocation and physical marginalization upon their admission and first experiences in the GC program, which exists in a separate building on campus complete with its own services and classrooms. The intention of the GC program's presence in a single building at the UMN is to provide continuity and access for students to their teachers, advisors, student services, and information. It also provides faculty and staff with access to their students and other colleagues as well for their collaboration on teaching and research in the field of postsecondary developmental education.

However, students perceived this separate space as a marker of social marginalization by and segregation from the University community, despite the fact that GC is located in the middle of the main campus. Maggie (M) equates her feelings about being in a separate space with being marginalized to the interviewer, Dana (D):

> Maggie: It's almost embarrassing to say that I'm in General College.
>
> Dana: Like you don't want to say it?
>
> M: Like I'm inferior.
>
> D: Is it their [your peers'] attitude and how you come into the place?
>
> M: Yes, I mean this building is kind of a side apart from anything else.
>
> D: Physically?
>
> M: If you are walking down the entryway, kind of the sidewalk between the normal buildings and once you get past those,

everyone around you is from General College.

D: Like a separate space?

M: It's like you made it into the zone, and you don't have to hide anymore.

These perceptions of spatial marginalization reflect a misconception that students believe that GC is totally separate from the University, when, in fact, it is directly linked to the University in preparing students to succeed in the University.

GC and racial stereotypes. There were some references in our student interviews to another aspect of GC and the stereotyping that marks its presence both externally and internally in these students' minds during their own transitions through the College. Some students' discussions of physical separation seemed to go deeper in terms of a comfort level they felt on campus, whether or not they perceive the climate as welcoming to them. This differed among the students in this study and also changed at times as they continually renegotiated their physical location on campus and identity as a GC student. Of particular interest in this study were students' perceptions and commentary, or lack thereof, on issues of race and their sense of belonging in GC and at the University of Minnesota. Although this issue merits a larger discussion and more focused future research on the topic than we will cover in the scope of this report, we will briefly discuss some examples where this arises.

The internalized stigma of being placed in a marginal position on campus is reflected in students' ways of describing the General College, including "thirteenth grade," "Ghetto College," "Appleby [name of GC's campus building] high school," "college for athletes," and "school for dummies," categories that conflate race and academic ability based on deficit models of people of color. Of the students we interviewed, many of them said they or others they know used these terms, which exist as popular lore among the students each year who attend GC or who refer to GC from the outside. These perceptions, particularly by White students, reflect a larger normative discourse of Whiteness that creates racial hierarchies that assume that students of color are less academically successful than White students or that they are the beneficiaries of what are perceived as unfair affirmative action programs (Cuomo & Hall, 1999; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Fine, Weis, Powell, & Wong, 1997; Roediger, 2002). White students may also evoke a "culture of poverty" cultural model designed to explain the so-called achievement gap between poor and middle-class students. Patrick Bruch (2003) argued that the culture of poverty explanation reflects a post-Civil Rights "racialization of whiteness" (p. 224) in which Whites react negatively to challenges to White dominance and privilege by arguing that non-Whites are stuck in a "culture of poverty" perceived of an inferior according to White, middle-class cultural models. White students may also assume that their perspective is consistent with the presumed community norm (Trainor, 2002).

Part of Maggie's previously noted perceptions about being physically separated also may have had something to do with being a White student in a college that likely had a more racially and ethnically diverse group of peers than her Twin Cities suburban high school. Thus, while she felt and articulated a sense of physical marginalization that she related to the building and program itself, Maggie also conveyed an underlying sense of feeling like, as a White student, with an assumed sense of White privilege, she did not belong in GC. This, coupled with her sharing of the term "Ghetto College" that her peers used to negatively describe GC, likely depicts something deeper that formed her impressions of GC as a separate space in which she did not feel a central part. Two other White students, Matt and Paul, observed openly that they noticed more, in Matt's word, "minority" students in GC than in the rest of the University. They also shared Maggie's sense of being in the "wrong" college and being physically apart from the campus, as well as the assumption that students of color may be academically inferior to White students.

Although this study did not focus specifically on questions about racism and students' identities, this kind of stereotyping based on race certainly arose as an issue for several of the White students we interviewed. The experience of being White in a more diverse academic program than they may have experiences in during their high school years, such as Maggie conveyed openly, may have contributed to some of these students' perceptions of their presence

in GC as being something unfamiliar; thus, they expressed it in terms of physical marginalization, which is something a White student like Maggie may have experienced for the first time in an academic setting. It is important to note that GC is one of the most racially and ethnically diverse units at the UMN; however, Maggie's impressions that she was a "minority" as a White person in GC was in fact false as GC has generally admitted slightly more Caucasian students by ratio to its students of color historically. However, White students still adopt a cultural stigma they associate with being enrolled in a "ghetto" college. Moreover, these students initially did not recognize the benefits of being in a relatively diverse program, such as learning to formulate and revise their discourses of race. White students in more diverse academic settings are more likely to examine issues of racial difference and their own racial identities than students in more homogeneous, largely White settings (Perry, 2001).

On the other hand, the benefits of being in a diverse setting were noted by students of color in our study. These students cited the fact that in the more racially homogeneous settings outside of GC, they experienced feelings of marginalization. Luca, an African American male, noted that he could not "be himself" in classes he took outside of GC:

> In General College at least I haven't had too many classes where I am the only Black person or the only person of color. So it hasn't been that difficult. But I have had classes [at the UMN] where I was the only Black male or the only Black person. So you are in your own little corner.

Later in the same interview he also said,

> You can be yourself more [in GC] because there are more people around that look like you, act like you, or that you are used to. People that are normal to you. But when you get into CLA, I'm in a classroom with a bunch of people that are harder to relate to. In GC there are more people to relate with. It is a transition because I may have a class where there are some Black people and a class where there are no Black people; at least I have that class with the Black people so at least it is a slow shift.

Here Luca was referring to the UMN non-GC courses as being the place he needs to transition to in terms of encountering a world that does not have as many students of color or welcoming spaces for someone with his racial identity as an African American male. He observed that GC offered some kind of transitional environment that helped him navigate the UMN campus and provide him space to be his "real" self. Throughout his other interviews during the project, Luca also brought up many examples of how he set up some personal boundaries to negotiate this process, specifically relating it to his cultural and racial identity. Luca was also a father of two children and a student who worked outside school, which further differentiated him culturally from his peers, both in GC and at the UMN. Still, he confirmed that GC was a more comfortable space for him, a perception expressed by other students of color (Barajas, 2001). Similarly, African American females, Brenda and Erika, noted that their course offerings provided them with opportunities to explore their racial identities and societal stereotypes, which was coursework that they found to be personally and academically engaging.

Other students of color, such as Sarah, a biracial student (African American and Caucasian), and Trinh (a Vietnamese student), also expressed disappointment in being admitted to GC and not directly into a major of their choice. As older students, they focused on their appreciation of the kinds of support provided to them as returning adults. Based on their comments, Sarah and Trinh's observations about feeling isolated had more to do with program placement and being older as students than their traditionally-aged peers than overtly with their articulated racial identities. Still, they each conveyed a similar sense of feeling more comfortable in GC and its space for providing a transition for them into the UMN. In each of their cases, they were returning students who had worked and raised or were raising children, and GC offered them more direct support. Despite the stereotypes others held, they reported more comfortable experiences in general in GC their first year. A sizable group in higher education, many of these older, returning adult students who may still be working or raising children, appreciate

the flexibility afforded them by instructors or advisors. GC offers a Student Parent HELP Center that provides direct service for student parents to the entire University campus, something that each of these student parents mentioned as helpful in overcoming feelings of difference and marginalization.

Similarly, Brenda and Erika, African American females who were among the more traditionally aged students in GC who attended college after high school, reported positive feelings about being in GC and not feeling like its stereotypes were something that impacted them negatively. They felt comfortable in the College and did not mention their racial identity directly as a factor in their transition. They did report that the course offerings that offered them an opportunity to explore their racial identities and societal stereotypes were something that engaged them personally and academically. However, they did not convey directly in their comments the same kind of outsider feelings that others had related more overtly to racial and social identities.

In the course of a study of only 14 students at a particular point in time and location, we interpret these observations as unique to these individuals, though our analysis certainly points to a more complex issue of racial and cultural identities as interacting strongly with students' and the public's stereotypes of GC. This is certainly something they navigate upon entry to GC as conveyed in several of these examples. Future studies should examine students' ethnic and racial identities as they relate to the location and presence of developmental education programs on college campuses, particularly in terms of how discourses of Whiteness may function as a normative force shaping students' perceptions and their identity constructions (Bruch, 2003). Students form different concepts of their roles and placements as students based on these identities, their prior educational experiences, and their levels of prior social capital and cultural access. Racism or concepts of racial identities (Barajas, 2001) could perhaps be a strong factor in how students and others perceive these programs, contributing to this notion of stigma and misperceptions about their mission and role in higher education.

GC as a second chance and opportunity. Not all of the students we interviewed voiced negative initial impressions of GC. In contrast to feeling physically marginalized and perhaps conveying some subconscious racial identity connections about being in GC, some students viewed their entry to GC and their first year as a positive opportunity. Trinh (T), offered a pragmatic view about the College. Though Trinh did not select GC as a first choice, she was a non-native speaker of English who received a low score on the language entry test, which required her to enroll in GC.

> Jin: So you didn't choose to come to GC, but it was because your test scores were low?
>
> Trinh: I chose IT [Institute of Technology].
>
> J: You chose IT?
>
> T: Yes, but my score was low.
>
> J: So you came to GC then?
>
> T: Yes, to improve my English. We can come to the community college and the technical college, and we can study there two years and transfer into the University. But I prefer here [GC] because I want to adapt to the University environment.

Trinh noted that given her status as an English Language Learner (ELL) student, the support services provided by the GC Commanding English program were central to her success as an immigrant and first-generation student. Because the Commanding English program was directly integrated into the curriculum of the College, GC students such as Trinh could readily seek out their assistance. One of the benefits of a developmental college program is that it can tailor its support systems to meet the needs of each student, something that may not necessarily be the case for students admitted to other colleges on the campus.

Another student, Solomon, also had a more positive impression of his admission to GC. Solomon was serving in the military in Kuwait and realized he wanted to attend college rather than

continue in the military. He described his positive assessment of his expedited admissions to GC:

> After 4 months in the desert, I was getting frustrated. I was like, hey, maybe I don't want to do this forever. So I got back [from a trip to Kuwait City] and looked up the University of Minnesota . . . and there was a number, and I wrote down the number . . . . About a week later I was able to use the phone again, and I called the University Admissions . . . . She said, yes, I was accepted.

In a compelling and emotional story about his admission to GC, Solomon, a Native American student, discussed his views of getting out of the military and into GC as equivalent to being "in jail [in Kuwait], and I was about to be paroled." For students such as Solomon, the flexibility of developmental programs represents alternatives to unsatisfactory career choices.

These students' perceptions reflect and mimic complex notions of how GC is perceived by those internal and external to the College. However, as we later demonstrate, some of these initial impressions can shift as students gain a deeper understanding of the program.

GC Programs and Student Services

The students also described the role of their classes, advisors, student services, and teachers in their academic socialization. The GC program is a multidisciplinary program that integrates skill development embedded within a range of academic content courses, such as math, writing, art, psychology, or biology. Students take a variety of credit-bearing classes before they can apply to transfer into their major, typically during their second year at the University. To do this, they must achieve a GPA that meets the criteria for admission into another program. GC is designed to fully support this transition through learning centers, support services, and academic resources. Its mission emphasizes a multicultural community with a postsecondary developmental education affiliation for shaping its research, teaching, and theory. Students take a majority of their courses in GC while also participating in UMN campus activities. Students' impressions of GC also vary widely, and students shared a variety of their perspectives about these essential aspects of the developmental education college and its impact on their educational transition.

Classes. GC classes include a range of different types of courses, such as computer courses, lecture-style classes, seminar courses with discussion, learning communities, writing labs, and courses in multidisciplinary subjects. GC's curriculum is meant to be comprehensive in nature, exposing students to a full range of liberal arts requirements while simultaneously offering skill development and intellectual growth opportunities. Students work with advisors to register for appropriate classes, choosing them for the same reasons as most college students, including time available, courses required, and preferred subject area or style of teaching.

Students expressed mixed perceptions of their classes. They noted the positive aspect of smaller class sizes they experienced in GC relative to larger, more lecture-based classes outside of GC. Erika noted that she not only liked the way that General College offered an atmosphere where teachers knew who you were, but that even her peers outside GC noted the positive experience that smaller class sizes brought to the college experience.

> Erika: I have a friend that I work with, and she said that she wished that she started in General College.
>
> Jin: Oh, really?
>
> E: Yes, because of the class sizes. She told me that when she was a freshman she didn't do as well because she didn't get as much attention as I'm getting. I tell her what is going on in my class, and she said that hasn't happened to her [in the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota]. It's so big they can't [give extra attention].

Ironically, some students also noted disliking the smaller class sizes. They equated the supportive environment of small classes with being in high school and as inconsistent with their cultural models of college with large, lecture courses. They

also perceived such support as reifying a sense of dependency associated with their high school experience, dependency that conflicted with their notion of college as symbolizing their emerging independence and as being different from high school. For example, Matt noted that some of his teachers employed practices such as attendance policies, expectations about class discussions and involvement, and interpersonal group work that he equated with high school.

> Jin: Do you think that instructors in GC are acting more or less like high school teachers?
>
> Matt: No, not ultimately, but sometimes.
>
> J: In what ways?
>
> M: Calling on people, name tags, but I can't think of anything else. That's what stands out in my mind. And trying to get the whole group involved and getting people to listen and like it. And one teacher, he said that if you are gone [absent] more than three times, your grade will be reduced. I was like, what?! This cannot be true! I guess that was another aspect. I was surprised because all of my friends in the College of Liberal Arts and the Institute of Technology, which most of them are, they don't have to go to class ever. They just have to read it and get notes.

Other students like Matt also observed that attendance policies, expectations about class discussions and involvement, and interpersonal group work were techniques they experienced in high school. Thus, this contradicted their cultural models of college as needing to be somehow different from high school. Encountering a curriculum that emphasized learning communities and active learning strategies to prepare them for their transition to other programs was a surprise to some students who expected large classes and impersonal interactions with teachers.

However, during his second year in GC, Matt shifted his beliefs about the value of smaller classes as helping him improve his work and self-confidence:

> Matt: I don't know how it helped. I couldn't describe it . . . It wasn't something I was consciously thinking about. It just happened.
>
> Jin: So getting good grades and feeling good in class and feeling successful . . . those things helped you?
>
> M: Sure, yeah, for sure. It gave me the confidence to break out.

In addition to the class size issue, some students described the challenges and rigor they experienced in their GC courses as preparing them for their learning in other colleges. GC's courses are also fully credit bearing and fulfill UMN undergraduate requirements, with the exception of pre-college level mathematics courses, which differentiates GC's developmental education program from many others nationally where the courses do not always count for full credit. Contrary to misperceptions about developmental education programs providing "remedial" course work, GC provides integrated and academically challenging approaches that emphasize critical thinking, multicultural perspectives, career planning, scientific thinking, and writing for research. Students particularly noted the value of their writing classes. Sarah stated, "I think GC has definitely prepared me in writing definitely, because the writing courses and the professors teaching them are very good. They're good." Jeremy also noted the rigorous curriculum in the GC writing courses. "The basic writing GC 1421 course was the most difficult thing that I have been through, and the high school that I went through was very writing oriented."

Students also appreciated the focus on diversity. Brenda described an African American literature course as fostering intensive personal and cultural reflection. "It's good because I'm learning more about my culture. That I really wanted… right now I'm learning more because I have an open mind." Students similarly mentioned a multicultural relations course as being one of the most challenging personal and academic courses they had taken, one that forced them to reconsider their cultural stereotypes and views about race and ethnicity.

Teachers. Students also described some of the ways their teachers supported their development

through their emotional support and teaching methods. Scott appreciated the personal attention he received from a composition instructor:

> I probably would thank GC for, well, because the teachers are a little more caring. Like my composition teacher. She was still hard on you, but you have to be. She knew everyone's names . . . and had high standards, and she gave us something to work for. She cared about all the kids, too. That helped a lot. She'd spend, you know, right about as much as I did in the paper itself making comments on the sides, telling me this could change or this was good or something like that.

Trinh echoed what she perceived as the value of close interactions with students:

> I think in General College, your professor takes such great care in the students a lot. After mid-term, they give review to student and let student know where you are and how to improve and if you have a question, talk to me.

While more students were able to offer one or two teacher names and point to positive experiences in GC courses, some students also encountered teachers they did not like or whose course structure they did not enjoy. Sarah offered her thoughts about a social science course in which she had a disagreement with the professor over the format of the course, which primarily took place in a computer lab. In most of the cases where students described a teacher they did not like, it typically was linked to their perception of the course structure itself. In one example, Sarah described an interaction she had:

> They give you, like, five times to take a quiz, and in that way, it's good. But in other ways it's bad because I've been telling the professor the other day that, I'm memorizing these sentences to win. But I'm not retaining these concepts at all, you know? If you were lecturing or having some sort of discussion, I'd retain it . . . . I'm not absorbing anything, and I told the professor that.

Sarah struggled through the course, describing frequent disagreements she had with the instructor as she tried to share her opinions about the format of the course. In her view, she thought the professor was too invested in the way the class was delivered through technology that he disregarded her experience as unique and only individual in nature, though she claimed that other students felt the same way but would not confront the professor. Sarah also offered this observation about a math teacher with whom she did not connect:

> I was really disappointed. I had some really good teachers in high school. I really need a strong math background for my future. I did really well in math in high school, and when I came here I was disappointed, I guess, because professors don't teach it. So instead, a T.A. [teaching assistant] about my age taught it, and she wasn't the best teacher in the world. That was a little frustrating. I'm glad that I had good teachers in high school because otherwise I wouldn't have understood everything that she was doing. That was a little frustrating because I was not going to get a professor. Her major wasn't even in mathematics at all.

At a large institution such as the University of Minnesota, students like Sarah frequently have teaching assistants who teach their courses. Other students, however, described very positive experiences with both professors and graduate teaching assistants alike, so students' reactions were highly individual and usually tied to the course they were taking and its format as much as their views of the teacher's personality or teaching style. Overall, however, the students in this study reported very positive and engaging interactions with their GC teachers.

Advising. In addition to overall positive experiences with their teachers, the students we interviewed similarly reported supportive and positive encounters with their GC advisors, called "counselor advocates." In GC, a form of advising that is very interactive, personalized, and intrusive exists to support students in their transitions from GC to their major at the University. Frequently in this study, students named their advisors and talked about how these relationships assisted them in their college transitions. Erika pointed this out:

> The lady I was working with in the career center got an advising award, so it's like these are some good people to know. I'm like, well, how fortunate was I to have both of them [this advisor and another award-wining staff instructor] as instructor . . . I'm like, well, these are people that I should know and continue to know even when I move out of GC. I think I need to stick around here because some valuable relationships are here that I might not get in CLA, and it's [CLA] so big and there's a lot of people to deal with there, so I will come back here.

Trinh also noted the positive nature of GC advising:

> With GC, the one thing that is different with another college is that GC make use of student advisor often. We have one advisor in another college. When you want to see advisor you have to meet with different advisors all the time. In the GC, one student has one advisor for a year. My advisor knows me and my situation, my problem, they know everything. They can advise me to do thing. That is one thing that is different. We met advisor very often. This quarter at least two times.

Although students appreciated the guidance in choosing classes and planning their programs provided by their advisors, they also noted that their advisors were continually challenging them to improve their academic performance. Again, the amount of time and attention provided to students by their GC advisors differs from students' experiences with faculty advisors in other colleges where the student-to-advisor ratio is much higher.

Student services. Part of GC's student services include comprehensive, in-house support programs, such as an Academic Resource Center that houses a writing, math, and computer center dedicated solely to GC students. Additionally, GC has services of the federally-funded TRIO program that include Supplemental Instruction (SI) for students entering high-risk courses who wish to have additional academic support. In house also in GC is the Transfer and Career Center and Student Parent HELP Center, both of which offer unique services to students in GC and outside the College as well in the case of the parent help center. On the curricular side, there is also an academic program called Commanding English that offers courses for students who are English Language Learners. There is also a student leadership group in the College, the GC Student Board, which provides a chance for students to become involved in college-level issues and decisions. These collective services centrally address students' needs for additional support that is accessible to them and meets their transfer needs.

Frequently in the interviews with these students, they mentioned these various services as providing positive and useful support to them in addition to the previously discussed teachers, courses, and advisors. Erika described the Supplemental Instruction sections:

> It has taught me how to study. That's what the supplementary instruction classes are for. Helping me to learn what I should be getting from the lecture classes. That has helped me a whole lot in comparison to the other kids in the class who don't have the SI class. Now I know how to study. I'm focused more in class. They point out what you should be looking for.

Others mentioned the Transfer and Career Center. Erika noted, "I went to the career center, and they taught me to write my résumé." Alana similarly brought up the usefulness of the transfer classes that this center offers. "It was pretty good, general stuff . . . a lot of advising and stuff." Her interviewer asked Alana what else was useful, and Alana said, "Well, in General College there seems to be more resources or people that make sure that you work to succeed, and I don't know if CLA has as many resources as GC does." Kenya, a student parent from a low-income background, also observed that the Student Parent HELP Center was very supportive in her transition to college, in addition to the Transfer and Career Center and her freshman seminar course. She said, "So all three of those entities are really what make me feel like they want you to succeed and that's why General College is here, for you to be able to succeed and take it seriously as a student."

Students overall mentioned many examples about how they found GC's support services to be quite well targeted to their needs, supportive of their academic skill development, and personal in nature in terms of providing a connective relationship beyond the walls of their classrooms. It is the integrated model in GC, including the curricula, the teacher, the advisors, and the support services, that offered this group of students an opportunity to prepare for their transfer into other colleges in the UMN.

Shifts in Student Perceptions

Over the period of 2 years, as students became more familiar with GC, some of their perceptions began to shift. While students expressed initial frustrations about being admitted in GC, during their second year they voiced a more positive view of their experience in providing them with necessary preparation for transferring to another college. They noted that without the attention and support they received that, had they been admitted to another college, they would not have done as well. Some students, such as Trinh, noted that she would continue to rely on her GC advisors and services when she transferred to another college. Another student, John, noted that given his close relationships with his GC writing teachers, he would continue to work with them to assist in his writing and his work as a writer for the campus newspaper.

On the other hand, one of the students, Anna, noted that she preferred the larger courses and the opportunity to be more independent and "on your own" in taking courses in another college, the College of Liberal Arts. However, she did perceive GC as a "freeway ramp" in terms of preparing her for the future. Overall, even when students expressed conflict about their positions in GC, they typically identified many positive aspects by the end of their second year and to the point of transfer into another University program or other life path.

Not all of the students completed their GC programs. After his experience in the military, Solomon struggled personally with the intense difference between the academic and military cultures. The freedom he found on campus that generated such excitement and enthusiasm during his entry was also a psychological obstacle as he found the transition difficult and overwhelming. At the end of his second year, we could not identify him as a registered student for the next semester.

Kenya also experienced uncertainty about her future due to a departure from campus with a pregnancy and some related health concerns. She thought she would return some day to the UMN, but the outcome was unknown to us due to the limitations of this study. Additionally, a program she had attended to assist welfare recipients in their job training through higher education had been shut down around the time of her last interview with us during her first year, and this further complicated her outcome.

Finally, there were no students in our study who reported moving from a positive experience or perception about GC to a negative one due to GC's programs or services. This group of 14 students maintained either mixed reactions or gained positive impressions of GC prior to transferring or leaving. Many external factors, such as their social worlds outside of college including work, peers, and family (Clark, 2005), also intervened in their responses, perceptions of GC and the UMN, and academic situations at the end of our interview cycle with this group of individuals.

Outcomes and Discussion

At the time we completed the analysis of the interviews, many of the students were continuing their work at the UMN in their other colleges. Others were more difficult to locate as they did not appear to be admitted to another college at the time they left or stopped out of GC's programs to attend to other life and work issues. One student left the program her first year due to family issues but intended to return to school later, and another individual transferred to a private institution in the Twin Cities to continue her work because she could not get into the UMN college of her choice based on her GC grades. Despite these outcomes that meant leaving the program itself at that point in time, students certainly reported a range of positive experiences and impact of the GC program on their

academic skill development. These findings indicate that students believe the program is successful for developing their skills and moving forward toward their goals even when the outcome is not direct transfer or graduation from the University.

There were also success stories, in addition to those who gained admission to their majors and eventually graduated. One individual remained linked to GC through becoming an undergraduate teaching assistant, another student won a scholarship for academic achievement, and another student won awards in the community for his writing. Still another student got a job as a campus newspaper writer. One of the students who continued her work outside the UMN after GC mentioned that she gained a lot of benefits from having had her first college experiences at such a large research university, despite her decision to finish her program elsewhere. These are also stories that reflect the diversity and successes of GC students who benefit from their experiences in the GC program according to their own comments and observations.

From our interviews and previous analysis of the data (Beach, Lundell, & Jung, 2002), it is clear that GC students face a complex range of issues as they work on their goals of getting a college degree at the UMN. The need to work, secure financial aid, support families, return to school at a nontraditional age, and balance the expectations of their family and communities frequently make the higher education process sometimes stressful and complicated. At the same time, these students generally reported that GC had clearly helped them sort through and shape their own career goals, assisted them in defining their future paths in higher education, and helped them define their major at the UMN.

Conclusion

These research findings uniquely represent 14 students who participated in an access program in higher education during a specific period in time. Overall conclusions cannot be drawn, and more research should certainly be conducted in the future from a qualitative perspective. Individual experiences such as the ones reported in this study are detailed, self-reported examples of how students themselves internalize the mission of a program, perceive its various activities, and relate their experiences to their future educational goals. Listening to students' perceptions of their programs and recognizing that these perceptions can change over time is important for understanding the impact of developmental education programs in students' educational trajectories.

In *The General College Vision: Integrating Intellectual Growth, Multicultural Perspectives, and Student Development* (Higbee, Lundell, & Arendale, 2005), students wrote about their perceptions and experiences in GC and the impact of GC's programs and mission on their future goals. The data from our study, along with anecdotal reports from teachers and students, does show that students report a range of impressions about entering GC. The data from this study also show that these impressions vary widely and are not static; that is, they change over time and are influenced strongly by their experiences with specific aspects of the GC program, their peers, their teachers, and other support structures. It would be overly simplistic to conclude that all students dislike GC or that all students like the program as it would be to say the same about UMN students who enter other programs. Each experience is unique.

It is the diversity in student perceptions in this study that highlights why a developmental education program, with its range of flexible programs and services, is an important kind of educational model for working with diverse students accessing the institution. Developmental education programs are unique, flexible, and defined locally based on the needs of each institution, as well as state mandates in some cases. Frequently these programs undergo changes, and understanding the impact of these changes and contexts on students is key to improving them for the future. Public debates, program alterations, and elimination seem to shape the public's conversations about programs like GC. Students should be invited to voice their opinions and share their perceptions of the programs that impact them most directly. As the students in this study demonstrated, they have centrally important things to say about their education and how they are being served academically. Their voices should

be part of the equation and evaluation of any program to find a way to capture and value their perspectives. We thank these students for their contributions.

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Student Perceptions of the Factors That Influence Academic Success

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This study explored factors that contribute to the success of developmental education students, investigating the subject through an examination of the students' own perceptions: how students themselves describe, explain, and interpret the reasons for academic success. The study sought to discover the psychosocial, environmental, and other noncognitive factors that contribute to success of students admitted to their institution through a support program. Developmental education students were defined as those identified at enrollment as needing additional support in order to make a successful transition to college. Success was defined as being in academic good-standing and enrolled in the final semester before graduation.

Faculty who work in remedial, developmental, and learning assistance programs consider the development of students to be their primary concern. Although they recognize that development is a complex phenomenon, the nature of their roles requires that they measure development in terms of one primary outcome—*success*, itself a complex phenomenon. That is to say, success—or more precisely, *academic* success—is the major criterion used to measure the value of developmental education programs and to judge the growth and development of students considered at risk. To be more accurate, the criterion is *ultimate academic success*, defined as successful completion of the college experience; success implies graduation.

Developmental educators monitor and applaud a variety of achievements toward the goal of college graduation. Yet it is the single most valued outcome, the one that is especially celebrated. Reaching this milestone is particularly rewarding for developmental education students, considering what little chance they are given by predictions based on traditional measures, namely standardized test scores and high school grade point averages (GPAs; Roueche, 1968). In fact, these kinds of predictions are what earn for developmental education students such labels as "at-risk," "high-risk," and "marginal" (Roueche & Snow, 1977). Success as defined by graduation is a much valued goal irrespective of the countless benefits that students gain from the college experience itself. Success as measured by completion of the degree is the main criterion used to judge individual students, the collective cohort, the faculty, and ultimately the program and the institution. Given this standard with its concomitant challenges, there is little wonder that attention settles on one fundamental question: What makes students successful?

Conceptual Framework

The most widely used method for deciding the potential success of college students is one that produces a prediction using cognitive measures,

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the most common being scores on the SAT and ACT. Another common measure is past academic performance, often combined with the SAT or ACT to produce a predicted college grade point average (PGPA). For developmental educators, this intellective data is generally only the starting point of a comprehensive needs assessment that includes other noncognitive or psychosocial data. Yet the prediction for success always begins, and often ends, with these cognitive measures, commonly referred to as "measure of ability."

Educators have long been aware that formulas that use only cognitive factors for predicting success for college students are inadequate (Gay, 1996; Pickering, Calliotte, & McAuliffe, 1992), but for developmental education students, their usefulness is practically negligible (Higbee & Dwinell, 1996; Larose & Roland, 1991; White & Sedlacek, 1986). These traditional predictors ignore the potential of developmental education students while at the same time conveying messages of low expectations (Roueche, 1968). Many developmental education students are, after all, academically successful, defying the predictions made for them. And, they are able to demonstrate that success by every measure that is typically stressed, from completion of the freshman year, to retention, to graduation (Boylan & Bonham, 1994a; Starks, 1989). It stands to reason that there are other factors besides test scores that play a significant role in the success and achievements of developmental education students (Jones & Watson, 1990; Maxwell, 1979; Roueche & Roueche, 1993; Roueche & Snow, 1977).

In the past 20 years, much work has been done to ascertain the factors that have an influence on student development in college, but few have shed light on the success factors with respect to developmental education students in particular. The range of possible factors is both broad and complex and measuring them is a challenge, as is determining the relationship they have to each other and to a particular outcome, one that empirical research seeks to meet by testing existing theory. For developmental education in particular, that body of research is limited. For example, we accept the belief that tutoring makes a difference in the success of students, yet, as Maxwell (1994) pointed out, this belief has been difficult to demonstrate or measure.

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) highlighted the various limitations of the research in an exhaustive analysis of over 2600 studies related to how students change and benefit from the college experience. They pointed out that the growing numbers of students in American postsecondary education who fall outside traditional student categories are underrepresented in the existing evidence. O'Hear and MacDonald (1995) called for more studies in developmental education, concluding from a critical analysis of work over the past 10 years, "Most research in developmental education is quantitative, and most of those quantitative studies are seriously flawed" (p. 4). According to Rose (1989), it is difficult to quantify what developmental educators do and yet the pressure is to do so: "what was messy and social and complex was simply harder to talk about and much harder to get acknowledged" (p. 200).

Not that there is a shortage of theory to frame studies. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) have called the growth in theory development since the late 1960s "one of the most striking and significant trends in the study of collegiate impact over the last two decades" (p. 15) yielding psychological, sociological, environmental, and cognitive-structural models as well as those with a less specific base, known as college impact models, like those promulgated by Tinto (1975, 1986b, 1987, 1988, 1993), Astin (1985, 1993), and Pascarella and Terrenzini (1991).

Academic success is obviously a broad and complex concept. It follows that the numerous factors contained in the various models and theories of student change and development would have some impact on student success. The challenge is in knowing which factors have significant impact, and which have significant impact for developmental education students in particular. It is possible, also, that there are factors that play a role in success for developmental education students that are not included in any of the existing models, or that have a deeper meaning or significance for developmental education students than any of these models have uncovered. This possibility is of major significance for the purpose of this research and is supported by the following caution from Pascarella and Terenzini (1991): "Readers [of the research] should understand that the evolving character of higher education's clientele, specifically the growing numbers of

minority groups and older students, raises serous questions about the universal applicability of these theories and models" (p. 17). By the same token, Maxwell (1994) emphasized the need to improve the design of the measures used to evaluate the effect of various interventions on the performance of developmental education students, suggesting that maybe developmental educators are asking the wrong questions and should be seeking more ways of determining how and why students change.

The Research Question

The purpose of this study was to explore students' perspectives with respect to the factors that contribute to their academic success in an attempt to discover what causes a student to become successful who has been identified by the system as not likely to succeed. The intent of this research was to provide a framework within which successful students could explore their own perspectives on that experience. An approach was employed that permitted the informants to identify, describe, and explain those factors in their success that they themselves understand to be important. The research sought to elicit feelings, beliefs, experiences, and behaviors in the students' own language, making each what is called in quantitative research "a native speaker" (Spradley, 1979, p. 25) and a teacher to those of us who reside outside the culture and "live by a different meaning system" (Spradley, p. 25). Aided by the nature and power of its format, this research, sought to examine one question: What are the academic, psychosocial, and environmental factors to which successful developmental education students attribute their academic success?

Research Design and Methodology

The nature of the problem identified for this research and the conceptual framework on which it is based supported a qualitative approach. As the purpose was to translate perceived experiences and search for an understanding of a complex phenomenon, the design of choice within the qualitative realm was an unstructured, open-ended interview study. This approach allows for "the opportunity to learn about what you cannot see and to explore alternative explanations of what you do see" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 65). The problem is to discover the cultural meanings that students considered at risk are using to interpret their experiences. Because the concept of success is complex, the variables within the domain are both complex and interwoven. An open-ended interview method with a guided list of interview questions promoted a full range of exploration into the pluralism and complexity of the subject and included questions and probes that explored the following areas: behaviors and experiences, opinions and values, feelings, knowledge, and sensory information (see Figure 1). This design assumed the existence of certain conditions, attitudes, beliefs, opinions, experiences, and behaviors, but did not seek to predict, measure, or test them. Thus, multiple realities were anticipated, but not preconceived.

Sites

Data were collected from seven 4-year institutions in central and western Pennsylvania, ranging in size from small (1200 students) to large (40,000) and located in a variety of settings including rural, urban, and small town. The types included two private church-affiliated, one private nondenominational, three public state-supported, and one public state-affiliated. Each institution had at least one developmental education program from which to draw subjects. Although the programs varied in size and structure, they all shared the same mission to provide service to students identified as needing support to make a successful transition to college.

The second criterion required that subjects occupy current status as academically successful students. Academically successful was defined as students being in academic good standing and about to graduate. The choice to use near-graduates rather than graduates was based on principles of selection recommended by qualitative researchers for insuring the best possible subjects for answering the research question. Spradley (1979) stated that informants should "have a first-hand, current involvement in the cultural scene" (p. 49). He recommended several additional qualifications, describing a good informant as one with thorough enculturation, current involvement, adequate time,

and a nonanalytic stance. He defined a nonanalytic subject as one able to be freely expressive without analyzing the process or information as would an outsider or one with a retrospective stance. All participants were in the final semester of their senior year. By selecting currently enrolled seniors rather than graduates, the study satisfied the requirements for enculturation and current involvement and also allowed for ease in identifying participants and scheduling adequate interview time. Invited subjects received an explanation of the study and an informed consent form prior to confirmation of participation.

Sample Selection

Adhering to the standard practice of qualitative research, the sample was small compared to that for quantitative studies. For in-depth understanding, qualitative researchers recommend a small number of respondents in the interest of generating what are referred to by Glesne and Peshkin (1992) as "thick descriptions" and for producing "detailed reconstructions of the various multiple realities" (Isaac & Michael, 1995, p. 220). Sixteen subjects were selected to participate. This sample was deemed small enough to manage the reconstruction of the various multiple realities that would emerge while allowing for the necessary condition of generalizability and trustworthiness of results (Isaac & Michael, p. 146). From the pool meeting the criteria, care was exercised to select a sample that represented a range measured against the following variables: age, gender, race or ethnic background, and cumulative grade point averages. The sample consisted of three Black males, three White females,

Figure 1. Interview questions.

1. How would you define academic success?
2. What does it mean to be academically successful? Would you describe yourself as a successful student?
3. Why have you been successful?
4. Why are some students more successful than others?
5. What are the factors that make you feel in control of your academics?
6. What are the factors that make you feel connected?
7. Do you have any role models, someone of particular influence in your success?
8. What have been your positive experiences regarding your efforts at success?
9. What have been your negative experiences? What roadblocks to success have you encountered?
10. Compare your experiences in high school with your experiences here in college.
11. Have you ever done poorly in a class? Why do you think that happened?
12. Other students have talked about the importance of (family, friends, faculty, ability, hard work, etc.) as factors in their success. What influence, if any, have had for you?
13. How did you feel about coming to college through a special program?
14. Have you ever thought of leaving the college? Why? What made you stay?
15. Why do you think others think of leaving?
16. What would you identify as a crucial time for you in adjusting to college?
17. What do you do (who do you talk to) if you are having difficulties with college?
18. What (behaviors, attitudes, or values) did you bring with you that helped you be successful?
19. What (behaviors, attitudes, or values) did you acquire in college that helped you become successful?
20. What advice would you give new students coming to college for the first time?

four Black females, four White males, one Asian male, and one Black male Latino. The majority of the participants (13) were 21 or 22 years old. The remaining three participants were ages 23, 24, and 39. Cumulative grade point averages for the group ranged from 2.1 to 3.8.

To include "extremes of particular interest" (Isaac & Michael, p. 146), three of the informants were selected from a group of students working as peer-helpers in one of the programs but also originally admitted as developmental education students. These kinds of subjects are referred to by Patton (1990) as information-rich cases from whom the researcher can learn most about the topic central to the investigation. In addition, this design satisfied two additional methods used in sampling selection for qualitative technique described by Issac and Michael as homogeneous and maximum variation sampling, homogeneous in that it represented a particular group of students (at risk) and varied by virtue of the stratified nature of selecting on a range of additional criteria such as those previously described. Therefore, the study satisfied the criteria upon which qualitative methods of data collection rely upon to establish trustworthiness and sound results: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and confirmability (Issac and Michael).

Procedures

The interview was unstructured and consisted of a minimum of 1 hour, using the unstructured format, most fruitful "Where highly complex or elusive questions are being raised" (Isaac & Michael, 1995, p. 147). Interviews began with a review of the explanation of the study and the collection of the demographic information. Students read a written copy of an introduction to the interview as a starting point for the process. The students were given the opportunity to respond according to their own view of what to stress in addressing the research question. With the general, open-ended beginning, they focused on specific factors considered to be of importance to them through a perception of their own unique experiences. Where appropriate, their responses were probed or questioned for further clarification, elaboration, and exploration. Where issues relevant to the research question had not emerged, they were introduced to relevant topics or to the prepared sample questions and allowed to provide the information freely. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Method of Analysis

The interview transcripts were studied carefully to determine elements that could be identified as distinct features for coding. Specific codes originated initially from the general categories set forth in the interview guide and from the sample questions. Additional codes emerged from repeated readings that looked for similarities and differences among the words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs, as well as for subtle distinctions in these elements or subcategories within the general categories. Repeated analyses were conducted until an exhaustive and thorough compilation of categories and subcategories had been identified and coded for subsequent organization into an explanation and description of the results. Analysis of data generated from interviews calls for the use of coding to "make connections among the stories: What is being illuminated? How do the stories connect? What themes and patterns give shape to your data?" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 132). When the major categories were identified, corresponding excerpts were identified through a close analysis of each transcript. When these major categories were located and labeled on all 16 transcripts, a complete analysis was applied to the transcripts of the first three subjects, resulting in the coding of additional categories. These added categories were then applied to the remaining transcripts one by one, with a few more emerging and others being collapsed into a single category. To be thorough in presenting the data, every response received at least one code, many were listed with multiple codes, and every response was initially excerpted for inclusion under a category. A final perusal satisfied research criteria to include every response in the data.

In identifying important elements in the data, attention was given to the conceptual framework of the study, in particular the elements of the theories and models related to student change and development in college and in particular to the critical influences on student persistence and withdrawal decisions as described by both Spady

(1970, 1971) and Tinto (1975, 1986b, 1987, 1988, 1993). According to these conceptual models, a student enters the college experience with certain precollege characteristics that in turn interact with aspects of social and academic integration into the institution to produce positive or negative responses to the process of persistence or withdrawal (i.e., success or failure). It is those influences of both the precollege and college experiences described by the students that the analysis sought to explain.

Also, attention was given to those models that describe the impact of the environment on student growth and development and college environmental elements, such as peer group experiences, faculty interest, orientation programs, or the campus climate (Astin, 1985, 1993). Finally, it was expected that by having students describe factors related to success, descriptions of failures would emerge as well. If not, the researcher was careful to raise the topic, as well as to probe for beliefs concerning the failures of unsuccessful students. Therefore, theories of social and personal achievement striving formed another conceptual basis for comparison, making it important to recognize in the data the various attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs the participants held regarding attributions of self-failure as well as the failure of others (Weiner, 1994).

Presentation of the Data

Students cooperated fully and spontaneously, eager to share their stories with little need to refer to the sample questions to elicit information. Their descriptions, explanations, and interpretations resulted in 265 pages of typed, single-spaced transcripts. Excerpts from the interviews were preserved for use in illuminating the findings, supporting the interpretations, and proposing further interpretation. The data analysis consisted of a descriptive account of the information, organized and synthesized from the transcribed interviews. The findings satisfy the criteria of qualitative research to respect believability, transferability, and dependability and that the data and resulting analysis contribute to the existing body of research by (a) providing a deeper understanding of the variables relative to a successful educational outcome for developmental education students, (b) validating or challenging existing theory, and (c) generating new hypotheses.

Students provided a wide range of responses that could be divided into any number of categories, especially given that many descriptions contained overlapping categories of information. Also, along with descriptions of positive contributions to success, descriptions of negative factors emerged: roadblocks, difficulties, disappointments, and failures. These descriptions of negative factors provided as much insight into an understanding of the students' successful outcomes as did the positive. Guided by both the nature of the data and also its relationship to existing theory and research, results were organized into two broad categories: precollege and college characteristics, with subcategories under each.

Precollege characteristics included the influences of academic background, family background, and other influences on goal commitment. The influences of college characteristics included (a) making a transition, developing, and maturing; (b) having, nurturing, and retaining the goal; (c) decisions about involvement; (d) considerations about dropping out; (e) positive and negative influences of institutional aspects; (f) and additional roadblocks to success. A third category examined the influences of behaviors, attitudes, and opinions and included (a) effort, time management, and other study strategies; (b) attitudes toward the role of attendance and ability; (c) responses to personal failure; (d) opinions about the failures of others; (e) advice for other students; (f) and miscellaneous observations. Finally, one category of response, though treated somewhat separately in the analysis, actually emerged as a central theme, woven throughout the data and underlying many of the other factors the students identified as contributing to their success. That theme was labeled in the data analysis as "goal commitment," but emerges in the data as a variety of terms, such as, "desires," "wants," "goals," "determination," and "priorities."

To identify excerpts from the transcripts, a system of coding was developed identifying each respondent with a letter, each interview transcription with a page number, and each response with a separate number. To protect the confidentiality of

each student, proper names and other identifying information were deleted and indicated as such in brackets. In the interest of efficiency, identifying codes do not appear in the following summary of the outcomes.

Research Findings

The research findings are divided into the two major categories of precollege and college characteristics.

Precollege Characteristics

Before eliciting a student's perceptions of influences on success, each student was asked to provide a personal definition of academic success. Responses were quite similar. Students downplayed the focus on grades, emphasizing instead the learning process, personal satisfaction, doing one's best and maintaining balance. One typical example illustrates this growth in intellectual development: "It's more if you care about your education, not just whether I get an A, but actually if I got something out of the class."

Academic background. Studies show that students who enter college with certain precollege characteristics are more likely to be successful, to make a successful transition and continue to accomplish the academic and social integration necessary to persist and graduate. Strong secondary school achievement and academic aptitude have proven beneficial (Pascarella & Chapman, 1983; Pascarella, Terenzini & Wolf, 1986; Tinto, 1975, 1986b, 1988), an advantage lacking in the profile of students selected for this study. By all standard predictions, they should not have graduated, as many in their respective cohorts had not, including those with strong academic records as well as those without.

It is not possible with this study to determine the exact reasons for this difference. Yet, it is just this type of study with its access to the very descriptions and perceptions of the students that make it possible to identify some important keys to such differences. For example, these students articulated an acute awareness of the disadvantages they faced due to inadequate performances or poor backgrounds in high school. This awareness enabled them to make necessary changes in behavior to overcome that disadvantage. Whether it was eliminating extra-curricular involvements or applying more effort to make up for the past, the common element appears to have been recognition, even acceptance, of this handicap, plus a conscious decision to work with it, through it, and beyond it. As one student recalled, "I wasn't taking college courses that I needed to get into college, but nobody told me. It's almost like they expected me to know. No one said, 'Do you want to go to college?' Yet he added, "I can't blame anybody. I imagine if I would have searched a little harder I could have found someone to tell me what to do. But at that age, that wasn't what I was into." Another admitted, "In high school everything was more social. I really didn't pay much attention to grades. I knew when I got to college it was going to be a different story. I would have to turn it around, and ever since the first day I have just been working hard."

Goal commitment. The theme of the importance of a strong commitment to a goal was woven throughout much of the students' discussion about success. However inspired, this initial and continuing commitment to the goal of education was central to all measures of success: achievement, persistence, and attaining the degree. Tinto (1988) described his model of college persistence or withdrawal as a longitudinal one, a process whereby interactions of the student with the academic and social systems of the institution lead to a *continual* modification of goals and institutional commitments. It is this continual process described by students that determined persistence or withdrawal decisions:

> You have to deal with so much. I mean, you have to deal with people that you live with, with budgeting your time, with possible financial problems. Just getting through those 4 to 5 years and graduating—that is the goal.

Goal commitment and the influence of family background. What was striking was how important the influence of family emerged, both in relationship to students' initial commitments to the goal of education as well as to their continuing decisions to persist. When asked to talk about the influences on

their academic success, *every* student had something positive to say about the influences of family. "Family" came to mind first and with expressions of a deeply felt debt of gratitude: "All of my life I wanted to do something that would make my family proud."

Another common category of response described the indirect influence of role modeling that family members had on educational expectations. Students described pressures they placed upon themselves to live up to examples set by other members of the family. Siblings who had been successful in college provided an incentive to several students. Parents who had achieved some level of success, either through education or otherwise, were an inspiration to others. Members of the family who had overcome odds or had modeled a strong work ethic were also influential. For one student: "I had an older sister that went here for 2 years, and I think maybe she has a lot to do with it because she was successful. I think she acted more as a role model for me." Another talked about her older sister: "She has two kids, and she is still going to college. She is a single parent, and if she can do it, I can do it."

Others spoke simply of the importance of family support in general. "Family" was interpreted to mean mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, and anyone who substituted for these members. They talked about overt efforts of family members to influence their educational goals, and they also described covert, subtle, and unconscious influences emanating from the family. When speaking about family influences, they described a vast array of factors including love, support, encouragement, sacrifice, trust, attention, steadfastness, values, advice, and knowledge: "Family support is very important. You can't do anything on your own, and I pity anyone that doesn't have that backing or doesn't have someone to help them out."

Another variation on the theme was the interpretation of several students that their parents' expectations and support were coupled with a willingness to allow them a measure of independence in making decisions and choices. This perception of the advantage of a trusting relationship with family expressed by students is supported by the research. Tinto (1975) spoke of the importance of support from authority figures where democratic principles rather than authoritarian ones are practiced. Students voiced this same appreciation, suggesting this type of support facilitated success: "They never really put any pressure on me to get in, to have a major that they wanted. They always left that up to me, and they always trusted me."

Given the amount of attention these students devoted to the influence of family, it is safe to say that they perceived this influence as a major contributing factor to their success. And although the research findings on the influence of family background support Tinto's (1975) conclusion that college persisters are more likely to come from families whose parents are more educated, he added that other factors influence persistence, such as praise, advice, interest, and high expectations. Apparently for these students, these parental expectations, dynamics, and influences had an even more profound effect on their successful outcome than the research suggests, given that other variables for success were lacking in their backgrounds. It appears that some of the disadvantages posed by their inadequate high school backgrounds or lower socioeconomic status were offset by the more influential benefits derived from various forms of psychosocial support received from family—support that defied the predictions made for them by more traditional measures. It would appear also that factors that prove to have a positive influence on the development of a goal and the ongoing commitment to a college education were the most important—important enough to mitigate against the more negative factors.

Goal commitment as influenced by role modeling. Besides being influenced by role models within the family, several students perceived that they were expected to act as role-models for others: younger family members, older siblings, other members of their racial or ethnic groups, sorority sisters or fraternity brothers, future students of theirs, or youth in general. This perceived or self-imposed responsibility served a beneficial purpose by keeping them committed to their goal to be successful, lest they set a bad example or otherwise disappoint those who looked to them for inspiration and motivation. This perception helped strengthen their own intentions to persist,

and this expectation, whether real or imagined, served as a constant reminder that their college decisions and performances had implications well beyond themselves, helping them keep educational goals and commitment in the forefront. As one student described it, "I have nieces, little sisters, god children, and even older people who look up to me. I am living for me, but I am also helping other people live their dreams through me." Another stated, "I put in my yearbook that I want to be a positive role model to the youth of tomorrow. I still feel the same."

Goal commitment as an early influence. Further exemplifying the value of prior commitment, nearly one half of the students mentioned the fact that their decision to go to college, or to chose a career that required a college education, was made at a very early age, for some because of an influential experience or family tie; for others because, as one explained it, "I think I have always had that goal from when I was a kid." With respect to being committed to a particular goal, some talked about knowing from an early age what they wanted to do with their lives: "As early as I can remember I always wanted to be a teacher."

Goal commitment inspired by unusual circumstances. It made no difference from where the commitment emerged. Two students described unusual events in their background that had a strong impact on their educational goals, sharing interesting and moving stories about how their goals had developed. One student described a tortured existence in school as a child because of a facial abnormality that made him self-conscious and was the source of teasing, making it difficult for him to apply himself. It was not until he was 12, when he entered a children's hospital for the first of a series of operations and came into contact with children who had terminal illnesses such as cancer and leukemia, that he began to feel grateful, actually "lucky," and resolved to make the most of his life and every opportunity that it offered.

A nontraditional student close to the age of 40 who had earned a General Education Diploma (GED), explained his decision to go to college as the work of "divine intervention," describing a scene in the shower where something hit him so hard that he went down on his knees, and, thinking he was having a nervous breakdown, asked God for help. He described the result as an "overwhelming push" to quit his job and do whatever it would take to go to school because, as he explained, "There was no choice in the matter. The choice was no longer mine." In each of these cases, the genesis of the life goal—in one case, to make the most of everything, including an education; in the other, to go to school no matter what—was accompanied by the power of strong emotions. In each case the commitment preceded the college experience, paving the way, as for those moved by prior family influences, for the likelihood of a successful outcome.

Goal commitment reinforced by observing the negative behaviors of others. Several students described how observing the self-destructive behaviors and failures of other students had an influence on refining or reinforcing their own educational commitments. Upon entering college, they were able to secure their resolve to be successful and keep their focus on their goals by observing the negative behaviors of those around them and watching the results of those failures and bad habits. Negative behaviors were described as those that detracted from an academic focus (e.g., missing class, wasting time and money, acting "uncivilized," using drugs and alcohol, partying excessively). According to Tinto (1975) and Spady (1970), for students to persist, it is important that they be adequately integrated into both the social and academic domains of the institution. Too much emphasis on one domain can detract from the other, such as in the case of students who give too much time to social activities at the expense of academic ones. Students in this sample were able not only to avoid such behavior when it detracted from their academic goals but also actually to use what they observed to strengthen their own positive goals. Or as one student put it, "I use other people's weaknesses to fill my strengths." As another explained, "I don't want to fall into the gutter. I know too many people in that situation. They made a mistake that they can't get out of. I just don't want to do that."

Goals as means to an end. Finally, with regard to developing and nurturing a goal to graduate, several students described their commitment in terms of a strong desire to achieve something they really wanted, to secure a future career, or to get their money's worth out of the college experience.

For these students, it was not only helpful to be motivated by family expectations or the desire for personal and intellectual development but also to see their goal as a means to an end: "I know that I had to go to college in order to get a good job. So, I put my mind to it—I was going to finish, get a degree, get out of here, and find a job.

College Characteristics

In the Spady (1971) or Tinto (1975) model of a predictive theory of dropout, in addition to precollege characteristics, the process of integration into the social and academic systems of the institution influences persistence and withdrawal decisions. In this longitudinal process, college characteristics, both institutional and personal, begin to play an important role as students interact with various aspects of the environment in an attempt to adjust successfully.

Making a transition, developing, and maturing. At this final stage in their college experience, as successful students and graduating seniors, students were quite able to reflect on the progress they had made in their personal and academic growth and development. They were conscious of the importance of having made the necessary adjustments along the way—of having made successful transitions, particularly early in their college careers. These early periods of adjustment appear to have been crucial to their success. When students identified a time period in their description of a transition or critical period of change, they tended to talk about events, circumstances, or conditions in their freshman or sophomore years. Students spoke about various aspects of this process:

> My confidence has grown so much. My freshman and sophomore year I was so unsure of myself. So much happens in the time you are at school. It is 4 years, and each year you are growing, learning new things. You get used to handling situations.

Having, nurturing, and retaining the goal. As students made the appropriate adjustments, their goals became even clearer and their commitment to succeed was further strengthened. Making successful transitions, developing personally and academically, and moving steadily toward greater maturity went hand in hand with the process of having, nurturing, and retaining their goal commitment:

> Sometimes I'm like, "I can't do this anymore. I give up. I quit." Then something always pops in the back of my mind, "No, you can't quit—not quite yet. You still have a little more energy left. Keep going."

Decisions about involvement. An important part of integration into the social and academic systems of the institution includes involvement in extra-curricular activities (Astin, 1985; Tinto, 1975, 1993). Although several of the students became involved in institutional activities that seemed to help them develop skills and interests that supported their educational goals, some students believed they needed to limit their involvements, believing such activities took the focus off their main goal and threatened their ability to accomplish it. This meant limiting many extra-curricular activities, even those that could prove to have a positive effect on social and academic integration: "I did a lot of things here. Not as much as I wanted. I would have loved to be a part of so many organizations, but I just didn't have the grades or the time."

Considerations about leaving or dropping out. Most interesting were students' responses when asked if they had ever considered dropping out of college. For a group of students for whom this decision should have loomed large as a constant threat, given their predicted chances of success, the answer to this question for most was an emphatic "no." The majority of responses to this direct question could be summarized by one student who said, "I never even considered it."

Developmental education program support and the precollege summer experience. Various aspects of the institution can have either a positive or negative influence on the decisions of students to persist. As they reflected on the most important contributions to their success, these developmental education students described some aspects of their respective institutions as significant. However, there was one aspect in particular that received their praise—the developmental education programs of which they had been a part. Every student, without exception,

extended considerable credit for his or her success to features of the developmental education program in which he or she had participated. In particular, their descriptions emphasized the contributions of program personnel and the advantages of being part of a precollege summer experience.

Along with goal commitment, the Tinto model (1975) suggested that initial and continuing commitment to the institution is also a factor in promoting persistence. Interestingly, none of the students in this study described a particular affiliation, strong attachment, or exceptional fit to the institution from which they were graduating. What these students did voice, however, was a very strong affiliation, attachment, and appreciation for the developmental education programs through which they had matriculated, an affiliation which, according to Tinto's model, promotes both institutional and educational commitment. As students reflected on factors in their success, each of them, without exception, gave credit to the faculty, staff, and services of his or her developmental education program. They were particularly appreciative of the opportunity this kind of program had offered them, in some cases because it was the only key to enrollment in college, and in all cases, because it had prepared them so well for the entire college experience. This was particularly true of their opinion about the precollege summer programs that the majority of students had been required to attend: "I know that I have gained so many things from the summer program. I mean, one of the greatest things is adapting to college. I made friends before anybody else, and my advisors—they have been a great help."

The students were so convinced that this early experience had made the difference between success and failure that many wanted every student to have a chance to experience the same advantage. This strongly positive attitude of developmental education students toward their program status defies one of the more common myths that at-risk students feel stigmatized by their participation in developmental education programs (Boylan & Bonham, 1994b). At least with respect to these successful students, that generally held impression is far from the truth: "I really am grateful. If I was not admitted through this program I would not be here. I wouldn't even have been admitted."

It is safe to assume that this commitment to their program, one which had lasted in many respects throughout their entire college experience, had become for these students not simply an adequate substitute for institutional commitment but, in essence, a better one. In many ways it made up for any of the negative institutional aspects the students encountered. If they were not embraced by their department or by individual faculty, they knew they were embraced by their program. If they found no help from the institution, they found it from their program. And if they were not particularly proud, connected, or committed to their institution, they remained so in some fashion to their program throughout their college career. And for those students who attended a large institution, their program participation was the key connection that helped them find the necessary niche to "make a large place seem small," as suggested by Chickering (1969).

Students also talked about academic and personal support from their peers, and described involvements in a number of activities and organizations through which they had gained pleasure, experience, and skills. In the end analysis, none of these institutional conditions or factors received nearly the same emphasis as the benefits associated with all aspects of their developmental education programs. The resulting strong and early affiliation that students developed with program personnel, the advantages they gained from program components, plus the contacts they enjoyed with peer leaders and other students in the program led to the social and academic integration validated by research as essential to persistence and success. As one student characterized the relationship, "I don't know about the learning skills centers on other campuses, but here it is really a family."

Lack of faculty support. All of the participating students wanted to describe negative experiences. A common complaint had to do with faculty. Although all these students had nothing but positive comments about faculty with whom they came into contact through their developmental education programs, it was not necessarily how they described their experience with other faculty. For every student who had some praise for concerned faculty, there was another student—or

even the same student—who complained about lack of faculty support, and especially a lack of interest in student success. Poor advising from faculty, at least poor compared to the advising they experienced from developmental education program personnel, was another specific complaint. Astin (1993) emphasized the importance of faculty involvement in student success and satisfaction. For these students, it appears that the faculty interaction they experienced through their developmental education program involvement made up for any disappointing experiences they may have had with other faculty.

Difficulties for students from underrepresented populations. The most compelling descriptions of negative aspects of the institution came from students whose social identiy placed them in the minority on their campuses. With the exception of the Asian student who described language and test taking difficulties, the seven African Americans and one Latino described having to overcome racial prejudices, negative attitudes, and low expectations regarding their potential for success. Negative attitudes and behaviors came from faculty, staff, administrators, other students, and the institution's local communities. Interestingly, students' remarks emerged spontaneously, without any questions or reference in the interview concerning their minority status or its impact on their success. Just as interesting was the manner in which these students described their experiences. Though not without passion, their remarks were made with an objectivity and maturity that underscored their success in dealing with these experiences. This finding is consistent with those studies measuring noncognitive predictors by race in which those minority students who scored highest on self-confidence and their ability to understand and deal with racism—regular admits as well as developmental education students—were most likely to be successful (Bandolos & Sedlacek, 1989; O'Callaghan & Brant, 1990; White & Sedlacek, 1986).

Additional roadblocks to success. Lack of faculty involvement, prejudice, and poor entering skills or backgrounds were not the only roadblocks to success. There were many others. As one respondent put it so succinctly, "You have to deal with so much." The three areas that received the most attention had to do with financial and personal problems and with lack of interest. Not unlike other students, this group had to cope with events and circumstances that were not in their control. Untimely deaths of family members, illnesses, and a variety of personal problems arose to distract them from their academic focus. Unlike other students, however, these events and circumstances challenged the already tenuous hold these students held on their likelihood of success. One more problem to solve, one more hurdle to clear, one more thing to think about could prove overwhelming. As one respondent described the situation, "You wind up struggling the whole way through." In addition, the majority of these students, unlike some of their peers, were compelled to deal with financial issues. Most had the demands of one or two jobs to juggle along with their academic challenges, while others had to consider the burden of carrying financial aid loans into the future, whether they were successful or not.

In addition to these uncontrollable, fairly common obstacles, there were several responses in which students described lack of interest in a particular subject or a required class as a difficult academic challenge. In these cases, it was the disinterest more than the material that caused them to falter or fail. On first glance, this problem seems to be out of character for students whose commitment kept them adequately focused on what they needed to accomplish. After all, it could be argued that, unlike developing an illness, developing an interest in a class is within one's control, yet students described the experience as though they had no power to correct it. And in one major respect that was true, since these were, in all cases, courses that they were compelled to take for one reason or another. For several, lack of interest in a particular subject or a required class proved a distinctive roadblock to success.

Behaviors, Attitudes, and Opinions

A major portion of the students' perceptions about success factors included descriptions concerning behaviors, attitudes, and opinions. Students described behaviors and attitudes with respect to study habits, commented on the role of class attendance, explained their opinions regarding

the role of ability, and elaborated on stories about failure—theirs and others.

Effort, time management, and other study strategies. When it came to identifying factors that contributed to their success, the students talked about more than just abstract concepts like goals and commitments. They also described specific behaviors that they believed were important to their success. They especially described examples of effort, hard work, and a variety of other learning and study strategies. Each seemed to have at least one strategy believed to be particularly important, whether that was studying in a quiet place, taking good notes, being a good listener, making a schedule and sticking to it, reading every class assignment, or studying as though preparing for an essay test. The students gave credit to their developmental education programs for having taught them many of these strategies and behaviors. They described themselves as persistent, organized, and disciplined. They talked about relaxing, planning, and concentrating. One student described a strategy he used to build and maintain interest when he entered a classroom. Mostly, they talked about applying hard work and effort, about striving to do their best, and about never giving up, because as one student concluded, "It is hard. I mean it is not a piece of cake."

Other attitudes and behaviors. Besides effort and hard work, students talked about the value of having a positive attitude, being determined, and making conscious choices. These attributes contributed to their ability to make academic goals their highest priority, which in turn supported and nurtured the most important factors: the commitment to persist and the intention to succeed. With academic achievement established as the highest priority, students were able to make appropriate choices on a day-to-day basis and avoid behaviors that might sabotage their primary goal. Setting priorities and making conscious choices demonstrated the level of responsibility they had assumed toward their education and their ability to take an active rather than a passive role in the learning process. Setting priorities, taking responsibility, and being self-directed learners were behaviors that set them apart from their less successful peers and also helped them to avoid negative peer influences and other distractions and seductions.

Attitudes about the role of attendance. If the topic did not emerge spontaneously, the students were each asked to comment on the role of class attendance in success. Their reactions were strong, their position clear: Without exception, the students regarded class attendance to be one of the most important factors in academic success—for themselves as well as for others. And, they backed their belief with action. For some, going to class meant getting one's money's worth out of college. For everyone, attendance at class was the best way to learn, to gain knowledge, to know what was expected, and to stay on top of matters. Like monitoring their study behaviors and prioritizing their activities, class attendance was another example of how these students took charge of their own learning, functioning as active rather than passive learners.

Attitudes about the role of ability. Unlike study habits and class attendance behaviors, ability is considered an innate talent or skill. In Weiner's (1994) attribution theory of achievement motivation, perceptions of the causality of an event play a significant role in determining motivation, and by extension, performance and achievement. According to the theory, an attribute, such as ability, is assigned a locus of dimension either internal or external and a choice within two causal properties: (a) controllable or uncontrollable and (b) stable or unstable. For example, ability has an internal locus of dimension, emerging from within, and is both uncontrollable (i.e., out of one's hands) and stable (unchanging). An opposing attribute, effort, also has an internal locus of dimension, but is controllable and unstable. It is easy to see that motivation to achieve can be stifled when one attributes failure to lack of ability rather than to lack of effort. Causal attributes such as hard work, effort, adequate preparation, understanding, and knowledge will increase motivation to achieve. On the other hand, causal attributes such as luck, bad teachers, unfair tests, and poor ability tend to have a detrimental effect on achievement motivation.

In order to learn how these students perceived the role of ability in academic success, especially given that it was measures of ability that had marked them as high-risk students, all students were asked to comment on the role of ability. Not surprisingly, students minimized the role of ability, particularly compared to the influence of other

factors such as hard work and effort. They regarded ability as an advantage or a strength, but it was effort as manifested through hard work that they believed essential to success, with or without ability. As one student concluded, "I don't think we know our abilities."

Responses to personal failure. Several students directly addressed the role of failure in their college success: their reactions to it, how it influenced their attitudes and behaviors, how they dealt with it, the importance to their ongoing growth, and its impact on their goals and commitments. The students' perspectives on the value of effort over ability was confirmed by their comments about failure, their own as well as others. Many of the students talked about using failure to promote success, of learning from their mistakes, of engaging in behaviors that showed they were in the habit of viewing failure as something controllable and situational—if not in the short run (after all, some faculty could behave like "jerks"), at least in the long term ("I'll take the class over"). When it came to failure, two notions emerged consistently: (a) failure was a learning experience, and (b) the antidote to failure was effort. As one student explained it, "F doesn't stand for failure, it stands for feedback. This means I need to switch gears." Students did not blame others for their failures, and when they did blame themselves, it was not in a way that destroyed their self-esteem: "You can't pick a failure to define your worthiness to go on. Failure doesn't define who you are. It can make you sit up and smell the coffee, though."

Responses to failures of other students. Students expressed opinions about the behaviors and motivations of students who had not been successful and had either failed or dropped out. When students commented on the failure of others, their remarks echoed the same themes they had used to describe success, only in reverse. They viewed the failures they had witnessed in others as the result of a lack of commitment and self-direction; an unwillingness to make academic success a priority; and a lack of concern, drive, or ambition concerning educational goals. They saw failed students as being followers instead of leaders, being passive rather than active, making poor choices or no choices, and engaging in self-defeating behaviors. In short, they believed that students failed or dropped out because of the absence of a strong desire, commitment or intention to succeed. In no way did they see these failures as having to do with a lack of ability. It was effort that made the difference—what you did, not what you are. As one respondent put it, dropouts and failures did not *fail* out of college, they "*fell* out."

Advice to Other Students: The Importance of Commitment and Effort

Strength of commitment and the importance of a goal were such strong themes in students' descriptions of the college experience, that most gave these factors top priority—along with hard work—when asked what advice they would give new students about achieving success. A visual model of Tinto's (1975) conceptual schema for dropout from college shows "goal commitment" both at the beginning of the integration process into the college experience and at the end of the process (p. 95). In other words, given the longitudinal nature of the process, if a student is expected to persist and succeed, the commitment to the goal of success must be retained and reinforced throughout the entire college experience, right up to the end. It appears that students who participated in this study would agree. Strength of commitment or the importance of goals was such a strong theme in students' descriptions of the successful college experience that they returned to it over and over again, essentially concluding with it when asked what advice they had for other students in college. Their advice urged other students to "Figure out why you are here;" "Discover what you want to do and do it;" "Find your goal and set it;" "Stay focused."

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study have implications for program development and for policies and procedures dealing with the admission and support of students at risk in postsecondary settings.

Focus of Goal Commitment

Policy makers should consider goal commitment in establishing admissions practices and in creating programs to serve developmental education students. The results of this study suggest that having a strong commitment to the goal of education

may be the best predictor of success for students for whom the variables commonly used to determine success indicate otherwise. Understanding how students at risk compare and contrast with regularly admitted students with respect to factors that promote success can help institutions who admit on established criteria to identify those students with the greatest possibility for success and to develop practices that aid in that determination. For example, a questionnaire, or better yet a personal interview conducted with the involvement of the developmental educator, can help assess a student's readiness for the college experience with respect to the intention to complete an education. Instead of denying students an opportunity because of test scores and other precollege criteria, or worse yet, admitting students at risk but engaging in practices and implementing policies that carry the expectation of failure, faculty and administrators can embrace these students as simply different, not deficient. In an open-admission setting, assessment of goal commitment can help developmental educators target students whose chances for success are more threatened by inadequate goal identification and development and develop interventions that make students more aware of the importance of having goals for setting priorities and resisting the pitfalls inherent in the college experience.

This study also suggests that there is a strong link between goal commitment and the influence of family background. By being more conscious of the influence and expectations of the family on students' expectations for themselves, educators can develop programs and sources of support that create "substitutes for family" for those students missing that vital connection or important dynamic, or otherwise find ways to develop and nurture the important factor of goal commitment. There is some evidence that commitment can be taught through involvement (Astin, 1984, 1993). Therefore, a pedagogy that actively involves the student (i.e., requires energy) and carries high expectations (i.e., increases time-on-task) is more likely to develop goal commitment than one that fosters or tolerates student passivity. Also, knowing that commitment to a goal at an early age has a powerful influence on later success may be used to help students explore their early interests as a way of identifying a major or future career choice. Students need to be informed about their increased career options and enhanced freedom of choice as a result of a college education. This knowledge helps students recognize the realities of how an educational goal can be a means to a particular end. Career courses, help with choosing majors, and other career development programs can help to strengthen the factor of goal development.

Emphasis on Self-Awareness and Behavioral Change

Programs and the faculty who implement them need to promote a realistic approach to developing goals through fostering self-awareness and appropriate behavioral changes. The successful students interviewed for this study described an awareness of their inadequate prior academic histories and an ability to come to terms with that reality. This recognition helped them to make the necessary changes in their attitudes or behaviors to overcome the past and manage successfully the demands of college. In addition, their descriptions illustrated an ability to engage in productive self-talk. This habit appeared to be effective in helping them overcome difficulties, solve problems, and make appropriate decisions. The findings suggest that students were able to make a successful transition not only by making up for their past educational deficits in the basic skills but also by becoming active rather than passive learners. Developmental education students often do not understand the difference and continue to wait for something to happen, for someone else to affect their performance, continuing to attribute their failures as well as any successes to external causes. Some never learn the value and dynamics of becoming self-directed; others learn it when it is too late. Programs can develop interventions that not only prepare students in the basic skills areas but also raise their level of consciousness concerning attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors with respect to achievement, particularly achievement in the new college environment.

Make Use of Positive Peer Influence

Many of the important skills and behaviors necessary for success in the college environment can be learned from other students, and in some

cases, more powerfully than from professional educators. The successful students interviewed for this study expressed a strong inclination to share their knowledge and expertise to help others to act as role models. Besides expressing the desire to be future role models, the responsibility they already felt in that regard, and their expressed intentions to give something back, respondents talked a good deal about how they themselves had learned from other students—even when what they observed was negative. The lessons they had to share when asked specifically about advice for other students is testimony to their insights and the ability to express them in powerful and colorful language. It is easy to imagine the powerful effect their messages can have on other students.

Chickering (1969) theorized that the main focus of student development in college centers on the influence of peers. It is recommended that programs make the best possible use of this influence as a powerful resource. Literature on effectiveness of students who deliver educational services to their peers suggests that peer helpers can have a powerful impact when dealing with many developmental issues. Peers have been shown to be effective as study skills counselors, tutors, and personal counselors. A number of studies (Barron & Hetherton, 1981; Brown & Meyers, 1975; Ender, 1984; Frisz & Lane, 1987) have revealed that undergraduate students trained as paraprofessionals to deliver educational services to their peers can have an equal or greater impact on their students than professionals. In addition, trained peer helpers are able to provide a variety of educational services. The roles they can play effectively and skillfully run the gamut from orientation and tutoring to counseling and mentoring. Trained peers may function as in-class tutors, helping to manage an educational setting that requires an individualized, self-paced, competency-based approach. They may perform roles as lab assistants, study skills counselors, resident assistants, Supplemental Instruction leaders, and workshop leaders. All of these are useful roles for developmental educators to incorporate into their programs.

The use of paraprofessionals not only intentionally maximizes the developmental impact that peers have on each other but also releases professional practitioners to provide the services commensurate with their higher level of education and skills. Student helpers serve not only as challengers and supporters in the developmental process, but also as role models for others. The desired outcome can be fostered by creating an environment in which students are able to observe and interact with those who are effectively modeling the behaviors, characteristics, and values that the environment wishes to promote. In addition, the dynamics of the peer relationships established through these helping roles have a reciprocal positive impact on the student who is delivering the service (Ender & Carranza, 1991). Programs that take advantage of this powerful relationship by recruiting, selecting and training students to work with their peers will not only better serve those students who need help, but will affect the growth of the paraprofessional as well. The already successful student will become more so, while, as an additional benefit, programs can make use of a cost-effective resource and counter the effects of negative peer pressure that influence so many college students from the start.

Development of Early Interventions

Negative peer pressure is not the only influence affecting students early in their transition to college. The descriptions of students interviewed for this study validated the universally-accepted belief that the transitions and the majority of adjustments to the college experience are faced during the freshman year (Pascarella, Terenzini & Wolfe, 1986; Tinto, 1988). Most programs for developmental education students recognize this need for early intervention and therefore place a great deal of emphasis on programs to meet entry-level needs (e.g., basic skills courses, strategies for study, career exploration). Not all programs, however, take advantage of a prime time for providing early intervention—the summer prior to matriculation. The value of a precollege program to the success of the students in this study was well documented by their many comments, stories, and praise of such programming. In fact, the students themselves recommended a precollege summer experience, not only for high-risk students but for all students, particularly because of the advantages they perceived the summer program afforded them during those most difficult early months and years.

The early period of their college experience was also the time when respondents questioned goals, experienced performance crises, considered transferring, or otherwise dealt with making adjustments. These adjustments were the result of both academic and emotional struggles. developmental education programs that confront both of these domains in an effort to treat the whole student have the best chance of helping students weather these most difficult periods of adjustment—as many of the respondents so eloquently confirmed with their many stories of support from their program faculty, advisors, and staff. Even small efforts can have a positive result, such as restricting students from involvement during the freshman year from activities that detract from an academic focus (e.g., social fraternities and sororities) and guiding them into activities that foster positive development (e.g., study groups and work-study programs).

Reflection on Experiences Characterized as Failure

Courses and workshops that teach study strategies are beneficial for many developmental education students. However, for students actually to apply such strategies, they must have deeper understanding of themselves in relationship to the learning process and specific tasks that will engage them in behaviors particular to each strategy. These findings suggest that timing can be important. Students spoke of learning some of their most important lessons as a result of failure. Reintroducing these strategies in a different or more intensive format after the first semester of grades or when students receive their first feedback about their college performance may be the best time to reach students on a more meaningful level. This is also a good time to analyze the relationship of their attendance record to their academic performance and to share insights about the relationship of effort to performance. Writing about the learning process and keeping a journal that has students tracking their progress as learners is another effective way to integrate learning strategies as well as writing and critical thinking skills into students' actual academic tasks and develop the self awareness and insights essential to growth.

Recommendations for Further Study

The results of this study led to the following recommendations related to future research:

1. Understand and validate the similarities and differences between traditional and developmental education students' factors in success. The results of this study indicate that there are many similarities between developmental education students and traditionally-admitted students when it comes to managing the college experience successfully. But the study also suggests some differences. Further study is recommended to isolate and validate those similarities and differences. For example, a large body of research exits for the general student population that validates Tinto's (1975) model of student dropout, Astin's (1993) theory of the impact of the college environment, and various other college impact theories (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). More of these same studies need to be conducted with populations of developmental education students, not only to make comparisons with existing research but also to provide a better understanding of the high-risk student.

2. Understand and validate the influence of goal commitment for developmental education students. The findings suggest that goal commitment is essential, possibly sufficient, to the success of developmental education students. Further studies need to be conducted that validate the power of goal commitment over the influence of other factors for the developmental education student, and studies are also needed to compare successful developmental education students with those who were not successful. Also, further study is needed to establish the link between participation in developmental education programs and institutional commitment and also to determine the relationship between program participation, or the lack of it, and the factor of goal commitment. Finally, studies are needed to determine to what extent goal commitment alone may be sufficient to sustain persistence for students at risk.

3. Understand and capitalize on the many benefits of providing educational opportunity. The findings of this study support the conclusion that successful students who participate in support programs express a high level of satisfaction with

their college experience. They appreciate both the opportunity provided for them by the developmental education program and also the people associated with their program experiences. It would be of value to know if a significant difference exists between developmental education program students and other students with respect to levels of satisfaction with the college experience and in particular the level of appreciation for the achievement of success. If developmental education program participants have a greater appreciation of their academic success, how much does this difference has to do with the support received from developmental education program? It would also be valuable to educators and administrators alike to know if this perceived greater level of satisfaction and appreciation has a direct relationship to students' aspirations to help others or, in some fashion, give something back to society. If so, the advantages to providing opportunities to students at risk carry benefits that go far beyond the obvious.

Conclusions

The most important factor described by students as significant to their academic success was the attribute of commitment. Most often referred to as goals, commitment was also discussed in terms of desires, determination, and priorities. Commitment had to do with the intention to get a college education, the intention to be successful in the college experience. Student perceived intention to be the underlying factor in their success, and it was the central theme of their message. Commitment played a role in descriptions of success regardless of whether students were talking about features of their precollege experience or of the college experience. Furthermore, commitment served to determine their behaviors, shape their attitudes, and guide their opinions. For these students, the theme of goal commitment provided the framework for everything else that proved influential in their success. Indeed, it is goal commitment that explains why this group of students, despite being identified as high risk, had not even seriously considered voluntarily leaving college. Just as goal commitment was the very source of inspiration; it too was inspired by other factors. Those most commonly described were the influence of family, the desire to be a role model for others, the desire to follow an early dream, and the desire to reap the benefits of a college education. Regardless of its source, it was this factor of commitment that found expression as both a pervasive and essential element in the outcome under discussion—their academic success—which, in turn, had led to their imminent graduation.

The second important influence that found expression in the descriptions of every respondent was the importance of family to success, especially when it came to inspiring the basic element of commitment. Inspiration came in many forms: through example, expectation, support, love, and encouragement. Regardless of the family's socioeconomic status, which was a precollege contribution to success, the influence of family members shaped both the student's initial commitment to the goal of a college education as well as ongoing decisions to persist.

The support from the institution's developmental education program was the third major influence described as important by every respondent. Noteworthy also were three additional observations about the developmental support: (a) every student required to attend a summer precollege program found the experience invaluable to continued success, (b), there was no significant expression of negativity regarding participation in or association with a support program, and, to the contrary, (c), there was significant expression of appreciation—for the services as well as for the personal connections provided by the developmental education program. Furthermore, this appreciation and sense of belonging or connection lasted throughout the college experience.

Finally, the theme of effort and hard work emerged as another key to success. Effort went hand in hand with commitment as each reinforced the other. In the opinion of each student, ability was no substitute for effort. Also, in the view of each, failure was usually a result of inadequate or insufficient effort. Strategies that often had been learned through their involvement in the developmental education program were applications of various types of effort. In addition, class attendance was regarded as a particular form of effort and viewed as essential to successful academic performance.

There were two additional findings that applied to all students: (a) every student defined academic success in terms of the quality of one's intellectual growth and development rather than as a quantity that could be measured in terms of grades, (b) every student expressed a commitment to contribute something on behalf of others. Most were preparing for a career in one of the helping professions; many were already engaged in some activity that gave them an opportunity to make a positive difference.

One finding emerged with respect to every non-White student. Those students who represented a minority on their respective campuses related examples of discrimination, both subtle and not so subtle. With respect to their academic achievements, discrimination took the form of prejudice and stereotyping of the student's ability. This form of prejudice, which conveyed an expectation of failure or low achievement, was one that students viewed as inevitable. As one student put it, he often felt treated like "a statistic waiting to happen." Students' descriptions of this treatment from faculty, both in and out of the classroom—as well as from students, staff, administrators, and the community—revealed their capacity to handle such treatment. As hurtful and frustrating as the circumstances were, these students displayed a capacity for forgiveness, patience, and determination in the very face of discrimination. For these students, success was linked to their measure of self-confidence and ability to understand and deal with racism. This finding is supported by the literature on developmental education students of color. Significantly, all of the students with a minority status on their campus held important positions of leadership and were intentionally engaged in activities related to service to others.

In some fashion, every responding student described the importance of making conscious choices, setting priorities, avoiding negative influences, monitoring performance, remaining self-confident, and being self-directed, determined, persistent, and positive. They referred to these same qualities when describing how they overcame roadblocks and dealt with failures. They pointed to the absence of such qualities in attempting to explain the lack of success of others. And they returned to them when asked what advice they might have for other students. Mostly they referred to the importance of having a goal and working hard—the two factors that served to promote or define all others en route to success and graduation.

In conclusion, the goal that students continuously referred to appeared to be the single most important factor in their success. The influences that gave rise to that goal and helped maintain and nurture it throughout the college experience were also important factors in success. The most significant of those influences appeared to be the relationship with family members and the relationship with their program of developmental education, a relationship that became an extension or substitution for family.

A major factor in Tinto's (1975, 1987, 1993) model of persistence and withdrawal, the major theory that seems to relate to this study, is goal commitment. The significance to this study of the other factors in Tinto's model is difficult to determine. There is a strong suggestion from the data, for example, that students' connection with the people and services in their developmental education program served as the major link with the institution, thereby serving to help students develop and maintain the other important commitment in Tinto's model, institutional commitment. This hypothesis would need further investigation. As for integration into the social and academic systems of the institution, it would appear that, once again, students' program participation had a hand in fostering that integration. Given their lower status on variables such as academic background, test score, and certain family background characteristics—the precollege characteristics—their social and academic integration would be expected to be more problematic. Whether or not their descriptions of the college experience as presented in this data support that contention does not matter. For these 16 students, what they did have—a strong enough desire to make it—was sufficient to overcome all other odds. And although studies support the importance of all the factors in Tinto's (1988) model, he himself concluded:

> But some students will "stick it out" even under the most severe conditions whereas others will withdraw even under minimal stress. The unavoidable fact is that some

students are unwilling to put up with the stresses of transition because they are not sufficiently committed either to the goals of education and/or to the institution in which entry is first made. Others, however, are so committed to those goals that they will do virtually anything to persist. (pp. 444-445)

According to their own descriptions, explanations, perceptions, and interpretations, these students could not have agreed more. It is clear from the stories of the students in this study that what they brought to the college experience was a goal and a dream. What the institution contributed was an opportunity to move the goal from a dream to a reality. What their support program of developmental education did was create the atmosphere for learning to occur. What is also clear from this study is the power and value of learning about that experience directly from those who tell it best—the students themselves.

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After the Program Ends: A Follow-Up Study With Generation 1.5 Students Who Participated in an English Support Learning Community

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Immigrant and refugee students with native languages other than English may face barriers to university education in the United States. In addition to language and literacy concerns, Generation 1.5 students usually face other challenges: economic difficulties, discrimination, first-generation college student experiences, and unrealistic parental expectations. Access programs for Generation 1.5 students must address more than language. This chapter presents results of qualitative follow-up interviews with three students who completed an access program called Commanding English. Findings indicate that students struggled with choosing majors, financing their educations, and coping with diversity; yet, they experienced academic and social support through the program.

In a recent monograph published by the Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy (CRDEUL), Duranczyk (2004) wrote about the importance of access and retention in higher education:

> Access and retention in higher education continue to be cornerstones for the democratization of the United States and achieving a more equitable world. In an increasingly technological world with a globalized economy, a primary role of higher education must continue to be the struggle to create a one-to-one correspondence between access and retention. (p. 1)

Thus, higher education should be available to all, and those who start upon the path of higher education should be supported to completion.

However, for many students there are barriers to success. For example, financial barriers often contribute both to a student's entry into college as well as to the ability to finish a baccalaureate degree (Saunders & Schuh, 2004). Furthermore, once students arrive at the university, they may be less prepared for what is expected of them, and may "lack some of the academic skills and experiences that are often associated with academic success in college" (Moore, 2004). Moore observed that these "at-risk" students are increasingly common at universities: "35% of the students who in 2000 entered 2- and 4-year public and private institutions in the United States took at least 1 year of remedial courses" (p. 115). Finances and lack of preparation are two key factors that influence students' persistence at the university. The current 5-year graduation rate at the University of Minnesota is 53%, as reported by Wambach and Brothen (2004, p. 9).

Some students face an additional challenge to their success at the university—English language competency. Certainly, not every multilingual student will find language to be a barrier to success at the university; indeed, many international

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students who come from their home countries with a high degree of literacy will quickly adapt to the English environment of higher education in the U.S. However, immigrant and refugee students may have a different experience. Often called Generation 1.5 students (Harklau, Losey, & Seigal, 1999) because they have experienced all or part of their schooling in a culture different from their home culture, these students come to the university with a variety of educational experiences. Swanson (2004) explained that Generation 1.5 students have different needs due to interruptions in schooling. In fact, some students may have had no formal education at all. Swanson drew additional comparisons between international students and immigrant and refugee students:

> Where international students attended secondary school surrounded by their home languages and cultures, immigrants have been pushed to meet high school standards set by state boards of education with native-born students in mind. International students transfer good, solid academic knowledge from one language to another, while some immigrant students may not have complete mastery of the material they studied in high school. (p. 74)

As a result, immigrant and refugee students come to the university with different needs and different issues that support or hinder their persistence.

Access programs for immigrant and refugee students with language needs are critical to student success. This chapter draws on the experiences of three students in the Commanding English Program at the University of Minnesota. The Commanding English program (CE) is an access point for Generation 1.5 students, and the program has been created around best practices in both English language instruction and developmental education (Christensen, Fitzpatrick, Murie, & Zhang, 2005).

Context

The CE program at the University of Minnesota is an innovative language education program for immigrant and refugee students. For the most part, CE students graduated from U.S. high schools. As a result, their language needs are not the same as those of typical international students who may have developed strong literacy skills in their native language (Christensen et al., 2005).

Most university-based English language programs target international students. Many international students may intend to spend one semester or year at a U.S. university; some may intend to complete a degree, either undergraduate or graduate. Generally, international students in English language programs have already developed the academic literacy skills needed for college-level coursework; however, they may need some additional language support. As a result, typical ESL-style programs offer pre-college courses (non-credit-bearing) that focus on various elements of language learning: listening and speaking, reading, writing, and grammar. Such language courses are usually not contextualized in a discipline. For example, an ESL reading class may use passages from a range of disciplines or a selection of readings from a precollege reader. A grammar class is likely to focus on learning the rules of English grammar in isolation (i.e., not directly connected with academic writing completed in the context of actual coursework). The overall goal of these language courses is to prepare students for university coursework. After completing a set number of levels, a student is then allowed to take credit-bearing university courses. In terms of advising, in typical university ESL programs for international students, advising is focused primarily on attending to students' visa issues rather than to choosing majors, sequencing course registration, or planning for transfer to another program within the university. In fact, some international students may take few, if any, courses outside of an ESL program, so long-term advising goals may not make sense.

Generation 1.5 students have different language needs from the students typical of the university language programs previously described. Generation 1.5 students bring a diversity of language and literacy experiences to college. Some Generation 1.5 students may have had interruptions in their education; others may have had limited education before coming to the United States. Some Generation 1.5 students may have experienced their first formal education beginning in 10th grade because the U.S. educational system often places

students according to age rather than schooling experience. Many Generation 1.5 students may have begun their education in the United States knowing little, if any, English. In the few, short years they had before entering college, Generation 1.5 students had to catch up in both content and language. Furthermore, as Swales (1990) observed, college-level language is not the same as daily-life English: discourse patterns, vocabulary, and sentence structures are all different. This problem of different registers of English may be compounded for students who have not been able to maintain a high level of literacy in their home language because they had to shift to English for educational purposes. Generation 1.5 students may be able to develop oral fluency in English quickly; however, developing academic literacy in English takes much more time (Collier, 1995; Cummins, 1982).

Although Generation 1.5 students may enter college with a need for continued language and literacy support, the typical ESL programs previously described are often not the best fit. Generation 1.5 students have typically completed English language support classes in middle school or high school, and they may feel discouraged to find themselves "in ESL again." Additionally, typical ESL programs do not have the focus on acquiring academic literacy that Generation 1.5 students need. These factors were taken into consideration when the Commanding English program was designed.

Thus, while most university-based English language programs have a goal of helping students acquire language, the CE program helps students acquire academic literacy. That is, CE students generally are quite proficient at the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills required to graduate from high school and participate in the day-to-day activities of life in the United States. What they need to acquire is the academic language and familiarity with the process of being a college student *in English*.

Students are selected for the CE program through a competitive application process. All University of Minnesota undergraduate applicants are considered for CE if they have lived in the United States for fewer than 8 years and their scores on the verbal part of the ACT are too low for admission. Students are then asked to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB), and they are admitted to CE based on these test scores.

The CE program is a year-long program for first-year students. The CE program is housed in the General College (GC) at the University of Minnesota, and CE takes a developmental approach to building language and literacy into the curriculum. Many CE courses are taught by instructors who have specialized training in English language teaching. Some courses are taught by General College instructors; these courses are paired with language support courses taught by CE instructors.

CE has been designed to embed language learning into the content of the freshman year. Students take courses typical of a first-year load. A fall semester in CE may include such courses as basic writing, sociology or biology or general art, and speech. These courses would be accompanied by credit-bearing adjunct courses, such as a grammar workshop paired with the writing course and a reading course paired with the anthropology course. Such a schedule amounts to 13 university credits, all of which count for graduation requirements. It must be noted, however, that although the reading and grammar courses count for graduation requirements, they do not meet any university general education requirements. Rather, they simply count toward the student's electives.

In the spring, the course load increases. Students take research writing which is focused on a specific area of interest, such as human rights, biomedical ethics, or life history writing. They also take immigration literature and cultural anthropology, general art, or human anatomy, as well as a reading course to accompany the general art, sociology, or human anatomy courses. Some students may be authorized to take a math course outside of the CE program. This semester amounts to approximately 15 university-level credits that count toward graduation requirements.

At the end of the freshman year, if students have successfully completed the CE program, they are then fully admitted to the University of Minnesota. Most students stay within the General College (GC) for at least the fall term of their sophomore year;

some stay in GC until their junior year. Very few students transfer directly to other programs from CE.

More formally, the CE program keeps track of retention and graduation data for former students, which is collected roughly every 2 years by the Office of Research and Evaluation in the General College. In looking at the CE retention data, students are often compared with other GC students, and CE students consistently show higher retention rates than GC students of the same cohort (Christensen et al., 2005). Additionally, recent retention and graduation data shows that

> Five or six years out, 49% to 65% of the students who began in Commanding English have either graduated or are in good standing at the University. These statistics are well above the average for the college, in spite of the fact that CE students are studying in a second or third language, without many of the resources that native-born U.S. students have. (p. 178)

Although the statistics illustrate student success, they do not reveal the individual voices of the CE student experience.

Seeking Understanding

The goal of the research presented here is to understand the experience of Commanding English students after they exit the program. Anecdotally, we have observed that students have academic struggles in their sophomore year, and we want to make sure that our program has done everything we can to prepare students for coursework outside of Commanding English and General College. Because most students stay in the General College for part of their sophomore year, we have some data that shows that CE students' grade point averages drop after CE. However, we do not know why this occurs.

Therefore, this research project attempted to describe the experiences of students after they leave CE in order to understand CE students' perspectives of the university and how CE served as an access point to the university. With this overall goal in mind, other research questions included the following:

1. What do CE students major in?

2. What classes do they take?

3. Do they feel prepared for classes outside of CE and General College?

4. What are CE students' experiences with diversity at the University of Minnesota?

5. After they complete the CE program, do they still have the idealistic vision of being a doctor, as many of our students tell us the first week of classes?

These were all guiding questions I had in mind as I set out to understand the experience of former Commanding English students.

Method

The goal of this research project was to enhance the understanding of former CE students; therefore, a qualitative approach was used. More specifically, this study used an ethnographic tracer approach—a qualitative follow-up with former participants in a program to discover what the effects of the program have been. Tracer methodology has long been used in the sciences to study the effects of an intervention, such as a vitamin or mineral, over time (Kamen, 1957). This technique has been adapted in longitudinal studies in the social sciences, although it is not typically referred to as an ethnographic tracer study. An example of an ethnographic tracer study is Chiseri-Strater's (1991) follow-up of two students in a composition course and their use of academic discourse in subsequent university courses.

Additionally, this study involves participant observation in that I, as a researcher, also have a significant role in the CE program. That is, for the past 3 years, I have been a graduate instructor in the CE program. I teach writing and reading courses, usually two courses in some combination per semester.

I chose to target students who were in the CE program 3 years ago; these are the students who began at the university at the same time I did.

Students who are currently juniors have had enough coursework outside of CE to have some perspective on the program. Although graduating seniors often come back to tell us they are graduating, they are already looking ahead in such a way that their time in the program is too distant to provide many insights. Juniors, however, are in a perfect position to make the connections with their CE past as they also look forward to the work world and possibly graduate school.

I contacted 20 students individually by e-mail to invite them to participate in the study. Because the University of Minnesota uses e-mail as a primary means of communication with students, I knew that e-mail would be a reliable means of contact. I sent out an initial invitation e-mail message, and a few weeks later I sent out a follow-up to students who had not responded. Three students responded directly and were interviewed. Two additional students responded, but were unable to be interviewed due to scheduling constraints.

In verifying e-mail addresses for former CE students, I observed that several students were no longer actively registered at the university. Therefore, I was doubtful that they would still check their university e-mail accounts. I interviewed a CE advisor to find out the status of several students who were not actively registered; we also discussed her general impressions about student success after CE.

Participants

I interviewed three former CE students and one CE advisor. In keeping with each participant's own wishes for anonymity, I have given them all pseudonyms, and some specific details that may have identified people have been left out at the participants' requests. From the three students I interviewed—Emily, Aisha, and Kito—I learned about the challenges and successes of university life after CE. They shared with me their challenges in finding a workable major, meeting the expectations of difficult coursework, and balancing the demands of daily life with their academic pursuits. To add to the understanding I gained from Emily, Aisha, and Kito, I also interviewed a CE advisor. My expectation was that Sarah, the CE advisor, would be able to give me a bigger picture about CE students and their experiences after CE; she would also be able to offer her own perspective on how students experience the transition from CE to other university coursework because Sarah continues to advise CE students during their transition process.

Emily

Emily is a traditional-age student who had moved with her family to the United States from south Asia about a year before she began the CE program. Emily's uncle arranged for her family to come here, as he had also gone to school in the U.S. Emily has several relatives with advanced degrees, and they are very encouraging of her education. She spent 1 year at a local high school before coming to the university. Emily had been educated in her home country prior to coming to the U.S.; she had a fairly high degree of academic literacy in her native language, and her primary reason for being in CE was to improve her English skills.

Emily has high career aspirations. She wants to have a career in medicine, and within the last year she has transferred out of the General College to the College of Liberal Arts (CLA), where she is majoring in human physiology. She is considering the possibility of doing science research and getting a Ph.D. instead of going to medical school.

In the year after CE, Emily took a heavy load of science courses, including biology, calculus, and organic chemistry. In the second semester of the CE program, Emily was able to take a chemistry class, so she was able to start out in CLA with organic chemistry. Overall, Emily said she did "pretty good" in her sophomore year, although she did not want to be specific. She also told me that she "didn't do well in calculus" and there were a few classes in which she would have liked to have done better. Emily has high standards for herself, and even though she did not do well in calculus, she assured me she still passed. As a junior, she continued with a hard set of classes, taking more organic chemistry, psychology, and biochemistry, along with a technology class.

As we talked about the difficult science courses Emily has been taking, she shared with me her strategy for being a high achiever and also surviving

all of these classes. She suggested that rather than retaking classes in which she has not gotten As, "if you do bad in one class, you have to take the next level and do really well so that you can show them that you can do well, rather than retaking them." At the University of Minnesota, when students retake a course, they can replace their grade, and this is a strategy that many former CE students use to raise their GPAs. Emily, however, has chosen to simply continue on to the next course in the series, hoping to earn a better grade in the next course. This way, she has been able to continue on with her goal of going to medical school in a timely manner.

As she reflected back on her experience in CE, Emily told me that she learned a great deal about reading and writing, which she thinks helps her in all classes because these are necessary components of every class. She has developed comfort in writing longer papers and being persuasive from her CE writing classes. She stressed that the reading classes have given her some good strategies to help her in her harder science classes now, even though she recalled that she and her peers had felt, at the time, that the reading classes were not that beneficial. She mentioned a little about how she learned some ways to memorize information more effectively and also skills to read textbooks. Emily laughed a little as she thought back to the CE classes, saying, "now I think they were so easy, but back then I didn't." Emily has a practical approach to life after CE. Instead of describing classes as hard, Emily described them as "taking more time."

Overall, Emily feels good about her experience in the CE program, and she repeated to me that she has found that the program gave her good skills to apply in other classes. As Emily thought about the program in our interview, she said the program would be improved if the reading adjuncts were made writing intensive: "one way to make the reading classes more countable towards your major to make it writing intensive." She said that, looking back, the class was so helpful that but it was also a lot of work. She thought that the course seemed like more of a four-credit class, but the reading adjunct does not directly count for anything in her program. Emily added that she would have been willing to do more writing in the class so that it would meet one of her graduation requirements. She said she thought it would be fair to make the class harder, but that would be a good tradeoff for making the class "countable" to graduation.

Even though Emily was not able to take many science classes during her first semester in CE, she did not feel like CE slowed her down in her major. Instead, she thought that CE helped her get all of her other requirements out of the way, so now she can "focus on taking science classes." She thought that offering science classes to CE students is a good idea, though she also suggested that not every CE student should take a science class. Because science classes are not only usually difficult but also use a different style of writing, Emily suggested that "if you don't know how to write, then you shouldn't take biology classes as a freshman. Just take CE, and learn to read and write . . . and then get into your major and take those classes."

In terms of diversity, Emily believed that the CE program really emphasized diversity. She learned a great deal about the cultures of the students, and she learned about different values. "In 1421 [the basic writing laboratory course], we had to write papers and include our background, and I felt like, oh my God, I'm in a different world." In her science classes, now, she emphasized that diversity is not raised as an issue because "it's focusing on the science so I kinda feel like they're all, like, American. Including myself." Emily added that the content of the writing course emphasized difference, whereas the science courses require people to learn the same thing.

Emily mentioned that she still feels connected to friends from the CE program. She reported that several students from her cohort are also majoring in sciences, and they often take classes together, and help each other. Other times, she added, she will see a former CE student, and "we'll say hi, how's it going? We're so excited to see each other, you know?" Emily described the program as a little like high school in terms of the social connections with other students.

Aisha

Aisha is also a traditional-age college student, and she is also a first-generation college student. She is a Somali student who graduated from a

local high school before coming to the University of Minnesota. Aisha is the oldest child at home, so she has family responsibilities. She also works while she attends school, and part of her money goes to support other relatives who are still in refugee camps. Aisha enjoys being an officer for the Somali Student Association on campus, where she and other Somali students enjoy getting together to share their language and culture with each other as well as helping new Somali students adapt to campus.

Aisha reported that things have been going well since she left CE. At the time of our interview, she was taking microeconomics, biology, statistics, and introduction to pharmacy. Last year she took chemistry, precalculus, medical terminology, and a few other courses she does not remember. Aisha told me that she was retaking microeconomics this year to improve her grade. She admitted that she passed the class last year, but she wants a higher grade point average (GPA). She said, "My GPA is important to me because I'm planning to go to pharmacy school, which is a competitive school. I want to have a good GPA. I want to have good grades in my classes."

Aisha is a prepharmacy student, but she decided to transfer from the College of Liberal Arts to the College of Human Ecology, where she will major in family social science. She was not yet enrolled in the program when we met, but she was planning to start the following semester as she had just received word that she was accepted. She plans to continue on for a master's degree in family social science where she can work with people.

I asked Aisha about how her plan to major in family social science fits with her plan to go to pharmacy school, and she told me that for her, the most important thing is to work with people. She added that she did not want to major in biology or a field where she had to touch blood, so for her, pharmacy seemed like the only medical option. As for her decision to major in family social science she stated, "I don't want to be away from healthcare," meaning that she thought this degree will give her the interpersonal skills a pharmacist may need.

As Aisha looked back on her CE experience, she thought the program helped her develop her confidence. She said, "I had a great relationship with all of my instructors. The whole year it was like something good. I never had anything negative at all. . . .Everything was positive so far." She added that she is still friends with many of her CE classmates, and she thought the program was a good place to learn about different cultures. Classes in CE "kind of promote people to have friendship . . . you have time to understand the other students' cultures."

In terms of diversity, Aisha mentioned that she has had experiences after CE where she has been the only Black student in the class. Aisha said that she always gets to know other people in the class and makes friends in all of her classes. Aisha seems to have an easygoing approach to diversity in the classroom, whether she is in a CE class with a diverse group of students or in a class where she is the only Black student.

As Aisha looked back on her experiences after CE, she reflected for a few moments on the courses in which she has had some difficulty—biology and microeconomics. Aisha stated strongly that her lack of success in these classes was not because CE left her unprepared. Rather, she blames herself for not managing her time better and not fully understanding the course requirements. In biology, for example, Aisha failed the class because she missed too many labs. With microeconomics, Aisha did poorly the first time because she had three exams scheduled on one day, and she invested her time studying for the other two exams.

In looking back on the CE program, Aisha stated that she would not change anything about the program. When she was in the program, she was one of several students who were concerned that CE offered few science courses. In Aisha's cohort, human anatomy was the only science course offered for CE students. However, based on feedback from Aisha and her peers, the CE program added a biology course, and Aisha was pleased to know that she was able to be part of that positive change for future CE students. She is satisfied knowing that the program changed in response to her concerns.

Kito

Kito is a slightly older-than-average college student who came to the University of Minnesota from a local area high school. Under a Minnesota statute, residents can take high school classes if they meet certain maximum age requirements, so Kito was able to attend high school, even though he was older than the average high school student when he started. He told me that he usually fudges his age a bit and says he is 21, even though he is "more like 27." Although Kito is older, he graduated from a local high school just few months before coming to the university. Like some other Generation 1.5 students, Kito has had interruptions in his education.

Kito is from Oromia, which is a nation struggling for independence from Ethiopia. As a result of the civil unrest in his country, Kito spent much of his life in a " 'fugee" camp in Kenya before coming to Minnesota in January, 1999. He described the time he spent before coming to Minnesota, and said, "A lot of years I lost without getting an education." Kito's mother lives in Dire Dewa, Ethiopia. Until his brother came to Minnesota recently, Kito was alone in the U.S. Currently, Kito lives alone. In addition to school, he works as a parking attendant on campus. He tries to work as many hours as he can because he has to support himself.

Kito has had a difficult time at the university, and he told me that he had to redo the first year of college, his year of the CE program. At the time of our interview, he had recently transferred from GC to the University's College of Liberal Arts, where he had been thinking about majoring in computer science, but he was listed as a global studies major. Kito told me he wants to study international politics and economics. His ultimate career goal is to work for a nongovernmental organization in Africa because he wants to help eradicate poverty there. He says, "Instead of sitting here, I'd rather feel it. Instead of sending money. You're not thinking for yourself when you're in a community. You're thinking for everyone."

Since Kito left CE, he has taken precalculus II, biology, Arabic, and microeconomics. When I asked him about taking Arabic, he told me that he took the class in part because he thought it would be easy but also because he thought he still had to meet the language requirement for CLA, and he did not find out otherwise until after he registered. Kito told me that he thinks the classes themselves are not so difficult; for him, he has a continual challenge of managing his time appropriately. About managing his time, he said, "God knows that you're gonna be alive at that time, but you still have to plan it. God loves organizers." He smiled. In addition, he feels pressure to work to send money to his family.

Kito told me that when he was a CE student he was working more than one job so that he could send money to his mother and other relatives in the refugee camp. He said that $100 may not be much money here, but to them, it really adds to their quality of life. He also has another relative who is a guest worker in Saudi Arabia, and every year he sends her money so that she can renew her work permit. He added thoughtfully, "it is either to send her the money or listen to them asking me for money all the time. The decision is simple." In the meantime, Kito has taken out a student loan to help him with his own expenses; yet, as a Muslim, he feels uncomfortable about owing the government money. He told me he wants to pay it back immediately, but knows he cannot. He hesitates to take out more loans, and he was considering taking time off from school to earn more money. In addition, Kito is a first-generation college student, and he emphasized that his family does not understand his college experience. He added, "In my culture, they have no appreciation for what I'm doing," and they do not understand how time consuming school is. I suspect that his family does not understand how difficult it is for Kito to work to send them money and also to go to school full-time. Kito acknowledged that most first-year students do not have the financial obligations he has. He commented, "For them, they are worried about money to party with." Yet, he also does not dwell too much on this, recalling a saying his father used to tell him. In Oromo it is "Akka abaluu taanaan, akka nama hingostu!" which means, roughly translated, "Just because I want to be like the other person does not make you like him." As Kito explained, "It's not their life; it's my life," and Kito bears responsibility for himself.

Kito had a great deal to say when I asked him about how CE helped him. He talked a little about how the diverse learning community was

important to him: "Not everybody experienced stuff I experienced. Most stuff is based on American culture, and it helps to learn from those who have been through it or who have seen people like me before." Kito appreciated CE teachers because they understand the experiences of Generation 1.5 students like him, and he also valued having been in classes with students who have had similar experiences negotiating U.S. culture.

Kito also believed that CE helped him develop his academic skills. He explained that he learned about writing longer papers and expanding his ideas. He recalled that the first time he received an assignment in a CE class, he remembered "just staring" at his instructor, incredulous that she would ask so much of him. He thought the writing and the reading classes helped him learn how to write better papers, and, he stated that CE helped him learn about the culture of the university. He emphasized that being from another place did not help him know about culture, but that CE helped him learn what to do and where to go. Because of CE, "you know what to do and you know where to go. You know how to solve problems and get the help of your instructors."

In terms of diversity, Kito also expressed an easygoing attitude. He commented that since CE, he has had experiences in which he has been the only Black student in the class. Similar to Aisha, Kito commented that he is friendly, and he always knows other students in the class. "I'm not afraid to ask questions," he said, commenting that other students often see him as a leader in classes.

Kito would like to see the CE program have more mentoring and more scholarships. He stressed that funding for CE should support mentoring to help students "feel more comfortable where they are." For Kito, the CE program was about building relationships, both between students and between instructors and students. Kito thought there should be more opportunities for students to talk about their lives and their problems so that CE can be more supportive of student success. In terms of scholarships, he talked at length about the benefits of offering scholarships to students at the beginning of the program. CE offers small scholarships at the end of the year, but Kito pointed out that other students are in situations similar to his, working to support family members, and need financial support earlier.

Sarah, the CE Advisor

Sarah, an advisor for CE students during the time that Emily, Aisha, and Kito were in the program, was eager to meet with me to share her experiences with CE. Having worked with Sarah for a few years now, I knew that Sarah is concerned about the success of CE students as they leave the program and transfer to other parts of the university. Sarah has observed that GPAs often fall after students leave CE, and in part it was this observation of hers that began this research project.

Sarah believes that GPAs fall in the sophomore year because former CE students take a heavy load of math and science courses. She mentioned that students are concerned about being able to graduate in 4 years, so in one semester they take "unforgiving classes"—calculus, chemistry, and physics—as part of a plan to get into medical school. When students do poorly, sometimes they reassess their career plans, but other times they retake classes, determined to have a career in science.

Sarah observed that CE students tend to want "the same five majors: IT [information technology], premed, nursing, medical technology, or radiation therapy is now the big one. Radiation therapy is the backup for premed and nursing because they have all the same courses, but guess what? They accept 15 people a year." Nursing is also a small, competitive program, as is IT. Sarah suggested that students choose these programs because they are practical and recognizable as a career. Sarah thinks that students select these majors in part because many CE students are first-generation college students, and their families do not have a realistic picture of the college experience and the many options available. She said, "they're getting it from their families and their cultures that these are the things that are acceptable." Furthermore, most CE students are very community-oriented, and medical careers, for example, have a direct connection back to helping the community. Yet, Sarah pointed out that "there are over 150 majors at the University of Minnesota" and many CE students would do well to explore other majors as a possibility. Sarah

would like to do community outreach to help CE students and their families understand the value of other majors.

Sarah described four primary barriers to CE student success at the university. In terms of language, Sarah thought that CE students need more support for conversational English skills. She commented that reading and writing are not always the issue; for some students, practice with pronunciation and conversational discourse would help their success at the university. In addition to language skills, Sarah thought that students misjudge their strengths. She gave an example of a student who is determined to have a career in medicine, yet has struggled in every science course she has taken. However, this student also has strong people skills and feels motivated to help members of her community. Sarah has recommended that the student consider majoring in family social science, and recently the student has seriously considered this as an option. Another major barrier for CE students is that they sometimes let pride get in the way of their success. For example, toward the end of the spring semester, Kito was injured and because he had no health insurance, he was home-bound for over 2 weeks. During this time, he did not contact any of his instructors, which resulted in his failing almost every class. Kito commented that most of his instructors told him that if he had simply called to let them know of his injury, he may have been able to get an extension or an incomplete. According to Sarah, this example is common among CE students. Finally, Sarah mentioned that CE students have financial barriers. Roughly 80% of CE students work, and many of them work more than 20 hours per week, she guessed. She commented that those who do not work during the school year work full time during the winter break and the summer. Sarah added that many CE students send money to relatives in other countries or help support their families here.

Sarah also commented that CE students bring real strengths to the university. CE students are determined, and they are also good advocates for themselves: "they follow through with people. They meet with people. They let their concerns be known. If I say 'you can't do this' they'll meet with me again." On the other hand, Sarah commented that other non-CE students do not meet with her as often and do not take the extra steps CE students take. Sarah added that CE students do not take education for granted, saying "CE students have had to work double hard to get it in. And, I think it's a cultural value to do well in school, so they're studying more."

Sarah would like to see CE offer more mentoring and more interaction with former CE students. Sarah liked Emily's idea of making the reading classes writing intensive, and we talked about reframing the course as a "literacy adjunct." In addition, Sarah would like an additional class added to the spring semester so that students can maintain the university's required credit load. "The university changed, but we didn't change with it," she says, reflecting on the fact that CE students must take one class outside of CE in the spring. Although she thinks math is a good option for some students, she would like to see a career planning class just for CE students, or a seminar on the first-year experience. Such a class might include connections to former CE students; Sarah thought both groups would benefit because current students would get ideas on how to expand their thinking about future careers, and former students would benefit by explicitly sharing their process with other students.

Understandings and Recommendations

Emily, Aisha, and Kito are successful former Commanding English students. They were all retained at the University of Minnesota. They have found majors that are workable, and they are using strategies, some learned in Commanding English and some they learned elsewhere. However, not all CE students are successful at transferring out of Commanding English and General College to a degree-granting college; in finding people to interview for this project, I discovered that several of Emily, Aisha, and Kito's classmates are no longer enrolled. Although I do not know the reasons why their classmates left the university, the themes that emerged from my interviews may shed some light on what is useful to students as they leave CE and what might be improved to enhance students' future success.

One theme that resonated throughout all the interviews was that students thought the CE

program helped them do well after they left CE. Students commented that the reading and writing classes helped them and gave them skills that they directly transferred to other coursework after CE. They talked about how writing classes helped them expand their ideas to write longer papers. Reading skills taught them strategies for textbook reading and building their general confidence about tackling heavy reading loads.

CE students overwhelmingly prefer science-oriented majors, and often a student's first choice for a major does not work out. Emily is majoring in premed, Aisha is majoring in prepharmacy although she is switching to family social science, and Kito is majoring in global studies although he talked about wanting to major in computer science. Finding a major was something they worked out with their advisors, and for Aisha and Kito, finding a realistic major was a long process. All of the students talked about the challenges of science coursework after CE, which include concerns about maintaining a high GPA, and repeating classes in order to maintain a high GPA.

Students valued the diversity of the CE program and commented that they understood cultural differences due to writing assignments in CE that encouraged them to share their culture as well as understand other cultures. Kito's point that being an immigrant did not make him an instant expert on intercultural matters was a theme echoed by Emily and Aisha. In addition, all of the students interviewed talked matter-of-factly about being the only person of color in a class. They shared that they coped with this by making friends with classmates. Similarly, they all reported that they still maintained strong friendships with students from their CE cohort, and that often they took classes together and helped each other do well in classes.

An additional emerging theme was that all the students referred to Appleby Hall, which is the building where CE is located, as a safe, familiar space on campus. They still come to the building often to find a place to study. They continue to feel as though CE instructors and advisors are available to answer questions or give advice.

A primary recommendation from the interviews is to make slight changes to the CE curriculum. All students talked about the mixed feelings they had about the reading adjunct course. Although they realized, in retrospect, that the course was beneficial to them in improving their reading skills, they expressed disappointment that it did not meet any graduation requirements. The possibility of making the reading classes writing-intensive—perhaps a "literacy adjunct"—was raised; if the course were writing intensive, it would then meet a graduation requirement, as a student must take four writing intensive courses for graduation. This suggestion may or may not be administratively feasible. The need for a class outside of CE in the spring semester was also brought up as a concern. Not all students are able to take a math course in the spring semester of CE; the decision to take math is made between the student and the CE program advisor. Emily and Aisha did not take math in the spring semester, and both thought that this put a burden on them the following year. Emily felt discouraged about her GPA as a result, and Aisha found herself repeating courses to improve her GPA. While adding math in the spring semester may be an ideal course for many CE students, other students, such as Kito, may struggle under the weight of such a heavy load. Offering a career planning course or first-year exploratory seminar may be potential options for adding a course to the program, particularly since students expressed difficulties in finding an appropriate major. This type of course would have been helpful to Kito, who has changed his major several times while at the university.

An additional recommendation from the interviews is to create scholarships for CE students at the onset of the first year of college. Scholarships would be beneficial in recognizing CE students who come into the program with high potential, and scholarships would also be one mechanism for alleviating some of the financial strain that many CE students face. Scholarships for CE students may be a viable form of support for a few students, and also a way to raise awareness of the program and the issues students face within the students' home communities as well.

Limitations of the Study and Directions for Future Research

Clearly, one concern with the methodology used for this study is that only three of the students in this cohort were interviewed. Furthermore, these three students self-selected, which skews the sample because they may be likely to be more positive about their experiences in CE. Considering the rich experiences of these three students, one might imagine that interviews with all of the students in the program would reveal other emerging themes and concerns that may be addressed by the program. However, the goal of qualitative inquiry is understanding, and in this case, understanding has been attained on some level. All of the students were my former students, and the power distance of our relationship may have limited what they felt comfortable sharing with me. On the other hand, my prior experience with these three students also was a source of rapport between us, and may have motivated them to participate in my study in the first place.

This study was considered to be an ethnographic tracer study in that it followed up with former students in the CE program to understand better the effects of the program on its participants. More commonly, tracer studies are quantitative, looking for patterns in participants' post-program experiences, including GPA, graduation rates, retention rates, patterns of majors, careers, and so on. A full quantitative tracer study of former CE students would be useful in understanding the experience of former CE students. Although the quantitative study would not capture the rich, thick description of the individual experiences of CE students, it would provide a broad picture of the successes and limitations of CE students after they leave the program. At present, our understanding remains largely anecdotal.

Conclusion

The Commanding English program at the University of Minnesota offers an access program for Generation 1.5 students. Although the program is only one year in duration, students learn skills, such as writing and reading, that they take with them into their courses in their sophomore year and beyond. In addition, students also develop friendships with other CE students, and they have the opportunity to experience a diversity of cultures in the CE classroom; these experiences prepare them for the social expectations of other university courses. The CE program would do well to consider making small changes in the curriculum based on student feedback, as well as finding ways to offer more financial support for CE students. These supports would enhance the retention of CE students at the university, thereby helping students succeed in an increasingly global society.

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Supplemental Instruction: Student Perspectives in the 21st Century

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This qualitative study examined students' perspectives of Supplemental Instruction (SI), a now well-established student academic assistance program. Utilizing responses from student evaluations of SI, this study sought to understand students' thoughts and feelings about the program. Consideration was given to what students perceived were the benefits of or frustrations with SI, the reasons for attending versus not attending, and whether SI serves students' needs today as effectively as it has over the last 3 decades. Results indicated that SI is still a beneficial program for many students, though some voiced frustration with the model's principles of information discovery through collaborative learning.

Over the 30-year lifespan of Supplemental Instruction (SI), too little attention has been paid to the perspectives of students regarding SI. What do students think about SI? Are their perceptions positive or negative? What are the reasons some students attend and find great benefit, while others shun the program or find it frustrating? Myriad studies have been published documenting the effectiveness of SI, but little research has been conducted to date that attends to the value students place on SI.

Additionally, we must consider that 3 decades have passed since the inception of SI. We know that students have changed. In 1997, the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) tabulated 30 years of data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program's (CIRP) annual freshman survey (Astin, Parrott, Korn, & Sax, 1997). In a review of these results, Astin (1998) noted significant changes in the attitudes of students regarding the role of women in education and society, social and political issues, smoking and drinking, value trends, and academics. Within the general heading "Academics," Astin observed five trends: (a) severe grade inflation, (b) increasing competitiveness, (c) increasing optimism about academic performance in college, (d) growing interest in graduate education, and (e) declining interest in "liberal arts" fields and in teaching careers (p. 126). Thus, the continual evolution of student populations requires constant evaluation of the effectiveness of SI. Is SI serving today's students' needs to the best of its potential?

The purpose of this study was to consider the perspectives of today's students on a now well-established student academic assistance program,

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Supplemental Instruction (SI). Developed in the early 1970s at the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) by Dr. Deanna Martin (Martin & Wilcox, 1996, p. 1), SI is a peer-facilitated, content-driven, group-tutoring model that promotes critical thinking skills through collaborative learning. The learning strategies involved in the acquisition of such skills help to increase academic performance and retention. Now in its fourth decade, the effectiveness of SI has been proven across numerous disciplines (Burmeister et al., 1994; Kenney & Kallison, 1994; Lockie & Van Lanen, 1994; Zerger, 1994), and with a variety of populations (Bidgood, 1994; Martin & Arendale, 1993b; Martin, Blanc, & Arendale, 1996; Martin & Wilcox, 1996; Ramirez, 1997). In 1981 the U.S. Department of Education designated SI as a model postsecondary retention program and advocated its dissemination throughout the United States (Martin, Blanc, & DeBuhr, 1983). Today over 1,400 institutions in 29 countries have adopted the SI model.

Supplemental Instruction is a unique academic support program in that it does not seek to serve "remedial" students, an often-elusive population to define, and a challenging group to support. Rather, SI targets historically difficult courses, those that consistently generate a 30% or higher rate of Ds, Fs, and withdrawals (Ws). Arendale (1994) noted that "high-risk" designates courses that (a) are often large, and in which the student has little opportunity for interaction with the professor or with other students; (b) have infrequent examinations that focus on complex, cognitively challenging material; (c) include large amounts of reading and information; and (d) have voluntary and or unrecorded class attendance. Such courses are also traditionally taught by instructors who demand a great deal of higher-level critical thinking. By directing the support at various courses, instead of specifically identifying students, SI avoids the remedial stigma that some students might associate with traditional tutoring programs. Thus, students from all levels of ability feel comfortable taking advantage of SI support, and they do so in respectable numbers.

Another hallmark of the program is the use of peer facilitators to lead the SI sessions. Peers are perceived as less intimidating to students than the course instructors, as they are not experts in the field, and they have no grading power. In the SI model, a student who has previously successfully completed a designated course, preferably with the same instructor, is chosen as a peer "SI leader," and is trained extensively in the concepts of group learning strategies. The SI leader attends the selected course, markets SI in class, takes exemplary notes, reads the assigned material, and acts as a role model for the other students in the class. The SI leader can also serve as a liaison between students and the instructor. With the input of the members of the course, the SI leader then schedules several out-of-class, weekly 50-minute SI sessions that begin during the first week of class and run throughout the academic term. In addition, the leader holds 2-hour examination review sessions a few days before every test. All sessions are voluntary; students may choose to attend as many or as few SI sessions as they wish. Attendance is taken for the purposes of data collection, but the names are not passed on to instructors, so students feel some degree of anonymity in deciding whether or not to attend or participate. Supplemental Instruction leaders also hold one office hour per week during which they are available to students on an individual basis.

The critical components that help to ensure the success of an SI leader are excellent initial and ongoing training and intense supervision. Leaders are indoctrinated with Astin's (1993) approach to collaborative learning–namely the idea that students can learn to see one another as potential helpers, rather than competitors, and can thus develop the teamwork skills needed to allow them to work together toward common goals. Supplemental Instruction leaders facilitate collaborative learning by "engaging students in active learning that includes asking questions, participating in discussion, predicting solutions, verifying facts, finding examples, and making applications" (Blanc & Martin, 1994, p. 452). As these authors definitively stated, "the focus of collaborative learning is understanding the content, not memorizing it" (p. 453). Leaders are also familiarized with the concepts of such prominent learning theorists as Piaget, Vygotsky, Dewey, Tinto, and others (Martin & Arendale 1993a).

The "curriculum" of an SI session varies from course to course as leaders must strive to integrate course content with learning strategies that students

need to acquire to be successful. Yet, it is important to note that SI leaders are not to stand up at the front of the class and act as "junior professors," to be viewed as experts in content. Rather, leaders are to assimilate themselves both figuratively and literally within the group and function as a peer leader. Close supervision ensures that this happens. Thus, while instructors provide the content to be covered in the SI sessions, the student participants are expected to take responsibility for the discussions of that material. Leaders may help their groups prioritize the topics to be reviewed, and they come to every session prepared with ideas in mind, but the model necessitates that the needs of the student participants drive the direction of the sessions.

Over the years, many articles have documented the numerous advantages and benefits the SI model provides. Blanc & Martin (1994) listed several of these: (a) removes the stigma sometimes associated with student assistance programs, (b) provides a venue for interaction of students with varying levels of prior attainment, (c) provides transferable skills that can be applied across disciplines, (d) improves the academic performance and persistence of students who elect to participate, (e) generates independent success and self-confidence, (f) produces quantifiable results, and (g) is cost-effective. For institutions, the implementation of SI helps maintain high academic standards (Wilcox, 1993), enhances the classroom experience without duplicating the efforts of the content expert, and allows for rigorous evaluation by program administrators (Martin & Wilcox, 1996). Supplemental Instruction reduces attrition rates and increases reenrollment persistence toward graduation by lowering the D, F, and W rates of students (Arendale, 1993; Blanc, DeBuhr, & Martin, 1983). Over the last 10 years at UMKC, the average difference in D, F, and W rates between SI participants and SI nonparticipants has held consistently at 13%. Thus, on an annual basis, it appears that SI may significantly contribute to the retention of students at UMKC who might otherwise leave due to unsatisfactory grades.

Even more important to the study at hand are the advantages realized by student participants in SI. The bottom line is that students gain better understanding of the material (Ashwin, 1994). "Their ultimate goal (with some exceptions) is to achieve the highest possible grade and move toward the completion of their degree program" (Wilcox, 1993, p. 28). Students who participate regularly in SI earn, on average, a half- to a full-letter course grade higher than their nonparticipating counterparts (Blanc, DeBuhr, & Martin, 1983). It is theorized that these gains are due to the development of critical thinking abilities and social skills acquired by being part of the collaborative learning environment promoted in SI (Martin & Arendale, 1993b). Additionally, there is some research that demonstrates that SI may affect other noncognitive factors such as locus of control, self-efficacy, and self-esteem (Visor, Johnson, & Cole, 1992; Visor, Johnson, Schollaet, Good-Majah, & Davenport, 1995). Students benefit from SI because of its proactive, participatory structure; its nonremedial image; and its promotion of group belongingness that students are often seeking (Martin & Wilcox, 1996). Supplemental Instruction facilitates student assimilation into the academic culture of the campus. It helps foster students' connections to the institution and helps builds vitally important interpersonal support systems (Martin & Arendale).

The SI model also provides wonderful benefits for its leaders. Student SI leaders gain a deeper understanding of the material (Ashwin, 1994), which is often in their designated major field of study; they develop leadership skills as they organize and facilitate group discussions; and they have the opportunity to hone and practice such skills as public speaking, problem solving, listening, and communicating (Martin & Wilcox, 1996). Wallace (1992) also noted that when students became SI leaders their grades improved, they appeared more self-assured, and they presented themselves more articulately. Clearly, there appear to be great benefits for the students who take on this additional level of responsibility and visibility.

In conducting a thorough review of the literature from 30 years ago, no research was found on students' perceptions of Supplemental Instruction, peer tutoring, small group tutorials, or even of classical individual tutoring programs. A very scant number of studies existed on these programs at all (Carsrud, 1979; Fremouw & Feindler, 1978; Wood, 1979), and none addressed SI. In examining the literature since then, there still has not been extensive research to date that

has examined student perspectives on SI, though there were a number of anecdotal quotes to be found that addressed this topic, but none before the 1990s. Cited in Arendale (1998) one first-year student remarked, "SI gives us the chance to talk about the problem and to work through it ourselves instead of the professor telling us what it ought to be" (p. 191). Another student quoted in Arendale said that SI sessions "clarified things in your own mind if you had to explain it" (p. 193), while another said this about needing to actively listen during the sessions, "From the other people talking, I get a better understanding then what I get in the lecture. The other students put it into better words" (p. 193). Martin, Blanc, and Arendale (1996) quoted a "typical" student response to SI:

> What I really liked about SI was that if I had any questions, [the SI leader] didn't tell us the answer. Instead, they let us think about the problem, set it up, and solve it ourselves. I also liked the one-on-one help and the friends I made. (p. 125)

Arendale (1996) included quotes from several students regarding how SI sessions had helped them organize their thoughts: "[The SI sessions] made me aware of what I should be looking at, rather than just taking notes about everything;" "It helped my understanding, the way I actually study. I am an improved student . . . and I think that SI really helped in that" (p. 2); and

> I can take the material I get in class down in my lecture notes and I can take it to the SI session. The SI leader breaks it down more and gives me an explanation of why it happens. I understand the process better.

In an interview with Dr. Deanna Martin, founder of SI, Dr. Martin was asked the question, "What do students like about SI?" (Burmeister, 1996, p. 22) She replied that they like it "because it gets them through the 'killer courses,' (p. 22) while actually saving them study time." She went on to explain that the choice for students often comes down to the question of whether they would rather "face a text they can't understand and a set of notes that look like their little sister took them" or "spend an hour with their classmates and an SI leader and figure out the lesson" (p. 22). She said that it is a fairly simple choice for most students.

It was much more difficult to find mention in the literature of any ambivalent or less-favorable student perspectives related to SI; only one such opinion was discovered, though it was not explained. Without any elaboration, Maxwell (1991) stated, "To be sure, when given a choice, students prefer individual tutoring" (p. 3). In spite of apparently overwhelming positive responses to SI, many students choose not to take advantage of it when it is offered. This study hopes to address this quandary, and to try to learn how students in the 21st century feel and think about SI. This research is also an attempt to address McCarthy and Smuts' (1997) critique of assessments of SI effectiveness in which they called for "a broadening of research methods [in SI] to include non-statistical, qualitative forms of assessment" (p. 4). This chapter intends to provide a flavor of what today's students like and dislike about SI, reveal and understand their reasons for attending or not attending SI sessions, examine the perspectives of today's SI leaders, and reflect on how to serve the needs of 21st century college students effectively.

Method

Every semester, the SI program at the University of Missouri-Kansas City collects midterm and end-of-term evaluations from students for the purposes of ongoing program evaluation and improvement. Example questions include, "Have you attended at least one SI session for this course this semester? If not, please give some sort of reason (e.g., Do you have scheduling conflicts? Is this class easy for you?). If you have attended, is there anything you feel that could use improvement in the SI sessions?"

Materials and Participants

For this study, we compiled these surveys from two complete semesters, spring 2004 and fall 2004, and from the first half of spring 2005. Spring 2005 end-of-term evaluations were not yet available when the data were synthesized for this study. From spring 2004 we collected 546 midterm and 687 end-of-term evaluations; in fall 2004 we amassed

818 midterm and 1,035 end-of-term surveys; and in spring 2005 we compiled 779 midterm evaluations.

All of the students in the targeted courses were undergraduates. This study did not collect specific demographic information on the students surveyed. UMKC is a public, mid-sized (approximately 14,000 full- and part-time students), Midwestern, urban university. The full-time undergraduate enrollment is approximately 6,000 students, 59% of whom are female, and 41% of whom are male. The average age of the undergraduate population is 24. Ethnically, the UMKC student body is represented by 70% White, non-Hispanic students; 13% Black, non-Hispanic students; 7% international students; 6% Asian or Pacific Islander students; 4% Hispanic students, and 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native students. The average UMKC American College Testing (ACT) score is 24. Eighty-one percent of UMKC students receive financial aid.

Courses represented in the surveys were primarily freshman- and sophomore-level courses from a variety of disciplines including but not limited to accounting, biology, chemistry, computer science, economics, history, mathematics, philosophy, and physics.

In addition to the aforementioned class evaluations, brief, anonymous, open-ended surveys were collected during SI sessions and leader meetings in the fall 2004 semester. Ninety-one student participants completed the SI student survey, and 18 leaders completed the SI leader survey. The student survey stated:

> Thank you for attending SI sessions. Please take a moment to write down what benefits you feel you gain from attending SI sessions. Your feedback will help us secure funding for these services to ensure that they continue to be available to you.

The SI leader survey stated:

> We would like you to help us answer the following question. You do not need to sign your name. The results will be used for presentations and publications on SI. Thank you for helping us with this. List all the advantages you gain from being an SI Leader.

Procedure

The midterm and end-of-term evaluations were administered during class sessions in order to include all students enrolled in the courses, regardless of whether or not they had ever attended an SI session. The open-ended student surveys were administered by SI leaders during SI sessions. The open-ended leader surveys were administered by SI staff during leader meetings.

Coding

The data were synthesized by utilizing the coding process of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, as recommended for qualitative studies by Strauss and Corbin (1998). The results were reported in general categories.

Results

Students provided remarkably similar responses across the surveys. It was quite easy to identify major themes in the data. The positive responses were akin to what the research had already borne out. Consistent "beneficial" themes emerged that included organization of course material, reinforcement of major concepts, question clarification, identification of key content, ability to learn in a "safe" environment, opportunity to voice understanding, exposure to other interpretations, and deeper understanding and increased confidence. However, unlike the almost-totally positive responses we found in extant literature, we also unearthed some themes critical of SI. Students expressed frustration with their perceptions of unproductive SI sessions, unknowledgeable leaders, contradictory or confusing information, insufficient leadership, and disappointing test preparation. The study found a number of common responses among students who did not attend SI or who attended inconsistently: scheduling conflicts, family obligations, lack of course difficulty, laziness, fondness for studying alone, preference for individual tutoring, or belief that SI was not helpful. Finally, Supplemental Instruction leaders confirmed

the benefits that they receive on the job: enhanced relationships, deeper content understanding, better study strategies, leadership skills, and teaching exposure.

Perceived Benefits of SI

Of the 52% of the students who reported having attended SI, the responses were overwhelmingly positive. Of SI attendees, 92% indicated that they found SI to be helpful. Their primary perceived benefits are listed below.

Organization of course material. One major benefit students repeatedly cited was the organization of course material that SI provides them. "[It's the] chance to organize all the information from class—handouts, books, worksheets, examples." Many stated that they appreciated receiving leader-generated handouts and worksheets, as well as the opportunity to work practice problems and quizzes in the sessions. Supplemental Instruction leaders create such learning tools from class materials, and then encourage students to work through them collectively, thereby allowing them to organize large amounts of information into smaller, understandable parts.

Reinforcement of major concepts. Many students stated that they attended SI in order to clarify course material, ask questions, and gain missed information from other students. Regular attendance was important to them because of the repetition and reiteration of material; "SI sessions help me to stay on top of the material and are a great review during the week." Another student explained; "It gives me a second chance to let the material in class sink in while reinforcing the concepts from class. SI really does help in the long run and I feel that I better understand chemistry when I leave."

Question clarification. Students frequently cited question clarification as a top benefit of SI. They received answers to their questions and elucidation of the material, presumably as a result of the organization and leadership from the SI leader. Many students indicated that they came with questions they had during class but did not have a chance to get answered, as exemplified by the comment: "I feel more comfortable asking questions in a smaller environment. It offers a down to earth approach to solving problems because it is coming from another student."

Identification of key content. Supplemental Instruction sessions are intended to address difficult content. Leaders try to anticipate the process students will have to go through in order to understand and digest challenging material. One student recognized this benefit by explaining:

> The leader knows how to take the most important concepts and emphasize them without getting peripheral info in the way. She takes a very logical approach to the material and is able to focus on organizing it by similar and dissimilar characteristics.

Because SI leaders have already taken the class, they are able to help students determine what is important and worthwhile to study.

Ability to learn in a "safe" environment. Many students stated that they found SI to be helpful because it provided a nonthreatening atmosphere for learning and making mistakes. The following was a typical responses illustrative of this benefit:

> I like how we all figure out and understand the material together. I don't feel pressured to already know things, or feel expected to understand everything. It's very comfortable and personable. I feel like I get the attention I need to learn things.

Another student wrote, "[SI was] very helpful, the leader is well-informed and communicates well with the students."

Opportunity to voice understanding. Another benefit students mentioned was the opportunity to express their understanding in their own words through discussion. Students stated that they not only felt comfortable voicing their understanding or misunderstanding, but they indicated that their different interpretations of the material often inspired debate and discussion: "I get to discuss topics with others and learn new ways of understanding." Another student found SI to be a "great way to express out-loud what you learn. Helps you to understand what you might have not. There are many levels of understanding

among students." Students get the chance to direct questions to each other, learn new information, and process what they already knew with an enriched outlook.

Exposure to other interpretations. "[When] other students have different points of view, the SI leader brings them together and organizes them all in the right direction." With appropriate leadership, contentious discussions can be quite beneficial for students. Leaders can facilitate the examination of different interpretations, pointing out contradictions or similarities for students until they, themselves, can come to a consensus. One student's response clarified the leader's role in such a discussion:

> The SI leader takes a lot of time to prepare us and help us reach our goals. You walk out with more than you came in with because of effort from yourself, the group, and the leader. You check your interpretation of the material with what the other students think and you see if they have important information you might have missed.

Deeper understanding and increased confidence. Many students suggested in their responses that learning with other students enriched their understanding and instilled self-confidence: "SI is the reason I did well on the test. I couldn't have done it without the sessions." The students compile their ideas and come away from the sessions feeling confident that they understand the material. Student effort and attendance create an atmosphere where learning through trial and error is possible and comfortable. Students feel confident that they are on the right track with the SI leader's guidance and preparation: "[SI] builds self-confidence."

Perceived Frustrations With SI

Of course, there were a small percentage of the SI attendees (8%) who did not provide high praise for SI. Interestingly, some students expressed frustration with the very same techniques and philosophies that other students commended. Their feedback is provided in the following paragraphs.

Unproductive SI sessions. The majority (65%) of complaints about SI sessions indicated somehow that the student-led discussions were unproductive. Myriad reasons were mentioned including the groups being too large, the sessions being too short, a dislike of group work, an insufficient amount of worksheets and practice problems given, a tendency to get off topic, and having to work with unprepared or slow students. However, the most frequently cited frustrations that fell into this category (15%) were in reference to disorganization, "The leader seemed disorganized and we led ourselves. We shouldn't have to figure out what is important to learn. It wastes time." Students repeatedly complained that SI sessions were unorganized and unstructured. They often mentioned that SI leaders "should explain the material."

Unknowledgeable leaders. A smaller percentage of students' negative responses (15%) indicated that SI leaders did not give answers and teach the material as the students wished. Representative quotes were, "[SI was] not worth the time. The leader didn't answer the questions brought up and the attendance was too low to learn," and, "[The] SI leader didn't seem confident in the information she was teaching, so I didn't go more than once or twice." Their leaders' silence certainly could have been due to the leaders' ignorance in a subject, but it is also possible that the lack of instruction students received was a result of an intentional, defining strategy of SI: that the students are supposed to discover the answers for themselves.

Contradictory and confusing information. Another 15% of students voiced frustration that SI sometimes made them more confused than they were before they attended. One student commented, "The SI seemed contradictory and confusing. Students give wrong answers and are not always corrected. The leader doesn't always explain the concept again after the student-led discussion, which is very confusing and frustrating." Others indicated that the SI sessions didn't always coincide with the lectures, which they found to be frustrating.

Insufficient leadership. A few students (3%) expressed concern regarding the peer-led element of the SI model. A representative response to the fact that students lead SI sessions was that there should be "more leadership. The leader should go over what is important." One student did not understand the purpose of SI, "I didn't find SI helpful, I had different expectations of SI."

Disappointing test preparation. Of SI attendees, 2% voiced frustration that attending SI did not always result in high test scores. Because leaders have no prior access to tests, students become frustrated with the disparity between the information reviewed in SI and what actually appears on the tests. One student complained, "I relied on examples from SI for the test, but they did not match the test format." Although some students attended SI and were obviously disappointed, others had not attended at all.

Reasons for Not Attending SI

Students who did not attend SI predominantly cited scheduling conflicts with work, school, and family as their reason for not taking advantage of the program (45%). The next most common response theme for not attending was that SI was perceived as unnecessary (31%): they were doing well in the course, the class was too easy, they already had a study group, or they were not motivated to do well in the class. The remaining responses varied: students preferred to study alone, or with a tutor; they did not enjoy SI sessions because of the conduct of other attendees; or that they had heard SI was not helpful, so they did not bother to attend.

Benefits to SI Leaders

The SI leaders were also surveyed as to what advantages they had experienced as a result of being SI leaders.

Enhanced relationships. A common response from leaders was that they had built relationships with other students, leaders, and faculty members. Many responded with such comments as, "I have met some great co-workers, have worked under great supervisors, and have developed friendships that have lasted beyond the office," and, "As an SI leader, I've had the opportunity to learn how to work with people of different cultural, educational, and ethnic backgrounds."

Deeper content understanding. They also gained a deeper understanding of the course material and confidence in their grasp of the concepts. Discussing and planning seemed to help them as much as the students: "I've developed much more confidence in my own subject area as a result of this experience." Leaders cited how helpful it was to refresh and relearn the material, and constantly organize it as their learning expanded.

Better study strategies. Insight into study techniques was another advantage often quoted. "I have learned how to study effectively within a group. I also know that the best way to learn something is to teach it to someone else." Leaders cited the strategies they learned in the SI trainings, and they also mentioned how helpful it was to see the errors their students made. They indicated that it kept them from making the same mistakes.

Leadership skills. "As a leader, I learned how to be in charge among a group of my peers without taking over or dominating the group. Now that I am a mentor (an advanced leader), I use those leadership skills to help others improve." Other leaders commented on how their experiences had helped them to overcome shyness, be more confident of their accent, or feel more comfortable speaking in public.

Teaching exposure. A few leaders commented that they had considered teaching careers as a result of their SI leadership experiences. One leader explained that the SI methods had given her a deeper understanding of what a career in teaching might be like.

Discussion

The results from this study were most interesting. There appeared be a great deal of valuable information to be gleaned from these students' perspectives. The reassuring news, of course, was that for the majority student attendees, SI seemed to be effective and helpful. These 21st century students mentioned virtually all of the previously well-documented benefits of SI. This was, indeed, welcome news. The probably more intriguing perspectives from this study, however, were those that revealed frustration with SI philosophies and techniques. These, too, emerged as well-developed themes, indicative of trends that may have more of a following than we wanted to imagine. Such phenomena provided for the most interesting speculation, though, and offered us the greatest opportunity for self-examination. It was also most helpful to get a sense of why students

sometimes shun SI. These were factors that we needed to understand and be able to address in more productive ways. And, it was very satisfying for us to verify that SI leaders were reaping some meaningful rewards as a result of their experiences in our program. We already suspected these findings, but it was good to have them confirmed.

Perceived Benefits of SI

It was validating to read the comments of the many students who greatly appreciated what SI offered them. Reading such testimonials should be a regular exercise for every educator involved in SI, as it is probably easy to lose sight of the effectiveness of SI for many students. From the perspectives of over 3,800 student responses, this study affirmed that the philosophies and techniques of SI are still alive and well, and reap the same benefits as have been found in the previously-published literature; critical thinking is still occurring, and students are continuing to realize growth and confidence as a result of their SI participation. These data informed us that students still find value in the ways SI helps them organize course material, work through problems, find their own answers, and collaborate with others to do all of this more efficiently.

Perceived Frustrations with SI

Fortunately, the negative responses we received from attendees represented a small minority of students. However, elucidating students' frustrations with SI was a very worthwhile undertaking. Having gleaned their perceptions of unproductive SI sessions, unknowledgeable leaders, contradictory and confusing information, insufficient leadership, and disappointing test preparation, we can now use this information to improve the screening and training of SI leaders, offer more structure in the sessions, tweak certain other facets of the program, and be better able to develop survey items that will reveal more detailed aspects of these concerns.

Additionally, these findings have verified the need to indoctrinate our student consumers more thoroughly in the SI model. While all of these frustrations certainly may have stemmed from valid problems within the program, it is also worth considering that these grievances may have been borne out of students' faulty expectations of SI. Virtually all of the documented frustrations with SI could be related to one underlying theme: SI does not give the answers away; students must work to discover them on their own. Perhaps these complaints were, at least in part, reactions to students' dismay with having to find the answers themselves. Such attitudes could have undoubtedly derived from a lack of understanding of the SI approach or from feelings of being entitled to be provided the right answers. This second explanation deserves some further exploration. What are the contributing factors to the phenomenon of expecting to be fed the right answers? Is this mindset part of a stage of cognitive development, a result of today's societal trends, an effect from certain psychological schematic frameworks, a failure to anticipate students' needs, or a combination of all of these?

A developing mind. The sense of entitlement to be furnished with answers is consistent with Perry's (1970) scheme of adult intellectual development. Perry's theory posits that at the earliest stages of cognitive maturity, students—especially first-year students—tend to think dualistically. They divide the world into absolutes: good and bad, right and wrong. From this perspective, a right answer exists for all questions and problems. Authorities know these answers, as they are omniscient and hold the "Absolute Truth." A student's job is simply to listen to authorities and receive the right answers. Perry asserts that as individuals mature, their thinking progressively transitions from a right-wrong outlook to the recognition of relativism. When students reach this stage, they recognize that there are no absolutes, that authorities have opinions, not answers, and that they must discover their own conclusions about the world.

Artichoke dip and instant messaging. A more cynical explanation is an indictment of our present culture of instant gratification. The process of true learning and discovery can be compared to peeling away the many leaves of an artichoke. There is preparation involved; the task is slow, sometimes tedious; there is much to enjoy along the way (especially if you have garlic butter for dipping); and when you reach the "heart of the matter," you are rewarded with a succulent prize to savor. However, many of today's young people

have probably never peeled an artichoke, because of the widespread availability of cheesy artichoke dips on every restaurant menu. The point is, in this era of instant messaging, immediate results from a Google™ search, and video games that can simulate nearly any activity, it is not surprising that some of today's students may see little value in delayed gratification, or in the process involved in getting there. Why would they want to wade through the sometimes murky, cold waters of discovery? If there is an easier, faster way to get there, why not take advantage of it?

Age of consumerism. A related phenomenon has also evolved over the last 3 decades. Not only have we become a society of hypersonic satisfaction, we have become a society of consumers with high expectations. A mentality has spread across the nation that if money has changed hands—even if those hands were not our own—we are entitled to the best product, service, benefit, et cetera, and we want it now. Today's students have been raised with this approach, and it, too, may be interfering with the classical components of SI.

A nation of tests. A third societal trend that may be influencing our young people is today's zeitgeist of mass testing. Having spent their entire academic careers being taught with testing in mind, today's students may have little understanding of, or appreciation for, the underlying goal of testing students, to assess whether or not they have acquired knowledge. If this is the only perspective students have regarding learning, it would stand to reason that they get frustrated with SI's focus on acquiring knowledge for the sake of knowledge.

Responsibility and locus of control. Ultimately, if students believe that they are not responsible for their own learning, then the concepts of SI will have little meaning for them. Students with an external locus of control expect that things happen *to* them. Traditional, authoritarian style classrooms contribute to the student's "learned helplessness" by virtue of feeding answers and not encouraging learning on their own. Some of today's students may not even believe that they have the capability to find their own answers.

The chess game mentality. Students complained that SI sessions were often disorganized and confusing. Leaders are trained to do extensive planning for every session, but maybe what is missing is that leaders need to approach their planning more like a chess game. They need to try to anticipate their students' every move (i.e., question, objection, misunderstanding, acceptance, etc.) and use this to plan their own next moves, thereby hopefully always staying one step ahead of their students, and avoiding some of the confusion that was mentioned in the data.

Such speculation as we have done here may or may not have any validity whatsoever when it comes to understanding students' perceived frustrations with the tenets of SI. However, based upon our findings, there was a definite disconnect between some of the students' expectations of SI and what they actually encountered. Regardless of whether or not any of these factors have influenced these perceptions, these data have told us that we need to do a better job of communicating with students. If some of our students were this frustrated, then we clearly have not been conveying our message effectively. This is the take-home message we must heed.

Reasons for Not Attending SI

Students reported a number of explanations for not attending SI, yet the overwhelming reason we heard was because of busy schedules and conflicts. Clearly, our students—the majority of whom commute to campus—have myriad responsibilities and commitments. This was another valuable lesson we gleaned from this study. This taught us that we need to be doing a better job of finding more optimal times to serve our students. We also acknowledge that we need to be actively marketing SI on campus, so that students have a more informed understanding of the benefits of SI, and may therefore make a more concerted effort to fit it into their schedules. Improved marketing efforts might also offset any inaccurate information being circulated regarding the service we provide.

Benefits to SI Leaders

It was heartening to hear that SI makes a significant difference in the lives of SI leaders. The data we collected from them provided an

enlightening portrayal of some of the benefits they realize from this "job." This is an area of research that deserves a much closer look. It would be fascinating to conduct some longitudinal research on the benefits for SI leaders. Hopefully, this will be a burgeoning area of interest for the SI community in the decades to come.

Conclusions

The world has indeed changed in the last 30-plus years. It continues to change, societal expectations and pressures continue to evolve, and educators must be constantly cognizant of this fact, and adapt accordingly. In some ways, however, it has also remained the same. We learned a great deal from this study. It appeares that we are still on the right track with a learning model that encourages critical thinking and develops self-confident learners in students who trust the process and work through it. Nevertheless, this study has shown that we need to be paying much closer attention to the student voices that are trying to connect with us, particularly the critical voices. This should serve as an impetus to do a great deal more research in this area to understand better our students' perceptions and concerns and learn ways to overcome their objections. Further qualitative studies of this nature are needed not only to verify our findings of student perceptions of Supplemental Instruction, but also to add to recommendations for making it more effective for more students.

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In Their Own Words: Learning to Be a Peer Leader

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Using students who have done well in a course as peer leaders to facilitate small group learning has been formalized as a pedagogical model, Peer-Led Team Learning. The pioneering role of the peer leader must combine elements of content knowledge, learning strategies, and leadership skills, which are supported by training for this specialized role. This chapter details the training provided at the City College of New York through the peer leaders' reflections on practice. Becoming facilitators of learning through cycles of practice and shared reflections helps transform students into new leaders.

How can students assume leadership roles in their institutions of higher education, especially to help other students learn? Becoming a leader involves group processes, demanding collaboration and shared purpose (Astin & Astin, 2000). Active student engagement in college courses has been developed through various models of student-assisted learning (Miller, Groccia & Miller, 2001). Rather than relying on the traditional lecture as the sole method of imparting knowledge, instructors can foster student engagement through workshops and other group methodologies. Such efforts include the Emerging Scholars Program (ESP; Treisman, 1986, 1992), Supplemental Instruction (SI; Arendale, 2002), and Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL; Gosser, Kampmeier, Roth, Strozak, & Varma-Nelson, 2001). The PLTL model does share significant similarities with other models of group work, but its fundamental difference is that it is applicable for the entire class, rather than for a subset of the class, it is integral to the course, and it positions a student as the leader of a group. The PLTL model supports the advantages of small group learning by placing a "more capable peer" (Vygotsky, 1978) as the facilitator to support students working together to learn. Those students who have course content knowledge, interpersonal skills, and a willingness to lead can become peer leaders. Students who may not have been identified as "born leaders" find themselves in charge of a group of students who are novices in the subject. This chapter discusses the PLTL model and presents the voices of chemistry peer leaders at the City College of New York through their weekly journals to demonstrate their development in learning to be leaders through cycles of practice and shared reflections.

Peer-Led Team Learning as a Pedagogical Model

Peer-led team learning is a model of instruction first introduced in general chemistry in the early 1990s at the City College of New York (CCNY), a senior college of the City University of New York (CUNY).

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Formally scheduled student-led workshops became an integral part of the course. The originators of the peer-led workshops witnessed unforeseen enthusiasm following the first trials. In focus groups held in May 1994 (L. Gafney, personal communication, September 12, 2005), students and student leaders voiced overwhelming support for the model. In contrast to lectures, where students might not say anything the whole semester, students thought that PLTL workshops reduced anxiety because leaders explained concepts and definitions in a different way, using different vocabulary and examples. In all groups, students started out feeling and acting alone, but after a few weeks behaviors changed. Workshop leaders asked their students to explain problems, and as these students became increasingly confident, they in turn began questioning and helping each other. They found it beneficial that different students would often express the same idea in different ways and explained that the chance to make a lot of little mistakes helped to make connections in the brain.

The PLTL model was refined over the course of a decade by a team of science and mathematics faculty and learning specialists from diverse college campuses, and has been adopted at research I universities as well as at 2- and 4-year colleges in the United States (Dreyfuss, 2005). At CCNY, new leaders are recruited from those students who have received an A or B grade in general chemistry, and have an overall grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.75 after they take the course. Students can become peer leaders in the next semester. There is a formal application, interview, and acceptance process, which helps to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the faculty and the leaders, and serves as a first step in leader training. Students' responses to questions relating to typical workshop settings provide a strong indication of their potential for group leadership. Criteria for selection include the ability to communicate and positive attitudes towards assisting other students. Peer leaders earn $500 for a semester leading a group in a course. The weekly time commitment is the actual workshop (2 hours) and participation in workshop preparation (prep; 2 hours) and, during the first semester of peer leadership, leader training for 1 hour. About 600 students per semester take the general chemistry courses. The first semester's workshop is a mandatory component of the course, and in the second semester it is optional. Each semester, 60 peer leaders lead workshops and approximately 20 of these leaders are new each semester. Five or six faculty members teach general chemistry each semester, and each one is assigned a coordinator who is a peer leader who has served at least two semesters and oversees a group of experienced and new peer leaders. One undergraduate former peer leader serves as Workshop Coordinator for the Chemistry Department, coordinating peer leaders' schedules and payments. The workshop coordinator reports to the department chair and the chair of the general chemistry sequence, David Gosser, who is a chemistry professor, and works closely with A. E. Dreyfuss, the instructor of the peer leader training course, a learning specialist in adult learning. The workshop coordinator and Dreyfuss oversee the application, interview, and acceptance process. Experienced peer leaders also participate as interviewers of new applicants, and later help in the initial training of new leaders in the orientation session.

The Workshop Format

The chemistry faculty introduce the course's central concepts in lecture. Students are expected to attend lecture, complete readings, and do assigned problems, and a few questions (i.e., "self-test") prior to the workshop. Typically, workshops will begin with a brief review of the self-test. Students then work on specific problems in pairs, triads or other groupings at the peer leader's direction, using the workbook, *Peer-Led Team Learning: General Chemistry* (Gosser, Strozak, & Cracolice, 2005). The workshop concludes with a quiz of two to three problems. The quizzes are important because they help prepare students for individual performance on tests (Chukuigwe, 2003).

The best practice of PLTL is obtained without reliance on formal answer keys (Gosser, 2000; Morrison, 2001). This practice creates some initial discomfort for faculty, leaders, and students. Conclusions must be arrived at through debate and group problem solving, without appeal to external authority, relying on the understanding of one's own and others' knowledge.

Peer Leader Training

"The primary factor in the PLTL model that distinguishes it from other types of cooperative learning is the role of the leader, and thus, a high-quality leader training program is an important factor in successful implementation of a PLTL course" (Varma-Nelson, Cracolice, & Gosser, 2005, p. 44). At nearly all campuses that use PLTL, a presemester orientation meeting is held, that varies in length from 3 hours to 2 days. The most commonly used book to train leaders is *Peer-Led Team Learning: Handbook for Team Leaders* (2001) by Roth, Goldstein, and Marcus, which is used at CCNY. The material in it is drawn from a variety of sources including cooperative learning, tutoring practices, disability and diversity awareness training, group dynamics, workshop practices, and learning literature. The reflective journals have been a consistent practice as part of peer leader training on most campuses, even where the training is part of the weekly prep session with faculty (Roth, Cracolice, Goldstein, & Snyder, 2001). Nationally, only a few campuses have a specific peer leader training course.

The peer leaders' training course at CCNY is held in the fall and spring semesters, in concert with the hiring of new peer leaders. It is a one-credit course officially listed in the Education Department's schedule. The course begins with a two-day presemester orientation meeting, led by a team of the learning specialist (i.e., Dreyfuss, the course instructor) and experienced leaders. Chemistry faculty, especially those new to PLTL, attend the first day. The session starts with an "ice-breaker" where participants, working in pairs, interview each other and find two commonalities; they then introduce their partner to the whole group. Participants then go through a series of exercises, learning about such group techniques as brainstorming, round-robin, flow-charting, concept-mapping, steps in problem solving, questioning techniques and structured discussions to prepare them for their first and subsequent workshops. The meeting ends with the opportunity to voice their concerns and apprehensions, such as, "What if I don't know an answer," or "What do I do with a shy or dominant student?" Experienced leaders categorize the new leaders' concerns and guide the discussion to put them at ease. Interestingly, most of these concerns are fairly uniform from semester to semester, as shown in a typical list (Roth, et al., 2001, p. 44). The course continues during the semester with eight 1-hour sessions, and ends with a poster presentation on a question about their practice as workshop leaders, explored in light of a learning theory.

The course is based on constructivism, defined as focusing on "learning as sense-making" (Oldfather, West, White, & Wilmarth, 1999), using group activities and reflective writing. After working in groups in the class sessions, the peer leaders then have assigned readings in the textbook (*Handbook for Team Leaders*) and online, where they may also have to research a topic. Once the leaders have worked on activities in the class and discussed the process with their peers, they are more interested in reading about the topic after the class exercises, reflecting on a concrete activity (Smith & Kolb, 1986). Their journals incorporate what they practiced in workshop, based on the class activities and the readings. The weekly journals are posted on an online discussion forum using Blackboard software and the leaders are asked to comment on two other journals each week, ensuring a sharing of views, thus supporting and challenging each other in practicing a new role. The instructor monitors the discussion and adds comments, especially where there are unanswered questions or concerns.

Each class topic is introduced here with a synopsis of the class activities and the reading and writing assignments. A small sample of reflective writing and discussion over the course of one semester follows. The class from which this material is drawn was composed of 13 women and 8 men, and 15 student leaders in the class are represented at least once. The statements are noted as an excerpt from a journal, (i.e., the weekly writing assignment), or a comment by another student leader. These excerpts are organized chronologically in the order topics were presented in the class and are quoted verbatim, leaving grammar and syntax as is.

Topic One: Communication

In class, students read about the pair problem-solving technique (Narode, 2000), then take turns being the problem-solver or the listener. Debriefing

focuses on what difficulties they encountered in each role. The basics of communication in groups are reviewed, emphasizing the need for such factors as context, participation, trust, and confidentiality. For their assignment, students read from the *Handbook* and articles by peer leaders in the PLTL Workshop Project newsletter, *Progressions,* on getting started in workshops and basic learning principles. They write on their first workshop and comment on communication and miscommunication.

Leaders' journals began with a positive attitude, even when they were nervous meeting their group members for the first time. Their initial task was to have the students get to know each other and understand the purpose of the workshop as a team effort. The following peer leader's journal entry is representative:

> I think I made students feel more comfortable when I explained my leader role as the way to help them organize the ideas and exchange information with each other. At the beginning some of them called me a "teacher," some of them called me "professor." At the end I was very glad to hear them calling me just [by my name]. The orientation program was very helpful for me because I got some idea on how to start the first workshop. Very useful techniques, I think, were organizing students into small groups and exchange of the information between other groups. This is the way my students got to know each other and got involved in the team.

Another leader started using questioning techniques that had been learned during the second day of the orientation session.

> Instead of directly answering their questions I would say, "how do you think we should solve this problem" and it would automatically become a discussion with everybody putting heads together to solve the problem. I still have a lot to learn, but my first workshop went better than I expected that I'm actually looking forward to the next one.

A third leader used the round robin technique that had been tried during orientation, a sequential technique that ensures that each person in the group has a turn.

> I realized that the others in the workshop were normal students like me. To get everyone involved, I asked them if they knew the difference between a mixture and a pure substance. I ensured that everyone said something by using the round-robin approach. Everyone explained his/her answer openly and confidently.

Topic Two: Marginality and Mattering

In class, segments of 10 songs from different cultures are played. Students fill in a grid naming the singer, song, type of music, origin in what part of the world, or what they know about the music. Students then discuss their responses. The instructor notes that this is the "jigsaw" technique, where everyone helps to complete part of a puzzle. Students respond with surprise to hear popular music, even if they are not familiar with it. Out of 10 songs few will know more than 4 cuts. Students then rate 10 questions regarding nonverbal communication dealing in part with cultural norms, and discuss their responses in their groups. The phrase "marginality and mattering," suggested by Schlossberg (1989), is both simpler and more encompassing than pinpointing various aspects of diversity issues. Assigned readings from the *Handbook* are on race, class, gender, disabilities and sexual orientation. Students write to address an expectation posed in the *Handbook*, "Can you expect everyone to do well in workshop?"

How students' different abilities influence their willingness to learn and the role of leader in making them feel included in the group are discussed in this journal excerpt:

> Some students have never even taken a Chemistry course, while others may be Chemistry enthusiasts. I may have mature and focused students in my group mixed in with students taking the class for the third time. Others may have a very heavy course load or a very light course load. I may have a student with a disability and, as our handbook suggests, I may "have to work around that student's area of deficit

in order to impart and to evaluate the same body of information and sets of skills." The bottom line is that each person in my group has a different set of circumstances to deal with and Chemistry will be a high priority for some and a low priority for others. After just two workshops, the difference between my students is clear. Certain students just want the answer to problems and could care less how to work through a problem. These students have interrupted me at 3 pm asking to take the quiz so that they could leave. On the flip side, I have students who want to know the specifics on every step taken through a problem. These students don't want to move on to a new topic until they feel they comfortably understand the topic at hand. Although this prediction may be a bit premature since this is only the first "real" workshop, based on their actions, I anticipate that the more patient students will perform better in workshop than those who feel they just need to be physically present. In fact this correlation was shown in the first quiz. The students who paid attention and actively participated outperformed those who wanted to leave early.

Another student leader wrote of the analogy of the class activity and the chemistry workshop, and reflected on recognizing and accommodating different rates of learning.

> During the last Education class when we were doing the exercise with the music, I had actually heard most of the songs, but it wasn't until we were actually going over the exercise that I knew the names and the singers. The same thing happened in workshop a week ago. We were going over units and measurements in class, and quite a number of people were having trouble grasping it. I found myself going over the same thing again and again, at first it was a bit frustrating, but when I realized that it just took a little longer for them to grasp the concept, I had a little more patience with them. It is not their fault that they don't understand immediately. I believe the key is to just be a little more patient.

Awareness of various types of differences were examined through the peer leaders' journal entries, and leaders were finding ways to be inclusive:

> There are only a few people who seem like they are at a slight disadvantage, and that is mostly because of difficulty with language. All but one person in my workshop did great on the first quiz. The one person who struggled, I realize has more difficulty with the language, so I think I will try to pair him up with a student who has an easier time during the next workshop.

The next entry discusses the leader's emotions and his reaction to students' performances, reflecting on past experience as a strong student in workshop.

> Last week, I was feeling a bit discouraged when some of the students hadn't purchased their workbooks or completed the chapter 2 self-tests. However, this week has proved to be much better. I agree that a willingness on the part of stronger students to help out those who are struggling is integral to the success of workshop. I found last semester, that while helping out others, I was also able to "solidify" my own understanding of concepts.

Obstacles that the peer leaders encounter include how students will not willingly reveal what they don't know. The workshop offers an opportunity for the peer leader to uncover this unwillingness, well before a student does poorly on the first test. The following excerpt also points to how learning is not often encouraged as a collaborative practice, demonstrating how a student does not want to feel embarrassed, even if that student does not understand the material.

> One incident that troubled me during the second workshop was that I asked everybody if they finished solving a problem, and nobody complained, but when I asked one student to put up his work [on the board] he told me he didn't understand how to do the problem. I am not sure why he didn't mention this earlier, but I guess he might have expected me to call on somebody else.

> Another thing about the workshop that I found interesting was that most of the participants tended to work by themselves. Before every exercise I had to group them myself, and even then they were hesitant to work together. I am hoping that as the workshops continue they will become more comfortable with the group atmosphere.

That beginning sense of organizing the group members to help them learn from each other is echoed in the following comment:

> I tried a method of doing the problem without subunits. We still divided into groups of 2-3 people, and we did the problem together, but each group had to figure out or at least suggest (predict) the next step for doing the problem. If they couldn't, we figured out the step together. It works very well, I think.

The following two comments in response to reading other peer leaders' journals begin overtly to explore the role of leader:

> I think being a good leader is figuring out where your group lies and try to let the power lie mostly in their hands. If you just give them a topic or discussion to start off, it is so interesting to see where they take it.

> My students are very confident and very willing to help each other out, and just realizing this fact I believe makes a good leader. Also, if a student comes up to you after workshop, I find it beneficial to see what they have to say and see if they have any suggestions. Also, by talking to them you get a stronger sense of their background which will also help you to lead your workshop sessions. Basically, a good leader is one who listens, observes, and plays into context what they realize.

Topic Three: Action Science

In the class, students are presented with a question: Do you believe in equal rights for women? Then a riddle: A father and son are in an accident and are taken to the hospital. "I can't operate on that child," says the surgeon. "He's my son!" Who is the surgeon? After discussion, a brief lecture on action science (Argyris & Schon, 1974), presenting the idea of espoused beliefs as opposed to theory in use is illustrated by the example. Students are introduced to the need to examine assumptions behind their beliefs. Working in groups, they take turns making an origami pig from directions that are provided in the form of illustrations only (no written text), then are asked to draw a picture described to them by one person in their group. For their assignment, students research and annotate two sites on action science, providing appropriate citations. They are asked to explain how the class exercises tie in to Argyris and Schon's theory by examining what they discovered about themselves while completing these exercises, and how this theory ties into what they are doing in workshop.

Themes from previous sessions are brought up again and begin to take on greater meaning, as this journal excerpt revisits the topic of communication, and incorporates the theoretical aspects of action science.

> From the origami exercise, I discovered communication is an important element in learning. I also discovered that it is much harder to communicate to a group of people, especially when it involves multi-interpretation of a single set of instructions. I have been quite surprised in the last class; I have always thought of myself as a person who speaks her mind openly, when appropriate, but through this exercise, I discovered that I did not say most of my feelings and opinions, a true single-loop learner. However, it is a good thing I have discovered this "gap" between my espoused theory and my theory in use. That was a great class exercise that helped me learn more about who I am, how I execute my actions, and most importantly, how I learn and react to an ever-changing society/environment.

The following journal excerpt demonstrates how apt Argyris and Schon's theory is to learning in a team setting, even chemistry:

> The [action science] model can be used in either an organizational or interpersonal context involving individuals undertaking

challenging tasks together. It is clear how this theory relates to Chemistry workshop. As far back as the time I interviewed for this position, I can remember being told constantly that my role was not that of a teacher but rather a facilitator helping the students understand the material better. This role makes me a part of the group, and the challenging task we are undertaking together is the understanding of Chemistry. Thus we as leaders must develop and facilitate these conversations by presenting the appropriate questions to get our students thinking and talking. I may be going through a problem on the board and some students in my class may have a particular way of doing a problem. This situation presents some predicaments. Let's say one student has an easier way to go through a problem, a shortcut so to speak. If that student never speaks up to share his idea, he or she will never be able to verify if the shortcut works in every situation. If the shortcut doesn't always work the student may get an answer wrong under those circumstances, something that could have been avoided had he or she spoken up in workshop. If the shortcut does work in any chemical situation, the student's act of not sharing the idea is still detrimental because by explaining the shortcut to the others in the group, the student can truly see if he or she understands what is going on. Thus if the shortcut works but the student remains silent, the other students in the group will never know of it. In order to prevent something like this from occurring, I think that my actions as workshop leader are crucial. I also make it a point to ask the group if anyone knows of a shorter, easier way to go about the problem we are doing. If someone does they explain it to the rest of the group.

The same leader's journal continues by reexamining the topic of inclusion through the lens of action science, demonstrating how peer leaders build on their growing knowledge of learning theories.

> Another tool used in Action Science is the Ladder of Inference which asks us what we really believe and how our beliefs may affect how we as leaders view and interact with the students in our group. Not surprisingly, by participating in this exercise we see how our beliefs affect what data we select to see next time. For example, I have a track runner in my class. If I believe that athletes are dumb, this generalization may lead me to believe that this particular student will not do well in the class. It is very surprising to read about our behavior, we really see that most of our actions are governed by preset power. We do not think anew when confronted with new problems. This happened to me in class when discussing about the kid who got into an accident, and was about to be treated by his surgeon mother. At first I did not get it, due to the fact that I always expected a surgeon to be a man.

Topic Four: Stages of Group Formation

In the class students decide on the characteristics of an ideal team. Following a discussion of these characteristics, they discuss where each leader's group is in terms of the four steps of group formation: forming, storming, norming, and performing (Stetson, 2003). For their assignment, students read about collaborative practice, stages of group leadership, and relational leadership. They write about a technique they have tried in order to deal with a situation in workshop and compare what else might have taken place if they had taken another type of action.

The assignment brought forth situations that troubled the leaders and the opportunity to examine their practice. The first journal excerpt presented here discusses resistance to the leader's authority based on an assumption that expertise is demonstrated by age. Because of the peer leader's understanding of her role as a guide of learning, she was able to put the group back on track by dealing directly with what might have derailed the workshop.

> Personally I thought Tuesday's class was very important in our educational development. I for example had a problem with one of my students early in the semester. According

to the four stages of group development the incident falls within the second stage of storming. The oldest member of my workshop questioned my credibility and also my authority, in other words he didn't want to take me seriously. I don't think he liked the idea that I was a student. Perhaps he was looking towards having a second professor. This incident caused a bit of tension between us, but it did not affect the workshop's overall performance. Actually, I believe to have reached the fourth stage of performing during that particular workshop. At the end of workshop I went up to him to make things clear. Once again I told him that I was not there to teach but to guide students through the course. Putting it in simpler terms I am the intermediary between the pupil and pedagogue. He seemed to understand that perfectly and his response was positive. I believe he finally understood what my role was. Ironically he has been my most cooperative student ever since. If I hadn't talked to my student about my role in the workshop, we would still feel hostile and consequently hurt the workshop's performance. Perhaps he wouldn't be attending at all. So I think I took the right step in fixing that up.

A comment made in response to a journal demonstrates why the sharing of ideas is useful in helping leaders find solutions quickly in their new roles, and harks back to the issue of marginalization: "Thought it was interesting that your storming sessions included students that spoke a second language. I had not thought about that as a possibility."

The peer leader must be aware of the group's dynamics, and the week's topic helped to formulate a framework to work with in reexamining how the group is operating. One peer leader wrote how she had to go back to the beginning, to reestablish the group's sense of being a team.

> One example that I used would be in the category of forming. As my workshop class progressed, I discovered that everyone in my workshop did not know each other that well, and cliques were beginning to be formed. As a result of these the essence of workshop was lost, peer learning, learning from each other. So I decided to use a different approach from the icebreaker that I used on the first day of class. I told everyone to write their names on little pieces of paper and place them on the table. Then everyone took turns in picking a name, the rule being if its your name you put it back and pick another, after that we took turns in telling the whole class whose name we picked. It was amazing how many people didn't know each other's name. After that we sat in a circular arrangement and I shuffled everyone around, separating friends and everyone worked with people they usually don't work together with or sit next to. This helped in building the peer bond tighter and strengthening the workshop, they felt more comfortable working with each other. This I think was a great illustration of a forming stage from the activity we did in class.

Another leader commented how one of the readings directly affected her actions, and how constant reminders help the leader to concentrate on guiding the group, rather than falling back into the "teaching" role that is so commonly understood as necessary for learning. It also harks back to the examination of assumptions explored in the previous week's class topic.

> As I read Sue Rosser's (2001) story on Peter Adams it hit me. Instead of focusing on my students or the quiz, I should have been giving attention to my own actions in workshop. I had done most, in fact nearly all of the talking during that first session. My nerves got the best of me and I forgot that my role as a leader was not that of a teacher. Instead, I should have been a facilitator, guiding the students in problem solving strategies and allowing the students themselves to work together in working through a problem. In retrospect, I realized that I did not encourage any questions, comments, or answers from my group. Instead I just rambled on with the material I presented. Just as Ryan Rekuski (2001) identified silence as a problem and mapped out several solutions, I identified my "teaching" style as a problem in workshop and made some alterations. So, I first decided

> to sit along with the group for the bulk of the time in workshop as opposed to standing at the blackboard and in a way spitting out answers at my students. I'm glad that I was able to take an objective view of myself and open myself up to criticism. I could have easily dismissed the quiz grades as a result of the inattentiveness of my students. This act would have done nothing to ratify [rectify] the situation because I would have gone on with the same approach in workshop, thinking there was nothing wrong with what I was doing. Luckily I was able to see that I was the problem and not my students and thus far, I feel that workshop has been a great improvement.

How one leader's journal will resonate with another's experience is another benefit of the requirement to comment as shown in the next excerpt.

> I also had a similar situation of a student in my class who felt that way, he is an Engineering student and has never taken chemistry his whole life. He always felt intimidated and didn't like to ask questions as he felt his questions were stupid. What I did was encourage him to ask questions and every time he got it right I congratulated him, and that made him want to do more, I gave him tips on how to tackle chemistry, going back and laying a good chemistry background, learning the periodic table, bringing out the simplicity in chemistry by looking at the question, thinking about it, and reading on his own. This boosted him and he's doing much better now.

Topic Five: Scaffolding, Social Mediation, the Zone of Proximal Development

In the class students working in groups compare six recipes for baking bread and decide which is easiest and hardest to make by sharing information. They are then given material that provides further information on baking processes. Vygotsky's (1978) theories are introduced: language is the tool of learning and is socially mediated; a more capable peer provides scaffolding that can then be removed as a student understands the material; and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is defined as at the bottom what a learner can do alone, and at the top what a learner cannot do even with help (Cracolice, 2000). For the assignment, students read about Vygotsky's work and write how their workshop is going by describing a situation that is problematic, and then commenting on their classmates' situation by scaffolding other leaders.

I found that weak students get VERY discouraged when they get deprived from the right to participate in discussion. Then, if there is no equality between partners, group learning is much less successful. When some of my students got dominated by "smart" heads, they ignore workshop. That's why I think I pay a lot of attention of what kind of relationship my students build to each other. Another point that I want to emphasize from Vygotsky's theory is the intellectual transformation through the group as a part of successful learning. I noticed the particular importance of peer learning—students have a potential to catch useful information from their peers and they learn how to transform it into problem solving. Also, I think that group learning gives my shy students opportunities to speak—a very important (and hard!) skill. Students learn language of chemistry through the interaction with each other. The main purpose of the skill to "speak" is social. This means that students will be willing to ask questions of each other and to obtain help in solving problems. I think that each student must be able to recognize the use of the help of others and benefit from give-and-take activities and conversations with each other.

> Working as a team is so uncommon in "school" that behavior that is considered "correct" in traditional classrooms, only paying attention to the teacher, for example, suddenly seems incorrect in workshop, as noted in this comment:

> I agree that communication is very important, especially when it comes to the nonverbal kind. During the first few class sessions, the students would talk to me, solely, by turning and facing me, instead of their classmates when they had an answer to a problem. I think that they were probably looking for

> approval and to see whether or not they were on the right track. I encouraged the students to look at each other when they talked and to address their questions to their peers. I also have different students put up their version of the answers, and like you, learned a couple of different ways to solve one problem.

The reflection on this new role of peer leader is mentioned again in the following comment, where balancing the group members' interactions is learned wisdom:

> It's important, especially for me, that the squeaky wheel not always be the one to get the grease. That is, I don't want anyone to feel left out. This is especially important to keep in mind because I think our behavior as peer leaders sets the tone for how the students treat each other.

The importance of anonymous feedback was introduced in the orientation session, using Brookfield's (1995) "Critical Incident Questionnaire" and other instruments, and the student leaders are regularly asked for feedback in the class. Practicing this technique, however, is not easy for the leader, who has to be willing to ask the students how things are going. This next leader's journal provides a clever and insightful way of checking on progress.

> My workshop is going ok but not up to the mark it should go though. In my last workshop, I asked my peer students to answer two questions anonymously. The questions I gave were, "what do you like about the workshop" and "what you don't like about the workshop." I also asked them to give me suggestions to make changes in the workshop. As I can recognize all of their handwritings, I asked my friend to read those answers for me. I got tremendous feedback through this activity. Through their responses, I realized that some of them are doing good and enjoying the workshop while a couple of the students are facing problems with my voice tone. I got very good suggestions such as I need to be more assertive and that I should give more homework. I think the feedback questions really helped me to understand what problems students are facing in my workshop.

The leaders must juggle several concepts at a time, not only dealing with content but also time management skills, ensuring the group is working together, and that individual students understand the problems. Vygotsky's (1978) idea of scaffolding is explored in the next two comments. One leader wrote,

> Yes, it is true what you say in your last paragraph. Sometimes what I do is that I don't always pair smart students with those who are little behind. It is kind of helpful because when in a group nobody sees immediately the answer, they tend to work together and share their ideas within the group before they come up with an answer.

Another agreed,

> Hey! I think you are totally right that students collaboratively find solutions to challenging problems, they benefit from this social interaction. I found that some of my students prefer group learning because they need to exchange their thoughts about the solution with each other, otherwise, they are not sure if they are solving the problem correctly. They get approval and support from group member(s), they get more encouraged to proceed to the next step together with everyone else. Good job!

Topic Six: Motivation and Self-Determination Theory

In the class, students first work in pairs describing how they might use "Smarties" candies (15 small sugar disks in a clear wrapper) in any type of lesson (e.g., in chemistry, biology, nutrition, mathematics). Discussion of the activity points out that this was extrinsic motivation, because the instructor gave them instructions. The instructor then reads statements and students circle their reactions of how the statement made them feel. The subsequent discussion and comparison of reactions

addresses why there are different motivations for learning and the role of emotion. Students read about Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (Richard, 2001) and how groups help students develop intrinsic motivation for learning. In their journals, the peer leaders examine ways to motivate students to learn course material extrinsically and intrinsically.

The student leaders are comfortable in their roles by this sixth week, and thoughtful about ways to help their students learn as shown in three excerpts that follow. One leader wrote,

> I found that one effective way of motivating them was if they saw that as I explained concepts and theories to them I was enjoying it, they might want to understand why I am so into what I am doing, and in the process learn something as well.

Another agreed, "You're right, seeing the reason why they have to learn a concept/idea can sometimes make them want to learn it or at least put it into perspective as to why they have to learn it." Finally, another per leader asserted,

> I believe personal relationships must be established in order to have a functional workshop. Students must care for each other, as well as for the subject, in order for them to truly learn. It is through this assignment that I learned emotion is one of the techniques to instigate intrinsic motivation. And so, emotions have a lot to do with motivation. If you truly care about something (internal motivation), then you would want put in all your heart and effort to master that technique or learn that subject.

Topic Seven: Developmental Theories

In the class students list the pros and cons of using answer keys and are introduced to Perry's (1970) four main stages of development, and Belenky's additional concept of the role of silence (Belenky, Clichy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). They read material on stages of development and write about a difficulty they have experienced explaining a concept in workshop, indicating what they did to resolve the problem. Allowing themselves to be explicit about uncomfortable situations is noteworthy for the leaders' growing sense of maturity in their role. The workshop provides a clear example of a method that moves students from a dualistic stage—the professor as authority—to a more nuanced stage where students learn to evaluate and commit to their own understanding, as noted in the following journal excerpt and answering comment. The peer leader wrote,

> Giving the answers is hard not to do. The students in my workshop want to know if they are solving the problems correctly. I think it is valid once you have gone through a process of trying to solve a problem to then check the answer and see if you have solved it with the right process. This past week, we did this in workshop. I did not give the answer and had two groups that came up with different answers. I still would not give an answer as to which was correct. Each group selected a person to present their theory of solving the problem. When one group was up, they discovered a flaw in their process and it explained why their answer was different from the other group. By having the students explain this process, they learned more than I could have ever taught them by just sharing the answer. It was really hard to do, I felt as if I were wasting time—time that could be spent going over additional problems and getting more material across to the students. It was truly a hard decision for me to make. Even now, despite the learning process the students went through, I still think about if I made the correct decision—could they have gone through more problems?

And the peer leader received this feedback on the journal entry:

> The method you tried in your workshop is more of a contemplative approach, where instead of working on getting answers they try to see different ways of working on the problem. I think it's good that you introduced them to two different aspects, so that they can learn to balance them themselves. I agree with you. I think this is

the role of the leader—it is not necessarily comfortable, it puts one out on a limb, but it creates "learning space" for the students.

Becoming comfortable integrating theory and its application in workshop is by now evident, as voiced in the following two journal excerpts:

> I think that Perry is (or would be) a true opponent of the answer key because he puts learning from the answer key on his lowest stage of knowledge. At this stage student receives knowledge from someone else and simply memorizes it. I think that when you give the answer key, you really block a student from the ability to think, put together his knowledge, research for unknown material, and prove his answer with the facts. In Perry's material "The Student's Experience" [in the *Handbook*] I was amazed to read how he emphasized the importance to support your answer, because any fact without the support is meaningless, whereas the opinion supported by ideas, is respected. In my workshop, I try to not even tell my students that I have solved the problem before. I sort of trick them and say: hey, guys, let's take a new problem and try to solve it together and then share the ideas. Usually we put individual answers and compare them. If none of my students can solve the problem, I give it as homework for research (which is they can ask anyone to help them). I also pay more attention to how my students can support their opinion.

The following journal entry also reflects the leader's level of comfort:

> In my last workshop, one of my students volunteered to show the other students an alternative method in solving a chemistry problem. I was relieved and happy that someone was willing to propose a different method, mainly because my students were not grasping the concept that I was trying to convey. It turned out my student's method was easier to grasp and also made logical sense. I was very glad to see that my students were learning and that their peer was leading the class, not me, for once. Actually, I am quite glad that some of my students now take the initiative to help other students by sharing their knowledge.

Topic Eight: Learning Styles

In class students compare their individual profiles using the learning styles instruments (Kolb, 1985; Soloman & Felder, n.d.), and discuss learning styles they have observed among their workshop students. They read about learning styles as discussed by Felder and others in the *Handbook*, such as Howard Gardner (multiple intelligences) and Mary Nakleh (algorithmic vs. conceptual learners). They write about what they learned about themselves and their adjustment to students with a different learning style.

The emphasis in the next journal excerpt, based on Felder's dichotomies (Soloman & Felder, n. d.) demonstrates the integration of the learning styles as a way of dealing with all types of learners:

> While some students like working the problem step by step (sequential learners) because they don't figure out directly a way to get the answer, others view the full picture and pop out with a shorter way to solve the problem. To ensure that students with different learning styles than mine are comfortable I try to use different approaches to explain them new concepts. For example I let them talk about what they know about the new material (active) and give them some practical examples that relate to real life (when I can find them)—sensor. After they work out the exercises in pairs (reflective), using the formulas and algebras (intuitive) before one student puts the solution on the board. This way we discuss it out loud (active) for possible discrepancies or new ways of solving the problems (active and global). When I have to explain a concept they haven't learned yet in the lecture, I try to balance the diagrams and sketches on the board with oral and written explanations to satisfy both visual and verbal learners. Also the [General Chemistry] workshop book is very helpful to me because most of the time the exercises are designed for all types

of learning styles. And this is good for the students because not only they learn in a style suitable for them but also are exposed to different learning styles.

Examining Outcomes

In both formative and summative evaluations of the PLTL model, peer leaders demonstrate that they see themselves as guides and not teachers, conduits between the students and the course instructor. They are enthusiastic about being leaders, and they find that their own understanding of the course content improves because of their involvement (Gafney, 2001).

The PLTL project's primary assessment of student performance has been based on grade comparisons and surveys of students, and there has not been much examination of the role of the peer leader. Blake (2001) compared the performance of former workshop leaders (n = 42) with that of nonleaders (n = 144), and found that former leaders scored 20% higher than nonleaders on tests of course content, even though the nonleaders who had been tested had taken more advanced chemistry courses. Gafney and Varma-Nelson (2002) conducted a study of past leaders (n = 26) to determine how they viewed their PLTL experience after having graduated from college. Sixteen respondents reported that acting as a peer leader was their most valuable undergraduate experience, and that it increased their confidence and early success in gaining entry to and making progress in science-related careers. It also made them more effective in interacting with people in a variety of situations—giving presentations, participating in discussions, and working as members of a team.

The Reflective Practitioner: Becoming a Peer Leader for Team Learning

The reflections on their practice reveal that peer leaders participate in a series of small transformative experiences that help them assume this innovative role, facilitating learning with a team. The novice peer leaders, having mastered content in the General Chemistry first-semester course, come to realize that supporting group learning demands a varied set of skills. As made explicit in their reflections, they experiment with techniques often inspired by the theoretically-based readings, and they report willingly on their results. Class members begin to debate and question their methods. Intellectual and personal development are clear, from the beginning expressions of nervousness through the maturation of peer leaders' views of their role and their students' learning. Peer leaders learn to be reflective practitioners (Schon, 1987), first through their own writings; then through their dialogue and an examination of their assumptions. It is an important first step to assuming relational leadership (Lucas, Komives, & McMahon, 1998). Through their guided learning in the Leader Training course, peer leaders find their more public voices and become exemplars of nascent leadership. They thus fit into the discussion of social change on campus (Astin & Astin, 2000) by supporting team learning through their facilitation.

Throughout the 15 years developing the Peer-Led Team Learning project, the students' voice has been prominent. In our dissemination efforts of presentations and faculty development workshops undergraduate peer leaders have participated as partners. They have presented their view of the PLTL model with great clarity and passion. In workshops, they have led groups of faculty in sample workshops to illustrate the model vividly. Our evaluation has shown their participation to be a key element in convincing faculty and administrators to consider implementing PLTL. But it is in the peer leaders' journals that we gain the deepest insight into the peer leader experience and what it reflects about the PLTL model. The PLTL leader training course at CCNY provides a structure within which the peer leaders can explore their experience in leading small group workshops on a weekly basis. The issues of communication, leadership, marginality, motivation, learning styles, and scaffolding could be abstract concepts in many other contexts—those in which they have no clear immediate application. However, as the peer leaders develop their leadership skills, these concepts take on a reality that both assists them in conducting chemistry workshops and in understanding the potential of their new role.

Furthermore, the leaders' journals provide us, as learning specialist and faculty, with real insight into the learning processes of our students. The

peer leader is in a unique and valuable position to understand from a student's point of view the process of learning in the workshops, and to mediate that meaning to us. This validates the student voice, which is often seen in opposition to faculty, in an "us versus them" paradigm that is counter productive. Our experience is thus not just that the student's voice is important, but that it must have a vehicle for expression that is empowered. Peer-Led Team Learning is one model where this is achieved.

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Teacher-Student Collaboration in the First-Year Experience

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In this chapter a faculty member and two undergraduate students investigate the practice of first-year undergraduate students serving as teaching assistants. The chapter is primarily a dialogue of three sections divided into three subsections. In each section a theme is initiated by one author, followed by commentary from a second author, and concluded by commentary by the third author, addressing both of the previous authors' commentaries. In the next two sections the authors' positions are rotated. Overall, the juxtaposition of the sections—and the subsections within—shows how teacher-student collaboration in the first year increases the academic experience of both students and teachers.

Walt Jacobs is a faculty member in the General College of the University of Minnesota. Jocelyn Gutzman and David McConnell are University of Minnesota graduates who participated in Walt's classes (as students and as teaching assistants) during the 1999-2000 year. All were in their first year at "The U" (as it is termed in local discourse) during this time period. In this chapter we will critically reflect on our first-year experiences, focusing on the creative possibilities of close professional and personal contact between students and professors in a developmental education program such as that of The U's General College.

The General College (GC) is one of the nation's oldest developmental education programs. It offers a pre-transfer, credit-bearing undergraduate curriculum for students entering degree-granting colleges in the University of Minnesota. GC's curricular model includes a multi-disciplinary range of courses integrating both skills and academic content, providing students with a set of perspectives and academic training for continuing work directly in their majors. Students can take courses in writing, math, sciences, social sciences, and humanities, all of which fulfill university graduation requirements. Students typically transfer to degree-granting colleges of the university at the mid-point or end of their second year (see Lundell, 2001, for a more complete overview of GC).

We believe that a collaborative piece by a professor and two students can shed many insights into the multiple complexities of education in the 21st century, such as those of the semi-open admissions wing of a major research university. To capture one of those complexities we have chosen a somewhat novel format for presenting our ideas. Following recent discussion about the purpose of developmental education to establish a pluralistic and discursive framework instead of one that focuses on standardized "deficits" and remediation (Lundell & Collins, 1999), we will

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construct the chapter as a series of three first-person themed conversations. More specifically, in each conversation we adopt a dialogical format involving three subsections. In each subsection one author will initiate a theme, which will be followed by comment from a second author, which is concluded by commentary by the third author, addressing both of the previous authors' commentaries. In the next two conversations the authors' positions will be rotated. Walt was part of a team that used this method in an invited meditation on graduate students' teaching perspectives (Hare, Jacobs, & Shin, 1999); Jocelyn and David also believe that the format can powerfully illustrate the worlds of professors and undergraduates. The juxtaposition of the three conversations—and the subsections within—will create a rich tapestry of teacher-student collaboration in the first-year experiences of both students and teachers.

Teachers as Text

> I attempt to construct my classroom as a place of radical possibility, a space in which my students and I attempt to make invisible societal dynamics visible, and co-create strategies to make our social worlds more understandable, pleasurable, and just. My classroom, therefore, is often contentious, as I encourage students to challenge and deconstruct a variety of issues and ideas, including my own. Many students find this process unsettling and resist full immersion, but it is my hope that sooner or later the experiences and knowledges gained from the class will increase their level of critical literacy.

Walt

The epigraph is the first paragraph of the teaching statement I sent to the General College (GC) in a November 1998 application for a position as an assistant professor of social sciences. I was a bit worried that sentiments like a desire to create "radical and contentious" spaces could turn off some of the sociology departments to which I applied (and they did!), but I had a feeling that these ideas would be an asset in the application to GC (and they were). In the aftermath of my January 1999 job talk to GC faculty and staff I was told that there was a place for my postmodern-influenced ideas, and I was encouraged to continue my explorations as part of an effort to make the GC a national leader in the field of developmental education. Although I had very little exposure to "developmental education," I figured that any place that was receptive to postmodernism and demanded excellence in undergraduate education had to be a good place for me. Besides, I'd spent four summers in the late 1980s in the Twin Cities and loved the climate, socially as well as environmentally. I was eager to return to see if I could also stand up to the rough winters, so I jumped at the chance.

During those summers I was an undergraduate intern at a Fortune 500 company; during the academic year I was an electrical engineering student at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta. I'd also grown up in Atlanta, which is 70% African-American. My first summer in 90% White Minnesota, not surprisingly, was full of shocks, such as witnessing White people working at low-skill jobs in McDonalds! Overall, the exposure to new people and cultures was a pleasant surprise, and it planted the seed of my interest in exploring social stratification and inequality.

Shortly after graduation in 1990 I found engineering employment in rural Indiana. In my second year, however, I realized that my interest in studying my co-workers vastly outweighed my engineering interests and skills. For instance, I designed and administered surveys to try to figure out connections between our disparate perspectives and social locations. I was one of few African-Americans, pro-Feminists, non-Christians, and urbanites. Aside from gender I was quite the outsider! After being told that I was doing "sociology without a license," I enrolled in Indiana University's (IU) sociology Ph.D. program in 1993. In my master's essay I conducted in-depth interviews with 12 of my former coworkers to explore our past interactions, and their perceptions of me as a person who attempted to improve race relations between Blacks and Whites. That experience, in turn, has influenced my teaching philosophy and methods ("I attempt to make invisible societal dynamics visible") used throughout my academic career.

At the center of my teaching philosophy and methods is a concept I call "the teacher as text" (Jacobs, 1998). The literature on developmental education and critical pedagogy is filled with exercises for increasing student agency and decreasing arbitrary and oppressive aspects of teacher authority (Dwinell & Higbee, 1997; hooks, 1994; Pedelty, 2001). In such projects, the literacies, practices, and aspirations of students are the point of departure for helping student and teacher alike construct a critical literacy of the everyday. The teacher as text strategy, on the other hand, uses the teacher's world as the gateway. In part, this means exploring how the messenger affects an existing message (Moore, 1997), but it also means that we examine how the message itself is dependent on the construction of the messenger. In other words, teachers center ourselves (share personal "articulations," connections of social issues that serve some interests and groups at the expense of others) in an effort to invite students to displace us (create disarticulations) and center themselves (generate rearticulations). Establishing the teacher as text, in sum, subverts traditional understandings of authority; authority as the embodiment of valued social characteristics (e.g., age, gender, race, ethnicity, etc.) is replaced by authority as the ability to create contexts that resonate on a lived level of consciousness. As the first semester got underway, I wondered: "If this resonates strongly with some of the students maybe they can, in turn, be teachers as texts to their peers?" I decided to test that question in the second semester of my first year, so I secured permission to hire two undergraduate teaching assistants (TAs).

Before we get too deep into the theory—and practice—of the teacher as text in the next two conversations (centered on "multiculturalism" and "marginality"), we should meet David and Jocelyn. Let me conclude with a brief note about why I chose them to be TAs. Both were in the same section of my fall 1999 GC1211 "People and Problems" course, which is basically "Introduction to Sociology." Halfway through the semester David approached me after class and asked for a list of sociology books, as he was really getting into the course topics and wanted to explore them in more depth than could be covered in an introductory survey course. Of course, teachers get warm and fuzzy when we hear that, and I was no exception! I had employed undergraduate TAs at IU and wanted to use them again at The U, so figured that anyone who volunteered for extra work would be an ideal TA candidate. David was the only student who ever asked for extra readings so he was a natural choice.

I can't remember exactly when I first pegged Jocelyn as a possibility for my second TA slot, but I am pretty sure it was after one of her in-class comments early in the semester. Jocelyn had a unique take on the "sociological imagination," the ability to connect personal experiences to societal issues and problems and explain the interconnections between both (Mills, 1959). Jocelyn insisted that a philosophical discussion of "the human spirit" be added to the concept, which impressed me because most students usually accepted definitions at face value; someone who questioned black boxes would also be a natural candidate.

Luckily for me, both accepted invitations to serve as TAs and were able to work the duties into their schedules. At times they questioned their decisions, but overall I think that we're all satisfied with the way things turned out. If I had to redo my first year I would select them again as TAs. Indeed, freshmen can be invaluable teaching assistants (Jacobs, 2002)!

David

Well, I completely agree with that statement (i.e., TAs are satisfied with experiences). I had many notable experiences as a TA, and I also learned much from the readings that Walt gave us to read after we officially became his teaching assistants. The most interesting to me was the "Teacher as Text" article (Jacobs, 1998) that Walt himself wrote. What I enjoyed the most was when he talked about how teachers should admit when they make mistakes. When they do this they break the myth that teachers are infallible and create a bond between student and teacher. Students make mistakes all the time, as well as teachers, but many teachers don't want to acknowledge this, because they think they will decrease the respect we have for them. I think that the opposite occurs and we become closer because a bond is made about how we all are human and can

teach and learn from each other. Yes, we students are here at The U to learn from teachers, but teachers can also learn something from us. That's what I wanted in college, but I did not expect to find that it was the standard.

So I was pleasantly surprised by my first-year experience in GC. In high school I figured that I'd end up at the University of Minnesota because my GPA wasn't very high, and I didn't have the money to go to school out of state. I assumed that I'd end up in the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) because that's where my interests (social sciences, social service) were housed. So although I was pleased when I got the letter of acceptance to The U, I was disappointed when I didn't get into CLA and was placed in GC. I had not heard about GC at all before my acceptance. I talked to some of the students that attended the university and learned that GC was considered "Grade 13" by many students. They gave me the impression that GC was really easy and inferior to all of the other colleges at the university. I loved high school for the social aspects, but my mind was starving intellectually. I thought that GC would be more of the same.

I did have one outstanding teacher in high school, and the GC1211 class format reminded me of him. Actually, I took a sequence of three history courses with this same teacher. Basically, he stressed critical thinking. In my other classes I was able to slide through by regurgitating the book on tests. In these history classes, on the other hand, I was forced to give my own opinion and then back it up. In the process I was taught to examine the positions of other speakers and identify their biases and agendas. This is the process of articulation (Slack, 1996), and it was central to the way GC1211 was taught. Class discussions in both the high school history classes and in GC1211 depended on us: we had to formulate articulations and keep the discussion going. We didn't just learn facts to be spit back later. We learned how facts were *constructed* and how they could be applied to our own personal stories. So after a few classes in GC1211 I felt very comfortable with the discussions and even felt like I had an advantage over other students. We didn't just give book answers, but instead we learned to create original ideas by extending previous knowledge.

That brings me to why I asked Walt for some additional readings. In class we focused on modern theories about the workings of society; I wanted to know more about the classics. I knew that all these modern theories stemmed from an original idea somewhere deep below, and I wanted to be able to draw the connection between those modern theories and the old classics.

Another huge advantage with GC is its small tight-knit community feeling. This is where being in GC has been a big benefit for me. I got to know a little about some of my other professors, which is hard to do if the class has 300 people in it. GC's small class sizes really helped me get the one-on-one attention that I needed. I also benefited from individualized attention from my advisor, who constantly e-mailed me about events, workshops, and classes that may be useful for my interests. Finally, I got to know many of my peers, as we shared some of the same classes, and I saw them in many different places in Appleby Hall and around the university.

Overall, the GC creates an environment where we are individuals, not numbers. There are problems with the system (as in any system), but in general it is a good place to realize potential that was not met in high school. I am glad that I started my student career there.

Jocelyn

After applying to four different colleges, I decided that the University of Minnesota was the right place for me. Once I received my acceptance letter, I was more than thrilled. I was pleased to be attending one of the Big Ten schools that was not too far away from home. It wasn't until I read the whole letter that I realized I was not accepted into CLA, but instead accepted into GC. I figured that both the colleges offered the same amount of classes and opportunity, but to my surprise GC was completely different than CLA.

I didn't know much about GC other than that it is set up as a starting ground to prepare students for transfer into one of the other colleges within The U. So from the start, I felt that I was placed in a school that was more for the "slackers" in high school. After realizing this, I was more or less disappointed

that the University of Minnesota did not see me as a valid candidate to attend CLA. I then told myself that this was based solely on GPA and class rank. Coming from a graduating class of 650, I realized that my class rank was greatly affected by this. Nevertheless, I was determined from that point on to make the best of my experience at GC.

Once I arrived at college, I found out quickly that the overall perception of GC was not a very good one. Stereotypes such as "Ghetto College" and "Appleby High" were just a few names that were placed on GC. I wondered why these stigmas were there and if they were really true. Within no time, I saw why some of these stereotypes existed. The GC is structured completely different from the CLA. Some of the differences include smaller classes, one-on-one attention, and having all classes located in one building versus multiple buildings.

I had an open mind towards the whole environment, however. I was pleased to have smaller class sizes where I could actually communicate with my professors on an individual basis. However, I did feel as though our every move was being closely monitored, in case of a slip up. An example of this would be the attendance taken at the beginning of class. This really surprised me to find out that we were actually required to attend all of our classes, and if we failed to do so our grade would be affected. Most of my classes did proceed in this fashion. It wasn't until I was in Walt's class that mandatory attendance was not a requirement to pass the class. So from the start, I knew that this class would be a different experience from the rest of my classes.

As David mentioned, GC1211 was a very open class in which our ideas really did matter. In some of my other classes the students' experiences were not validated. In those types of classes it seemed that we were empty vessels to be filled rather than already formed individuals who wanted to stretch our boundaries. I came to see GC as a place in which this could be done, and I looked forward to being the TA in GC1211 to help other students examine this same ideology.

When I started the TA assignment I was leaning towards majoring in psychology when I transferred to CLA. By the end of the semester I was thinking about majoring in sociology because I applied sociological thinking to an unpleasant experience in my psychology class. This class was a computer-based course with very little human interaction. The purpose was to learn the fundamental terms and concepts of psychology, which is great if you're absolutely sure you want to be a psych major, but that is not the case for most of us. More specifically, if you accept the empty vessel model of learning, this class would be great. However, I have learned that there are other models through conversations with Walt and David. Gaining inside information about the system is one of the many benefits I received from working as a TA. This is one of the ideas we will explore later in the third conversation included in this chapter.

A True Multicultural Education?

Our second conversation presented here revolves around multiculturalism, which is central to the General College mission (Higbee, Lundell, & Arendale, 2005).

Jocelyn

I will never forget one specific event that permanently changed my personal thoughts, which brought me to a better understanding of race and gender. Throughout the semester, Walt, David, and I had weekly meetings. Once a week we would get together and discuss the excitements that occurred, questions we had, and things we would like to change. Somehow we got on the topic of why Walt chose David and me to be his TAs. Intrigued by this, I listened intently. I always wondered in the back of my mind why I was chosen to be a TA. I waited in excitement for the spotlight to be turned on me. Walt faced me and said, "And you Miss J, I chose you for a few reasons. First because I saw a certain spark in your sociological imagination that differed from your peers, second because you are a female, and third because you are White."

After hearing these words, I felt my throat drop into my stomach. My intelligence only gave me a slight advantage over the rest of my peers, but being a White female made me a definite candidate. This harsh realization tore deeply at my insides. I left Walt's office feeling more lost than ever. I could

not understand how my physical characteristics played a role in ensuring a job that I thought I had earned. According to Walt's teaching philosophy statement at the beginning of this chapter, students find some of his methods unsettling and resist full immersion. I was not comfortable when Walt classified me as being a White female. On the other hand, I thought that his confrontation with me was his way of creating a place of radical possibility. Walt says, "I attempt to make invisible societal dynamics visible." He made the fact that I was a White female visible to me. For the first time in my life I was forced to confront my feelings about being a White female and also being selected for an assignment because of my race and gender.

Issues such as race and gender can easily be overlooked or pushed under the table. Such issues may not arise in regular conversation, whether it be by choice or simply unawareness. Many people feel uncomfortable discussing race and gender because they feel it may offend someone if the conversation goes too far. However, if these things are not examined, when will we ever grow as a society? These are the issues we are forced to deal with in our everyday lives. To live in a world where we do not recognize these issues leaves us minimal room for growth. It is our duty as human beings to learn, explore, and question the things that do not come naturally to us.

After examining my thoughts, I realized that Walt didn't mean any harm by his statements made towards me. Granted he saw a certain spark in my sociological imagination, but he also saw me as being a White female. The realization that my racial identity helped play a role in ensuring the TA position was one of great significance to me. With my newly found racial identity and its implications, I developed as a person and a TA.

Because I had the opportunity to be a TA and work with Walt, concepts such as race and gender were not only learned; they were felt. I was able to comprehend and critique the concepts I had been learning about throughout the year on a more personal level. In the GC1211 textbook, the editor says, "The sociological imagination not only compels the best sociological analyses but also enables the sociologist and the individual to distinguish between 'personal troubles' and 'public issues.' By separating these phenomena, we can better comprehend the sources of and solutions to social problems" (Ferguson, 1999, p. 1). I was experiencing the true meaning behind the sociological imagination for the first time.

Walt

Jocelyn ends with a nice summary of Mills' "sociological imagination" concept. Perhaps another concept we should add to the table is Patricia Hill Collins' (1991) "matrix of domination." She argued that Americans tend to highlight those aspects of our identities in which we suffer disadvantages and downplay our privileged identities. For instance, as an African American male I am more likely to be sensitive to the operation of race and ignore my gendered privileges. Collins argued that no one person's set of social statuses are totally subjugated or completely privileged; we should examine the intersections of advantages and disadvantages rather than construct static hierarchies of "who is the 'most' oppressed group."

I always have a tough time encouraging students to completely enter the matrix and examine complex interactions. Usually my use of the movie "Space Traders" (Jacobs & Brooks, 1999; David also discusses it in the next section) goes a long way to this end, but there are always students whom the movie does not completely reach. After all, by the time students have reached college they have been powerfully socialized into a very individualistic view of society and have a tough time identifying the operation of social structures in their lives. I was a bit surprised, however, when Jocelyn reacted so strongly to my comments, as I thought that she had fully grasped the main ideas about social stratification. I started to wonder about where I had gone wrong in my teaching.

Jocelyn's comments provide me with the basics of an answer. She talks about how she was forced to deal with the matrix since she could not avoid it—among other things, she'd have to write about it in this chapter! In my classes I did not integrate lessons about the matrix as I thoroughly as I did in graduate school. I believe that I relied too much on a "corporate multiculturalism" (McLaren, 1995) that highlights differences as good rather than a more sustained critique of how difference can be

used for bad as well as for good. In other words, we should not only teach tolerance for difference, but we should also teach consequences of difference in our own lives (Cruz, 1996; Davis, 1996; Lubiano, 1996). I failed to fully take the extra step because I was not sure how it would be received here in the GC; now I realize that it is not only welcomed, but it is expected in the course of daily instruction.

My unfamiliarity with GC's culture of diversity also played a role in the choice of TAs. I selected White students out of a desire to avoid the charge of "favoritism" by selecting students of color. This is an interesting dilemma: on the one hand we want to expose students of color to areas in which they are underrepresented, but in so doing can contribute to the backlash against them (hooks, 1994). In the abstract, I have learned that we must be willing to risk backlash in order to challenge oppressive structures. In particular, I've learned that GC is very receptive to supporting underrepresented groups of whatever stripe. In the past I employed TAs from a variety of different groups (e.g., race, gender, age, sexual orientation, class) and should—and will—do it again in the future.

David

I was introduced to many appealing ideas in my first year of college. Perhaps one of the most interesting ideas that came to me was the matrix of domination. I was intrigued with the idea that a lot of people do not think about other peoples' problems enough and only concentrate on the shortcomings of their own groups. That does not mean that there are not those who fight against inequalities for all people, but like Jocelyn was saying, there has to be some personal connection to that particular inequality before most people lift an eyebrow.

I've had the benefit of going to diverse schools my whole life (well, as diverse as Minnesota can get), so I've been exposed to many different cultures since an early age. I feel that because I have been exposed to a variety of cultures I am pretty comfortable debating issues of race, class, or gender. On the other hand, however, I am not as comfortable debating issues concerning homosexuality because I have not been challenged and confronted all the time like I have by people of different races, classes, and gender. The matrix says that members of privileged groups should challenge the prejudices of other members of that group. For example, as a male I should challenge other men when they make sexist comments, as well as refraining from dishing them out myself. Getting the courage to do this can be one of the hardest things to do but also the most rewarding.

One of the movies Walt showed in class is "Space Traders" (Hudlin & Hudlin, 1994). In this movie extraterrestrial aliens visit the U.S. and make this offer: "Give us all of your Black citizens and we will give you environmental, technological, and financial riches." The aliens give the government five days to decide, and they put the question to a national vote. In the end the American people vote to send Black people away by something like 60% to 40%.

My first reaction to the action of sending away all Blacks was that this was pretty ridiculous, but at the same time the idea seemed hauntingly real. Then I really began to think about all the people that I knew who were closet-racists—people who would never say their opinion out loud, but disclose them around people they trust, when their real feelings come out from behind the mask. When I really thought of it, if the vote were real it most likely would pass because I realized that there are learned prejudices in all of us and especially with the issue of race. Although we don't want to think about it, our ideas about the worth and value of groups other than our own are still very strong.

In the fall Walt replicated the vote in the movie: he asked students to anonymously tell the class if they thought the vote would pass if taken today and how would they personally vote. Amazingly, two personal yes votes were in the slips of paper Walt counted (in addition to 10 or so general yes votes). I was not in class that day, but I couldn't believe it when I heard that one person identified himself as a yes vote! While I was amazed that he felt free to voice his ideas even though he would get obvious static from everyone, I wish that more people had engaged him, especially other White people. I would like to think that I would have spoken to him about it.

Actually, I did, when I ran into him on the bus the next semester. I talked to him about his beliefs and why he voted yes. He said that in college he felt that he should not have to hide what he believed. I told him that I respected that and told him that if he would respect my opinion I would respect his. I figured for me to disregard his opinion as stupid and ignorant would only be stupid and ignorant of me. So we went on to have a really great discussion, while at the same time both of us giving respect to the other person's opinion despite the vast differences. I have often thought about this experience in wonderment, wonderment at how college had matured my thinking. If this man had met me a year earlier with his ideas of how the world was supposed to be, I would have probably hurt him. I think that my actual response was the right one because violence does no good.

As a TA, I had the opportunity to talk to many people about their ideologies. I want to say, though, that I don't tell them what to think. I just ask them to consider the implications of what they think. To me, this is what critical thinking is all about. Although students may dismiss some of the things Walt says because of his race, or age, or education, they may be more receptive if they hear them coming from me. Overall, hearing multiple messages from many different sources is the key.

From the Margins to the Penumbra and Beyond

As previously mentioned by Jocelyn, our third conversation presented in this chapter addresses a variety of issues related to teaching and learning outside of what is considered to be the mainstream.

David

Because "penumbra" is Walt's kind of word, I had to look it up for all of us. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (1985) says that it is "the space of partial illumination (as in an eclipse) between the perfect shadow on all sides and the full light" What?!? That makes no sense, so why did Walt choose that title? Let me put my critical thinking skills to work. I know that the "margin" is the space outside of the mainstream, and Walt said that social "marginality" is when you are betwixt and between two groups, having characteristics of both but not a full member of either (Jacobs, 1994). So maybe this penumbra stuff is the next stage out of the margin? I don't know; I'll let Walt deal with that in his section.

A freshman TA is a marginal person. On the one hand, we do not have full responsibilities for the class. We are, after all, the "assistants." On the other hand, we are the same age as many of the students but are not taking the class for a grade. Many of the students did not know how to act when somebody their age was supposed to be leading them in the classroom. These students must have been confused, especially those who were older than me because they had to deal with a TA who had less college experience than they did. However, this did not turn out to be an issue because all but two other people in the class were within a year of me in age. A more significant surprise was in store for those who had been in classes with me in the fall and now they had to ask me questions if they needed help. When I first accepted the job I wondered if I could really answer questions that the class would have for me because I did not have a vast knowledge of sociology. But Walt told me that because I had taken the same class before and did well in it I would be able to handle it. I like to think that is exactly what happened.

One of the main duties that Jocelyn and I had was to run the "electronic classroom" (EC). Basically this is a bulletin board system on the Internet: students can post messages about topics, and all other students can read them and respond to them. Only students enrolled in the class have access to the system. There are two main sections: the "Coffee House," where students posted general messages about sociological topics, and the "Debate House," where Jocelyn and I posted specific questions that the class answered. These questions could be about anything from current events to a movie that the class watched. I have to say that coming up with the questions every week was one of the toughest parts of the job. It was a lot more difficult than I thought it would be. As a student in GC1211 I

liked answering the questions, and I thought that thinking the questions up would be just as easy. I was mistaken.

Not only did I have to come up with something that would be of interest to the class, but I had to make sure that it was relevant to that week's topics. I had to make questions that were controversial enough to generate a number of opinions, but not too controversial, which could polarize the debate. Perhaps the hardest part of coming up with a question was phrasing the question correctly. If I did not use the correct words then the debate would go away from where I wanted it to go; if I used the wrong words I would create a biased question and unintentionally offend someone. If I did not add enough information in my question then people would not respond with all the facts to make a good educated answer. Most importantly, if I did not ask the right question then I would not get an intellectual debate going, so it would be meaningless and collapse on itself. If it is meaningless, then what's the point?

The funny thing is that before I came to college I was not the most computer literate person and had developed a dislike for them. I still do, but I've become a little more comfortable with computers. Anyway, I was concerned when Walt told me that I'd be in charge of the EC. What if I could really mess it up? My fears turned out to be unfounded, because all I needed was a little practice. I was worried that my lack of computer skills would prohibit me from being a good TA. Fortunately, this was never an issue.

I think that this all says something about "authority." We have built-in biases about who is qualified to do this and who has the ability to do that. Being a TA has taught me that we have to confront these fallacies head on. As we discussed in the last conversation, being a TA puts you in a situation where you are directly forced to deal with these things. I'd add here that thinking about a marginal status helps, because being betwixt and between means that you never come to a final answer about yourself; it tells us that we should always be in the process of growth.

Jocelyn

When I was hired to be one of Walt's TAs, I had a variety of mixed feelings. I was apprehensive but at the same time excited. I knew this would be a great opportunity to help others and expand on my own knowledge. I just told myself to relax, and everything would fall into place.

At the beginning of the semester, I felt quite uneasy sitting in the classroom being a TA. My biggest fear was the age similarity between the other students and me. This put me in an awkward setting because without having any age difference, it would be difficult to seem like an authoritative figure. I knew that I would not gain power by telling the students what to do, but rather I needed to show them what to do. So according to Walt I was experiencing marginality here.

With this crutch working against me, I felt that I would have an even harder time being a TA. This fear could not have been any more apparent than on the first day of class. After Walt finished introducing me to the students, he concluded by saying "And Jocelyn is also a freshman just like the rest of you, so don't feel hesitant to ask her about anything." From this moment on, I knew my cover was blown, and I was pegged as a freshman just like the rest. However, I decided that instead of having this work against me, I would somehow try to use it as a benefit. I didn't know any of them, and they didn't know me. So from that point on, I decided that it was my duty to reach out to the students. I felt it would be beneficial to show the students that I was just like one of them, even if I had the label of being their TA.

As time passed, my position as being a TA evolved to a new level. Soon I began to feel more confident with my position. This enabled me to interact with the students more on an individual level. The students were required to write a bi-weekly reflection paper from the readings, and then get into groups and discuss their papers. I took this time as a golden opportunity to help the students with any questions they had about the material. This allowed me to have more one-on-one discussion with the students and share some of my

personal knowledge on the material. This was a good way to open the field for communication for both the students and me.

Unfortunately, this was one of the only times that I was able to work with the students. I always felt that if I had more of an opportunity to talk with the students, my time would be of more use. Because 75% of the class time was oriented around lecture and discussion, there was not a whole lot for me to do except take notes. I thought if I had more time to do group work and hold discussions with the students, that it may have created a more open learning environment.

On top of my obligations inside the classroom, my greatest task was held outside the classroom. As David mentioned in his section, the electronic classroom was our biggest job. Here we were required to do weekly postings online. The EC was set up like a chat room, just without having a live discussion. With this in mind, the main discussion had to originate from some point, so this is where David and I fit in. It was our weekly duty to post questions of debate, current events, or anything we thought would evoke some interest in the students.

In contrast to David, I truly enjoyed doing the EC. Here I had the chance to challenge the students to expand their minds and express their thoughts. I knew that if their minds were not being stimulated in class that the EC would be the place to do so. With this idea in mind, I felt that it was my duty to write a question simple enough to understand, but complex enough to answer. I thought the EC was a very positive style of learning because the students were able to express their thoughts in a non intimidating place that was public for their peers to read.

Walt

Looking back, I, too, would want to have Jocelyn and David be more active in the classroom, in addition to running the EC. I think that the reason that I didn't have them do much inside of class was be. . .(At this point David interrupts Walt in mid-sentence.)

David

Hey, I want to add something about that, too, before you get all "academicy" on us. I know that may not be a word, but new words are made up all the time, and this one is all good. Working with the students in a reflection paper group was great. A lot of the time when you put them in groups they didn't ask you questions, but when I was in the group I was asked some. So, I think that this is another example of how we can elicit information from students that wouldn't be raised otherwise.

I have to say that I was really excited when Jocelyn suggested that we organize an optional bi-weekly reading group. I thought that the students would really appreciate the opportunity to meet informally about topics that were of interest to them. I was disappointed when no one came to the first meeting. I guess that we made the mistake of launching it during a very busy week, and maybe we should have held it off campus rather than in the GC Student Lounge. I know that if this had been suggested to me as a student I would be more receptive if it were off campus; I'm on-campus long enough as it is! However, I still don't know what to make of the gender ratios of interested students. Jocelyn's group had only men in it, and I got all women; what's up with that?

Jocelyn

Oh David, there you go interrupting again! Just because you got all women to sign up and I got all men doesn't mean it is gender biased. Who knows, maybe each just thought it would be more of a social gathering than reading group. You should pay more attention to what you said about the matrix of domination! Just kidding, David, I know that you are one of the good guys. It is interesting, though, that you felt the need to interrupt. That *is* more typical of the male-report talk style versus female-rapport talk (Tannen, 1990). This is one of the many concepts that I was initially exposed to in the fall semester, but it really came to life while working as a TA.

My main objective behind organizing a reading group was to create an environment outside of class where students could express their viewpoints. By having an informal group meet there would be

no pressures of grades or mandatory attendance. Instead students could attend of their own free will. In the meetings the students would bring materials such as current events, books, poetry, song lyrics, or anything that had to do with our everyday lives. Some of these things may bring out positive or negative feedback, which would start the whole discussion. During the discussion the students would be able to listen, reflect, and discuss with one another new ideas about themselves and their social worlds. Living in such a fast-paced world, we must take the time to understand the things that make up our everyday lives. I think that by listening and reflecting with others we create a good chance to help this process out.

Walt

I, too, was disappointed that Jocelyn's reading group idea didn't take off. As David and Jocelyn discussed, a number of factors contributed to the group's stillbirth. With more notice and an off-campus meeting place, the group could have worked. For instance, every semester during my graduate school teaching career at Indiana University a small group of students would see a current release movie on their own, and then we'd meet as a group at a coffee shop (Jacobs, 2005). Although these outings never drew more than five or six students, we always had fascinating conversations and the students wanted to have more of the meetings. I have not yet conducted an informal reading group at The U, but with the assistance of TAs I am positive that they can be just as useful as when I used them at IU.

I have already implemented another request: Jocelyn and David's wish to be more involved in class, in addition to running the EC. The main reason that they didn't do much in class the first time around was due to my nervousness about being in a new place (GC) and in a new role (assistant professor). I figured that I would stick to tried-and-true methods as I adjusted to the new situation, and in grad school I had not used TAs for much in-class work. As Jocelyn and David noted, however, they have much to offer students in class as well as in the EC. I took them up on that as they worked with me during our second year in GC and will continually revise collaborative techniques with undergraduates.

It is important to note that I, too, existed in a marginal position: the transitional point from graduate student to professor at a Big Ten 'institution. More importantly, I frequently talked with Jocelyn and David about the processes that I went through, to help them understand the transitions that they were making. In turn, their reflections helped me make sense of my own experiences. Perhaps this mutual reflection is one of the most beneficial aspects of teacher-student collaboration in the first-year: students receive socialization into the academic world—especially regarding its hidden aspects—and teachers gain practical insight into what is too often an abstract understandings of student lives. The students who are enrolled in the instructor's classes and interact with the TAs benefit as well from insights and practices created by the student-teacher collaboration (Jacobs, 2002). I will, then, always strive to include some type of ongoing collaboration throughout my career.

Conclusion

We have reached the end. In line with our attempt to create a somewhat novel mode of representation we will not rehash what we have discussed in the preceding sections. Instead, we'll add a wrinkle to Walt's last section as the conclusion. Walt suggested that mutual reflection of both teachers and students in teacher-student research collaboration helps socialize both to new worlds. We want to conclude with a brief word on *where* that reflection takes place. Of course, students and instructors will meet in the instructors' offices to discuss class dynamics. Occasionally, students and instructors will gather in off-campus locations for course-related meetings. We also encourage students and instructors involved in student-teacher collaboration to meet in purely social settings. For instance, in our first year, among other things, Walt took David and Jocelyn out for their first Thai food experience, David exposed Walt and Jocelyn to the local hip-hop scene, and we all played basketball together at a local park. The old man won a game of H-O-R-S-E, but Jocelyn was a close second and would have won if not for the rust of not shooting in six months! It is in relaxed, informal situations

like these that teachers and students really get to know each other.

We would also like to add a final note about personal dynamics. Although we realize that this cannot work for everyone, we would encourage liberal doses of humor in student-teacher collaboration. We all tease each other constantly and think that this keeps us on our toes intellectually as well as interpersonally. We all strive to encourage critical thinking in others, and we have found that the ability to engage in easy give-and-take among ourselves is good practice for rapidly fielding more serious student questions and comments.

Overall, we all had very positive experiences during our first year in GC. During the course of our recollections, we hope to have provided you with a model of how student-teacher collaboration in the first year can create stimulating possibilities for students and teachers alike. Education in the 21st century holds many complexities; we hope to have provided insights into a few that are associated with a developmental education setting.

Epilogue: August, 2005

The preceding dialogues took place in the summer of 2000. We would like to provide a brief coda on our statuses in 2005. Jocelyn graduated in December of 2003 with a degree in psychology. She is currently a graduate student at Argosy University working on a Master's degree in counseling psychology with a goal of becoming a licensed marriage and family therapist. David graduated in December of 2004 with a Bachelor of Individual Studies degree, concentrating in the history of colonialism, social justice, and youth studies. While he considers whether or not to attend graduate school, he is currently working for several Minnesota youth social service agencies. Walt was promoted to associate professor with tenure in August, 2005, and he is working to help maintain many of the innovative elements of GC as it is downsized from a college to a department in the summer of 2006. All three of us remain in touch with each other, and we thank GC for launching us into productive careers.

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I Know the Space I'm In: Latina Students Linking Theory and Experience

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This chapter examines the practices and conduct of social actors participating in an educational setting as interpreted by the real lived experiences of two Latinas attending a large, Midwestern university. Unlike many individualized viewpoints, these Latinas do identify institutional power in their educational experiences. From their perspective, the educational achievement "gap," which is often attributed to individual deficiency, is also about an individual's ability to participate in the institution. That is, the gap is viewed as a negative space in which female students of color negotiate institutional power. Ironically, identifying this space as negative, but negotiable, also identifies where institutional change is possible.

Across the United States the discourse and the policy attached to the discourse on education is increasingly focused on the individual. Concerns include reduced state support for public educational institutions and a reduction "in the relative value of Pell Grants has diminished by 50% since the late 1970s" (Haycock, 2005, p. 2). In addition, a focus on individual merit has replaced a focus on higher education being "the main drivers of opportunity, social mobility, and economic progress . . . supported through federal policy" (Haycock, p. 1). Less money means more competition for fewer resources. The most current discourse calls attention to the individual through "the achievement gap," meaning the disparity in test scores and graduation rates among groups of students from differing racial, ethnic, and social class statuses. The intent in drawing attention to discrepancies in achievement is a good one—we need to access who is being well served and who is not. However, along with a national spotlight on who falls where in the achievement gap, higher education has also experienced attacks on the progressive gains that have been made in education surrounding access (Apple, 2001; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002). These attacks centered on an old voice—a nonexistent meritocratic system. At the same time, opposing arguments to these attacks are often stifled by academic gatekeepers declaring a narrow view of "what counts as 'legitimate' inquiry that returns us to the days of unreflective positivism" (Weis & Fine, 2004, p. xi). It is no wonder, then, that the current political climate focuses on the individual by ignoring a critical understanding of the relationship between education and power. In these circumstances, who is accountable for the success of students and what kind of inquiry contributes to understanding student success? In a report from the National Education Trust, Carey (2004) stated "students themselves bear significant responsibility for their own success . . . but a large measure of responsibility for the education of students lies with the decisions and conduct of the institution themselves" (p. 5).

This chapter examines the practices and conduct of social actors participating in an educational setting as interpreted by the real lived experiences of two Latinas attending a large, Midwestern university. Unlike many individualized viewpoints,

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these Latinas do identify institutional power in their educational experiences. From their perspective, the educational achievement gap, which is often attributed to individual deficiency, is also about an individual's ability to participate in the institution. That is, the gap is viewed as a negative space in which female students of color negotiate institutional power. Ironically, identifying this space as negative, but negotiable, also identifies where institutional change is possible.

One of the ways in which schools have chosen to deal with institutional contributions to the gap in student achievement is the adoption of a color-blind ideology (Barajas & Ronnkvist, in press; Lewis, 2003, Omi & Winant, 1994). Color-blind ideology asserts that when students enter the school doors, color (i.e., race) should not be an issue. All students, therefore, should be treated equally with the same opportunities regardless of race. Adopting a color-blind ideology provides two comfort zones for educational institutions. First, color-blind ideology may be viewed as the antidote to "the problem," the problem being difference. Second, if difference (i.e., the problem) is neutralized through a color-blind approach, then equality must exist. What prevents this approach from fully explaining the issue of race and public schools is the underlying assumption that public schools actually are race neutral, or color-blind spaces and that most students respond to them as such (Barajas, 2000; Barajas & Pierce, 2001; Barajas & Ronnkvist, in press; Lipsitz, 1998). Depending on who you are, schools may appear neutral because the structure and ideologies within institutions or organizations such as these are driven by assumptions based on taken-for-granted, everyday phenomena that mask how differently these phenomena play out in student lives. Some groups are advantaged, and some are disadvantaged.

The case for why some groups are disadvantaged in these circumstances can be made through the existence of particular kinds of "isms" such as sexism, racism, or classism. In the case of sexism, feminist sociologists (Acker, 1989; Pierce, 1995) have been successful in explaining the concrete consequences and actions of sexism by examining differences in male and female experiences in work organizations. Sadker and Sadker (1994) also identified sexism by examining differences in male and female experiences in schools. In both work and school organizations these researchers found that the differences in the relationships between what is male and what is female result in different expectations for males and females and decided disadvantages for females. We pursue the same kind of argument, but examine racism. Barajas and Ronnkvist (in press) observed how the relationship between what is White and what is not White results in different expectations for mainstream students and students of color, and disadvantages for students of color. Specifically, they observed how racialization is built into the school organizational space through formal and informal practices and identified the implications of these practices.

Research on Latino student groups often focuses on the characteristics of students who have failed to complete their education. This essay spotlights two Latina students who have had a successful primary through postsecondary educational experience making timely progress through educational institutions. They were asked to provide insight on how they successfully negotiated a racialized university space. The purpose of this essay is two-fold. First, students' reflections about their experiences were taken seriously as part of the larger school context. In other words, students were considered part of the educational organization's team of experts along with instructors and administrators in defining the educational organization and learning process. Second, we observe the difference that performing research makes in the relational powers between groups in the classroom

Educational Organizations, Racialization, and the Individual

The theoretical argument supporting this essay is that educational institutions operate as racialized organizations. Racialization is a socio-historical process through which social structures and individual social actors take on a racial dimension (Omi & Winant, 1994). The language of racialization is useful because it raises attention not only to the ways social actors think about and practice race, but also how race influences the organization of social structures (Barajas, 2000; Barajas & Pierce, 2001; Doane, 1997; Doane & Bonilla-Silva, 2003).

The idea that a space is racialized is about power and relationships. If power provides a supportive, reflective relationship, then racialization is likely to serve as a mechanism of awareness rather than a mechanism for hiding differences in neutral assumptions (hooks, 1994). However, we know that school organizational spaces tend to be owned by those who have White, middle-class power and are likely to see their power as neutral and therefore limited. As Blau (2003) stated:

> Whereas whites collectively exercise great power over others through the institutions that they dominate, other groups struggle to achieve equal rights, dignity, and access to opportunities . . . . To be sure, in contemporary times society is not made up simply of an assortment of distinct groups; there is dynamic overlapping of groups, owning to individuals' involvement in work organizations, [and] schools . . . . Yet the imbalances of power, resources, rights, and cultural autonomy are group based. (pp. 205-206)

Key work on Whiteness has demonstrated how neutral or color-blind perceptions operate in organizational spaces (Doane, 1997; Frankenburg, 1993; Gans, 1979; Waters, 1990). One particularly helpful concept in explaining what students who participated in this study experienced is hidden ethnicity (Doane). Hidden ethnicity is defined as the lack of awareness of an ethnic identity that is not normally asserted in intergroup interaction. In these social situations, ethnicity does not generally intrude upon day-to-day experience, and the privileges of group membership are taken for granted. However, group consciousness can change and identity can be asserted when dominant group interests are threatened by challenges from subordinate groups (Doane). Hidden ethnicity employed by individuals within the organizational space of the school becomes part of the neutralizing process of racialization in that space—obscuring White ethnic identity, power, and privilege by creating a neutral category (Barajas, 2000; Doane). However, as feminists have pointed out, within organizations, power exists in the relationship among differences (Acker, 1989; Pierce, 1995). Appropriating a perspective of schools as racially-neutral spaces rather than acknowledging racialized power effectively erases how we look at the taken for granted, and focuses us only on prejudice and discrimination. This has two implications. First, it diminishes the impact racialization has on the organization itself and only allows for a discussion of racialization as an abstract part of individual identity politics (Feagin, 2001). Second, it allows claims of racialized space by students of color to be easily dismissed.

The concept of school organizations as racialized is about power and relationships. In this case, we are making the power of students visible in the relationship between educational organizations and students. Doing so allows students to participate as critical researchers in order to "bear witness" to what is occurring as "neoliberal and neoconservative policies litter the landscape of education with the inequalities their policies have generated" (Weis & Fine, 2004, p. x).

Data and Methodological Process

The research method engaged for this essay is qualitative. We state qualitative because it involves a kind of auto-ethnographic reflection process (Krieger, 1991; Salvador Vidal-Ortiz, 2004). One of the problems we face in talking to individuals about any social phenomenon is the disconnection individuals feel from their sociological imagination (Mills, 1959). That is, people speak as if they are immune to or somehow separate from history, current political issues, and economic contexts (Apple, 2001; Katz, 1996; Weis & Fine, 2004). In addition, the value of understanding categories, such as those often used to describe social identity, is too often dismissed as essentializing. In real lives, these categories are alive and practiced in school organizations and other institutions (Barajas & Ronnkvist, in press; Omi & Winant, 1994; Weis & Fine, 2004). There is value in identifying social categories connected to identity. What we gain is identifying the power in the relationships among categories that create policies, practices, and the ideology that reproduces them.

What would happen, then, if we were to teach individuals critical sociological concepts, give them the academic tools to reflect and connect to the external and internal issues surrounding social

phenomena, and ask them to participate in observing their own experience? To this end, this essay is what Weis and Fine (2004) described as an ethnographic exploration of the "national formations and relational interactions that seep through the lives, identities, relations, and communities of youth and adults" (p. xx), in our case of two Latina college students.

Weis and Fine (2004) described their research process as "an intersection of theory and method . . . some have described as oscillation, a deliberate movement between theory 'in the clouds' and empirical materials 'on the ground' " (pp. xv-xvi).

Two Latina students provided their experiences as the data for this project. Both students identify as coming from a bifurcated racial ethnic background they describe as White and Mexican. Both identify themselves as being light-skinned. One graduated in the spring of 2004 and began in the fall of 2005. She is a single parent of a 3-year-old daughter. The other graduated December of 2005, is married, and has a 6-year-old son.

The two Latina students participating in this research were introduced to critical social science research and sociological concepts early in their college careers, and continued their academic use of these tools as undergraduate teaching assistants. For the purposes of this work, the two Latina researchers were asked to reflect on the following research question: What experiences during your college career reflect your racial and ethnic identity in relation to successfully getting through institutional requirements on a daily basis? Both kept journals of class experiences and were then interviewed by the first author with a protocol that asked general questions about their postsecondary experience as a whole. This methodological device explores a piece of compositional design (Weis & Fine, 2004) that suggests research be based in broad frameworks committed to framing or reframing questions of theory or policy from "within the sites of contestation" (p. xx). Specifically, our research stands as a process referred to as a "first fracturing" (p. xx) analysis that produces an examination of the institution through lines of difference and power that challenges taken-for-granted institutional facts.

Following are two accounts in which Latina students, through their actions, require educational organizations to notice racialization. What their efforts make visible are the effects of racialization on the relationships in the practices and responses to practices in the classroom.

The "Law" of Survival: Analysis by Anne Howarth

During my first semester at the University of Minnesota I took on the task of writing a paper focused on diversity. I considered several different topics, but in the end I chose to do research on affirmative action. My decision to do research about affirmative action, and consequently about diversity in higher education, stemmed mostly from my encounters with either conflicts with or the apathy of other students about such topics. At the end of my first semester, my paper was completed, my class was over, but my initial interest in my research continued.

I also continued to find myself battling with other students during classroom discussions. Whenever I spoke about affirmative action other students would chime in and say things like, "I've never seen that happen," or "it wasn't that way at my school." I was upset that one person's experience or one particular group's experience ruled the classroom. I usually found myself doing extra research just so I could have some academic backing to my voice, as opposed to the "common sense" knowledge of my peers. For example, in one course during my third year of college one student stated that he did not believe abandoning affirmative action would result in lower diversity at the university. Because of my research, I was the able to tell the students in the course about the California Civil Rights Initiative (CCRI) system (Conrad & Sharpe, 1996).

In 1995 the state of California decided to create the CCRI to replace affirmative action. The CCRI was designed to accept the top 12.5% of students from each high school into the freshman programs in the University of California (UC) system (Conrad & Sharpe, 1996). Conrad and Sharpe found that the problem with this design is that some universities in the UC system are more popular than others and

therefore cannot accept all top 12.5% of the students. The result is that fewer students of color are attending universities. Instead they are attending community and junior colleges and in many cases never transferring to the UC system. Empirical evidence proved diversity in the university decreased by abandoning affirmative action, a scientific fact I used back up my opinion.

Sometimes the ability to cite my examples in class annoyed my peers. In a class my second year at the university we had been assigned the article, "And Now Set the Teeth" by Patricia Williams (2000). The article is about racism as a double standard. Williams wrote about how President George W. Bush's life would be different if he were Black instead of White. Williams asserted that a Black person who had drug problems, was caught drinking and driving, and went absent without leave (AWOL) from the military would not have become the president; he would have been dead or in jail. The instructor began the class discussion by asking if someone would give a summary. I volunteered, beginning my assessment of the article as one framed in race and racism. Another student in the class interrupted my summary and said, "it isn't all about race!" Even today, I still cannot fully comprehend how this student thought Williams' article was *not* about race. Many students, including this one, seemed to be tired of me bringing up race in class. Many students did not see that race mattered or was central to understanding how the social world works. I believe in their minds Williams and I were both "playing the race card."

Research as an ongoing part of my college career was fueled by the knowledge that I was likely to walk into most classrooms and face opposition. I did not believe that different ideas were a bad thing, but I did witness unwillingness by students participating in a research I university to be open to other points of view, and that was disturbing. In addition, assumed ethnic group membership also played a role when I brought up the issue of race. I was often dismissed when speaking about race in class because I have light skin. To my White peers it seemed useless that I wanted to defend affirmative action and diversity in higher education because it should not matter to me. Although I have opportunity because I look White, I also face obstacles because I do not act in accordance with the White norm.

It proved difficult to navigate the university as a Nonwhite, White person. I never felt quite comfortable in my environment; I was constantly bombarded with degrading comments and negative racialized viewpoints. It could best be compared to telling gay jokes to a person you are unaware is gay. In my final level of Spanish, during my last year of school we were asked to pick a topic for debate, and of course my group chose affirmative action. My debate group chose to meet outside of class to plan out some dialogue so we would always have something to say if we got confused. At this meeting we spoke (in English) about our true feelings concerning affirmative action. The other members in the group spoke openly about how unfair affirmative action is to "nonminorities," meaning White people. They all insisted that affirmative action keeps qualified applicants out of the university. One of my group members said she hates that "those people" get special treatment. Funny that these comments came from three women, who are also included in the benefits of affirmative action. It was assumed that because I, too, have White skin, that I would agree, and my group members were all confused as to why I disagreed, and more confused as to why I would care.

I care about affirmative action because I know the consequences of not having the program and I know what it is like to negotiate a racialized space that I see as powered by Whiteness. What I learned from my experience in navigating a racialized space is that I must continue to research and stand up for what I believe. Although I found myself to be out of place, I did succeed at the university. My former and future peers may not believe what I say regardless of the citations I use, but I still find my research to be important. My knowledge allows me to exist more easily as a Nonwhite person in what I experienced as a White space.

The Consequences of Expectation: Analysis by Arien Telles

Expectation is a primary matter in addressing the issue of educational institutions operating as a

racialized space. In my experience, there has been one overwhelming expectation of me from my peers: that race should not matter to me. When I deviate from this expectation, I can expect two reactions. First is confusion, and the second is anger. I am currently an undergraduate sociology student. I am Chicana. However, I have light skin and am often labeled by others as White and therefore considered part of the mainstream group. My light skin, then, is one of the reasons that I receive the reaction I do when I discuss race.

Although it happened on a regular basis in various classes, there were two distinct times that there were negative reactions—confusion and anger—from my peers when we were discussing race. The first occurred in the second semester of my freshman writing class. We were all told to pick a topic, do some research, and then present to the class. This writing class focused on tutoring in writing and, thus, the topics we were given to choose from were relevant to the course. I chose to present on cultural differences in writing. While conducting my research, I found it difficult to stay focused on the topic without first addressing issues of race in education in general. Instead of forcing myself in a direction that placed the topic out of context, I began my research with a focus on race in education and then discussed how that was connected to cultural differences in writing. After presenting to the class, only one student had a question for me. She asked me why race had anything to do with the assignment. As I looked around the room, all I saw were people nodding their heads and looking confused. I do not remember exactly what I said; however, it was something to the effect that it is not possible to talk about cultural differences in a specified area within education if we do not first discuss the issues of race in the educational institution as a whole. She did not ask any other questions, but did not look quite satisfied with my answer. Looking back on the experience, I realize that my peers were not being mean or vindictive, they just did not understand why the issue of race mattered so much to me.

The second example of a negative reaction I received while discussing issues of race was in my junior year "multicultural" education class. The quotation marks around multicultural indicate that it was clear my definition of multicultural education and the course definition were different. Christine Sleeter (2000) defined multicultural education as a

> struggle for justice emerging from the civil rights movement. The primary issue was one of access to a quality education. If we are not dealing with questions of why access is continually important, and if we are not dealing with why there is so much poverty amid so much wealth, we are not dealing with the core issues of multiculturalism. (p. 1)

I say that this definition of multicultural education differs from the class definition because of my observations. Unfortunately, the term was never actually defined, nor the multiple assumptions about multicultural education discussed.

In one class session our instructor asked who had watched the Grammys the night before. I must have had a nasty look on my face because the instructor asked me, "Why the look?" I expressed my concern and my outrage at the negative depiction I witnessed the night before in the performance by the group Outkast. Their performance began with Native American music in the background and Jack Black speaking. When the lights went up, there were a number of green teepees and about 10 women dancing with green headbands on. These headbands had one feather in them. Their keyboardist also had on a full headdress, meaning a headpiece made up of large eagle feathers. It looked as if we had all just entered Neverland and were witnessing a disgusting portrayal of Native people as Peter Pan and his lost boys were mocking their culture and sacred dances.

After expressing my dismay to the class I was immediately attacked. One classmate gave me the "not the race thing again" look. Another pointed out that we should all be able to celebrate each other's cultures and informed me that I was over-reacting. After she informed me of what I *should* be thinking, five other students jumped on the bandwagon of attack. I was told that the race card was used much too frequently, their performance had nothing to do with race, and that I was being much too sensitive to an issue that did not concern me. I was subjected to this attack for roughly 5 minutes, with

no interjection from anyone but those attacking. Of the seven people, six were women, and one was a man. All were White. This reaction by my peers was expected, and I was prepared to defend my position. When people seemed to be out of ugly things to say to me, I began my rebuttal. However, I was quickly silenced by my instructor and told that we needed to keep the class moving because we were on a tight schedule. After class, I asked the instructor why I was not allowed to respond to my peers, and she told me that she thought that I was being attacked and that she wanted to put an end to it. She also informed me that she agreed with my assessment of the performance, even though she did not defend my position. I, being angry and at my wit's end, told her that I was frequently attacked, that I could defend my position, and would have appreciated the opportunity to make that defense. I also recommended that she show a documentary called "In Whose Honor" (Rosenstein, 1997), which is about negative depictions in the media of the Native American community and culture. She thanked me for the suggestion and never returned to the topic again. Am I angry about what happened that day? Absolutely, but I am more concerned than angry.

This course was and is currently offered through the Educational Psychology department and many students who choose to take this course are interested in becoming educators. When I was enrolled in the class, the majority of my classmates were White, but there were three students of color, including myself, in the class. In the beginning of the semester, the instructor asked who was planning on becoming a teacher. Three-quarters of the students raised their hands. Among these students all of the students who regarded race as unimportant raised their hands. As I recall the fear and ignorance surrounding what should have been a discussion about race and the Grammy Awards, what frightens me most is the thought that these are the people who will be the future elementary and secondary teachers of America. Moreover, this instructor will continue to sidestep the issue of race when the discussion is more than superficial, and more of our future teachers will learn they do not have to talk about it.

As I stated above, these types of experiences occurred frequently during my undergraduate career. I also learned early in my freshman year that I had to know, without a doubt in my mind, that my information was accurate and empirical. I also had to be prepared to communicate this information on multiple levels in order to be heard, at least heard to some extent. A somewhat shocking lesson I learned was that sometimes it really did not matter how much accurate or empirical information I had. In other words, in many cases my majority peers and their common-sense "knowledge" silenced me. When it comes to racial issues, the instructors are also pivotal in determining how classroom activities and discussions play out. In the case of my multicultural education class the instructor, although well-intentioned, actually escalated the problem by *not* addressing the issue. She chose to single me out and then "rescue" me when she thought that I was in trouble. I was not given the opportunity to decide when I was in trouble nor was I allowed to defend my position. She had the power to lead the discussion and challenge the other students to think about what they were saying, but she chose, instead, to silence me—just as the other White people in the class had. Despite these challenges in my education, I will graduate with a 3.7 grade point average (GPA) after the fall 2005 semester with a bachelor of arts degree in sociology.

Discussion

What we learn from these student observations is that individuals can negotiate when they (a) understand that power relationships in racialized organizations exist; and (b) have accepted, as an additional burden, doing critical research in order to cite empirical evidence to support their position. Both Anne and Arien learned early in their college careers that common-sense knowledge was only valuable if the taken-for-granted represented mainstream ideas. If, for example, mainstream students in a classroom insist that a particular social phenomenon is not about race, then the conversation ceases to be about race. From both Latinas we learn that when it came to race being deemed an appropriate topic, the power in the relationship lay with the mainstream students who as a group racialized the situation by suppressing the discussion. In addition, both students showed us how racialization affects the classroom practices

and courses whose intent is to support multicultural efforts, and those who do not often have the same goal. That is, neither place race on the table for open, uncomfortable discussion. What role, then, do instructors play in a racialized space when one group continually neutralizes race by omitting race from the discussion?

We know from other research that White students work "optimally" (Weis & Fine, 2004) when race is not discussed, whereas students of color "can be engaged and unburdened only when race and ethnicity is clearly on the table" (p. 143; also see Powell, 1997). This particularly difficult situation requires intervention on the part of instructors so that both groups can participate in the learning process. However, an additional element in the mix is how the instructor works optimally. Instructors who fear the conversation cannot put race on the table. The case becomes even more problematic when instructors believe they are putting race on the table, but do not allow open debate. Which side of the argument the instructor is supporting is irrelevant. The intent of protecting either the student of color from being "attacked" as was the case with one of our examples, or the intent of protecting White students, delivers the same outcome. Either intention by the instructor silences only one group—the group who identifies a need to engage in the conversation. Although not engaging real conversations about race may be perceived as neutralizing and therefore supporting the learning situation, just the opposite is true for both White students and students of color.

By forfeiting this opportunity, educators fail to support students' need to experience "disequilibrium," a developmental theory emphasizing that discontinuity and discrepancy spur cognitive growth (Gurin, et al., 2002). In the pivotal research used in the Michigan affirmative action case, the authors argued that identity develops best when young people are given a "psychosocial moratorium . . . [that] should ideally involve a confrontation with diversity and complexity" (Gurin et al.). When not given that opportunity students passively make commitments based on their past experiences, rather than actively thinking and making decisions informed by new and more complex perspectives and relationships (Gurin et al.). This theoretical idea was made visible in the experiences reported by the Latina students in this essay.

Both Latinas reported that differing ideas and perspectives were a valuable part of classroom learning, but that they were disturbed that their peers were not willing to cross the boundaries of their own experience. For one Latina, it was the simple unwillingness for any discussion, much less most discussions to include a race perspective. This included a discussion surrounding an article that was clearly framed in race. For the other Latina, the uncrossed boundary was peers who only wanted to talk about race in "nice" terms, that is, "we all [meaning White folks] should be able to celebrate everyone else's culture" when referring to the Outkast performance at the Grammy Awards. That there was a possibility that race could and should be discussed with a more critical lens was dismissed by students and instructors alike. Furthermore, this necessary learning position was one that both Latinas were willing to enter to enhance their education, even if the organizational practice was reluctant to allow such a process in the classroom.

Conclusion

Ironically, Latina students identifying educational space as negative but negotiable also identifies where institutional change is possible. But change will be long in coming as long as we hide it in our institutional language by referring to diversity rather than naming who and what we disadvantage at the least or exclude at the most. The most common way we in the institution hide is by insisting we do not know what to do about issues surrounding race when just the opposite is true (Sleeter, 2005). We know, we just do not want to talk about it openly because we are afraid of seeing how racialized our policy, practice, and fear actually are. Or, we hide behind insisting that excellence and success are narrowly defined by one set of indicators. As Charles Willie (2005) argued, those concerned with diversity and multiculturalism know we do not make people of color over in the image of Whites. To this end, we should not concentrate on closing the achievement gap often associated with students of color by simply teaching to the test in order to boost test scores while ignoring the actual curriculum content that prepare students

to move forward in their educational careers. Instead, we should

> learn to replicate desirable experiences and eliminate undesirable experience . . . . And, to do so benefits Whites as well as people of color because there are some things White folks need to know and can only get from us. If all we do is close the gap, all we accomplish is letting go of the self. (Willie, 2005)

Willie was telling us that no matter how often or how hard we as people of color try to align ourselves with a White perspective it simply does not work. What our students are telling us is that their experience bears witness that Willie's observation is true—we need to widen our discussion of the gap to include the responsibility and practice of the institution rather than trying to envision how historically disenfranchised groups can become more mainstream. So what does the institution need to do, and what is the current trend?

The students in this project revealed they were willing to take on additional burdens, burdens not required of mainstream students, in order to survive and thrive in the educational organization. However, what their observations also told us is that institutions can intercede, simply by requiring all those who participate in the learning process to take on the same burden. And, to do so would benefit all participants. However, the goal can no longer be for instructors to make students comfortable. Rather, we need to guide all our students into disequilibrium to spur cognitive growth, even if it requires instructors to do the same. Moreover, this is not simply a teacher-learner paradigm. The mission, policy, and particularly practice of the whole institution frame all learning in an educational organization.

Finally, like Willie (2005), this chapter argues that the frame for understanding how difference is perceived has been highjacked by current social and political discourse resulting in goal displacement. According to Willie, today's conservative and liberal discourse on multicultural education has been highjacked to align itself with a racialized perspective. The equal access frame has been highjacked by an equal outcome frame as if achievement is somehow determined by a normative set of outcomes. Frameworks centered on equity have been highjacked by an excellence frame as if excellence cannot be achieved without displacing the goal of equity. The goal of multicultural education is access to a quality education for all students, not producing policy and discourse that debates the actuality of what real people are facing.

Until educational institutions adjust their frames, a racialized perspective will displace all goals. Institutions cannot be excellent by sacrificing equity even if doing so makes mainstream participants more comfortable. We challenge the institution to open the debate, for everyone in the institution to make themselves uncomfortable, and to identify the racialized aspects of institutional practice that contribute to the power in institutional relationships. We challenge institutions to do so in order for them to achieve their real goal—educating all young people to become productive and contributing citizens.

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Their Own Voices: Alumni Perspectives on the Special Admissions Experience

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The purpose of this study was to examine the experience of specially-admitted students at a comprehensive public university. The study was designed to determine what factors of the special admission program and the institution contributed to student success. Data were collected through telephone surveys from over 500 graduates who had been admitted to the university between the pilot year of the program, 1968 and 1998. Three themes were identified as the most important contributors to student success: (a) opportunities, experiences, and successes related to special admissions; (b) support services, courses, and programs associated with the program; and (c) diversity issues.

I designed this study to get inside the student experience of the CHANCE (Counseling Help and Assistance Necessary for a College Education) program at Northern Illinois University in order to determine what has contributed to student success and graduation. Through the voices of successful graduates and using qualitative analysis strategies, I identified factors that have contributed to the success and graduation of program students. I conducted a telephone survey of alumni, using both demographic and open-ended questions, to examine student perspectives about their experience as specially-admitted students.

History and Mission of the Program

During the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement and the subsequent death of Martin Luther King affected colleges and universities in powerful ways. National concerns about representation of people of color, particularly African Americans, in the workplace and the protests of students with respect to the lack of racial representation on college campuses led to the development of institutional policies and procedures to address diversity in admissions. Initially, campuses responded by developing programs and services that were geared to recruit and support African American students, then later, services to support many racially-diverse groups.

In fall 1967 African American enrollment at Northern Illinois University was less than 3% of total enrollment (Cady, 1973). Racially-diverse faculty and staff percentages were even smaller. Despite the institution's proximity to Chicago, the University did not reflect the diversity of its service region. In 1968 University President Rhoten Smith was troubled by the lack of representation of African American students on campus. He brought a task force together to develop a program that would help the University become more diverse and more reflective of its service region.

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In his May 1968 inaugural address, titled "Excellence and Opportunity," President Smith (1968) expressed the opinion that the University must find creative ways in which to provide both excellence and access to the citizens of this area. He put plans into motion for many access-based programs, including a special admissions program designed to admit and support students who did not meet traditional admission criteria. Now named the CHANCE program, it is still one of the largest and most comprehensive of these programs in the country.

McKinley "Deacon" Davis was hired in 1968 to initiate a special student recruitment and support program that targeted racial minority students, particularly African American and low-income students. The CHANCE program began with a pilot in the spring semester of 1968. The pilot class of 48 special admits was selected from several urban communities in the service region, including the Chicago area, and was comprised primarily of students who had not met traditional admissions standards with regard to high school rank and ACT scores. In fall 1969 Northern Illinois University admitted its first full class of 184 first-year students through the program.

The program was counseling based, meaning that students were assigned to a counselor within the program for academic, emotional, and other supports throughout their college experience. Counselors were assigned a caseload of students for regular one-on-one meetings. CHANCE staff also provided a mandatory series of workshops on study strategies, campus resources, and transition issues. Traditional academic units provided necessary developmental education coursework in what is referred to as the "communication skill areas," which included oral communication, English, reading, and mathematics (Davis, 1968).

The mission of the CHANCE Program is to provide comprehensive academic and counseling-based services to support the success of specially admitted students. CHANCE staff identify eligible students, offer an admissions process for selected students to enter the University, provide an interactive orientation program that assesses and places students into appropriate developmental and traditional coursework, and connect students to an intense retention-based counseling program to help students develop the necessary skills to be academically successful and attain a baccalaureate degree.

Over the years the mission and fundamental components of the CHANCE program have remained the same. Each year 500 first-year students are selected from over 2,000 applications, comprising approximately 17% of each entering class. They are recruited primarily from urban and suburban low-income schools in the University's service region that have a low percentage of students who attend college. The students are racially very diverse with 64% African American, 17% Caucasian, 12% Latino, and 5% Asian, on average. Students do not meet at least one of the two traditional admissions standards: high school ranks greater than or equal to the 50th percentile, and an ACT composite score of greater than 20 (Eaton, 2004b).

Counselors still serve as the core component of the program, working regularly with students to provide individual and group support, resource development, academic and emotional counseling, and assistance with transition and survival skills. Traditional University academic departments provide developmental and enhanced traditional coursework in the four communication skills areas.

The workshops and seminars to assist students with transition issues and resource development that were a part of the early program have been replaced with a credited first-year seminar taught by the counseling staff. More extensive academic support services are also provided in most academic areas including a Supplemental Instruction program in all developmental mathematics courses and tutorial support to aid in student development of assignments for developmental English and oral communication skills. The 8-year graduation rate, which has hovered at about 30% for the past 2 decades, is projected to increase to 40% or higher for the next several cohorts (Eaton, 2004a).

Theoretical Framework

College student retention literature has examined student backgrounds and personal characteristics, as well as aspects of the institution such as program components and characteristics that have a relationship to academic success. The majority of research in this area is grounded in Tinto's (1975) Interactionalist Model of student departure. The theory states that a student's academic and social integration into the university strongly influence future decisions regarding commitment to the institution as well as persistence and graduation. Tinto theorized that students who are unable to form connections to an institution academically and socially are likely to become isolated within the community. As students withdraw from active participation in the institutional environment, they are less able to integrate or affiliate, eventually resulting in a detachment from the institution and possible departure (Braxton & Lien, 2000).

Over the past few years, there has been a call for retention research that moves beyond the contributors to retention to focus on how those contributors can be affected by the institutional culture and community (Braxton & Lien, 2000). The influence of academic integration on institutional commitment and persistence offers one piece of the puzzle, but an examination of the *process* of academic integration at an institution can offer programmatic insights that can lead to the development and improvement of campus programs (Tinto, 2000). Many studies have examined the institutional contributors to academic integration and retention and identified those that support these important constructs. For example, Swail, Redd, and Perna (2003) found that academic support services are one vehicle that can enhance retention of underrepresented students by reducing stress and helping students gain necessary skills to become more academically successful and more integrated into the academic community. Richardson and Skinner (1990) asserted that, "institutions can achieve both quality and diversity through adaptations that support achievement by more diverse learners" (p. 486). They further stated that programmatic efforts, including financial aid and academic support services, are important to retention as well as to an institution's goals of inclusiveness and equity. Gass (1990) identified six factors that can aid retention, including peer group development, interaction with faculty, development of major and career plans, interest in academics, and preparation of skills necessary for academic success. More recently, Habley and McClanahan (2004), in a comprehensive study of retention at 4-year institutions, found that academic advising, first-year programs, and learning support services are important contributors to retention.

Although there is an array of research on retention of students who are underrepresented or academically underprepared and the programs designed to support them, it is valuable to examine more closely the internal aspects of those programs and how they have influenced the student experience (Watson et al., 2002). A large number of universities now have some form of retention services program, but the effect of those programs varies greatly by institution. Variation in success rates is likely due to a number of contextual factors including institutional culture and climate, student populations, programmatic interventions, and staffing. But, clearly, even in identically designed programs, there are factors inside of the programs that make contributions to academic integration and retention.

For example, Hall (1999) did an in-depth analysis of the skills, attributes, and supports that African American students used as coping strategies in dealing with institutional stress that also contributed to academic success and retention. The factors related to success included a high self-concept, parental support, on-campus support in the form of African American administrators and faculty, student involvement in cultural and ethnic organizations, and the existence of a critical mass of African American students to reduce isolation and alienation. An examination of who students are, the resources available to them, and the connections they have the opportunity to make are all important aspects of integration into the academic community and retention. In this study, Hall pointed towards methods by which students can connect with others who support their decision to go to and succeed in college. This study raised the question of why these particular programmatic initiatives effectively contribute to students' adjustment,

academic or social. Clearly, the internal aspects of each are vital.

A concern regarding research in this area is that many studies are focused on the programmatic level and most are quantitative. Though quantitative research may help identify programmatic areas that have helped students succeed, it does not explore the nature of factors that contribute to key personal and emotional processes that contribute to student success. Qualitative research can provide additional insights about participants in a program and the context, culture, and process in which academic integration occurs (Whitt & Kuh, 1993).

Method

Over the years, a number of unpublished quantitative studies of CHANCE students and programs have been done to identify contributors to the success of the program in terms of retention and graduation rates. However, no study has been done that examines the program from the outside in, from the perspective of its most successful students, its alumni. A telephone interview survey, which included both demographic and open-ended questions, was developed to focus on qualitative aspects of programmatic initiatives.

Using the program mission and goals as a starting point for the development of outcome information, and gathering input from staff and program associates, survey questions were developed. An interview protocol was developed for a telephone survey. The institution's Public Opinion Laboratory (POL) was contracted to do individual telephone surveys of alumni. Most of the questions were open-ended, allowing respondents to talk freely about their experiences in college.

Because the POL employs a large number of students who were admitted through CHANCE, most of the interviewers had great familiarity with the program and were very motivated to conduct the study and collect as many surveys as possible. The completed surveys included interviews from over 500 alumni representing students from the inception of the program in 1968 to those who graduated in 2001.

Telephone interviews focused on the following questions:

1. What year did you enter Northern Illinois University? What year did you graduate?

2. Are you employed? What type of employer?

3. What additional education have you had since receiving your bachelor's degree?

4. Would you recommend the program to others?

5. What part of the program was most helpful to you?

6. How comfortable were you at NIU?

7. What university groups or activities were you involved in?

8. While in college and since you have graduated, how do you feel that the program has made an impact on your life?

9. What was the single most important thing you gained from attending a university like NIU?

The sample for the study was identified from available data from 4 decades of graduates. Through the use of a combination of institutional, alumni foundation and departmental records, 1,996 graduates were identified who had viable telephone contact information. In total, data from 504 respondents (approximately 25% of graduates in the list) were collected.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered from the survey. For qualitative data from open-ended questions, Miles and Huberman's (1994) recommendations for effective qualitative data analysis, and Patton's (2002) method for codifying data, were used to establish patterns and themes. Because of the redundancy around responses to individual questions, themes were developed across all questions.

Results from Demographic Questions

The results below provide two aspects of data collection. First, I will review the demographic information gathered. I will then provide a summary of the qualitative data that resulted from open-ended questions. Qualitative data is divided by the categories that resulted from data codification and resulting themes.

Distribution of Alumni by Decade of Entry and Graduation

Participating alumni represented entering cohorts from 4 decades of students. Of them 4.2% were admitted in the 1960s, including two respondents from the pilot class of 1968. Another 38.0% were admitted in the 1970s, 31.4% were admitted in the 1980s, and 27.6% were admitted in the 1990s. With respect to graduation years, 22.9% graduated in the 1970s, 33.2% graduated in the 1980s, 34.8% graduated in the 1990s, and 9.1% graduated in the 2000s.

The number of years to graduation for the sample ranged from 2 to 11.5 years, with the average number of years at 5.03. However, there were significant differences in graduation year averages over the decades, with newer graduates taking more time to degree than those from earlier decades, which follows an institutional trend over the same time periods (D. House, personal communication, February 18, 2005). On average, students from the 1970s graduated in 4.6 years, students from the 1980s in 5.1 years, and students in the 1990s in 5.4 years.

Distribution of Alumni With Respect to Majors, Degrees, and Subsequent Degrees

The alumni had received degrees in majors and colleges throughout the university, the majority in liberal arts with a small but fairly even distribution of majors in health professions, education and business. Data divided by decade, however, revealed that students from the 1960s and 1970s were more likely to graduate in education, and students from the 1980s and 1990s were more likely to receive liberal arts or business degrees. These findings are fairly consistent with institutional trends over the same time periods (D. House, personal communication, February 18, 2005).

A surprising finding from the study was related to the number of students who pursued additional degrees after graduation. Over 40% of the respondents went on to further their education after graduation. 16% percent either had or were working on advanced degrees, such as the Ph.D., Ed.D., and J.D. Just over 20% completed master's degrees or were in the process of completing an advanced degree. An additional 5% of the group obtained or are working on a second bachelor's degree or an associate's degree.

Distribution of Alumni with Respect to Current Employment

Respondents reported a wide array of job choices as their current employment. The majority were working in business (27%) or education (25%). The rest worked in a variety of areas including social services (8%), finance (7%), health fields (6%), technology (4%), and several others.

Data also indicated that many alumni continued to advance in their professions. For example, within the 27% of business employees, 3% are business owners, 11% are managers or administrators, and the rest are in customer service and marketing. In education, 18% of all respondents are teachers, 4% are school administrators, and 3% of the group is working in higher education, with 12 serving as administrators and 4 as professors.

Recommending the Program

Alumni were overwhelmingly enthusiastic in their responses to the interview team. Overall, they demonstrated a strong positive attitude towards Northern Illinois University as well as a very strong emotional connection to the CHANCE program. Over 94% stated that they were very or somewhat likely to recommend the program to others.

Comfort on the NIU campus

Over 74% of respondents indicated that they had been "very comfortable" on the NIU campus, and an additional 25% indicating that they were "somewhat comfortable" or "sometimes

comfortable, sometimes not." Only 1% indicated that they were "never comfortable" or "not comfortable most of the time."

Participation in Campus Social Organizations

Several studies have found that students from underrepresented groups, in particular, must find a support network within the university community (Hall, 1999; Lesage, Ferber, Storrs & Wong, 2002; Watson et al., 2002). In the case of students admitted through CHANCE, a large number of students became active in university activities and organizations. Just over 75% of respondents indicated that they had participated in campus social organizations. More than half indicated involvement with ethnically-based social groups, including Greek organizations, Black Choir, Black Student Caucus, Latino Club, Southeast Asian Society, and many others.

Many students (17% of all respondents) participated in academic or major-related organizations. Some of these were also ethnically based, such as the National Society for Black Engineers and the Black Business Association. About one-third of respondents' participation involved more than 20 activities including athletics (17%), student governance (9%), and religious activities (2%).

Responses Organized by Themes From the Open-ended Questions

Analysis of responses to open-ended questions showed similar categories of response, and data were combined across the survey into thematic response groups. The most frequent responses centered into the three themes discussed here. They include (a) the opportunities, experiences, and successes that came from being admitted to a 4-year institution through the special admissions program and the ways in which it affected their lives; (b) attitudes towards the support services, courses, and programs affiliated with special admission that enhanced their college career; and (c) the influence of diversity on their college experience.

Opportunities

While the CHANCE program and its supporting structures are fairly large, comprehensive, and intrusive entities in the experience of the students, alumni pointed overwhelmingly towards the outcomes of that experience as the most important factor derived from participation in it. Over 80% of the respondents in the study stated that admission to the university and the experiences and outcomes that followed were the most important parts of participating in a special admissions program.

About half of the respondents pointed to the opportunity to get a college education at a 4-year institution as the most important aspect of special admission. Although practitioners often assume that students may feel marginalized or segregated by the label of "special admission," clearly, after graduation, students view their admissions status far more pragmatically. Some of their comments that reflect the group perspective included:

"It allowed me to go to college. My grades weren't high enough. I wasn't accepted in any other colleges due to grades. The CHANCE program saw the capability in me."

"If not for the CHANCE program, I would not have been able to go to a university. Because I was able to enroll in a university, my educational and career goals have been met."

"It made me go to college. I didn't have plans for a university but through the CHANCE program I had the opportunity to go there. The chance to enroll itself was helpful to me."

"I was able to access higher education. It created a future for me and taught me management, people and life skills."

"It gave me the opportunity to go to college and I knew I needed to go to college. It gave me the sense of knowing that I could overcome an obstacle and be successful and share that with others. It opened up future doors for me, but it's given an edge for people to take advantage of and be successful."

More than just being given a chance to go to college, many respondents pointed to the program as the opportunity for exposure to a new world in

college. They spoke of experiences that were not a part of their understanding of life before they entered college and how those opportunities kept them motivated to succeed, as indicated in the following quotes:

"It provided a foot in the door to the future and it gave me a chance to prove myself, especially being a minority. It helped me achieve."

"It allowed me an opportunity that otherwise I wouldn't have been able to take advantage of, getting into a recognized university. It provided tools and assistance to help me through in spite of my [entering] status."

"It gave me an opportunity to make it in the real world, and education is the only way to make it in the real world."

"I have achieved the confidence to know I can [reach] my goals. I saw a better way of life and learned good habits."

"I would not be the person I am now. I had the chance to become something."

"You guys gave me a chance. I've had a 22-year career…I'm very grateful and I've been very successful. I've got a great life."

The Educational Experiences

The next grouping in this category revolved around the respondents' experiences within the university that shaped their opinions of higher education and Northern Illinois University in particular. Their comments demonstrate a reflection of how they saw themselves initially and how they have changed because of the opportunity to go to college. These alumni view the university as an amazing opportunity, a choice that they never thought they would have in life. From that perspective, their view on their education and the institution is one of overwhelming pride and respect. Alumni indicated what they gained:

"I gained a really sold overall education, a well-rounded education."

"A competitive edge, comfort in your education. Knowing that I learned along side other individuals who would be competition in the workforce".

"The ability to think for myself. The interactions I had with others."

"The commitment to excellence."

"All of my degrees including the Ph.D."

Alumni also identified facets of their undergraduate education that they had especially appreciated:

"The English department. In their department, I discovered my passion."

"The quality education. The education for business was fantastic."

"The nursing program emphasized leadership. [I] got a lot of confidence and skills from that."

Successes

Throughout the interviews, about 20% of respondents shared their successes. Alumni saw a clear path between admission, the support services of the program, and the opportunities and successes that they have had since graduation. The following quotes are representative:

"If it weren't for the CHANCE program, I wouldn't be making the salary I'm making today, and it also made me into the person I am today."

"It has improved my lifestyle because I have a college degree and it also allowed me to get into a graduate school program because if I were not admitted to NIU, I probably just would have gone to a community college."

"I'm a professional. I have a career. It couldn't have happened without CHANCE."

"I think they've made me a lifetime learner. They've made me want to help other people. They've made a significant impact economically in my life."

In total, nearly 60% of respondents identified specific programmatic supports as the most important contributors to their success. In this study, as in an unpublished study of current students (Eaton, 2005), CHANCE staff and counseling support are identified as the most significant factor in student success. Alumni identified CHANCE counselors and staff (38%), tutoring and academic supports (11%), and developmental education coursework (8%) as the contributors that influenced them the most.

Counseling and CHANCE Staff Support

From the early days of special admission and developmental education programs, a counseling-based model has been identified as key for improving success for students who are underprepared (Snow, 1977). Alumni in this study spoke powerfully of their experiences with counselors and staff within the CHANCE program. They reported on their relationships with staff, often by name, 10 or 20 years after their graduation. With great fondness and emotion, many of the earliest graduates of the program reported about staff who had influenced their entire lives. In sum, responses about the counseling staff were overwhelmingly positive, and they validated anecdotal evidence that staff members who cared for students and worked earnestly on their behalf were still held in high regard years after their graduation. One respondent noted:

> The support of the program allowed me to go through college. It gave me someone to identify with. I felt like I would not have gotten through college without this program. The counselors helped me to continue on. This program helped me meet my goal of graduating from NIU. The teachers gave me the support necessary to stay at NIU.

Other quotations from alumni included:

"I remember people that worked in the program. Very warm and encouraging. People were there to talk to us, willing to listen to us. That is what helped us the most …"

"The individualized program planning that they set for you, compared to general admissions, it's a much smaller, close knit family atmosphere type of program. The administrators care."

"[It influenced me] by working with people who were concerned about my education. It helped me to focus on what I needed to do to graduate."

"The staff members were great. It made me realize that I wanted to be in education. I've moved from the classroom up through administration."

"Having an assigned counselor from day one was critical [to my success]."

"They made me less scared in life."

Tutoring and Developmental Education Coursework

Responding alumni often identified tutoring as a positive component of their experience at NIU. Responses to this question are summed up succinctly in the following two statements:

"The tutoring and other assistance; if you needed help, there it was."

"I got the support I needed, and . . . I wound up being a tutor for the program myself."

Comments about the developmental education coursework were equally succinct and significant in that they identified the features of the developmental education programs that were of most benefit.

"It provided the additional coursework that I was lacking."

"The classes were smaller, more individual attention."

"Having my classes designed with extra support [helped me]."

The Influence of Diversity

On a predominantly White campus, underrepresented students encounter a broad array of negative experiences with regard to race (Watson et al., 2002). Responding alumni in the study spoke of diversity from a variety of perspectives. Their responses indicated a sense of

context and perspective about their experiences, which seemed to include both positive and negative associations. Gurin (as cited in Gándara, 2002) stated that interaction within a diverse college setting offers many benefits to both minority and majority students, enabling students to grow within the academic community. The negative and positive aspects of the alumni perspective here support this position.

Alumni observed that racism and prejudice were a part of being at college. They recognized that the environment could be isolating and uncomfortable. However, several stated that they gained a more realistic perspective of the communities in which they would work after leaving college, learning how to deal with diversity in new environments. The following quotes exemplify the range of responses provided:

"[I saw myself] becoming worldly, involved with people from different walks of life."

"I experienced discrimination and that taught me about the real world when I got into the workforce."

"I learned about racism."

"I had to remain focused on what it was that I wanted to achieve. As an African American, I was made very uncomfortable so I had to stay very focused."

"I guess I valued my experience with diversity and just learning more about people there. Everyone has different backgrounds and circumstances. Everyone isn't just a cardboard cut out."

"[It gave] me a more worldly knowledge of society and history. The diversity. It gives you a different perspective of how you communicate with other people. You don't feel segregated from other people as much after you leave Northern."

Discussion

From the voices of the alumni in this study, I found that the issues, concerns, and barriers to specially-admitted students on this campus are similar today to what they were in the early years of the program. The positive results reported here, from 3 decades of alumni, clearly support the conclusion that this special admission program has been a significant contributor to the successful transition to higher education. The program also has been a powerful influence on the lives of students.

Students benefit from feeling connected to the institution, and those who are motivated to succeed and graduate will likely seek out those connections (Tinto, 1975). Institutions and programs will benefit from providing assistance to students that enables them to affiliate. This study shows that students want and need academic and emotional supports to deal with their academic, personal, and emotional issues and are grateful for the opportunities that are identified for them by those who know the institution better than they do.

Students from underrepresented populations on predominantly White campuses are likely to feel isolated at the beginning of their college experience (Watson et al., 2002). Students who have been specially admitted are very likely to experience isolation and marginalization at 4-year institutions (Smedley, Myers, & Harnell, 1993). Students who learn how to cope effectively in this environment are likely to become more successful (Eaton & Bean, 1995). But approachable and knowledgeable resources are valuable tools for student survival and success.

The alumni respondents in this study confirm that participation in social and academic programming and activities was a way to cope with their issues and concerns and become integrated both academically and socially. Joining organizations that provide an opportunity to connect with other students who share similar culture and background characteristics was clearly a factor in success. But connections within organizations were not the only way for them to become integrated into the university community. What stood out for those who work in the program were the powerful and emotional statements that alumni made regarding their connection to the CHANCE program staff. Many referred to the sense of family and the warmth and openness of the program as experiences that stood out for them years after they graduated.

The key elements of the program that provided the most powerful support for helping students achieve academic and social connections in college were the relationships that connected these students to staff. Levine and Nidiffer (1996) found that for poor students, the decision to go to college and succeed in college was very frequently precipitated by a relationship with a mentor who supported the student in this goal. Enrolled students need the same sorts of emotional support throughout their career. In response to the survey, many alumni referred to staff as a meaningful part of their careers, some by name, even decades later. Clearly, students in this program benefit as greatly from the contact they have with the people in the program as they benefit from the program services provided.

Because the respondents are looking back at the experience as college graduates, their perspective is different than from currently enrolled students. As a student in the heat of a difficult academic moment, a math tutor or a good English instructor can be the most important factor in educational success. But later, as graduates, although most may not remember the names of the tutors or the professors or even courses taken in college, these alumni still remember those people who touched their lives and helped them change and grow for the better. Perhaps the most successful aspect of the CHANCE program, as the alumni here have told us, is that it is a community of academically and emotionally supportive people who welcome and support students and help them succeed.

Findings here support what Snow (1977) said nearly 30 years ago:

> Counselors can make a dramatic difference in the chances for success of the underprepared student. But before they can, they must have certain essential skills; for regardless of intellectual ability, if counselors don't have interpersonal competence, they won't get to first base. (p. 9)

The most important factor in any retention program is people who care about students in all aspects of their lives. As one graduate stated,

> I didn't have much of a family. There was no money. But at this place, I found a new family in the people who worked in CHANCE. They were my family. They helped me get through the hard times no matter what.

The alumni perspective on the opportunity provided by special admission is highly informative. The students here received far more than a degree from the University. They learned about the power of education in changing their lives and breaking the cycle of poverty. The open door of special admission enables students to open many more doors in the future, including graduate programs, gainful employment, successful businesses, leadership responsibilities, and countless other contributions to society. The study showed that this special admissions program, by connecting students to the people and programs that care for and support them, can change their lives forever.

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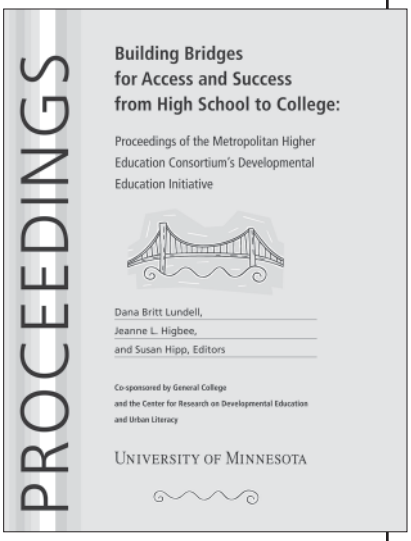

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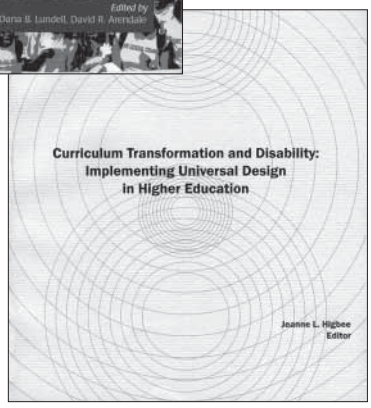

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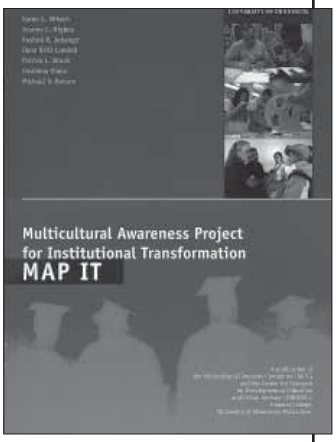

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CRDEUL MONOGRAPH #7 CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

"DIVERSITY AND THE POSTSECONDARY EXPERIENCE"

The seventh annual monograph sponsored by The Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy

We encourage and invite postsecondary educators to contribute to the independent monograph series sponsored by the Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy (CRDEUL). The goal of these monographs is to build strong research and theoretical foundations for practice for postsecondary programs related to access and retention from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, researchers, support services specialists, and students. The seventh monograph will feature theory, research, and best practices that focus on the opportunities, nature, and impact of diversity in higher education. Priority will be given to manuscripts that address perspectives of student populations traditionally underrepresented and underserved in postsecondary education.

It should be noted that the word "diversity" relates broadly in our conception as the most inclusive range of individuals and their backgrounds, talents, insights, and contributions to the postsecondary classroom. This includes a definition of multiculturalism hat we would like authors to use in this monograph when considering diversity, including race, ethnicity, gender, age, home language, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, disability, and other social identities that enhance our classrooms and institutions.

Articles for this monograph might explore and expand the following questions:

- What are some examples of multicultural pedagogies that fully address diversity and enhance student success in the postsecondary classroom?
- How can the meanings of "diversity" and "multiculturalism" be further defined and refined to transform institutions in the future to fully encompass and support all students?
- What do "diversity" and "multiculturalism" mean to current students, faculty, or staff who teach, work, and learn in postsecondary settings?
- What are some results of recent research studies about diversity and the postsecondary experience that challenge or support present pedagogical approaches or program models?
- How does a specific discipline, such as math or science, best support and engage a diverse range of students in their access to future academic and work opportunities in the field?
- How do approaches, such as developmental education courses and services, Universal Instruction Design (designed to support students with disabilities and increase access for all students), or multicultural advising models address student diversity in an innovative way?

DUE DATE: Submissions (see attached form) must be **postmarked by August 21, 2006**.

Manuscripts will be forwarded to the editorial board for masked peer review. Authors will then be notified regarding the status of their proposals and receive initial recommendations and feedback by December 2006. Manuscript revisions will be due January 15, 2007. Final publication date is May 2007.

Refer to the attached guidelines for authors for further information related to manuscript submission. This information is also available online at **http://www.gen.umn.edu/research/crdeul/monographs.htm**

For further information, contact:

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GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS
"Diversity and the Postsecondary Experience"

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1. Manuscripts and reference style must be in accordance with the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Submissions that do not comply with APA style will be returned to the author(s).
2. Manuscripts must be typewritten, double-spaced, minimum one-inch margins, regular type face/font, preferably 12 point, no right justification. Do not use boldface type or special fonts. Italics are used instead of underlining for titles and emphasis, including subheadings and in the reference list (see APA handbook, 5th edition, pp. 100-103).
3. The subject must be relevant to the monograph theme.
4. Manuscripts must not duplicate previously published works or articles under consideration for publication elsewhere. All authors will be required to sign a nonduplication agreement.
5. The title page must include the title of the chapter (not to exceed 12 words); the name(s) and institutional affiliation(s) of all authors; and the address, telephone numbers, and fax and e-mail information, if available, for the lead author. All correspondence will be with the lead author, who is responsible for all communication with any additional author(s).
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