

**At-Risk, First-Year Students' Patterns of Perceptions of Their Academic
Performance Activities and Grades Earned**

By

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Abstract

Researchers and practitioners in an attempt to understand academic performance, and thus reduce academic failure, have identified variables associated with academic performance. Although this research has been useful, there are limitations and critiques: 1) findings are often inconsistent; 2) student experiences and perceptions tend to be constructed as dichotomous variables: thus little is known about interconnections and contradictions in students' lives; and, 3) gender, race and class are constructed as variables to assess difference and not as social structural positions of power. The purpose of this research is to explore at-risk, first-year students participating in a structured intervention program and their perceptions of their academic performance. In addition, the ways in which their perceptions are shaped by gender. Through multiple qualitative techniques of semi-structured interviews, content analysis, and observations over an 8-month period I constructed an understanding of students' perceptions of their academic performance. The students' perceptions are interconnected such that themes emerged illuminating three patterns of perceptions. My analysis illuminated some manifestations of how gender shaped students' perceptions. However, gender was but one lens, not the dominant analytical lens, from which to explore and understand these students' perspective. Using extensive quotes from students in a narrative form, these patterns are described and discussed. As a sociologist, a feminist, and student affairs professional, I am concerned with structural elements of a given phenomenon; therefore I make particular mention of organizational and policy issues and implications associated with the patterns of student perceptions.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

Understanding academic performance has become increasingly important because, nationally, academic failure resulting in suspension represents from 30 to 35 percent of all college student departures (Tinto, 1996). One in four students will be placed on probation sometime during their undergraduate career (Garnett, 1990). Academic performance is of concern to students and higher education institutions for financial reasons; and because educating a heterogeneous population is a national need (Erickson & Strommer, 1991). In an effort to predict academic performance and subsequently reduce academic failure, researchers have identified numerous factors associated with college grades (Astin, 1971; Pace, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1987, 1993). However, despite identifying students as 'at-risk', findings are often inconsistent and much of the variation in grade point averages are left unexplained. Models attempting to predict academic performance provide useful information on factors related to college performance; however, collectively they have conceptual, methodological, and practical limitations and critiques.

One way to understand academic performance is through a gender lens. Researchers have assessed the relationship between gender and academic performance. Gender, in these studies, has been constructed as a demographic variable that is added to a list of other variables to be studied. However, gender can be conceptualized as an important status position occupied by individuals in society and thus different paradigms from this perspective should be applied to understanding academic performance.

My study seeks to broaden the conceptualization of gender and address these critiques and limitations. The purpose of my study is to explore, through a multi-method analysis, the ways in which at-risk, first-year students' academic performance is shaped by gender. My study is propelled by my motivation to contribute to the understandings of college student outcomes and the ways in which gender shapes experiences.

In this Chapter, I provide a brief overview of research and theorizing on academic performance, noting theoretical and practical limitations. I will also offer conceptualizations of gender to illustrate what work still needs to be done. The weaving together of research and theorizing on academic performance and gender forms the conceptual framework that guided my study.

THE NATURE OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Traditionally, researchers have operationalized academic performance as grades earned (e.g. Bower, 1994; Thombs, 1995). Past levels of academic performance as indicated by the cognitive variables of high school grade point average (GPA), and college aptitude tests such as the SAT, are the best predictors of college performance (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Rea, 1992). High school GPA predicts approximately 23% of variations in college grades (Noel-Levitz, 1993). Although significant, in "real life" terms this level of predictability leaves some students' experiences left unexplained and the findings are often inconsistent (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Rea, 1992). Additionally, these two

predictors are less adequate for understanding black students' academic performance at predominantly white colleges (Nettles, Thoeny, & Gosman, 1986; Tracey & Sedlacek, 1987). SAT scores have been shown to have a gender bias in predictive validity (Rosser, 1992). High school grades and college aptitude scores are the primary criteria used to admit students into college and to identify academically at-risk students (McGrath & Townsend, 1997).

The process through which predictive variables are identified and models are developed is to statistically analyze relationships between variables and grade point averages. Once positive relationships have been identified, "performers" typically are characterized as exhibiting specific behaviors, attitudes and experiences, positively associated with college grades. Conversely, "non-performers" are characterized by an absence of such behaviors, attitudes, and experiences (see Astin, 1971; Pace, 1990). This model has been referred to as a "deficit model" (Ladner, 1987, Smith, 1995) and focuses on "the group as problem...This approach assumes that the answers to 'the problem' are in the characteristics of the target group" (Smith, 1995, p. 232). Some researchers suggest that we should shift from focusing on students, as the problem, to understanding students' perspectives on the college or university (Smith, 1995).

Some consensus has been reached, based on these predictive models, as to which students are predicted to be at-risk of low performance. However, "there is still little consensus about the nature or needs of at-risk students" (McGrath & Townsend, 1997, p. 213). Intervention strategies are designed to develop and enhance "positive" characteristics in "non-performers", but the models predicting academic performance do not also focus on ways to cultivate the characteristics. Also, little is known as to the characteristics that can lead to academic success.

An assumption seems to be made that all students performing at a certain grade level in college have similar perceptions and experiences. There has been little discussion as to the possible multiple pathways taken by students to reach various levels of academic performance. The result is that students predicted to be non-performers are understood as uniform groups of students, overlooking within group variations. Strategies employed to respond to poor performance may not address the unique needs of academically at-risk students. As we have learned from studies focused on understanding diversity, students classified on one dimension may not be similar in other dimensions (see Allen, 1992). Therefore, there is a need to explore variations in perceptions and experiences for at-risk, first-year students. Research on organizational diversity also suggests that studies should be conducted on "the group on its own terms" because this type of research "often provide cultural critiques and institutional factors that affect race, class and gender and the relationships among them" (Smith, 1995, p. 233). Additionally, new paradigms assert that emphasis should be placed on understanding multiple perspectives rather than focusing on cause-and-effect relationships (hooks, 1990; Smith, 1995).

Models predicting academic performance include cognitive and noncognitive variables (e.g., Hood, 1992), social and academic factors (e.g., Tinto, 1987, 1993), formal and informal experiences (Astin, 1971; Pace, 1990) and student demographic characteristics (Astin, 1977; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, Rea, 1992). But while these lines of research have provided information as to the behaviors students engage in and the perceptions that are associated with academic performance, they lack what I call the "but why" element. To illustrate this limitation I will discuss some of the variables associated

with academic performance such as quality and quantity of effort, measured by study habits and time management (Astin, 1993; Pace, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Thombs, 1995), and demographic characteristics such as being female, white, and middle-class, as indicated by parents' level of education (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Rea, 1992). Behaviors are described in these studies but little information is provided as to student perceptions of these behaviors in turn increase the likelihood of engaging in such activities. Study habits is an example. While the amount of time spent studying is positively associated with college grades (Pace, 1990), these studies do not provide information as to why students study, what impacts time spent studying and students' perceptions of this academic activity. Another example is being a first generation college student. This factor is correlated negatively with college grades and academic preparation for college as indicated by high school grades (Pascarella, Whitt, Nora, Edison, Hagedorn & Terenzini, 1996). However, little is known as to how first generation college students' perceive academic activities that may have been associated with academic outcomes such as grades.

Despite the contributions of the aforementioned models for understanding academic performance, we only have a partial understanding of students' perceptions and experiences associated with academic performance. Recent research and theorizing by feminists and postmodernists, in particular, suggest that one reason our knowledge is partial is that perceptions and experiences are often dichotomized into two separate spheres (Best & Kellner, 1991; Smith, 1987). Examples of dichotomies constructed to understand academic performance are cognitive/noncognitive variables, social/academic interactions, and formal/informal experiences. Dichotomies do not illuminate overlapping and sometimes contradictory real life experiences (Olesen, 1994; Schwandt, 1994; Smith, 1987). Theorists argue that human experiences do not fit into neat, mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories which then are found to explain a high percentage of variation in a particular outcome (Acker, 1992b; Smith, 1987).

As mentioned, an objective for studying academic performance is to ultimately reduce academic failure. To reduce academic failure, colleges and universities have developed intervention programs to address the perceived needs of academically at-risk students (McGrath & Townsend, 1997). To maximize intervention effectiveness it is crucial to understand the social context in which these programs exist. Many suggest that social contexts which are made up of student perceptions and experiences shape all the interactions students engage in, how students spend their time, and student perceptions of what is of value (King, 1996; Kuh, 1995). Kuh (1996) asserts that if student realities and perspectives are not understood and addressed, "even the most ambitious, elegantly designed institutional renewal strategy will fall short because students themselves determine the social context in which learning occurs" (p. 141). Additionally, very few studies exist assessing the effectiveness of various elements of academic intervention strategies (McGrath & Townsend, 1997).

Much of what we know about students' academic performance has been assessed by using single quantitative methods such as surveys, standardized instruments and structured interviews (Stage & Russell, 1992; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1991). Quantitative studies emphasize amount, intensity, and frequency and require that students choose a response from a predetermined list, while qualitative methodologies emphasize processes and meanings of experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Quantitative studies are less

likely than qualitative research to provide a rich understanding of the experiences and perceptions that are important to students' academic performance, and hence useful to administrators and educators (Kraft, 1991; Stage & Russell, 1992; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1991). Additionally, there is a need to enhance the descriptive validity of how students perceive and experience academic performance by allowing students to openly report important elements to their academic performance. (Kraft, 1991; Weiner, 1985).

A strategy to further our understanding of academic performance is to explore the ways in which academic performance is shaped by gender. Over the past several decades, in an effort to address inequality, gender has been a focus of study. Theorists and researchers in higher education have explored the ways in which student experiences vary by gender (Pearson, Shavlik, & Touchton, 1989). Progress has been made since the passing of legislation (e.g., The Educational Amendments Act of 1972) that addresses gender equality in education. Women are participating in all levels of higher education at greater rates than in the past, the gap between women's and men's academic attainment is decreasing, and academic disciplines have become more integrated with men and women (Touchton & Davis, 1991). However, progress toward gender integration and equality does not mean that individuals in various social structural positions experience the world in the same way (Acker, 1990, 1992a; Hall, 1993a, 1993b; Kanter, 1977, 1978).

Focusing on gender and college student experiences such as academic performance, researchers traditionally conceptualize gender as a variable from which to explore similarities and differences in experiences and perceptions (e.g., Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Touchton & Davis, 1991), but there are multiple ways to construct gender which have not been incorporated into most research on academic performance. Women and men not only have different experiences but they also have different perspectives regarding their experiences (Astin, 1977, 1978, 1993; Baxter Magolda, 1992, 1994; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1982; Brooks, 1992; Gilligan, 1982; Smith, Morrison, & Wolf, 1994).

Research on gender and academic performance has been vast. However, "gender" tends to be synonymous with "women" (Calas & Smirch, 1992b). Therefore, most of the research on understanding gender has focused on understanding women. Focusing on women's experiences has been a response to mainstream scholarship, which is primarily based on men's' experiences (Smith, 1987; Calas & Smirch, 1993). While research on women has made contributions to our understanding of college student experiences, understanding men as having gender is also necessary to deepening our understandings of experiences (Collinson & Hearn, 1994). Additionally, researching men and women as separate categories ignores the impact the relations between genders may have on experiences. Theoretically, gender refers to men and women, masculinity and femininity, therefore research on gender needs to explore women's and men's experiences.

Turning specifically to studies on academic performance, research suggests there is a relationship between gender and academic performance. While the findings are somewhat inconsistent, being female has been positively associated with GPA (Astin, 1971; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Despite the statistical relationship, only a very small percentage of variance, 1% - 4%, in college GPA is explained (as cited in Rea, 1992). Even though the relationship between gender and academic performance has been found to be statistically significant, this relationship is of little practical value. Therefore, I do not come to the issue of gender and academic performance with a specific problem of gender

differences in failing grades. Instead, I theorize that student perceptions of their academic performance are shaped by gender. I am attempting to understand academic performance as indicated by college grades for at-risk students by understanding processes associated with those grades.

The most recent theoretical conceptualizations of gender suggest that gender is a social structural position (Acker, 1992b; Tong, 1989; West & Zimmerman, 1987; Wharton, 1991). This conceptualization of gender represents the ways that power is imbedded in masculinity and femininity, and in what it means to be a man or woman. Conceptualizing gender as a position of power allows for the intersections of the structural locations of race, class, national origin, age and sexual orientation. Race and class are not variables that are added to gender but intersect and form unique experiences from the converging perspective. There is little understanding as to the ways gender, as a social structural position, manifests itself in micro-level experiences such as academic performance. For example, based on this conceptualization of gender, we might expect that students' perceptions of their academic performance would be shaped by their position in the power structure (Kanter, 1976, 1977; Yoder, 1984).

Yet another way to explore gender as a position of power is to analyze the ways in which gender shapes organizational structures and values. Traditionally, organizations have been theorized as gender neutral. In reality, masculine values such as rationality, hierarchy, and objectivity have shaped the social structure of organizations (Acker, 1990). These multidimensional, power-based conceptualizations of gender have not been applied to research on academic performance.

I have presented some of the limitations of research on academic performance, examples of undergraduate experiences shaped by gender and multiple conceptualizations of gender. Woven together, this discussion informs and guides my research. Since research on academic performance of at-risk students has not incorporated these multiple layers of academic performance and gender, my study is exploratory.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

My study continues the exploration and understanding of at-risk students' academic performance by addressing these limitations and critiques, and by broadening the conceptualization of gender to explore the ways in which student experiences are shaped by gender. As noted, academic performance is traditionally synonymous with course grades, grade point averages and scores on aptitude tests. To develop a broader understanding of this phenomenon, I conceptualize academic performance in two ways, course and assignment grades earned and academic performance activities. Academic performance activities are behaviors and experiences that have been associated with grades. The purpose of my study is to explore how at-risk, first-year students, participating in a structured academic intervention program during their first semester at a four-year institution, perceive their academic performance activities and grades earned, and the ways in which their perceptions were shaped by gender.

Research Questions

My research explores the following questions:

- 1) How do at-risk, first year students perceive their academic performance activities?

- 2) How do at-risk, first-year students perceive their grades on course assignments, courses and overall grade point average?
- 3) How are at-risk, first-year students' perceptions of their academic performance activities and grades shaped by gender?

To explore how students perceive their academic performance, I was guided by a constructionist paradigm which emphasizes "the world of experiences as it is lived, felt, undergone by social actors" (Schwandt, 1994). Not only is this paradigm well suited for addressing the critiques discussed but it also is compatible with my own epistemological and ontological perspective.

Multiple techniques of semi-structured interviews, content analysis, and observations were utilized to gather data across an eight-month period to begin constructing an understanding of students' perceptions of their academic performance and explore my research questions. Interviews and field notes were analyzed for themes in student perceptions of their academic performance activities and grades earned. As a feminist, I assumed that gender is a construct that shaped students' perceptions of their academic performance. Thus gender theory was a framework through which I analyze the data. As mentioned, the constructionist paradigm asserts that both the students and I create knowledge and understanding. In my analysis neither the students' words nor actions illuminated gender as the dominant lens through which they perceived their academic performance. Where gender is evident in shaping perceptions or social contexts the dynamics are discussed and theorized.

Themes emerged illuminating variations in perceptions students had of their academic performance activities and grades. Three patterns of perceptions emerged such that students were clustered according to patterns of their perceptions. To give life to these patterns, I named each according to the characteristics of the perceptions in that pattern.

Using extensive quotes from students, for each pattern I illuminate how at-risk students perceive their academic performance. I situate the patterns of perceptions in the social contexts of student behaviors, experiences, and social structural positions. Within the description of student perceptions of their academic performance, I discuss theoretical perspectives and various implications. As a sociologist, a feminist, and student affairs professional, I am concerned with structural elements of a given phenomenon. Therefore I make particular mention of issues associated with structured intervention strategies and organizational policies and practices.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Exploring how students perceive their academic performance is important for practical and theoretical reasons. On a practical level, the college age population in the United States is decreasing and is becoming increasingly heterogeneous racially and culturally (Eitzen & Baca Zinn, 1997). With this change comes the responsibility and challenge of educating students from multiple social structural positions (Erickson & Strommer, 1991). Understanding how at-risk students perceive their academic performance and analyzing the ways in which gender shapes both the students' perceptions and social context of a structured intervention program is crucial in this process. It is not simply enough to add variables of gender, race, and class but the framework from which we conceptualize these issue needs to be resituated (Acker & Van Houten, 1991; Calas & Smirch, 1992a, 1992b; Collins, 1990)

Academic performance, specifically failure, has important implications for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Currently, due to federal regulations, students receiving financial aid such as PELL grants or Stafford loans must maintain a 2.0 GPA or risk losing their financial support. Also, state legislatures (e.g., Virginia) are entertaining the idea of restricting financial support to students with a "C" average or better. Understanding academic performance in hopes of raising college student grades reaps many benefits in educating a diverse population.

Additionally, studying academic performance can be examined as a subset of student retention, which is important to the fiscal management of colleges and universities and for students. In an era of a decreasing college age population, retention is the primary strategy employed in maintaining enrollment levels. Additionally, incidences of academic failure that result in suspension have increased over the past few years. Currently academic suspension represents 30 to 35 percent of all college student departures nationally (Tinto, 1996). At some colleges and universities, academic dismissal "makes up a majority of all student leavers" (Tinto, 1996, p. 1). Therefore, understanding processes associated with academic performance may lead to new strategies to reduce failure thereby increasing college student retention.

Traditionally, research on academic performance has conceptualized gender as a category from which to assess difference. From this perspective, women are viewed as having fewer opportunities. The reasons for gender differences in college student experiences are many, such as differences in students' socialization, support/role modeling, and unequal treatment by faculty and administrators (Astin, 1978; Bales & Sharp, 1981; Carney & Morgan, 1981; Inglehart and Brown, 1989; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1990; Crawford, and MacLeod, 1990; Morgan, 1992; Whitt, 1994). In response to these gender differences, programs have been developed which focus on the individual level and employ strategies to change the woman (e.g., self-esteem/assertiveness workshops, mentoring programs, and resocialization).

Conceptualizing gender as a social structural position and exploring how gender shapes student perceptions of their academic performance may shift the focus of intervention strategies from the individual to the organizational structure (Acker, 1990, 1992a, 1992b; Ferguson, 1984, Kanter, 1976, 1977; Yoder, 1991). Analyzing gender as both a social category and a social structural position may address gender issues throughout an organizational structure, rather than on an individual, case by case basis. Understanding the ways in which gender as a social structural position impacts academic performance may inform strategies for addressing the short and long term goals of developing gender relations based on equality.

Theoretically, to understand how gender shapes perceptions and experiences, we should continue to expand the conceptualization of gender. Furthering the understanding of perceptions differentially influencing experiences will contribute to creating a range of opportunities for a variety of students, especially those not in the mainstream. Egalitarian gender relations are more likely to occur if we understand the dynamics involved in the constructions of those relationships. My research will make contributions to research and theorizing in higher education and gender studies.

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

The following section discusses conceptualizations and definitions of key terms used throughout my study.

Academic Performance: Academic performance has two elements. I conceptualize it as 1) a combination of midterm and semester course and assignment grades students earned and 2) academic performance activities that have been associated with college grades. In regard to grades, research on academic performance suggests that GPA is not an adequate measure of cognitive ability due to the variations by university type, academic discipline, student learning styles, mode of course instruction, grading policies, and faculty style (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). However, GPA is relevant because it is the criterion by which university academic standards are set. Also, my research is not concerned with students' demonstration of cognitive ability but is focused on understanding academic performance as indicated by GPA.

Academic performance activities are a variety of behaviors and experiences that have been associated with college grades earned. For example, study habits and interactions with faculty are associated with college grades. Behaviors and experiences associated with grades are many. My study reports only those that were identified by the students as most meaningful to them. Therefore, applying the perspective of student participants, academic performance activities include 1) studying/preparing activities such as reading, library work, and group meetings, 2) interactions with faculty, and 3) the mental work associated with college course work. For example, thinking about paper topics and mental quizzing.

At-Risk Students: At-risk students in my study are students who the Southeastern University's (SEU) admissions office has identified, based on a combination of factors (high school grade point average, high school courses, SAT or ACT scores, and guidance counselor recommendations) as at-risk of failing academically. These students meet the academic criteria for admittance but are below the average SAT score and high school grade point average of other entering new students. At-risk, first-year students admitted to the university are required to participate in a structured intervention program called EXCEL. EXCEL is an alias for the program. All at-risk students in this study are first semester students.

Gender: In my study, I conceptualize gender as both a social category from which to assess differences between men and women and as a symbol of power (Scott, 1986). For further clarification, I make a distinction between the concepts gender and gendered. Gender for the purpose of my study, refers to the social categories men and women. By theorizing gender as a category, I can assess differences between men's and women's perceptions of their academic performance.

Gendered refers to dynamic, relational, power based processes through which gender as a social structure manifests itself (e.g. Acker, 1990; Hall, 1993a; Reskin & Roos, 1988). In my study, to explore the ways in which student perceptions of their grades earned and academic performance activities are gendered means to explore both differences and similarities between men's and women's perceptions and the ways domination and subordination are constructed in terms of gender.

I recognize that gender is but one of the interlocking and overlapping social constructs that shape perspectives and experiences. Perceptions and experiences are constructed through multiple structural positions such as race, ethnicity, class, age and

sexual orientation (e.g., Collins, 1990; Frankenberg, 1994). Theoretically it may be possible to distinguish between these constructions; however, in practice it is difficult to differentiate between multiple interlocking social structural positions (Acker, 1992a). Therefore, I attempt to isolate gender in student perceptions, but also illustrate intersections with race and class.

The following Chapters outline related literature, describe my method of discovery, discuss patterns of student perceptions of their academic performance, and theorize student perceptions and implications of perceptions particularly in the context of an academic intervention program.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:

My study, concerning at-risk, first-year students' perceptions of their academic performance activities and grades earned, is guided by scholarship on higher education and theories of gender. What follows is a summary of research on academic performance, intervention strategies for academically at-risk students, gender and higher education, and gender theory so that my study will be situated within the context of related literature.

UNDERSTANDING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

To understand academic performance in college, it is necessary to discuss how academic performance is conceptualized and the multiple factors associated with academic performance.

Conceptualizations of Academic Performance

There are a variety of ways to conceptualize academic outcomes in college. Researchers have utilized concepts such as student learning, cognitive development, academic achievement, academic attainment, subject matter knowledge, academic skills and academic performance (see Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, for overview of conceptualizations). Each term operationalizes a different aspect of academic outcomes associated with college enrollment. For example, cognitive development often refers to building a repertoire of skills such as “reasoning skills, critical thinking, intellectual flexibility, reflective judgement, cognitive complexity, and so on” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 114). Despite the range of terminology, definitions are sometimes inconsistent and/or are limited in scope. Factors associated with one academic outcome may not be associated with another.

Traditionally, researchers operationalize academic achievement and academic performance as grades earned in high school and college courses and as college aptitude test scores (e.g. Brower, 1994; Thombs, 1995). These conceptualizations focus on the final outcome of a grade, not the multiple performances and achievements that comprise a course grade or grade point average. By focusing on an end result, little is known about students' experiences and perceptions throughout an academic term that might be associated with college grades. Although there are multiple factors associated with college grades as will be discussed, often there is an assumption that all students performing at a certain level achieved that level in the same manner. There has been little discussion as to the multiple pathways to various levels of academic performance, the multiple forms of academic performance, and the associated processes and perceptions. Therefore, in this next section, I discuss a conceptualization of academic performance that will be applied to my study.

Drawing from the sociology literature on work, job performance is operationalized as a multifaceted process comprising various skills, behaviors and outcomes. For example, in one study, performance is conceptualized as “work quality, thoroughness, recognizing priorities, work drive, need for structure, oral communication, and originality” (Shore, 1992, p. 504). Although evaluating job performance is different than evaluating academic

performance, I believe much can be learned from this conceptualization. In both contexts there is an expectation that a person will prepare, investigate, and demonstrate skill.

To develop a broader understanding of the phenomenon academic performance, I refer to the factors associated with college grades and conceptualize academic performance activities from these factors. For example, study habits are associated with college grades and, I would argue, as is evident in the work research, that studying is an element of performance. Although academic performance activities are many, the activities featured in my study are those reported as meaningful to participants. For more a detailed discussion on what academic performance activities encompasses, refer to the analysis section of Chapter Three. By broadening the exploration of academic performance to be inclusive of academic performance activities and grades, we may be able to better understand student perceptions and experiences and the outcome of student grades.

What follows is a discussion of factors associated with academic achievement, academic performance and/or college grades. Literature on academic performance often uses the terms achievement, performance and grades interchangeably. I will use “academic performance” to be inclusive of all three terms, and I will discuss the associated factors. Particular attention is paid to gender, race and class dynamics that are related to academic performance and perceptions associated with performance.

Factors Associated with Academic Performance

In an effort to understand academic performance, researchers have attempted to identify factors associated with college grades (Astin, 1971; Tinto, 1987, 1993; Pace, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Factors associated with college academic performance include previous academic performance (Noel-Levitz, 1993), social and academic integration (e.g. Tinto, 1987, 1993), formal and informal experiences with faculty (Astin, 1977, 1993; Pace, 1990), student demographic characteristics (Astin, 1977; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Rea, 1992), and institutional type (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates; 1991).

High school GPA and college aptitude test scores are cognitive factors associated with college grades (Rea, 1992; Noel-Levitz, 1993). These factors are the strongest predictors of college academic performance. High school GPA predicts on average 23% of variations in college grades (Noel-Levitz, 1993). However, across studies on cognitive factors and academic performance, findings are often inconsistent (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1990). Also, these traditional cognitive predictors are better predictors of white and men's students' college grades than students of colors' or women's grades (Hood, 1992, Nettles, et al., 1986; Rosser, 1992)

Student demographic characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors (Astin, 1971; Pace, 1990; Pascarella, 1985; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Richardson & Sullivan, 1994; Tinto, 1987, 1993; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989) are all noncognitive factors associated with academic performance. Similar to cognitive variables, research suggests there are statistical relationships between noncognitive factors and academic performance.

With regard to demographic characteristics, being female has been positively associated with college grades while being nonwhite has been negatively associated with college grades (Astin, 1971; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, Rea, 1992). First generation college students have been found to have lower degree aspirations than their traditional

peers (Pascarella, et al., 1996).

Attribution theory of achievement motivation (Weiner, 1985) explores what students report as causing or being associated with their academic performance. This theoretical model suggests there is a connection between beliefs about causes of success and failure, academic expectations and academic performance. Women and men, whites and people of color have been shown to have different attributions for their academic success and failure (Allen, 1992; Gigliotti & Secrest, 1988; Kraft, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991) and different expectations for college (Braxton, Vesper, & Hossler, 1995). Research findings are somewhat mixed, but women students tend to attribute their academic success to luck, ease, and instructor which are external to the student (Erkut, 1983; Holland & Eisenhart, 1988) while men attribute their successes to internal factors such as effort, ability, and personal ambition (Kraft, 1991). Also, Women have been shown to attribute both success and failures internally; and in other cases no gender difference in attributions have been found (Gigliotti & Secrest, 1988; Vollmer, 1986).

The findings about gender differences in academic success expectations are also mixed. Women and men enrolled in college have different expectations for their future academic success. Men are more likely than women to expect future success in their college courses and overall academic experiences (Allen, 1992; Erkut, 1983; Gigliotti & Secrest, 1988; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Positive academic expectations are associated with higher academic performance even when prior academic performance is controlled (Vollmer, 1986). Some explanations given for these gender differences are a student's familiarity with the task (Gigliotti & Secrest, 1988), academic self-confidence (Whitt, 1994) and meaning given to the academic work (Holland & Eisenhart, 1988; Inglehart & Brown, 1989).

Despite the insights gained using the attribution model there are several limitations. The inconsistencies in the findings make it difficult to develop strategies in response to student attributions for their experiences. Little is known as to "what students mean when they attribute their performance to factors such as ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck" (Kraft, 1991, p. 425). In addition, the perceptions of academic performance are shaped by multiple, overlapping experiences and perspectives of the student.

Students make meaning of situations within a context that they construe. Using filters, students evaluate appropriateness, usefulness and importance of a given experience(s). For instance, initial poor grades effect people differently. Early academic success is vital to women and minorities (Erickson & Strommer, 1991; Skinner & Richardson, 1988). Women enter college with lower academic confidence despite higher high school GPAs than men, so women need to know early that they are "capable of intelligent thought" (Belenky et. al. 1986). Gender differences also exist in how academic failure effects retention. Women drop out before they are dismissed while men wait to be dismissed (Tinto, 1987). When minorities and women earn grades lower than in high school they may be "devastated", "depressed" and consumed with the fear of failure because they do not want to disappoint their families or communities (Erickson & Strommer, 1991 p. 43; Skinner & Richardson, 1988).

Student attitudes such as grade expectations (Kraft, 1991; Vollmer, 1986), educational aspirations (Allen, 1992; Richardson & Sullivan, 1994), and academic confidence (Richardson & Sullivan, 1994) have been associated with various levels of

academic performance. For instance, students with lower grade expectations have lower levels of academic performance (Vollmer, 1986).

Study habits and class attendance are student behaviors linked to academic performance (Astin, 1977, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Richardson & Sullivan, 1994; Thombs, 1995). Tinto (1987) has characterized these activities as academic integration (Tinto, 1987). His model suggests that students who are academically integrated into the institution have higher academic performance than those who are less integrated academically.

College students' interactions with faculty, other students, family and university personnel contribute to student success (Auster & MacRone, 1994; Kraft, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1987). The quantity and quality elements of such interactions are indicators of academic and social integration with the college or university (Pace, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1987). Quantity elements of student interactions are assessed by measuring frequency and duration of interactions (Pace, 1990). Elements that reflect quality components of interactions may include the multiple processes of turn-taking (Tannen, 1989), decision making (Acker, 1992), content (Pace, 1990), and meaning-making (Baxter Magolda, 1992, 1994). The student's race and/or gender influences how different interactions impact the student (Auster & MacRone, 1994; Brooks, 1992; Hall & Sandler, 1982; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

Faculty interactions are typically formal interactions in the classroom/office and informal interaction outside of the classroom. Inside the classroom, interactions take the form of student participation by asking questions, responding to teacher-generated questions, and engaging in course discussions (Auster & MacRone, 1994; Pace, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Sandler & Hall, 1982; Tinto, 1987). Researchers suggest that classroom participation/formal faculty interactions engage "students in the intellectual materials" (Auster & MacRone, 1994, p. 289) and contribute to the academic integration of the student with the university (Tinto, 1987). The byproducts of academic integration typically are higher grades and persistence to graduation (Astin, 1977, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1987).

College students' interactions with faculty are an element of academic integration. Lack of academic integration may lead to academic failure (dismissal) which is one example of "leaving college" (Tinto, 1987, 1993). Academic integration into the university as indicated by formal and informal faculty interaction, and a lack of integration may "lessen commitments and possibly lower individual goals" (Tinto, 1987, p. 117) and consequently, GPAs. Additionally, academic integration has been shown to be more important for undergraduate men, than for undergraduate women, in relation to retention (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1987).

College students' formal interactions with faculty have gendered elements. Men are more likely than women to participate in the classroom by asking and answering questions and contributing to discussions (Astin, 1977, 1993; Auster & MacRone, 1994; Brooks, 1992; Crawford & MacLeod, 1990; Hall & Sandler, 1982; Krupnick, 1985). College men feel more comfortable in the classroom and comfortability has been associated with level of classroom participation (Astin, 1993; Auster & MacRone, 1994; Whitt, 1994).

Behaviors that faculty engage in have been associated with students' level of faculty interaction/participation in the classroom. For example, students are most likely to participate in courses when faculty call on students who volunteer and call them by name, give ample time for response, and ask analytical not factual questions (Auster & MacRone, 1994; Crawford & MacLeod, 1990). Female and male college students participate similarly regardless of the gender of the faculty so long as the faculty member exhibits these behaviors (Crawford & MacLeod, 1990). Male students tend to exhibit more aggressive behavior with their female faculty than their male faculty (Brooks, 1982). Further, faculty women are most likely to engage in behaviors that facilitate student interaction (Auster & MacRone, 1994; Crawford & MacLeod, 1990). Given the current gender ratio of faculty, 36% of faculty at four-year institutions are women (NAWE, 1998), students are more likely to enroll in courses taught by men.

Informal interactions with faculty are facilitated by students' participation in cocurricular activities (Astin, 1977, 1993; Pace, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Smith, 1990; Whitt, 1994). Being involved in student organizations and holding leadership positions creates opportunities for students to informally interact with faculty who serve as advisors or are involved with student issues. When assessing student involvement in leadership positions, research suggests that women traditionally have fewer leadership experiences than men (Astin, 1977, 1993; Hafner, 1986; Pace, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1987; Whitt, 1994). Since participation in cocurricular activities is positively correlated with informal interactions with faculty, women may be less likely to experience the same level of academic integration as men.

While not a dominant topic in the literature, interactions with family members have been associated with undergraduate academic performance. This form of student interaction is particularly important for females and students of color. Therefore it is useful in discussing the diversity of students' perceptions of their academic performance activities and grades (Christie & Dinham, 1991). Student interactions with family members are reported by black women as an important form of social support associated with academic performance (Hood, 1992; Kraft, 1991; Lavine, 1992). Although not directly associated with performance outcomes, Kraft's (1991) participants discuss familial relations and expectations prior to entering college and while enrolled in college as important to academic success. Family support was described as continual encouragement to work hard, preparation for college, and resources such as finances and parental time (Kraft, 1991). Supportive familial interactions has been related to academic integration for black undergraduates but not white undergraduates (Lavine, 1992). In addition, gender differences were found between social supports from family and academic success. Female students of color are much more likely to associate academic success with social supports (Kraft, 1991).

Social integration into the campus community is another factor associated with academic performance (Astin, 1993; Erickson & Strommer, 1990; Lavine, 1992; Tinto, 1987). Social integration is primarily achieved through informal interactions and social activities students engage in that are not directly linked with academic work (Tinto, 1987). Interactions with peers are often a paradoxical experience for undergraduates, particularly first-year students. Student-to-student relationships that develop within the campus community can simultaneously support and oppose the institutional academic mission

(Holland & Eisenhart, 1988). Tinto (1987) suggests that social interactions in college do not necessarily support the mission of the institution. Students can be involved in social activities that are within an "ellipse" that is a significant distance from the heart of the institutional mission.

As mentioned, social integration includes interactions with peers and involvement in cocurricular activities (Astin, 1971, 1989; Pace, 1990; Tinto, 1987). Academic integration includes such items as interactions with faculty, hours spent studying, and discussing course related issues. A student's level of integration in an institution reflects the degree to which there is congruence between the student's values and experiences and the organizational culture (Tinto, 1987). For example, under-represented minorities often perceive a lack of institutional support (Kraft, 1991) and the institutional culture may place additional "demands" on the student (Thompson & Fretz, 1991). This "lack of fit" is theorized as one reason minorities, on average, earn lower grades than majority students (Astin, 1993; Boyer, 1987; Pascarella, Smart, & Ethington, 1989; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Whitt, 1994). Also, research suggests that social integration is more important for the retention of women while academic integration is more important for the retention of men (Erickson & Strommer, 1991; Tinto, 1987).

While levels of academic performance have been correlated with individual characteristics, attitudes and behaviors, organizational structures and processes also contribute to academic performance (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1987). Organizational factors associated with academic performance, albeit slight, have included institutional selectivity, gender and racial composition, size, and type of university (i.e. research, residential, two-year, etc.) (Allen, 1992; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

Tinto's model (1987, 1993) contributes to the understanding of academic performance by assessing the connection between organizational context and student academic experiences. For example, Tinto (1987) suggests there are cognitive factors prior to entrance to college that are mediated by college environmental factors that then create opportunities for social and academic integration into the university community. As discussed above, the institutional gender and race composition may affect a student's level of integration and therefore interactions with the college or university.

Similar to the critique of the construction of race and gender discussed later in this Chapter, the analysis of organizational structures and academic performance have not theorized the ways social structures such as race, class and gender shape institutions of higher education. Recent organizational theory suggests that a person's position in the organizational structure shapes performance (Kanter, 1976, 1977) and organizational structures are shaped by social structures (Acker, 1990, 1992a, 1992b; Collinson and Hearn, 1994; Gherardi, 1995). Also, these studies on organizational factors seldom illuminate the organizational process associated with student performance that may be crucial to the understanding of overall academic performance.

AT-RISK STUDENTS

At-Risk is a term that refers to a multitude of different student characteristics associated with students who are most likely to experience poor academic performance or drop out of college. The current notion of at-risk students includes "learning disabled, the visually and hearing impaired, those enrolled in English as a Second Language programs,

as well as returning, first-generation, and under-represented students and under-prepared students as indicated by college aptitude tests and high school grades” (McGrath & Townsend, 1997, p. 212). Despite this comprehensive list of student populations who may be at risk of low academic performance, considerable variation exists in the ways at-risk students are identified on college campuses. Colleges and universities usually focus on one or two of the above student populations as at-risk depending on the composition of the institution.

At-Risk Students and Academic Performance

Literature discussing students who are at-risk focus on issues of retention and on issues of academic performance. To focus my review of literature, I will report research on at-risk students and academic performance (grades). However, poor academic performance is often a subset of retention. Performance is related to retention because a student may not be retained due to academic dismissal (Tinto, 1987, 1993).

Research suggests there are different predictors and factors associated with first-year, at-risk students’ academic performance as indicated by GPA than students who have not been identified as at-risk (Richardson & Sullivan, 1994). These findings are quite complex. It is difficult to differentiate what predictors or factors are associated with race, class and gender structural locations rather than individual student characteristics. For example, differences exist in at-risk and non-at-risk students’ attributions for their success (Gigliotti & Secrest, 1988), perceptions of parental support (Pascarella, et al., 1996; Yaworski, 1996), and academic confidence (Pascarella, et al., 1996; Richardson & Sullivan, 1994) which have also been shown to be associated with race and gender.

Yaworski’s (1996) study of at-risk, affluent college students demonstrates the ways that students’ attributions and behaviors are associated with academic performance. Low achieving, at-risk students believed that a person’s inherent ability was determined and ability cannot be changed (Yaworski, 1996). Richardson and Sullivan’s (1994) findings suggest grades are not a good predictor of at-risk students’ first semester college grades. Additionally, blacks are more likely to be inaccurately classified as at-risk academically using these indicators (Hood, 1992). Non-cognitive factors such as study habits, academic confidence and initial impressions of the institution were more strongly correlated with first-year students’ fall grade point average, than cognitive factors such as SAT scores, for at-risk students than traditional students (Richardson & Sullivan, 1994).

Interventions for At-Risk First Year Students

Although there is some consensus as to who at-risk, first-year students are, there is little agreement as to what at-risk students need in the way of interventions to be successful (McGrath & Townsend, 1997). Some scholars and practitioners agree that for an at-risk student to achieve the desired outcomes of retention, the intervention must be early in a student’s academic career, it must be continuous and it must be intensive. These intervention strategies have been represented by the equation $RET = \text{Early ID} + (\text{Early} + \text{Intensive} + \text{Continuous}) \text{ Intervention}$ (Seidman, 1992). Another perspective on intervention strategies is that effective programs are those that are highly structured, voluntary, lengthy and offered in groups (Coleman & Freedman, 1996). At-risk student intervention programs have been characterized as remedial and developmental and a

hybrid of the two (McGrath & Townsend, 1997). Hybrid programs often have less clarity than programs with a single focus. Programs are to accommodate the academic and psychosocial needs of the students. The focus of academic intervention strategies has been on performance outcomes and less emphasis has been placed on the theoretical framework of the "treatment" (Coleman & Freedman, 1996).

A common intervention strategy for at-risk students and first-year students alike that takes a hybrid approach is a university first-year/student success seminar. In the most recent National Survey of Freshmen Seminar Programs, 72% (n=720, 40.7% response rate) of the respondents reported that they offered a "college survival course" or an extended orientation (National Resource Center for Freshmen Year Experience and Students in Transition, 1995). Some common goals of first-year seminars are to teach academic survival skills, provide a sense of community, inform students of institutional resources and supports, enhance relationships with faculty, and improve attitudes toward teaching and learning (Gardner, 1986). In addition to common goals, there are also common characteristics of successful first-year seminars. Seminars that have broad institutional support and longevity tend to involve continuing students in the teaching process, incorporate interdisciplinary content that is integrated into technical skill development such as study skills or time management, and are an integral part of the first-year curriculum (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996). Most of these seminars (86%) carry academic credit.

Numerous desirable outcomes have been associated with participation in a first-year seminar for all first-year students, regardless of prior academic experience (Barefoot, 1993). Some of the outcomes include higher grade point averages and graduation rates, increased interaction with faculty outside the classroom, and greater use of campus resources (Barefoot, 1993).

UNDERSTANDING GENDER

Gender is a theoretical lens through which I analyze my data. What follows is a brief overview of feminist theory and gender conceptualizations. Understanding gender has been the primary focus of feminist scholarship over the past 30 to 40 years (Tong, 1989). Although some conceptualizations of gender do not stem from feminist theory, most conceptualizations of gender reflect different phases and time periods in feminist theorizing (Farganis, 1994; Welehan, 1995). Each phase is characterized differently and there are also different categories of feminist theory within each phase (e.g. liberal, socialist, radical, and postmodern to name a few). Regardless of the era or type of feminist theory in which gender is conceptualized, common threads are woven throughout each understanding of gender. Incorporated into all conceptualizations of gender within a feminist framework is the belief that 1) gender is socially constructed, 2) gender shapes our experiences, and 3) gender inequality exists (Andersen, 1993; Tong, 1989).

Conceptualizations of Gender

Given the multiple feminist frameworks, gender can be conceptualized in many different ways. This section outlines various definitions of gender. When possible, I use literature from higher education to discuss our understandings of gender.

Gender can be defined as a dichotomous variable that includes the categories men and women. Research applying this definition of gender may illuminate the ways in which women's and men's experiences are similar and different. Focusing on gender and college student experiences, researchers most commonly conceptualize gender as a variable from which to explore similarities and differences in experiences and perceptions. Some examples of how women's and men's undergraduate academic experiences are different include: location in academic disciplines (Jacobs, 1986; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Touchton & Davis, 1991; Ware, Steckler, & Leserman, 1985), interpretations of their academic performance despite similar levels of achievement (Astin, 1977, 1978, 1993; Erickson & Strommer, 1991; Gigliotti & Secrest, 1988; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pearson, Shavlik, & Touchton, 1989; Smith, et al., 1994; Tidball, 1994), educational and career aspirations (Gigliotti & Secrest, 1988; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Smith et al., 1994; Tidball, 1994), classroom experiences (Auster & MacRone, 1994; Brooks, 1992; Hall & Sandler, 1982; Inglehart & Brown, 1989; Maher, 1993; Whitt, 1994), social experiences (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Smith, et. al, 1994; Tinto, 1987), responses and interactions with instructors and administrators (Constantinople, Cornelius & Gray, 1988; Hall & Sandler, 1982; Holland & Eisenhart, 1990; Tidball, 1994; Whitt, 1994), and "ways of knowing" (Baxter Magolda, 1992, 1994; Belenky, et. al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982).

Women and men not only have different experiences but also they have different perspectives of their experiences. For example, college women's and men's epistemologies (Baxter Magolda, 1992,1994; Belenky, et. al., 1982; Gilligan, 1982), interpretations of experiences (Astin, 1977, 1978, 1993; Brooks, 1992; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pearson, Shavlik, & Touchton, 1989; Smith, et. al., 1994;), and moral development (Gilligan, 1982) have been shown to have gender related patterns. Gender in these incidences refers to a pattern of perspectives that are typically associated with women or men.

Another way to conceptualize gender is that gender is something we "do", not something we "have" (e.g. Hall, 1993b; West & Zimmerman, 1987, Williams, 1995). Gender from this perspective is not a characteristic we bring to an experience; gender is influenced by the particular social setting (West & Zimmerman, 1987). In other words, "doing gender" is a constantly negotiated behavior influenced by what is appropriately masculine and feminine in social situations and interactions (Hall, 1993a, 1993b; West & Zimmerman, 1987; Williams, 1995). Women and men may not behave the same way in all settings but may adjust to what is gender appropriate in various situations. For example, Holland and Eisenhart (1990), in their ethnographic study, suggest that college women feel they are not taken seriously so they adjust their ambitions and meaning of college work.

The most recent theoretical conceptualizations of gender suggest that gender is a social structural position (Acker, 1992b; Tong, 1989; Wharton, 1996; West & Zimmerman, 1987). This conceptualization of gender represents the ways that power is embedded in masculinity and femininity (Acker, 1990, 1992a, 1992b; Britton, 1997; Cockburn, 1990; Collinson & Hearn, 1994; Gherardi, 1995; Scott, 1986). For example, Hall (1993a) argues that the waitstaff "do gender" by performing a role that has gendered meaning. For instance, "male and female servers in integrated restaurants continue to do gender, but their

gender embedded in their work role may no longer match their own individual gender" (Hall, 1993a, p. 342). The server's styles of work are seen as masculine or feminine in the different contexts. For example, when women were servers in high-prestige restaurants, they performed a waitering role that traditionally has been filled by men and is a masculine style. The waitering role carries a higher status than performing a waitressing role that is typically associated with females and femininity (Hall, 1993a, 1993b).

Conceptualizing gender as a position of powers allows for the exploration of the intersections of the structural locations of race, class, national origin, age, and sexual orientation. Race and class are not variables that are added to gender but intersect and form unique experiences and perspectives. Variations in college student experiences may reflect intersections of gender and race (Ferron, 1993; Mau, 1993; Noble, 1993). For example, Mau's (1993) research on Asian American undergraduates suggests that the ideology of the "model minority" applies more to Asian men than Asian women in higher education. The gender ideology for Asian American women is very traditional and assumes a home-bound, care-taking role, which is generally not compatible with the image that "model minorities" pursue advanced degrees in science (Mau, 1993).

Another way to explore gender as a position of power is to analyze the ways in which gender as a construct shapes organizational structures and values. Traditionally, organizations have been theorized as gender neutral. However, in reality, masculine values such as rationality, hierarchy, and objectivity have shaped the social structure of organizations (Acker, 1990, Britton, 1997; Park, 1996). Acker (1990) maintains that "the structure of the labor market, relationships in the workplace, the control of the work process, and the underlying wage relations are always affected by symbols of gender, process of gender identity and material inequalities between men and women" (p. 145 - 146). Organizations often appeal to masculine values and styles of individualism and competition, which have been overlooked in analyzing organizational cultures (Collinson & Hearn, 1994). To suggest that an organization is gendered "means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through, and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine" (Acker, 1990, p. 146). The process of gendering an organization may be obvious or hidden in organizational processes and gender may appear to have nothing to do with decisions and procedures (Acker, 1992a, p. 251).

Higher education is an example of a gendered organization because it was developed by men, for men (Fried, 1994). Masculine values and styles of objective knowing, individualism, independence, and hierarchy (Belenky, et. al, 1982; Gilligan, 1982; Pearson, et. al, 1989) characterize higher education (Baxter Magolda, 1992, 1994; Fried, 1994; Pearson, et al., 1989). As Pearson, Shavlik, and Touchton (1989) state, "men still serve as the educational norm by which women are evaluated" (p. 7). Thus men and women, and masculine and feminine values and orientations hold different structural power positions within higher education. Often, as Acker (1990) points out "to function at the top of male hierarchies requires that women render irrelevant everything that makes them women" (p. 153). Understanding gender as a power relationship may assist us in asking how advantage and disadvantage based on gender are produced and reproduced (Acker, 1992b).

Individuals in various social structural positions do not experience the organizations in the same way (Acker, 1990; Kanter, 1976, 1977), nor do they perceive their experiences in the same way. People's experiences and perspectives are influenced by their position in the organization (Ferguson, 1984; Kanter, 1976, 1977; Yoder, 1991) and social structures such as gender, class and race (Acker, 1990, 1992a, 1992b; Collinson & Hearn, 1994). Individuals in positions outside the dominant power structure have a unique views of the dominant group's actions and ideologies (Collins, 1990, p. 11) and there "is a connection between experience and consciousness that shapes everyday lives" (Collins, 1990, p. 25). Being outside the dominant group not only can be associated with oppression, but also this position of "otherness" shapes people's thinking and way of being. (Tong, 1989, p. 219).

In my study, I conceptualize gender as both a social category from which to assess difference between men and women and as, " a primary way of signifying relationships of power" (Scott, 1986, 1067). For further clarification, I make a distinction between the conceptualizations gender and gendered. By theorizing gender as a category, I can assess differences between men and women's perception of their academic performance. Also, it is through this conceptualization of gender that I explore the ways in which academic performance across the semester varies by gender.

Gendered is a term researchers and theorists have used to refer to experiences, processes and structures that are organized through distinctions made in gender terms (e.g., Acker, 1990; Hall, 1993a, 1993b; Reskin & Roos, 1988). In my study, gendered is a multi-faceted, multi-layered conceptualization of gender. Gendered refers to dynamic, relational, power based processes through which gender as a social structure manifests itself. For example, gendered patterns of perceptions associated with academic performance include the following: 1) the ways in which people "do gender" in various social setting such as a classroom (West & Zimmerman, 1987); 2) the ways in which values are associated with events or experiences labeled masculine and feminine (gender hierarchies and gender meanings); 3) the ways in which distinctions are made between men and women, masculinity and femininity (Acker, 1990, 1992a, 1992b); and 4) the ways in which domination and subordination are created and recreated in gender terms particularly through interactions (Acker, 1990; Cockburn, 1990; Gherardi, 1995). In my study, to explore how students perceive their academic performance, I use a gendered lens to explore both differences and similarities between men's and women's academic perceptions, and the ways domination and subordination are constructed in terms of gender.

CHAPTER 3 METHODS AND ANALYSIS

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

To explore the ways in which at-risk first, year-students perceived their academic performance activities and grades and the ways in which their perceptions are shaped by gender, I developed a qualitative study design from a constructionist paradigm. The constructionist paradigm explores how experiences are "lived and felt by social actors" (Schwandt, 1994). Guba and Lincoln (1994) eloquently describe the nuances of the constructionist paradigm as 1) assuming "multiple, apprehendable, and sometimes conflicting social realities that are products of human intellect but may change as their constructors become more informed and sophisticated", 2) viewing knowledge "as created in the interaction among investigator and respondents", and 3) methodologically dialectic in that it is "aimed at the reconstruction of previously held constructions." (111 - 112).

Guided by this paradigm, epistemologically I believe that knowledge is created by both the investigator and respondents (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, the observer should not be disentangled from inquiry and constructions (Schwandt, 1994). In addition, since realities are constructed by social actors, methodologically this paradigm does not specify what the investigator should see in the field but suggests the direction of where to look (Schwandt, 1994). What follows in this section is a discussion of where I looked and why I intended to look there. As discussed in the previous Chapter, I am guided by a medley of conceptual tools relating academic performance and gender that will serve as the conceptual framework for data collection and analysis.

The constructionist paradigm fits my own epistemological and ontological perspective and complements my conceptual framework. For example, in Schwandt's (1994) discussion of qualitative methodologies, he suggests that by viewing the social world through the constructionist paradigm we can attempt to dissolve dichotomies. In addition, the constructionist perspective assumes there are multiple and sometimes-contradictory realities produced by social actors (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Since my research focuses on perceptions, qualitative methodologies are an appropriate choice. Qualitative research "is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter...attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them." (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). As an exploratory study, qualitative methodologies are appropriate because through this method meanings, processes and perceptions are illuminated, whereas quantitative methods emphasize cause and effect outcomes (Cresswell, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Additionally, qualitative methods may be particularly suited for exploratory studies such as this one because this form of research emphasizes understanding participants' perspectives on the phenomenon being explored (Patton, 1990).

Current scholars in higher education recommend that "greater use should be made of qualitative research...(because) they may be particularly sensitive to the kinds of indirect and conditional effects (on college students)" (Terenzini & Pascarella, 1991, p. 89). In addition, qualitative methodologies have been cited as good for student affairs (Stage & Russell, 1992; Tinto, 1996). This research strategy "offers student affairs

practitioners a richer picture of the campus environment" from which to develop appropriate strategies in response to issues (Stage & Russell, 1992).

SITE SELECTION AND ACCESS

From July 1996 to May 1998 I administered a program called EXCEL for new students who have been identified as at risk of academic failure. This program is for first-year students the university admissions office has identified as needing academic support. The selection criteria used by the admissions office were students' SAT scores and high school GPA. No specific level was set for SAT scores or GPA below which new students were identified as at-risk. General impressions by the admissions staff of the combination of courses taken in high school and grades earned in college preparation courses were considered. These at-risk, first-year students are admitted with the requirement that they participate in the EXCEL program, a one-semester structured academic intervention program.

This structured intervention program created an opportunity for me to access a group of students to explore the perceptions associated with academic performance and the ways in which their perceptions might be shaped by gender. My role as coordinator was the means through which I gained access to this population. Logistically, my connection to EXCEL students assisted in facilitating my interactions with participants. For example, two key components of the program are regular meetings with EXCEL staff to discuss "how it is going" and enrollment in a new student seminar, UNIV 101, of which I taught one of the sections. Through this structured contact, I was able to tailor my interactions to intentionally gather data to explore my research questions.

In reflecting on my roles as researcher and program coordinator, there are many benefits to my connection to the students participating in this intervention program. My ongoing relationship with the students contributed to the richness and complexity of the data gathered. I had contact with the students in multiple settings and had interactions regarding a variety of topics of concern for students.

While there were benefits to my role as coordinator, I also had concerns I needed to pay attention to throughout the data collection process. I attempted to base my relationship with EXCEL students on trust and mutual respect, but the nature of our relationship has some power dynamics. As coordinator, I assessed whether students were complying with the requirements of their EXCEL contract (Appendix A) signed at admittance. If a student was not complying at a reasonable level, I could make recommendations regarding her or his future academic standing in the university. For this reason, research participants may have told me what they perceive I wanted to hear so as not to jeopardize their status in the university.

I have been working with college students for over 10 years in a variety of capacities and feel this experience served me well in setting a tone in which the participants felt comfortable discussing their experiences. Later in this Chapter when I outline my specific data collection procedures I discuss in further details the ways in which I sought to increase student comfort and decrease negative power dynamics between the participants and myself.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants in this study were first-year students at "Southeastern University" (SEU) who had been identified by the university admissions office, based on a combination of factors (high school grade point average, high school courses, SAT or ACT scores, and guidance counselor recommendations), as academically at-risk for the fall 1997 semester. Students identified as at-risk met the regular admissions criteria but elements of the students' academic record such as courses taken and pattern of course grades earned that the admissions staff felt warranted providing the student with additional support. The average SAT score and average high school GPA for students identified as at-risk were lower than the averages of students not labeled as at-risk (Table 1). Southeastern University is a comprehensive university (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1987)

First -year students are of particular interest because research suggests that the first year of college is critical in setting the framework for student's academic experience (Erickson & Strommer, 1991), so it is crucial to understand these experiences. Other research maintains that little is known as to when significant experiences occur which may alter student attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors (Astin, 1977, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Smith, et al., 1994). Assessing students' perceptions of their academic performance at the beginning of their college years will provide a "snap shot" along the continuum of the years of enrollment in higher education.

The 89 students identified as at-risk were required upon entrance to participate in the EXCEL program. Students in EXCEL program signed a contract (Appendix A) agreeing to 1) participate in 6 hours of mandatory supervised study hall, 2) enroll in a

Table 1
Entering Characteristics of EXCEL Students

	Average SAT Score	Average HSGPA
At-Risk Students in EXCEL	881	2.39
Non At-Risk Students	975	2.94

semester-long, one-credit New Student Seminar (UNIV 101) 3) grant permission to access official records such as transcripts and advising records, and 4) grant permission to discuss the student's situation with faculty, administrators and families on a "need-to-know" basis.

Data such as demographic characteristics, midterm and final grades were gathered from all 89 students participating in the program. A subset of twenty-six students participated in the in-depth portion of the study. All EXCEL students are required to enroll in a section of UNIV 101 and these 26 students were enrolled in my section of UNIV 101. Initially I attempted to use purposive sampling (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) to assign EXCEL students to my section. Purposive sampling is selecting predetermined characteristics that participants must possess to be included in the study. The characteristics I was seeking to balance were gender, race and class (first generation) status of the students. However, a mix up occurred with the UNIV 101 section assignments so students in my section were disproportionately students who had not attended summer orientation. Students not attending orientation committed to the university later than other students in the program and scheduled their fall classes the day before classes started, rather than in June.

My section of UNIV 101 was larger than the other three sections designated for EXCEL students. I wanted a group of students large enough that should a few leave school or not participate in all portions of the study I would still have a variety of student perceptions and experiences from which to theorize.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

To explore how students perceive their academic performance activities and grades earned, multiple sources of data were collected across. The data collection and analysis for my study employed qualitative techniques. There were several data collection points during the fall semester (Appendix B) and the data have been woven together in the final analysis to answer the broad research question: *How are at-risk, first-year students perceptions of their academic performance shaped by gender?*

As mentioned above I relied upon a group of 26 EXCEL students to be my in-depth research participants. The participants were EXCEL students enrolled in the section UNIV 101 that I taught along with peer instructor. All 89 EXCEL students were required to enroll in one of the four EXCEL designated sections of the seminar. All first-year students are encouraged to enroll in the one-credit UNIV 101 (750 out of 1400 new students fall 1996 enrolled). The sections designed for EXCEL students differed slightly from the general seminar sections (Appendices C and D - sample syllabi of "general" sections and "EXCEL" sections of UNIV 101). The primary difference was that the EXCEL instructors (four) are knowledgeable of the program components and served as an extension of the EXCEL staff in counseling and advising these at-risk students.

At the beginning of the semester, I asked the students in my section to agree to be participants in my study. Participation in the study required participants to: 1) grant permission to analyze academic transcripts and EXCEL program file notes, 2) grant permission to copy and analyze written assignments from our seminar course, and 3) participate in one-on-one and group interviews. Participants indicated their agreement by signing a consent form (Appendix E) which has been approved by the Institutional

Review Board of Virginia Tech and "Southeastern University". All names used referring to students are pseudonyms.

I had given a great deal of thought as to how my role as instructor influenced my research participants. My perception was that since the assignments are customary for the UNIV 101 Seminar, students felt a degree of comfort providing me with the information. There was the concern that my regular interaction with EXCEL students would complicate the analysis in trying to understand perceptions of academic performance. I assume that my interactions with the students would influence the students in my section and that was also part of my analysis.

My data sources for qualitative analysis are written text, semi-structured interviews and field observations. Since I am interested in perceptions that occur throughout the semester, these data sources were collected from the participants at multiple times during their first semester at SEU. I followed a schedule of contacts with the students across the semester (Appendix B). The schedule included three interviews, two in person and one over the telephone and three writing assignments that were a requirement of my UNIV 101 course.

I had regular contact with the participants via the UNIV 101 seminar meetings (twice a week) which provided me the opportunity to make observations of participants. I devised a system to regularly record observations following each UNIV 101 class session. I noted discussion topics, who participated and how they participated, individual conversations before and after class, attendance, and general impressions of the day. Also, any references to perceptions and/or experiences participants reported as being associated with their academic performance activities or comments about what grades meant to them were recorded.

Written texts included three written assignments (Appendix F) and multiple e-mail correspondence (Appendix G) completed by the participants. These assignments were requirements for my UNIV 101. The writing assignments focused on different aspects of participants' experiences and perceptions associated with their academic performance. Assignments were due at three different points in the semester. In the first writing assignment, the students were asked to describe, in detail, the expectations they had for college, particularly related to academic performance. The second assignment, due shortly after midterm grades had been issued, students were asked to reflect on their level of academic performance as indicated by their midterm GPA and interpretations of what their performance means to them. The final written assignment which was due at the conclusion of the course (12th week of 16 week semester) instructed the students to reflect on their first semester in college. In this assignment, they were asked to especially note significant experiences and how perceptions of the experiences may have impacted their academic performance. Another component of the final writing assignment was to make evaluative comments on the seminar.

E-mail correspondences focused on a given topic were another data source. The specific e-mail correspondence to be analyzed for my study focused on how the participants perceived gender (their gender and the gender of those with whom they interact) affected their experiences and immediate reactions to midterm grades. They specifically discussed gender in relation to interactions with faculty, students, family members, and university personnel. Comments made on e-mail were followed up on

during one-on-one interviews. General e-mail correspondences were also considered to be data.

In regards to students' comfort in communicating on e-mail, a goal of the UNIV 101 is to encourage the knowledge and use of electronic communication technology. At the beginning of the semester, students were shown how to access their e-mail accounts and were expected to have regular communications with their seminar instructors via e-mail. While there may have been different levels of students' comfort associated with using technology to communicate, students had an opportunity to practice this medium before I relied on it for a data source. My experiences in communicating with students via e-mail is that students feel comfortable and appreciate the flexibility and personal distance associated with e-mail. E-mail assignments were interspersed throughout the semester.

Semi-structured, one-on-one interviews were conducted with all participants at three points in time. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. To add to the richness of the data, notes were made following each interview to report visual observations such as body language and shifting of arms and legs which could be an indicator of comfort (Tierney, 1991). Contact summary sheets (Miles & Huberman, 1994) were completed within 24 hours of an interview on which I noted important points from the conversation, recommendations for future contacts, and questions raised during the interview (Appendix H).

The first interview was held the week prior to the issuance of midterm course grade reports, week five in the semester. During these interviews, I asked students to comment on their interactions they believed to be associated with their academic performance and what their performance activities and grades meant to them thus far in the semester. Appendix I includes a complete protocol for all interviews. In this first interview, students were prompted to comment on 1) their performance and grades and what they perceived accounted for their engagement in academic performance activities in each of their courses, 2) interactions and relationships they had with faculty, students, family members, and university personnel that they perceive impacted their performance activities and grades, and 3) the meaning of grades and academic performance activities.

Interviews were conducted in my office outside of my regular office hours. The first sessions of interviews were scheduled both in the afternoon and the evening. When reflecting on my experiences during these interviews, I noticed that students spoke more informally and candidly in the evening interviews than during the day, perhaps because they felt our conversation was not an official meeting. Therefore, the second session of interviews were scheduled in the evening. Initially I was concerned about the formality of my office and the power dynamic that the location communicated. In considering alternative locations, I thought about the impact of a sterile neutral environment such as a library conference room and the lack of privacy in more public locations. Thus I conducted all interviews in my office.

The second interview was conducted the 15th week of the semester. Prior to the second interview, the first interview, written text, field notes, midterm grades, and EXCEL program file notes were reviewed so that clarifying, probing, and follow up questions could be asked. This strategy is similar to the self-corrective techniques utilized by Suddlemire (1996) in an attempt to address trustworthiness and interpretive

validity (Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The same line of prompts was used for the second interview.

My concern for the power dynamics between my students and I was also considered when scheduling the timing of the interviews. I attempted to gather periodic information from the students so the due dates of writing assignments and interview dates were intermixed across the semester. I intentionally scheduled the second interview after the conclusion of UNIV 101 so that hopefully some aspects of the teacher-student power dynamics would be minimized. My impression was there was little difference in our relationship. This later interview date gave me an opportunity to meet with the students just prior to finals. In some cases, students had questions about their performance and strategies for taking final exams.

A third semi-structured interview was conducted with participants over the phone the first through the fourth week of the spring semester. Two of the research participants did not return for the spring semester. In this case the two were telephoned at their permanent residence. Data collected on each participant were reviewed prior to the final interview. The final interview focused on their current perceptions of their academic performance activities and their final semester course grades earned.

In addition to the field notes gathered during class, I noted in individual student EXCEL program files all contacts I had with the student, his/her family members, and his/her faculty and advisors. Any contact that was made with the student was documented in her/his EXCEL program file. Participant files also contained documentation of their compliance with the EXCEL program (study hall hours logged, required meetings with academic advisors, etc). Both of these procedures are customary for all students in the EXCEL program. Copies of student files were made and placed in my files on each student participant.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

In my study I explored at-risk, first year students' perceptions of their academic performance activities and grades in the context of participating in a structured academic intervention program. My quest was not to explain academic performance but to describe the multiple pathways to various levels of performance by exploring student perceptions.

I conducted a literature review prior to collecting my data and read additional literature periodically throughout the data collection phase of the project. In addition, it was common for colleagues to pass academic support literature my way, and I would receive multiple mailings from publishing companies about the latest solution for at-risk students.

The interview transcripts and writing assignments were entered into the qualitative software package QSR NUD*IST (Richards & Richards, 1996). QSR NUD*IST allows for coding various lines or paragraphs and developing a relational tree of codes. For example, the base of a branch of the tree may be interactions focused on academics. The smaller branches may be the various people with whom the student interacted and finally the "leaves" may be student perceptions of the various types of interactions had with that group of people.

The first stage of analysis was to begin the coding process. Initially I used an open coding strategy (Strauss, 1987) and coded all student comments and observations for elements of performance activities being referenced. For example, when the student

referred to feelings about studying, those comments were simply coded "studying". This process yielded overlapping codes in that a passage of a transcript could be coded as both "studying" and "mental engagement". I coded all the entries in NUD*IST. Throughout this process I also watched for emerging themes that were coded as separate branches or as "free codes". The students identified multitudes of academic performance activities that have been associated with grades that were each given a code.

I then identified dimensions of each of the codes as suggested by Strauss (1987). In this stage of analysis, I looked for distinguishing characteristics within each code and in my case I was looking for dimensions in student perceptions. I was exploring the ways in which students perceived various aspects of academic performance activities and grades. Students communicated their perceptions directly by stating how they felt about an academic performance activity and indirectly through their responses to experiences they described as having impacted their performance. My evidence of perceptions includes both student statements and their behaviors. Another reason for examining both words and actions is that meaning and action are indivisible (Denzin, 1989; Loftland & Loftland, 1984) and "action is intrinsically meaningful, it is endowed with meaning by human intentionality." (Berstein in Nielson, 1990, p. 8).

My coding was going along methodically when I began to explore my own experiences in relation to what I was coding. I read Krieger's (1985) insightful piece on coming to terms with yourself in relation to your data. I realized that what I knew of the perceptions of at-risk, first year students was shaped by my experiences I have had as a student, a student affairs professional and as a teacher. My analytical perspective was solely based on the literature. I had not myself experienced academic difficulty in high school or college. Also, unlike the students whose stories I was analyzing, I am a third generation college student who grew up in a white suburban middle-class neighborhood in northern California. This acknowledgement was very freeing because it allowed me to set aside what the literature was telling me and really listen to the words of my students. I had gotten "stuck" in my analysis because my lens through which to explore the data did not illuminate the students' perceptions and experiences. In other words, the literature did not seem to fit the majority of the stories I was reading.

From the sources I have read on analyzing qualitative data, analyzing and reanalyzing is how understanding evolves (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Strauss, 1987). I re-read all the student files again and as suggested (Strauss, 1987), during this read I attempted to identify core concepts that cut across all student descriptions of their perceptions and experiences. Also, during this phase of analysis I discussed my observations with my graduate assistant and peer instructor for the UNIV 101 course. It is during this exploration that I identified academic performance activities that were of importance to my students. Identifying these key activities necessitated a merging of codes to conceptualize academic performance activities. In addition, different categories of their perceptions for activities and grades earned surfaced. For example, studying was a key activity and the perceptions of studying could be categorized into perception of the need to study, perceived style of studying, and expectations for studying. Upon further analysis, within each category of perceptions there were variations in the characteristics of the students' perceptions. Using studying as an example again, one category of perceptions was the perception of the need to study. The perceived need to study varied by how the student perceived their past academic performance. Some students defined

themselves as "slackers" and felt they needed to put forth more effort, while other students defined themselves as "deficient" and felt they needed to develop new skills.

In the next stage of analysis I conceptualized the academic performance activities important to students and variations of students' perceptions of those activities. A detailed description of this process follows.

Conceptualizations of Variations in Perceptions

I coded each of the transcripts for the different types of academic performance activities described by participants. These multiple activities were collapsed into three types; studying activities, interactions with faculty, and mental engagement in academic work. From here I was able to clearly identify different categories of students' perceptions of these activities and their grades. Not only were there different categories of perceptions but I could also distinguish and code variations of perceptions within each category. I developed descriptive terms for each of the categories and for each of the variations within the categories. For example, perceptions of studying activities are categorized as expectations for studying, perceptions of the need to study, and preferred style of studying. Within the category expectations for studying, variations of perceptions include clear expectations, unclear expectations. The perceptions described are the most commonly discussed by the students. However, some students reported additional perceptions of their performance. These additional perceptions are noted within each of the Chapters describing the patterns of perceptions.

What follows are the conceptualizations of the categories of students' perceptions of elements of academic performance activities and grades (Table 2). The ways in which

Table 2
Variations in Perceptions in Elements of Academic Performance

<p style="text-align: center;">Perceived Influences on Mental Engagement</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Perceptions of Grades Earned</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Perceptions of Studying</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Perception of Interactions with Faculty and Advisors</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic, Social, Personal Spheres <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate Spheres • Integrated Spheres - Need for Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional support not needed • Emotional Supported needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Purpose of Grades <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn/Prepare • Upward Mobility • Get By 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What Entails • Level of Capability - Perception of Need <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Slacker" • "Deficient" - Style <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group - Social • Group - Academic Community • Individual - Perception of EXCEL Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciative/Compatible • Resistant/Incompatible • Helpful/Incompatible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Resource • Academic Resource • Rule Maker/Enforcer - Approach Style <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care/Trust vs. Intimidation • Friendship vs. Authoritarian • Resource/Mentor

students perceive their academic performance are perceptions of their performance in general and at Southeastern University specifically.

Perceived Influences on Mental Engagement in Academic Performance: The ways in which students perceived the integration of the multiple spheres of their lives, (academic, social and personal) were described as having influenced their mental engagement in their academic performance. Three different perceptions of the integration of academic, social and personal were described: 1) the spheres were viewed as distinct and balanced; 2) the spheres were seen as distinct but one took precedence over the others; and, 3) the spheres are interrelated and cannot be disentangled.

The perceived need for support and the support received from family and friends was reported as having influenced students' level of concentration and motivation directed toward academics. Discouragement from family and friends in the form of contradictory expectations and lack of interactions related to academics were also perceived to have influenced mental engagement. Students reported various combinations of need for support, support received, and feelings of discouragement/encouragement. Some students reported needing support from family and friends and receiving support, while others reported not needing support but still receiving it. Others reported a mix of needs for support and receiving both support and discouragement from people they cared about.

Perceptions of Grades Earned: Student perceptions of their grades earned centered on the purpose of grades. They spoke clearly about outcomes associated with grade point averages earned. The stated purpose of grades can be placed into three different categories, getting by, preparing for career, and upward mobility. These perceptions became evident in the reasons students gave for enrolling in college, how students chose to spend their time, and their perceptions of the meaning of grades.

Perceptions of Studying Activities: Studying activities include reading text, reviewing class notes, group meetings, help sessions, library and computer work, and assistance from academic support centers such as the writing center and tutoring centers. Perceptions of studying activities are divided into three categories: 1) expectations for studying, 2) perceptions of the need for studying and capabilities, and 3) preferred style of studying. These three perceptions are manifested in different ways for each pattern of studying perceptions.

Students' entering expectations for the nature and extent of studying activities are the basis of the perceptions of studying. Participants either had clear or unclear expectations of what would be involved in studying activities in college. Having a clear or unclear expectation does not indicate the degree to which their expectations were realistic or whether the expectations were met.

There are three different perceptions of need to study in college that stem from students' self-perceptions of their academic skills. Students viewed themselves as: 1) deficient in studying and academic skills and therefore needed to develop studying strategies and academic skills, 2) lazy ("slacker") and only needed to apply themselves at a later date and performance would improve, or 3) lazy in the past but now academic performance "counted" so they applied themselves. Examples of the perceptions of the need to studying were references to why and how they studied in high school as well as why and how they study in college.

Style of studying is divided into two characteristics, preferences for group or pair studying and preference for individual studying. Group studying was either a social activity or an academic activity. Style does not include aspects of learning styles or studying strategies such as making note cards or using a highlighter. These elements of style are not included because the students did not report this specific level of information regarding their studying. This may be the result of one, these specific elements are not perceived to be the bases of their performance and two, because my interview questions and probes did not draw out this information.

Perceptions of Faculty: This category of perceptions includes: 1) the perceived role of faculty, 2) preferred relationship with faculty, and 3) approaches to interactions with faculty. Students perceived the role of faculty to be an academic resource, a general resource, or a rule-maker/enforcer. The preferred relationship with faculty and interactions with faculty are intertwined. The relationship students desired with their faculty were either a mentoring relationship or a friendship. Students approached their faculty based on the degree to which they perceived the faculty met their relationship preference.

I included student reports of perspectives and interactions with myself both as their UNIV 101 instructor and as the EXCEL program director/advisor. While I am not their faculty in the traditional sense their comments about relationship helps to illuminate perspectives on other faculty. Also, it is useful to present the students' perceptions of our relationship.

Constructing Patterns of Perceptions

As I was moving through this process coding and re-coding, I had a sense that I was losing much of the richness and complexities of the student stories. The coding process in effect took the comments out of context of the students' experiences and other perceptions, the very context that gave the experience meaning. Also, I sensed there were patterns in the variations of perceptions across the elements of academic performance activities and grades. It did not feel adequate to simply report characteristics of perceptions of one aspect of academic performance activities and then move on to the description of the variations in another.

I developed a chart for each of the students assigning a descriptive name to the characteristic of the perceptions within a particular category for a specified element of academic performance (Table 1). In an effort to identify possible patterns of perceptions, I assigned colors to each of the variations in student perceptions across the elements of academic performance activities and grades. For example a student might have characteristics "blue", "green" and "orange" for studying, characteristics "purple" and "white" for grades and so on. After the color charting was complete, each student had a distinguishable color pattern. The patterns of variations of perceptions were now evident. Several students had the exact same color scheme illustrating a similar pattern of perceptions of their academic performance.

Three patterns of perceptions emerged from this color coding scheme. I labeled each pattern with a name that represents key characteristics of the perceptions associated with academic performance, "The Right to Party", "Collaborative Progress" and "Resourceful Preparation" patterns. A few of the student's patterns did not match exactly

within a cluster. I determined that two variations in the pattern were acceptable to be included in a particular pattern of perceptions. Four students' patterns were similar to the three identified but had a bit more variation. Those four students were included in patterns and the ways in which they differ from the pattern of perceptions are noted.

A few students' perceptions of their academic performance changed during the course of the semester. In these instances the student is included in the pattern based on the predominant perceptions held throughout the data collection period. Some students reported their perception changed after the first week so their later perceptions would be viewed as predominant. Others held one set of perceptions for most of the semester only to change perspective just before finals week. These students would be placed according to the characteristic of the perceptions but the changes are noted.

Although the students are characterized as having one perception of an element of their academic performance, in reality students may have multiple perceptions. The perception chosen to place a student in a pattern is the one that the student spoke of most frequently and/or most passionately. The evidence for the perception and the variations in perceptions are based on student comments and/or deduced from observations of student behaviors. Examples of how students perceive their academic performance are both explicitly and implicitly stated.

Analyzing Gender

My first task was to explore how students perceive their academic performance activities and grades. Once the perceptions and patterns had been identified, I began to explore the ways in which these perceptions might be shaped by gender. When discussing gender, scholars have suggested that explorations of how gender shapes experiences are difficult because definitions of gender are often ambiguous (Gherardi, 1995). Also, the ways in which processes are gendered are difficult to identify because of the permeation of gender in language throughout social structures and organizational components (Acker, 1990; Gherardi, 1995). Similarly, researchers and theorists (Acker, 1990, 1992a; Cockburn, 1990; Collins, 1990; Smith, 1987,) argue that gendered processes exist but it may be difficult to see the ways in which processes are gendered.

To explore the ways in which perceptions were gendered I analyzed 1) the ways in which participants report "doing gender" in various social settings such as a classroom, 2) the ways in which values associated with events or experiences are labeled masculine and feminine (gender hierarchies and gender meanings), 3) the ways in which domination and subordination are created and recreated in gender terms, and 4) the ways in which student perceptions reflected gender.

Although I assumed gendered processes existed, I was also guided by a constructionist perspective that suggests meaning and understanding must evolve from both the researcher and the participants. My task was to understand student perceptions as reported and demonstrated. My analysis illuminated some manifestations of perceptions that could be said to be gendered. However, gender was not the dominant analytical lens through which students perceived and experienced their academic performance. The gendered perceptions I could derive are discussed in the implications of each of the patterns of perceptions and in the final Chapter. I feel I would be misrepresenting the students' perceptions and experiences if I primarily focused on gender. When I solely used gender conceptualizations to explore the perceptions, I

overlooked other phenomena important to the students such as their first generation status, experiences of discrimination, and interactions with persons in power positions.

STRUCTURE OF FINAL ANALYSIS

The final analysis of my data is written in narrative form. A chapter is devoted to each pattern to describe the characteristics of students' perceptions of their academic performance activities and grades.

To discuss and describe the characteristics of the patterns of student perceptions of their academic performance, I could have started with any of the perceptions of elements of academic performance. No one element is the foundation for the pattern. All of the patterns have both interrelated perspectives and perspectives that stand alone. However, because the perceptions are interrelated it is beneficial to set a context in which the other perceptions exist. The perception element that sets the stage for the other perceptions is not the same element for each of the patterns, therefore the outline of each of the chapters discussing a pattern of perceptions is different.

I am cautious that I do not suggest that a perception of one element of academic performance "causes" the perceptions of another element or any of the associated behaviors. From my data it is not possible or desirable to ascertain an order of occurrence of perceptions and/or behaviors. My objective is not to assess causal links between perceptions. My intent, as stated earlier, is to describe how students perceive their academic performance. Also, students may associate experiences or attitudes with performance outcomes but again, I am not presenting a causal link but identifying student perceptions.

To illustrate the patterns that emerge from the data, quotes are used as well as summarizing statements. Within each Chapter on the patterns, I provide theoretical insights and implications of the patterns of perceptions to assist in the understanding of academic performance and to inform future academic intervention strategies.

TRUSTWORTHINESS AND AUTHENTICITY

Reliability and validity are terms associated with quantitative research while trustworthiness. Authenticity and credibility are terms associated with qualitative methodologies. These concepts refer to how the researcher and the reader know that the findings reflect a particular situation or phenomenon (Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

I have attempted to address trustworthiness and authenticity by clearly identifying my goals, assumptions and processes. I have attempted to be reflective in my role as a participant observer by exploring the power dynamics that may shape the content of my data. As mentioned in the data collection portion of this chapter, I also attempted to maximize trustworthiness by conducting member checks that clarify previous student statements and behaviors (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The frequency and duration of my contact with these students contribute to the likelihood that I have reached an understanding of their perspectives and experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Additionally, I do not summarize a perception unless several students made mention of the same perspective (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The comprehensive, multi-method, exploratory nature of my study carries with it many contributions to research and practice in higher education and gender studies. The

benefits are the depth and richness of data, contributions to theoretical constructs of academic performance and gender, and adding other perspectives to the partial views currently presented in the research. Transferability refers to information that is useful in multiple contexts (Whitt, 1991). Depth and richness of the descriptions of how students' perceive academic performance enhances the transferability of this study.

Due to the complexity of the data collection across the semester, some experiences and perceptions may be associated with students' academic performance activities and grades but my methodology did not draw out the information. Additionally, as mentioned previously, it may be difficult to distinguish the ways in which multiple overlapping social structural positions such as race and class shape academic perceptions and experiences. What I describe is three patterns of perceptions of academic performance. However, with a larger group of students more and different patterns may emerge. Also, in a different institutional setting and/or geographic location the characteristics of the manifestations of process may be different than what I describe. Although similar research conducted in a different setting may yield different understandings, my study contributes to our understanding of at-risk students as discussed in each of the following chapters, particularly Chapter Seven.

CHAPTER 4
"RIGHT TO PARTY" PATTERN OF PERCEPTIONS

I'm really social. I love people. I love talking to people. I love going out and meeting people. I just let that get in the way sometimes. There are so many people here it is awesome. Courtney

When you watch movies they make it (college) out to be a party scene and everyone is like college is the best four years of your life. It's supposed to be so fun and everything. Mandy

I have never had a problem with anything like that (academic performance) in high school. You know I have never been like failing a class. I could never be a failure in a class. It is just I would squeak by with a D or something. Todd

OVERVIEW

Students' perceptions of their academic performance activities and grades earned emerged as patterns of perceptions. In this Chapter I describe and discuss the "Right to Party" pattern that eight of my participants exemplified (Table 3). The "Right to Party" characterizes the pattern of perceptions that this group of students had of their academic performance.

For this pattern I begin by describing students' mental engagement in academic performance because through an understanding of this perception we are better able to understand The "Right to Party" perspectives on other aspects of their academic experiences. Freedom and socializing/"partying" consumes most of these students' mental energies which carries over into perceptions of studying, faculty and the purpose of grades. Studying is an activity to be avoided because it is counter to the goal of "playing" in college. When these students did study it was a very social activity in groups or in pairs. The role of faculty is perceived as rule maker. These students enjoy

Table 3
Patterns of Student Perceptions of Their Academic Performance Activities and Grades Earned

	Perceptions of Grades Earned	Perceptions of Studying Activities	Perceptions of Faculty and Advisors	Perceived Influences on Mental Engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Purpose of Grades 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perception of Need - Style - Expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What Entails • Level of Capability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role - Approach/Interaction Style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic, Social, Personal Spheres - Support/Encouragement
The Right to Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get By 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Slacker" in past still do not choose to do work • Group - Social • Little Time or Effort • Capable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make and Enforce Rules • Friendship/Authoritarian 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate Spheres • No support from family, Discouraging and Supportive Friends
Collaborative Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upward Mobility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deficient in skills, need to develop new skills • Group - Academic Community • Unclear as to what involved • Incapable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Resource • Trustworthy & Caring/Intimidating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Spheres • Discouraging & Supportive Family, Discouraging & Supportive Friends
Resourceful Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn/Prepare for future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reformed "Slacker" now work hard to achieve goals • Individual • Lots of Time and Effort • Capable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Resource • Resource and Mentor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate Spheres • Supportive Family & Friends

college life immensely so the purpose of grades is to earn a grade point average such that they avoid academic suspension and are allowed to return to SEU the following semester.

STUDENT PROFILES

Before proceeding with the discussion of the pattern "Right to Party", I feel it is useful to learn a bit about the students so that their perceptions will be set in a personal context.

Todd, the youngest of two boys, begins college excited to be away from the controls of male family members. Having lived in the same coastal town his entire life, college is an opportunity to explore, meet people and have new adventures. College for him was a choice between working at the family business or coming to school. Since his brother was to inherit "the shop", Todd chose college. He says he never failed an exam in high school but "squeaked by with D's" but didn't perceive that he would experience any academic problems at SEU. Although he says he never "blows off work" entirely, Todd frequently described episodes where he was unable to do work due to hangovers or because he let distractions get in the way of studying. He and his friends had a bet as to who would flunk out of school first. (White, First Generation College Student, Male)

Courtney is a self-described assertive woman who grew up in an urban area in the state. She has one older brother and describes both him and her parents as being over protective. High school was a very social experience, partying with friends and her boyfriend of four years. Courtney rooms with a one of her best friends from high school, which is a source of conflict for her because her roommate has frequent seizures at night that require medical attention, usually in the emergency room of the hospital. She usually accompanies her roommate, which causes her to miss classes the following day. Courtney's catch phrases throughout the time I have know her are: "I can't go back home" and "I am a very social person." She believes she is capable of college level work if she would just apply herself. Speaking up in class and "chatting" with faculty are common for her. (White, Female)

Mandy didn't enjoy the early years of high school because the students were very snobby and unfriendly. This changed when a new school opened, and she was able to move. Her older sister went to college and partied too much and has shared words of wisdom with Mandy. Her parents say that if she doesn't do well in school she will have to pay back the loan, but they also recognize that "there is a grace period" during which students make mistakes and perform poorly. Mandy is awed by the variety of people whom she has come in contact. She was amazed at herself when she turned down her friend's invitation to "go out" because she had a paper to write. During the semester she spoke as if she attended classes regularly. However, spring semester she reported that she had missed quite a few. She was a good friend of Todd's. (White, Female)

Jermaine came to the U.S. from Haiti when he was in 6th grade. He achieved high marks in middle school but had family problems and "developed bad study habits" in high school. His mom is a tremendous source of academic motivation and is credited by Jermaine for his graduating from high school. Coming to college Jermaine reported that he was not trying to impress anyone but came to college to do "this and that" (translated - party and hang out with friends). Jermaine is a jokester and frequently complains about how unfairly he has been treated by faculty and friends. He is frustrated that if he "hangs out" with a woman, other women perceive that he is a "player" and

having a relationship with that woman. This is particularly true if the woman he is talking with is white. Jermaine is disappointed with his low midterm grades and emphatically states "this is not me". (African American, First Generation College Student, Male)

Pam is a soft-spoken woman who described her academic experiences in short vague sentences. Pam and her roommate, also in the EXCEL program but unknown to Pam prior to the start of school, became inseparable during the semester. Her roommate took a medical withdraw the 11th week of classes. "Try" was what her parents expected her to do while in college. This same message was given to her brother who flunked out of community college the previous year. Pam would like to stay at SEU if she can. She attended UNIV 101 regularly, but I had difficulty determining whether she was emotionally present. When asked to describe conversations with faculty that she reported had occurred, her answers were incredibly vague which communicated that perhaps the interaction did not actually transpire. She reports that she is a very social person and that her friends distract her from her studies. (White, First Generation College Student, Female)

Kristy, an out of state student, is the second after her sister to go to college. Her sister was currently enrolled in college but having academic difficulty. Kristy makes several decisions during the semester that do not support her academically such as staying out too late so that she slept through exams or forgot assignments. In the past she said she could "act sweet" or lie and get out of this kind of trouble. This strategy she said was not effective at SEU. Most of our informal conversations centered on what she should do to correct a problem she was having in a course due to poor attendance. She and Todd often drug each other to class late both looking as if they had just woken up from a very short sleep. The most significant experience she had her first semester was camping with several friends in the rain high upon a mountain and partying until dawn. Piercing her tongue was one of the many adventures she had while partying. (White, First Generation College Student, Female)

Steve a baseball star in high school, hoped to play ball at SEU but his SAT scores were not high enough to meet eligibility. Conversations with his dad and mom are regular occurrences. However academic performance was not a typical topic of conversation. Studying and grades are a mystery to Steve. He feels he has devoted time to knowing material for exams but consistently earns Ds and Fs. He attributes these grades to going "blank" on tests. Although he was encouraged to meet with his professors to discuss his situation, Steve never did because he believed they could not help him; he could figure it out on his own. The few friends he has made at SEU are very important because he needs a break from the monotony of classes. He did not respond promptly to his admittance letter with the EXCEL contract because it was early in the summer, and he did not want to think about school yet. (White, First Generation College Student, Male)

Bud describes himself as the outcast of the family, and somewhat, of his whole community. He is not really sure why he is in college but has an interest in art that he would like to develop. According to Bud, high school did not prepare him for college work, which is very frustrating to him. Study hall is a useful place for him to get work done because he likes to study alone and often has to force himself to study. Bud is a man of few words and several body piercings. Although he visits home frequently he

does so to see friends or to go to his family's cabin to be alone. Toward the end of the semester he occasionally brought in his drawings to show off. Getting to know his faculty as people helped him to pay attention in class (White, First Generation College Student, Male)

PERCEPTIONS OF MENTAL ENGAGEMENT IN ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Mental engagement in academic performance activities, sometimes referred to as effort (Pace, 1990) is an element of student experiences associated with behaviors linked to grades earned. When discussing what students perceived influenced their mental engagement in academic performance activities "Right to Party" students reported that their emphasis on the social sphere of college limited their mental engagement. Family support was not perceived by these students to influence their mental engagement and friends both supported and distracted them in their academic performance activities.

Perceptions of Academic, Social, and Personal Life Spheres

The "Right to Party" students reported that the ways that they perceived the relationship between the various aspects of their life, social, academic and personal, influenced their mental engagement in academic performance. These students view these three dimensions of their lives separately, but do not desire a balance between them. They report a belief that a social life is incompatible with an academic life. You cannot function in both spheres even if the spheres are separate entities. This view is communicated in the students' emphasis on "freedom" and the ways in which "doing as you please" distracts them from engaging or committing to academic performance activities and desired outcomes of grades.

"Freedom" and "partying" were the key words students within this pattern used to describe their perspective on academic performance. Their emphasis was on meeting new people and to be free of the parental and teacher constraints they experienced in high school. Students in the other patterns desired freedom and independence as well. However, their perspective was coupled with other beliefs of "balance" and academic goal directedness.

These students' mental engagement or lack of engagement in academic performance activities was communicated in several different ways. They expressed this perspective during summer orientation and the first week of classes, in relation to studying, and through their perceptions of faculty. Upon arriving to SEU the reported desire for freedom was intense. Mandy's desire for freedom was declared during summer orientation in her statement, "I can't wait to be in college, I can go out whenever I want." Pam writes in a survey conducted during summer orientation that she is most excited about "being on my own. I like the idea of being free to do what I want and to be on my own." Courtney's statement early in the semester, which was quoted at the beginning of this Chapter, captures the sentiment of these students: "all I could think about was freedom. Freedom to do whatever I pleased". Todd described his freedom this way:

What am I trying to get out of it? A lot of it is the experience...just the experience of being on your own. I have never had that. I have always had my big brother or the guys at the shop looked out for me. So I have always had someone looking out for me.

Jermaine told me that he came to college with the intention of partying and getting wild, "so I didn't think about school." By the end of the semester he had analyzed his mental engagement in his academic performance and made this observation about himself, "partying, getting drunk seems to be worth more than my education right now in the early stages of my college years. Skipping class has been one of the options that runs through my head almost every morning." However, despite this soul searching regarding the choices he made during the semester, his behaviors related to academic performance changed very little. Jermaine wrote in his final UNIV 101 essay in which he reflected on his academic performance:

My transition from high school to college has not been successfully transmitted yet. I am still in a laid back type of mood. Missed classes, because of my lassiness. My attitude toward class have not been enthusiastically strong enough...I still look forward for the weekends, rather than looking forward to doing well on a test, quiz or homework.

Alone, these comments do not necessarily represent a lack of mental engagement in academic performance. However, coupled with their perspective on studying, faculty, and grades, their commitment to "being free" precludes them from thinking about academic performance activities and grades. For example, the motivating factor these students cited for raising their grades was that they did not want to return home where their freedom would again be restricted. Detailed examples of this discussion are included in the section Perceptions of Grades.

Other ways that they communicated a perspective on their mental engagement in academic performance activities and grades were in their reports of reasons why they studied and/or interacted with faculty. As mentioned, patterns of perceptions are really patterns of interrelated beliefs and viewpoints about academic performance. Since the perceptions of studying, faculty and grades will be discussed in detail later in this chapter, I will provide a brief overview of how students' perceptions of studying, faculty and grades demonstrates their mental engagement in academic performance.

When discussing both studying and faculty, students were conscious of what they felt they were being "made" or "forced" to do. Studying was an activity they described as having the freedom not to do except with regard to the EXCEL study hall requirement. Some of the students openly stated they did not attend study hall, or did non-academic work while in the study hall because they were "mad" at the thought of being forced to study. None of these students fully met the study hall hours requirement. Faculty and advisors were cast as the people whose role was to control their activities. Through overburdening assignments, attendance policies, and authoritarian lectures students reported their freedoms were limited. The stated purpose of grades was to earn a GPA simply high enough to avoid academic suspension.

This element of students' perceptions of academic performance activities has potential implications for the effectiveness of the academic intervention. "Right to Party" students may resist any element of the intervention that may be perceived as controlling or contradicts their image of what college life is all about. To maximize the effectiveness of the EXCEL program, as much control as possible should be given to the students

without compromising the contractual agreement for admittance. Additionally focusing on the roles of the faculty and advisors may help reduce the perception that they simply make and enforce rules.

Perceived Need for Support and Source of Support

Unlike students in the other patterns, most of the "Right to Party" students described limited conversations about their academic performance with their family. Students felt the discussions about "school" did not impact on them or effects of conversations were described related to their feelings not their behaviors. Some of the students were conscious of potentially being the first one to graduate with a four-year degree and this was motivating for them.

Steve, Bud, and Pam reported short, vague conversations with parents about their academic performance, and they seemed to be content with this level of support. For example, Steve said he mostly talked to his parents about activities on their farm and when the conversation turns to academics it goes something like this: "He (dad) is always asking me, you know about how school was. When I have tests. He is always joking with me 'you better study.' And all that stuff. That is basically all." Growing up near SEU Bud goes home weekly but does not talk with his family about his academic performance. Bud says his parents "really don't talk about it (academic performance). They just ask if I am doing good." I asked how he responded to such inquires and he said, "I say 'yea'. I just say that so they will be quiet."

Pam described a typical conversation with her parents about academics. Her parents ask, "how are classes? How are you doing? Are you getting all your study hours in?" When I asked what her response is to these queries she gives a drawn out, sarcastic "yes, it is okay." Pam says they do not get into specifics about her academic performance activities and grades.

The academic conversations between Todd, Jermaine, Mandy and Courtney's parents were also limited. These students' reports of the nature of conversations with parents were similar to those described above. However, these students also reported they did not want to disappoint their parents by performing poorly in college. Todd and Jermaine are first generation college students and spoke of a desire to make their family proud because of their accomplishment. Mandy and Courtney were influenced by their families because they felt they had disappointed them in the past with their low academic performance in high school. They no longer wanted to disappoint them. Concerns of disappointment were not spurred on by discussions with family members, but were conjured up by the students themselves.

Limited conversations with family members and a lack of need to receive academic support from parents might demonstrate two things. One is that "Right to Party" students had separated themselves from their parents that is an important stage in transitioning to college life and making a commitment to the institution (Tinto, 1987). Second, six of the eight students are first generation college students and a finding of the National Study of Student Learning (NSSL) is that first generation college students report less encouragement from their parents than traditional students (Pascarella, et al., 1996). De-emphasizing the role parents play in fostering mental engagement in their academic performance may be a response to the lack of encouragement received by family members. Although this description of students' perceptions may support the NSSL

findings, first generation students in other perception patterns emphasized the support and encouragement they received from family members and how they perceived this support to be important in motivating them to engage in academic performance activities.

PERCEPTIONS OF STUDYING ACTIVITIES

A variety of behaviors are included in "studying activities" such as reading text, reviewing class notes, group meetings, help sessions, library and computer work, and assistance from academic support centers such as the writing center and tutoring centers. Students had a range of perceptions of each of these behaviors that are divided into three categories 1) expectations for studying 2) perceptions of the need for studying and capabilities, and 3) preferred style of studying. These three perceptions are manifested in different ways for each pattern.

Expectations for Academic Work Load and Studying Activities

Students reported specific grade goals but had few clear expectations as to what was involved in reaching their goal. This sentiment was captured in Kristy's comment: "When school has just begun I thought it was too easy, that I could get by with flying colors...studying was an hour or two in my room with the music on and my roommate talking."

Mandy described her expectations this way:

It's like my first impression was like it is going to be all these parties and temptations to go out and your classes are going to be so hard and I didn't think I was ever going to have time to go out. I thought college was either you went out and failed all your classes or you went to classes and studied all the time.....I don't want to burn out you know. I want to do both so I was like how am I going to be able to manage that, but it is not as hard as I thought it would be.

For Bud, expectations of academic performance activities were shaped by his high school experiences. He arrived at SEU with unclear expectations of studying as communicated in his comment:

My high school didn't compare to this. No comparison at all. I don't feel prepared at all. All the studying and all the work. We didn't have anything (in high school). In my English class we have to write 5 essays this year. I maybe wrote one before (in high school). You got to be really precise. High school just wasn't. They (high school teachers) really didn't care what you did. I don't think the teachers knew more than you did.

Although Todd presented this comment as if he was joking, his behaviors and later comments suggest that this was his expectation for studying. His comment in his UNIV 101 "Expectations" essay the first week of class was: "I expected SEU to be tons of partying and women with a little studying and learning in between."

All students were required to comment on their expectations for studying in a UNIV 101 "Expectations" essay. Pam and Jermaine did not articulate what they expected of studying activities, but their comments throughout the semester demonstrated

that they assumed most of their time would be spent on activities other than studying. For example Pam reported that she was most excited about "being on my own. I like the idea of being free to do what I want to and be on my own." She reported this while at the same time noting how she intended to spend a lot of time with her friends because she is very "sociable". In the UNIV 101 "midterm reflections" essay, wrote Jermaine, " I came to college with the attitude of laying back and have fun." Later, during an interview he said, "When I got here I thought I would do this and that." When I asked if "this and that" was partying and getting wild, he agreed.

Steve and Courtney expressed a variation in student expectations for academic performance in this pattern. Both felt their older siblings' experiences in college shaped their expectations for studying. Steve reported:

I had a little of information on how it would be because my sister just graduated from Shorewood college and she told me about how the work was and that I was going to have to work my butt off. She also told me about how you have a lot of time, but you just have to manage your time. It's kind of nice to have a sister that's already been through what I was about to encounter because it gives me a good insight on what to expect.

And Courtney wrote in her UNIV 101 essay on expectations:

My older brother told me before I left to make sure I become familiar with all my professors...Although a social life is healthy, during the school week, there really is not social life. Instead I know I must get all my work done. Work comes first, life comes second for a while. This may sound drastic but it is the smart way to go.

Perceptions of the Need to Study and Academic Capabilities

"Right to Party" students did not have a clear perception as to what was involved in studying in college. As presented in this section they were not receptive to academic support because they believed they did not need it. They felt capable of doing academic work.

All students with "Right to Party" pattern of perceptions reported approaching studying as "slackers". Students suggested that from this self-described "slacker" perspective they simply needed to spend more time on the tasks of reading, studying and getting organized in order to earn higher grades. Each student believed they had "potential", but that they just did not put forth the effort or "try" hard enough. This was the explanation they gave for their academic performance in high school and their grades during most of their first semester at SEU. These students perceived that if they worked hard the grades would follow but engaging in studying activities was not a priority, perhaps due to their expectations for partying and goal of freedom. Jermaine's comment is a good example of this approach:

Right now I am saying...it is like I have to get myself organized. I just got my grades and I got a 68. Which I could have done better if I had studied which I didn't study for...for right now I don't have time to study. I am going outside to

play basketball. I am not making time for my work. That is all I need. Study hall...I don't study I be sleeping...I go to bed at 3 or 4 and by time I get up it is time to go to class. I don't have time to start to study. I got a 68. I have to do something.

Recognizing his shortcomings but choosing not to change his behaviors, Todd describes a studying situation where he "slacked off":

I am just doing too much stuff and not organized enough to use my time wisely and I am just running out of time. I don't know. I need to find some kind of routine...Like the other day. I studied for a geology quiz and I was sitting and studying and then the cartoons came on so I started to watch cartoons. I was just a stupid thing. Before we knew it, it was 12 at night. I had run out of time. I didn't do that bad on my quiz but I knew I should have studied harder. It is just things like that...I am a big procrastinator.

Similar to Jermaine and Todd, Bud believed lack of organization was the reason for his grades at midterm GPA. He explained:

The main reason any of this occurred (low midterm grades) is because the time up until midterms I haven't been organized. For instance in UNV 101 I could have gotten an A but I was so disorganized I didn't turn anything in...If I would have been organized throughout the first half of the semester I would have done a lot better.

Courtney was a self-defined "slacker" in high school and believes she is capable of college level work as indicated during an early interview conversation:

Like I know I can do it, I know I can work hard and I know I can make the grade. It's not that I didn't want to, it was just the last thing on my mind. I was a cheerleader...and had a boyfriend for five years and it was a whole big mess. Everything like that was just so much more important...I would get so bored with just sitting there doing my homework. Plus I had a car and it was just so easy to get in the car and just leave and go somewhere.

Interestingly for Courtney, the first week of the semester she vowed to put "schoolwork" first above socializing. Her described behaviors the rest of the semester indicated that she did not live up to this vow.

Midterm essay assignments in UNIV 101 were designed for the students to reflect on their grades thus far in the semester and provide an explanation. Kristy's perspective on her grades also illustrated the theme of "slacker with potential". She wrote:

When school had just begun I thought it was too easy, that I could get by with flying colors. That all changed when I received my first couple of grades. As many other freshmen I blamed the fact that I was away from home for the first

time. I just wouldn't admit to myself that I was lazy and did not try at all...I was partying and living it up and I mean everything.

Shortly after turning in this essay, Kristy sent me an e-mail message stating the realization, "I was not working to my potential."

In an e-mail message describing immediate impressions of his midterm grades, Steve remarked, "I know that if I work hard I can bring my grades up. I know that I can do better than that, but I'm just going to have to study more and apply myself. I think that it will be all right. I just have to work my butt off." And in a comment during our second interview he stated, "I probably should have studied more and I could have gotten a better grade." Steve earned a 1.42 midterm GPA and a 1.52 semester GPA.

And finally, Mandy described both her college performance and high school performance as "slacking". She begins by talking about high school:

In freshmen year (in high school) I pretty much didn't care. I missed so much school and that is what messed up my grades...I didn't skip school, well I guess you could consider it skipping school. I would be like, I'm sick today and my mom would be like 'okay' and she would write me a note. But I mean half the time I wasn't really sick. I just didn't feel like going to school.

Later, in relation to her first semester at SEU, several times she refers to being "slack" because "like, great, this whole week (of the semester) I haven't done anything. I was so slack." In the section on studying styles I give specific examples of Mandy "slacking" with friends instead of studying.

An implication of this "slacker" perception of their studying activities is that "Right to Party" students did not seek to learn or internalize new study strategies presented in UNIV 101, the study hall or through other academic support services. The "slacker" approach does not cultivate a perspective in the students that necessitates enhancing skills but simply suggests they "try" harder.

All but one of the students withdrew from a course sometime during the middle of the semester because the course was perceived to be "too hard". This strategy could have been effective in raising "Right to Party" students' overall midterm grade point average because a low or failing grade would be removed from their record. Withdrawing from courses may mask elements in students' perceptions and behaviors that may be associated with "hard" courses. The "slacker" perception is fertile ground for students to justify and rationalize why they are not doing well in a course and not to alter their approaches to that course. A vivid example of rationalizing a withdraw from a "hard" course was Steve's reason for "dropping" political science; "That class was like wow. It was hard because I mean it was comparing governments and stuff." By comparison, Students in the Collaborative Progress pattern also earned low (D) and failing grades in some courses during the semester but only four of the ten withdrew from a course.

Although students engaging in other patterns of perceptions lacked writing skills, this group was particularly deficient. Their UNIV 101 essays typically had run on or fragment sentences, lacked organization and often did not meet the specified topic guidelines. This could, as in the students' opinion, be a reflection of their lack of effort. My past teaching experience leads me to believe that the errors are deficiencies in

techniques. Their "slacker" approach may have hidden or rationalized the need to improve skills thus limiting the likelihood of enhancing academic performance.

Preferred Style of Studying

Research suggests that an important element of the transition to college for students is to achieve connection with peers, to feel a sense of belonging to a community. Tinto (1987, 1993) refers to this process as social integration. More so than students within the other patterns, students within the "Right to Party" pattern were consumed with relationships with "friends back home" and the new friends they will meet once in college. From the beginning, all of these students indicated that they were most excited about meeting "new people" and apprehensive about the friends they have left behind. Not surprisingly then, for this group of students' the preferred style of studying was that it was an activity to be avoided because it interfered with the social, freedom aspects of their college life. If they did engage in studying activities "Right to Party" students preferred to study with friends in social pairs or groups.

Social interactions with friends were preferred over studying activities and were commonly reported as being antithetical to academic performance activities and grades. These students perceived that it was cool to "blow things off" and party. Students described their preferred style of studying as one that was strongly influenced by peers. Perhaps the strongest example is Todd's running bet with his friends, "Yea, we have a bet kind of going, it is a bad thing...we're trying to...who ever flunks out first wins...so we have this bet going about grades and things going on." This comment occurred within another interview discussion about how classes get in the way of friends and partying. "UNIV 101 is kind of early for me", said Todd. I queried, "early as in time of the day?" The class begins at 11:00 am Tuesdays and Thursdays. He replied:

That is the days I can go out. Monday, Wednesday and Friday I have a 9, and 11. And Monday I have lab 12 - 1:50 so I can go out those nights and then I have your class in the morning. I don't do that all the time because it is hard to get up. Tonight I have a big test tomorrow so I am staying in and trying to study.

Mandy has a similar perspective on studying and connecting with friends to have fun. Mandy described an evening just prior to our first interview:

Well actually she (her roommate) went out last night and I had a four-page paper due today and I wrote it and typed it in time to go out but I still had to go over and check it so I ended up not going out. They were like 'I'm surprised you stayed in'. I was the only one that stayed in...that was like the first time I have ever stayed in by myself...Last night I knew I couldn't go out. I couldn't believe I did that. I was like, what am I saying? Are these words coming out of my mouth?

Mandy's friends drew attention to her choice to stay in because it was uncommon for Mandy and out of the norm for the group.

Yet another example of preferred styles of studying and peer groups is that students reported choosing or being enticed to study and "party" at the same time.

Students in this pattern reported that they often brought homework with them to friends' houses to socialize so they would not "miss anything" (Courtney's words).

Jermaine believes that he "don't have time for books" because he goes to bed "at 3 or 4 am and by time (he) gets up it is time to go to class." The time spent late at night is with friends in his residence hall. Bud mentions that when he starts to interact with friends at some point he remembers that he has academic work to do. He then has to make a choice between his friends and studying. Typically Bud chose to continue the activity with friends and complete his academic task at a later time. And Kristy reported that she and her roommate had "come to an understanding" so that they would "force" each other to study together instead of "tempt" each other with invitations to "go out".

When these students did engage in studying activities, the work could not be disentangled from the social aspect of the interaction. The most preferred style for studying for these students was group or partner studying. All of the students reported that when they did study they studied with at least one other person. This person was typically their roommate. I often asked the students if their relationship with their roommate could be described as "partners in crime". The responses were affirmative with each student noting that they had made pacts with their roommates to "go out" less and study more. These pacts were typically unsuccessful and partying behaviors continued.

These students' perspectives on studying included an acceptance and encouragement of distractions from peers. "Right to Party" students simultaneously preferred support for studying activities from their peers. Students with "Right to Party" perceptions often relied on other students to provide missed notes, explain concepts they did not understand from class and generally break up the "boring" studying. All students expressed an enjoyment for peer interaction in their classes because it made the course more interesting. Additionally, friends were helpful in getting students to class after a late night and could remind them of course assignments. This peer support became evident in the UNIV 101 context. Todd, Kristy, and Mandy often arrived together, late for class, looking as if they had just woken up. Turning papers in late was a common occurrence for these students and typically another student in the class had reminded them of the assignment. Commonly these students to completed their study hall hours together.

Interactions with peers have been discussed extensively in the literature on retention. Most notably Tinto (1987, 1993) who conceptualized social integration theorizes that student to student interaction contributes to retention. According to this model, these students would be characterized as having high levels of social integration. However, the activities they preferred to engage in do not support the heart of the institutional mission, academic performance. The model would suggest that this form of social integration is negatively associated with retention of which academic performance is a subset. On the other hand, the described support provided by peers may positively contribute to retention and overall academic performance of these students. Without the support of their peers, these students may be less motivated to increase their academic performance in an effort to remain in college and avoid academic suspension (see the section on Perceptions of Grades). Also they are less likely to have at least the minimal information assignments and course content necessary for their classes if it were not for

their peers. In these ways, "Right to Party" students' perspective on studying may both diminishes and enhances their overall academic performance.

When constructing interventions it is useful to consider the role of peers in students' perceptions and approaches to studying activities. As in this case, it may be necessary to reduce the interactions and importance of peers while simultaneously cultivating peers as allies to enhance performance. Holland and Eisenhart (1990) also recognized the role of peers in shaping academic performance perspectives for students in their study.

Another implication of the "Right to Party" pattern of perceptions of studying for interventions is that although group or partner studying was not overly effective for these students, the emphasis and value these students placed on peer interactions cannot be denied. The design of the study hall primarily supports individualized studying. For these students whose style of studying is to interact in groups, role modeling effective team approaches to studying would have been beneficial. By designing a study hall that primarily accommodates individualized studying styles this group is disadvantaged.

The interrelationship between "Right to Party" preferred style of studying, perceptions of their mental engagement in academic performance activities, and perceived need to study also needs to be considered. These students were resistant to elements of the EXCEL program because the format of the program was not compatible with their perceptions of their academic performance activities, namely studying.

The study hall component of the EXCEL program was intended not only to provide a structure for studying but also, to demonstrate strategies positively associated with academic performance outcomes. These students based on their expectations of studying and social approach to studying could have benefited from the structured studying schedule dictated by the study hall requirement. During the course of the semester, the students with the "Right to Party" perceptions did not internalize the structure of the study hall. When the study hall requirement ended the 13th week of the semester these students exclaimed that they were "free" and that now they had more free time to do as they please. This perspective is particularly noteworthy because students in the other two patterns reported at the completion of the study hall requirement transferring the studying time from the hall to the library or residence hall room

Based on the initial impressions of studying, the study hall component of the EXCEL intervention should have been effective in demonstrating the behaviors and structure necessary to earn the expected grade point averages. Unlike the students in the other patterns of perceptions, all of the students in this pattern violated the study hall hours requirement significantly enough to receive a letter of warning and have a required meeting with an EXCEL program counselor. Bud, Kristy, Courtney, and Pam repeatedly violated the contract which warranted parental notification and denial of any future academic appeals should it be needed. These students were one step away from being terminated from the program.

Jermaine, Kristy, Courtney, Pam and Steve reported a feeling of resentment toward being required to study at a certain time, in a certain location and for a certain amount of time. Each reported activities they engaged in because they were "mad" they were forced to go to the study hall. Kristy "resented" the study hall because:

I was up to all hours of the night and took many naps during the day. So you can imagine how frustrated I was with study hall. I could have been sleeping instead of sitting in a classroom (the study hall) with tons of other people in the same situation as me. I retaliated by skipping (study) hours and staring endlessly at the walls (when attended study hall).

Additionally Kristy noted that her dislike for study hall impacted her perceptions of UNIV 101 as she reported that "Due to the connection between the EXCEL program and UNIV 101, study hall was always thought of making it difficult to fully enjoy (UNIV 101) and participate." Courtney and Pam "blew it off" and did not attend study hall hours because they were spending time with friends. Jermaine slept in the hall.

Three students had a "love/hate" perception of the study hall because it "made" them do their work. Bud remarked:

Even though it may not seem like it, one of my better experiences this semester has been study hall. It really gets old having to go up there to study but if I didn't have to do this everyday I probably wouldn't have studied at all. Study hall really has gotten my priorities straight. It was one of the biggest reasons my grades have been coming up. I kind of wish it was required to keep doing the study hours. It has helped a lot.

Todd appreciated the study hall because "the study hall is helping me a lot. A lot of people say it is a drag but I am glad we have it. I really need to do good." His frustrations with the requirement were that it was difficult to keep track of his hours completed for the week. Todd frequently stopped by or called my office to calculate his study hall hours completed.

Steve constantly attempted to negotiate his way out of the study hall requirement citing an incompatibility with his style, while at the same time he recognized a positive impact on his performance when he wrote in his final UNIV 101 essay:

The best part of the class was that we had to go to the study hall for six hours (this was not a requirement of the class but of the EXCEL program). I thought that was really good because it helps you get started on the right foot. My only complaint is the study hall is too quiet. I can't study that well when it is quiet because my mind tends to wander. If there was a distraction once in a while then I think I would be okay. I think that study hall should be in the library. The other thing that I don't like about the study hall is the fact that you can't talk or take a break. You have to swipe your card (computer check out) and you can't be gone that long. They should just let you do what you want, but if you're abusing the privilege than that privilege should be taken about.

In many ways these students' perspectives on the study hall given their perceptions of their mental engagement in academic performance should not have surprised me. Being held accountable to study a specified number of hours under supervision perhaps epitomizes what these students were trying to escape as college

students. To these students, required study hall may have symbolized the parental and teacher controls they experienced while in high school, and they expected and desired "freedom" in college. This example demonstrates that not only should we consider the behaviors students engage in but we should also consider the context of perceptions in which those behaviors occur. The effectiveness of well-intended and necessary intervention strategies may be compromised if student perceptions are not considered (Kuh, 1996).

PERCEPTIONS OF FACULTY

The perceived role of faculty, preferred relationship with faculty and approaches to interactions with faculty are the three categories of how students perceived their faculty. Student participants perceived three different roles of faculty which were intertwined with their desired relationship and approaches to interactions.

Role of Faculty

As reported by these students throughout the semester, the perceived role of faculty is to make and enforce rules. This perception is communicated explicitly in students' descriptions, as well as implicitly when students expressed surprise at a faculty role outside this perception. Faculty members are also perceived to provide information on a given academic subject that is to be reiterated by the student on tests or in written assignments. The students' role is to figure out what information will be on the exam. In other words, the professor makes the rules for the exam and the student must follow the rules, which are not always "fair".

Todd described his perception of rule-making role of the faculty, which would control him within the confines of the classroom, but beyond those walls freedom was his.

I would sit (in class) and listen to a person babble in front of me for hours.....the professors would be people that don't care who you are and what they are teaching.....and then when the professors would say 'dismissed'. The social life would start to roar.

According to Steve, most of his teachers provided "pages and pages of notes" and his job is to figure out what will be on the exam. Not only does he believe he has to know the rules, he also has to know the "tricks" and hidden rules designed by his teacher. History was particularly troubling because as Steve reports:

The hard thing about it was I think he puts maybe two answers that could be right and you have to pick the best one, so it is not like the tests were straight forward. You have to think about it and how it relates. It's not a straightforward question it is more of a thinking question.

The other "Right to Party" students were not as explicit in their perceptions of the role of their faculty but their behaviors support the notion that faculty are only available for academic purposes and to set guidelines and rules. Pam, Kristy, Mandy, and Jearmaine only interacted with faculty when they had an academic issue to be discussed. As indicated in the next section, the perceived ability of the faculty to "relate" to students

impacted their interactions. Also, these students only discussed their academic performance with their faculty when they believed they were at risk of earning a GPA that would result in academic suspension and would not be allowed to return to SEU.

After earning a 1.8 midterm GPA, Kristy wrote to me in an e-mail message: Something had to be done so I started by talking to my anthropology teacher. I stayed after class and attended extra help. I continued trying to make a meeting with my philosophy teacher, it took three days until I could see her. She told me how to improve my note taking skills, and other important aspects to help me improve my grades.

Similarly, Pam describes brief conversations with her faculty "about just how to study...how I can pass the tests" because she was failing three of her five courses when midterm grades were issued. Jermaine responding to his midterm GPA of 1.7 wrote in his midterm reflections essay, "I have been talking to my teachers since my grades came out...The important lesson that I learned is teachers play a serious role in your academic career."

The only student who had a broader view of the role of faculty was Courtney. She had the goal of getting to know all her faculty because they are both academic and personal resources. For example "after class I sit there and talk to her (religion professor) like everyday...I think the more you put into it (class) the more you get out of it. I raise questions and everything like that." Her view of role of faculty is also illustrated in the next section of interactions with faculty.

Approaches to Interactions with Faculty

As discussed above, students perceived the role of their faculty was to make assignments, give tests and be an academic resource only when absolutely necessary, which means when the students were at-risk of academic suspension. Despite this limited view of faculty, students perceived their faculty were in two opposite categories: teachers they could "relate to" and were "fun" and teachers who were boring and intimidating. The descriptions of the nature of the interactions varied with the type of teacher with whom they were interacting. Interaction with "boring", "intimidating" teachers were nonexistent while interactions with "fun" teachers were frequent and sought after. This construction of faculty styles and approaches to faculty become apparent because they contrast those of other patterns.

Mandy, Todd, Courtney, and Steve illustrate clear examples of this polarization of faculty. Mandy explains, "Like my religion teacher, when I go talk to her she's like, 'oh hi Mandy.' When I see her on campus she remembers me and I'm like 'oh, hi'. So it makes it a lot easier than what I thought." Later in the semester she passionately describes the development of her relationship with her English teacher when she stated "I love my English teacher and I talk to her all the time and I always feel safe talking to her..." When speaking of her other courses she mentioned, "The other teachers are not hard but not easy". She said "They just come in class and lecture you and then leave with a quiz on this day or an essay on this day."

Todd also likes his English teacher and explained, "My English teacher and I, we get along well. Like we shoot pool. I have him next semester." He went on to say:

It's neat to have someone younger and he really relates to us. Like if we are working really hard and no one is answering his questions or anything like that, we will go outside and he will break us up into groups and start having conversations about what we did. He turns it into some kind of lesson at the end. I think pretty soon we are going to have class at (RJ's Bar and Grill).

Relating to teachers is important because as he said "I have a relationship with him (English teacher) I tend to do better...I can't just sit there and take in lectures. He (psychology professor) lectures us and we are supposed to participate but there are so many people."

Courtney's perceptions and interactions suggest the two different styles and approaches. She reported in our first interview:

I love all my classes. I really do. I didn't like my zoology class so I ended up getting out of that. The teacher didn't talk to me. I know that he is not getting paid to talk to me, he's getting paid to teach me but I think it's not really respectful. When someone comes up and tries to talk to you and he would blow you off...He wasn't nice to me at all. I know he's not getting paid to be nice to me but I mean I don't know. I went up after class and introduced myself and I told him that I was really looking forward to this class because I want to be a veterinarian and he was like 'okay'. Then I was like 'okay, bye, see you later.' And that was all. I like social people.

Steve's series of description of his "teachers" represents this pattern of perceptions as well. He began by contrasting his math teacher with the "typical" teacher when he said "I really like my math teacher because he is down to earth. He is not like 'I am smarter than you. This is what you have to learn.' He relates to you better than the basic class." Being able to relate is important because "It's more interesting because, I don't know, you know they can relate to you more so they know if you are bored or whatever and don't want to listen."

One student did have a different approach to her teachers. Kristy who found all of her teachers to be intimidating, described a few interactions that she had with them. Her preferred approach was avoidance however, there were a few times when she had to discuss the problem of a missed assignment or test. When she did interact she attempted to "act sweet" so she could earn their sympathy and get out of "trouble". This was an approach she used in high school but she indicated it was not very effective in college. She described her experiences this way:

I always had an excuse or a really great lie to get out of a bad situation...I would like to think it is just a phase I am going through (not studying and socializing) but I know it's not. I did not do well in school so once again I always have a reason. It was so easy back then (in high school). You got to know your teacher and they let you slide. I thought it was really wonderful. Now I wish it never happened.

The students reported that they did better in courses taught by "fun" teachers that could "relate to students". Interestingly however, only Mandy earned a higher grade in her "fun" English class than any of her "boring" courses. All other students earned the same low grades, Ds and Fs, in all of their courses regardless of how the instructor was perceived or pedagogy.

Interactions with faculty is a form of academic integration and is positively associated with retention and ultimately academic performance as indicated by grades (Tinto, 1987). However, there are some drawbacks to emphasizing "fun" and only interacting with a few teachers. First, students reported interacting with their "fun" teachers "all the time" but the nature and content of the interaction was not academic. True the students benefited from seeing their professors as "real" people they could "relate to" however the students were not receiving the academic feedback necessary to do well. Since they did not interact with "boring" teachers they are more likely to fall behind in those classes. This problem of selective interaction is magnified because the students reported enrolling in more "boring" classes than "fun" classes.

The notion of being able to "relate" to professors suggests that students in the "Right to Party" pattern perceive a power differential between themselves and their "teachers". Interacting on social terms may be a strategy to equalize the power differences. "Relating" to faculty was often synonymous with a student's perception that the faculty did not act as if they were "better" or "smarter" than the student. First generation college students, of which most of the students in this pattern are, are more likely than their traditional peers to perceive that their faculty do not care about them (Pascarella, et al., 1996). Perceiving a lack of care on the part of faculty may be a symptom of a first generation student's perception of being unequal to the faculty.

Intervention strategies such as new student seminars typically attempt to facilitate interactions between students and faculty. In the case of "Right to Party" students, not only should conversations between students and faculty be encouraged but also information should be provided as to the nature of the conversation and the range of topics that should be discussed. Students also need to develop techniques in responding to a range of faculty styles. In addition faculty need to be aware of the possible influence they may be having on students' perceptions of academic performance.

PERCEPTIONS OF GRADES EARNED

Student perceptions of their grades earned centered on reasons students gave for enrolling in college and their perceptions of the meaning of grades. In the case of the "Right to Party" pattern, reasons for enrolling were discussed under the section in this chapter on students' perceptions of influences on their mental engagement in academic performance activities. In this section, I will briefly summarize that discussion to place those perceptions in the context of students' perceptions of their grades.

Expectations for academic performance and actual academic performance itself (grades) have been found to have a relationship (Allen, 1992; Kraft, 1991; Richardson & Sullivan, 1994; Vollmer, 1986). Students with higher expectations for grades are more likely to earn high grades than students with lower grade expectations. "Right to Party" students expected to earn between a 2.5 to 3.0 grade point average their first semester at college and half these students expressed a desire to earn a degree higher than a bachelor degree, which are expectations similar to rest of the students in my study. Despite similar

grade expectations to students in the other two patterns of perceptions, "Right to Party" students' semester grade point averages were considerably lower than the other two groups, 1.4 average GPA compared to average GPAs of 2.13 and 2.8 for the other student patterns. As evident for the "Right to Party" students, their grade aspirations were not reflected in their final grades earned or their approach to studying.

When I asked my students what grades meant to them or what grades reflect the "Right to Party" students' response was grades reflect "effort", "how hard I studied", and "how much I knew". I believe that imbedded in their comments on other aspects of their academic performance activities, the purpose of grades was a means to remain enrolled in college for another semester and maintain their current lifestyle.

All the students in this pattern of perceptions were at risk of academic suspension if they continued to perform at the same academic level as midterm grades. Their midterm grades were Pam .64, Courtney 1.0, Mandy 1.2, Steve, 1.42, Jermaine 1.5, Bud, 1.53, Todd 1.7, and Kristi 1.8. According to university policy, students are academically dismissed if their first semester grade point average is below 1.25 GPA. Grades earned became a means to remain in college and live out their freedom of partying with their friends. Courtney, Todd, Pam and Mandy all stated that they had to do something different because they "did not want to go home", they liked the "experience of it all". Courtney was the most persistent in her comments "I'm not trying to go back home to my family any time soon. The idea of returning home is enough motivation to make good grades...to be back with them in their house and I would have to follow their rules. I can't do it." These statements did not reflect a concern of failing and being suspended, which would be the reason for them returning home, but a concern for a loss of freedom and departure from friends.

More so than with students in the other patterns, when discussing grades earned I had to ask specifically what grade they earned. These students often reported "I am doing good" or that their academic performance was "okay", the grades they were referring to were typically Ds. "Right to Party" students had GPA goals upon entering college these students more convincingly described having the goal of "squeaking by" with passing grades. It was not uncommon for "Right to Party" students to rejoice after earning a D on an exam or paper because they were happy they did not fail the assignment. A typical example was Steve who when reflecting on his midterm grades stated "the two grades I got Ds on were really hard and I thought I bombed it bad so I was happy that I didn't fail it."

The introductory statement by Todd is an example of his perception of acceptable grades, "I have never had a problem with anything like that (academic performance) in high school. You know I have never been like failing a class. I could never be a failure in a class. It is just I would squeak by with a D or something." And in reference to his college grades he remarked:

If I know I have something big due I haven't just blown it off and gone (out). I just can't do that. I will put forth some kind of effort. I will never quit something. That is why when I missed an assignment a while ago (in UNIV 101) I went ahead and turned it in (3 days late)...I would rather take an F any day than a 0.

As the semester progressed two students in this group reported that they were unhappy with Cs and Ds. Despite the lack of effort put forth in studying and the value placed on partying, Jermaine and Kristy felt the course grades they earned at midterm did not reflect who they are. For example, Jermaine declares "It wasn't me at first. No that wasn't me. You know what I am saying. I saw my midterm grades. All my life I am used to A's and Bs, and high C's. Now I got a low D. I say that wasn't me so that is what changed."

All the students in this pattern mentioned that grades earned had a financial purpose. For example, Mandy would be expected to pay back her student loan if she did not succeed. Together, with her friends, they calculated that for every missed class, that cost them \$20. The thought of wasting \$20 was a major motivator for her friendship group to attend class:

So my parents are paying \$20 every time I go to class and if I don't go they are still paying \$20. So that is going down the drain..... I think about it all the time.....I think it really shocked me...I mean that is a lot of money to pay for a fifty minute class and half the time you get out early or they cancel it or something.

Courtney described the "wasted" money as the "mad money" her parents were paying. Jermaine puts the thought succinctly: "You are paying some money and you might have to get something out of it." And Steve commented "I am not here because I have to be. I am here by choice. I mean plus my parents are paying for it. I mean there are a lot of kids that are less fortunate that have to pay their way through college. It means a lot because if I don't take advantage now then I will regret it later."

Noting these approaches to studying is useful in trying to motivate students to engage in behaviors that are likely to translate into satisfactory grades (grades above the suspension or probation level). If students approach studying with the attitude that simply passing an exam with a D is acceptable they are unlikely to alter their behavior. However, it is not possible to assess which occurred first, the grade or the acceptance of the grade. Tolerating low grades may be a strategy students use to cope with the negative feedback associated with low academic performance. Another intervention strategy in response to "Right to Party" students' perception of grades is to cater to this perspective and assist students in anyway possible to remain in college. Perhaps by staying in school, their motivations and strategies will be altered such that they devote more time to studying and strive for higher academic achievement that reflects their learning.

As extensively discussed in the Mental Engagement section of this chapter, the "Right to Party" perceptions of the reasons students enrolled in college revolve around desires for freedom and an impression that college life is primarily "partying". Students situated in this pattern do not site goals of getting a job or a desire to learn as a reason for attending college as is the case in the other two patterns. As illustrated in the previous discussion of the meaning of grades, these students do not perceive that the alternative to college, namely returning to live in their parents home, is an option.

SEMESTER GRADES EARNED

As may have been deduced from the discussion on approaches to studying, the grades earned during the semester by these students were poor. None of them performed above a 2.0 at midterm. Student grade point averages at midterm were Pam .64, Courtney 1, Mandy 1.2, Steve, 1.4, Jermaine 1.5, Todd 1.7, Bud, 1.53 and Kristi 1.8. Seven of the students withdrew from a course they were failing at midterm. Presumably this action would raise their semester grade point average however this was not the case. Pam, Mandy and Todd were suspended after the fall semester because their grades fell below the university minimum of 1.25. Their averages were .2, 1.2, and 1.0 respectively. Mandy and Todd were granted an exception to suspension and allowed to return spring semester under another contract based intervention program. The other five students' final GPAs were Courtney 1.4, Jermaine 2.4, Kristi 1.5, Bud 2.1 and Steve, 1.54.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Four of the eight students in this pattern are male and four are female. The racial mix is one of the men is black the other three are white, and all females are white. This gender ratio, unlike the other patterns, is balanced between males and females. This point is discussed more extensively in Chapter Seven. Six students' parents did not earn a four-year college degree (first generation student status) and two students' fathers graduated from a four-year college. An uncommonly sited characteristic is that all eight students within "the "Right to Party"" have an older sibling who enrolled in college, of which five experienced poor academic performance and withdrew, and three succeeded to graduation

CHAPTER 5
"COLLABORATIVE PROGRESS" PATTERN OF PERCEPTIONS

I think education is my ticket to a better future. Tanisha

Both of my parents went to community colleges. That was like their dream, for me to go to college. To do it and finish it and everything. Now that I am here I am doing it for myself...It makes it so much easier to know I am doing something that is making them so happy.....yes, (I think about it a lot). It makes me work so much harder to get the best grades I can get. My mom will be so proud of me.

Margot

I am so frustrated. I have so much in my head about everything else that it's hard to concentrate on studying. I mean you don't even want to but I decided yesterday that I am just going to stop thinking about all of it I hope. I'm' trying to, so I hope it will be all right. Hannah

OVERVIEW

"Collaborative Progress" characterizes this pattern of perceptions of grades, studying, faculty and mental engagement in academic performance (Table 4). The perceived purpose of grades is to earn an education that is a means to a better life through upward economic mobility. This is the overriding theme of perceptions reported by these students. "Collaborative Progress" students described being distracted by multiple aspects of their lives and felt they needed to find a way to deal with the distractions that limited their mental engagement in their academic performance activities. The roles of faculty and advisors were viewed solely as academic resources and interactions varied with the perceived level of care for students and trustworthiness the professor communicated. Students within this pattern expected to work very hard in college to earn good grades but described very few details about what "hard work" would entail. The primary mode of studying was in pairs or groups because it was believed to be the most effective strategy for them.

Table 4
Patterns of Student Perceptions of Their Academic Performance Activities and Grades Earned

	Perceptions of Grades Earned	Perceptions of Studying Activities	Perceptions of Faculty and Advisors	Perceived Influences on Mental Engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Purpose of Grades 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perception of Need - Style - Expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What Entails • Level of Capability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role - Approach/Interaction Style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic, Social, Personal Spheres - Support/Encouragement
The Right to Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get By 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Slacker" in past still do not choose to do work • Group - Social • Little Time or Effort • Capable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make and Enforce Rules • Friendship/Authoritarian 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate Spheres • No support from family, Discouraging and Supportive Friends
Collaborative Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upward Mobility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deficient in skills, need to develop new skills • Group - Academic Community • Unclear as to what involved • Incapable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Resource • Trustworthy & Caring/Intimidating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Spheres • Discouraging & Supportive Family, Discouraging & Supportive Friends
Resourceful Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn/Prepare for future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reformed "Slacker" now work hard to achieve goals • Individual • Lots of Time and Effort • Capable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Resource • Resource and Mentor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate Spheres • Supportive Family & Friends

STUDENT PROFILES

Students describing the "Collaborative Progress" pattern had a variety of experiences prior to and during the semester. What follows are brief profiles of the students so that their perceptions of their academic performance activities and grades earned will be in the context of multiple aspects of their personal lives.

Hannah began college life with concerns reflecting her inexperience and naivete. She described her high school experience as a "fairy tale life" citing her popularity (she was Homecoming Queen), boyfriend of four years, and being drug and alcohol free. Much to her surprise, Hannah began experimenting within her new college life. She experienced intoxication and sexual relations with someone other than her boyfriend. The explanation she gave for these experiences is "college has corrupted me." Her mom is her best friend, and Hannah said she tells her everything. Hannah frequently discussed concerns about money. By the end of the semester she resolves to transfer to a university close to home so that she can baby-sit her younger sister and save her newly divorced mom some money. Her self-perception is that she is not smart but also is very proud of her academic accomplishments. (White, First Generation College Student, Female)

Charmaine did not know if she would have the money to attend college but knew if she wanted to improve her life she had to go. Social time for friends was not something she regularly includes in her schedule because she was always occupied with studying and thinking about her family. Charmaine was not familiar with the routines of college life but constantly strove to improve the effectiveness of her studying in order to earn the grades she desired. Although she fell short of her desire to be on the Dean's list, her performance improved greatly over the semester. Her "mamma" recently re-entered Charmaine's life and was not around while she was growing up. Charmaine enjoys providing for her dad and brother by contributing to the household income to pay electric bills and buy clothes. (Black, First Generation College Student, Female)

Yvonne is the oldest of seven children, the first person in the family to attend college, and works hard at making her family proud. She described spending a great deal of time studying and gets discouraged when her grades do not reflect her efforts. Her roommate is a friend from high school but this relationship is filled with tensions, due to conflicts between the two women's boyfriends back home. Yvonne was hospitalized near the end of the semester for "female problems". Transferring to a community college is something she has strongly considered because "it would be cheaper and easier" but her mother and grandmother quickly squelched that idea. Soft-spoken and reserved, she visited with me frequently to discuss her latest concerns. She also met with her faculty frequently in an effort to improve study strategies. (White, First Generation College Student, Female)

Tanisha is a passionate, outspoken person, but somewhat reserved when you first meet her. She perceives that if she does not get a college degree she will be doomed to a deadend, frustrating life with other trapped women at the nursing home she worked at prior to college. She is conscious not to portray that she is better than the women who remain at the nursing center, but she is proud of her accomplishment of getting into college. Tanisha describes the impact being black has had on her life. Throughout her education, she believes that history, particularly race relations, has been misrepresented. Her goal is to right this wrong and become an elementary school teacher focusing on American history. To her, teaching younger children is crucial before they form negative

attitudes based on race. Being employed in the campus dining services often taxed her energy. Support was frequently sought from her older cousins who are also enrolled at SEU and her roommate Jazelle, also her cousin and a study participant. Although she described spending a lot of time studying her grades did not reflect this effort. She began altering her strategies toward the end of the semester, but there was little increase in her grade point average. (Black, First Generation College Student, Female)

Ray, mentored by a high school art teacher who "really cared", desires to teach young children so he can make a difference. This motivation, along with an ultimatum given by his girlfriend that either he attend college or he "was gone", are part of the meaning of academic life at SEU. He enjoys college because he has the opportunity to meet like minded black men who are "out to do something with their life." Ray is the oldest of "lots of siblings" and his extended family is an integral part of his life. His father, who has custody of him lives in California. He lived with his grandparents during his high school years, and his mother is a big source of emotional support while in college. Ray is a fun-loving guy who took on a formal air during the interview process, but was causal and familiar when the recorder was turned off. (Black, First Generation College Student, Male)

Margot, being the first person in her family to attend a university, college is very important to her. Not only is she fulfilling a dream of her own, but she is also fulfilling the dream of her parents. An interview or conversation did not end without her mentioning the importance and motivation of being a first generation college student. As the semester progressed, her close friends "back home", none of whom enrolled in college, became distant and finally broke off all contact. Margot was very disappointed by this because she expected them to be supportive of her accomplishments. Having gone through a "wild stage" in high school, she believes that has helped her focus on her studies. She has a dream of owning a day care center so she is majoring in elementary education. Studying with others in an academic community is important for her. She described blending her social and academic life so that multiple needs are met. (White, First Generation College Student, Female)

Eva progressed through the semester attempting to resolve the academic and social "pushing and pulling" she experienced from friends and parents. Some of these complications she attributed to being a commuter student. Her friends were pulling her away from academic work because, according to Eva, they did not see the importance of college. The push to work hard comes from her father so that she can have a better life than he has. Her father has progressed in his company, but wants better for her, and believes that mobility is not possible without a college education. Eva agrees with her father's perspective, but this recognition does not easily resolve the tensions with friends. Seeking feedback and interacting with faculty is common for Eva, but she claims she does not want to be "one of those pushy students". She is deeply effected by her experiences. It was not unusual for her to cancel a meeting because she was feeling overwhelmed. Working as a waitress 20 - 30 hours per week contributed to this feeling. Eva had a desire to please everyone. In high school, this motivation contributed to her eating disorder that she reported is still a struggle. She came to the resolve that "stressing" is not effective so attempts to change her attitude so that she can accomplish more academic work. (White, First Generation College Student, Female)

Terri is very close with her ailing grandmother who has been a source of support as Terri attempts to deal with her family dynamics. Screaming and hitting among her siblings was described as a frequent occurrence. As the middle child and oldest female, her role is the peace-keeper and care-taker of the family. Finding a rationale to convince her dad to allow her to bring her car to campus was a frequent topic of conversation. Terri is vociferous and to the point. Her friends back home did not maintain the level of contact Terri desires and by the end of the semester all contact was lost. Transferring to a school closer to home was under consideration so she could be closer to her grandmother and less of a financial burden on her family. Terri was often distracted by concerns at home. She resolved not to talk to her family until the majority of her studying was complete. Her grandmother passed away the last week of classes. (White, Female)

Jazelle is a deeply caring person and described how her intense emotions are distracting to her studies. She wants to make her whole community proud of her and to earn high grades so that people will think she is smart. Maintaining a long distance relationship with a man she met a month prior to the start of school was very draining for her. Jazelle rooms with her cousin Tanisha who is also a study participant. The two are a source of support for one another as are other older cousins who attend SEU. She feels she was spoiled as a child because her mom did not work outside the home. Her explanation for not doing well in high school was that she was "too into her friends". Friendships are still important to her. Talking to faculty is something that she knows will assist her in achieving desired grades, but she was very intimidated by them and rarely followed through on her intentions to meet with them. She felt comforted by a conversation with her history professor because she believed that he cared about students and was not "out to flunk everyone". (Black, First Generation College Student, Female)

Virginia, presents herself as very serious and focused on her academic work with a goal of becoming a lawyer. "School is my number one priority" was a frequent statement of hers. However she frequently contradicted this statement when she described being persuaded by her friends to go party. Balancing school and social was a dilemma that consumed her thinking. Being black and female, she believes that she will have to work harder to achieve the same level of success as white men. Conflict with teachers in the past and also while enrolled at SEU was fairly common. The conflict usually centered around perceived discrepancies in the evaluation of her academic work. Some people have told her that she is trying to act white, in her opinion, due to her use of "proper English". Virginia has a very close relationship with her parents. She planned to transfer to a university in a larger town because "it wasn't working out". She felt out of her "element" at SEU. (Black, First Generation College Student, Female).

PERCEPTIONS OF GRADES EARNED

"Collaborative Progress" perception of grades earned was made clear in the students' statements during my conversations with them. Students describing perceptions characterized as "Collaborative Progress" believe in the conventional notion that earning a college education is the only legitimate path to a future of greater economic independence and personal happiness (Mickelson & Smith, 1995). Grades were perceived as a means to reach that goal. This perception is captured in Tanisha's exclamation, "I think education is my ticket to a better future. I hope that others see me in that way too. I want people to see me as a person with a good education and went to

college for a purpose and the purpose is to use my brain to its fullest." Her experiences in a nursing center "pushed" her to pursue a college education and the promise of a "good job". Tanisha reflected:

I have to find a way to get a job when I get out and everything. I find that is kind of hard. That kind of pushed me to go to college because when I was at the nursing home I said 'I can't keep doing this.' It was just like, everything was happening at one time. I was like I will never come back here again. I was pushing and the fact that I wanted to continue my education so I can work and can have something more than a job I hate...I am here at school trying to better myself.

Eva's pursuit for a better economic future was described this way:

I feel compelled to...my dad has been very successful. I feel compelled to go above and beyond because he is pushing me. I don't know, I think he just wants it better for me. So I feel compelled to do that...I think the main thing is that parents basically want better for their kids than they had themselves. That is where it all stems from...He (dad) worked his way up. He says that is something you can't do anymore. Now so many people have degrees that you can't do that.

Eva went on to say:

I'm quite determined to say the least. This is due to several factors. First, and foremost I want for my family to be proud of me and also I want to be proud of myself. Secondly, I don't want to wait tables for the rest of my life. It's very crucial for my inner happiness to successfully complete college.

Yvonne and Charmaine are enrolled at SEU as a means to achieve higher economic status and have a happy life.

Yvonne passionately states:

I have a strong desire to make something of myself. I want to have a career that I enjoy very much. I want a job that I do not dread going to everyday. I want to love my work and enjoy doing it.....I think with the goals and desires that I have that someday I will become the person that I want to become.

Charmaine's convictions of upward mobility are described in relation to her experiences growing up without ample resources. Her desire to improve her life is unmistakable in her following comments:

They didn't have to motivate me. I knew what I wanted to do.....They say the only way you can get a good job is a diploma when you graduate from high school. But it is not true...You will still probably end up in a factory or something. You might get paid a little more money but it depends on your skills....You know you have to go to college to really...unless you are just

lucky...My daddy always is being like 'you don't want to have to work hard, two or three jobs like me and still struggle.' "

She went on to say:

Going to college was a way to maybe help make things better for myself and not have to live like my parents who've struggled all their life to take care of my brother and I. I buy groceries and pay bills every week. I want to have a reason to work and get paid good money not just to pay bills. I would like to have something to look forward to when I work hard and get paid. Unlike my daddy, all he ever does is pay bills, buy groceries, take care of my brother, and since I am in college, send me money.

Ray's articulation of his goal of "doing something with himself" is presented in contrast to other black men from his community. He enjoys meeting other black men on campus because "the black males (not in college), a lot of them I can't get along with....Then when I am here (SEU) I get to meet a lot of guys that are like me and want to do something with themselves."

Influencing their passion for upward mobility, earning "good" grades in college is meaningful because these students are enrolled in college with the vision of being the first in their family to complete a four-year degree. Thoughts of being "the first" consume their thinking and motivate them to study, interact with faculty and generally become involved in their academic performance.

Margot was quite repetitive in her pronouncement of how being the first to attend college has impacted her perspective. On four different occasions Margot mentioned the importance of being the first in her family to attend college. She wrote in her UNIV 101 "expectations" writing assignment:

Both of my parents went to community colleges. That was like their dream was for me to go to college. To do it and finish it and everything. Now that I am here I am doing it for myself...It makes it so much easier to know I am doing something that is making them so happy.....yes, (think about it a lot). It makes me work so much harder to get the best grades I can get. My mom will be so proud of me blah, blah, blah.

Later in an interview, Margot restated the impact of her first generation college student status.

I guess now that I am here on my own knowing I am doing this for myself and it's a goal that I want to accomplish. Actually going to college because neither of my parents did and I don't know, I'm just really happy.

Eva is motivated by being "the first" as she disclosed, " I am not the first family member to go to college but I am the first one attempting the university...It (being FG) is probably my main motivation right now. Probably more so for me than everyone else."

In a conversation with Tanisha, we discussed her perceptions of being the first one to graduate from college. Tanisha emphatically stated:

That is like huge. On my father's side I think I am like the 2nd person to go to school but I don't know how that is going to work because she is pregnant right now. I am not sure how that is going to play out. I might be the first one on my father's side to graduate from a four-year university and have a degree.

For Ray, being the first to attend college was important for his family and also his community. As the oldest in his family, he is paving the way for his younger brothers. Ray claimed,

My family is really glad for me because they know this is what I really wanted and I am trying something on my own. They are glad I had a chance to go, so my brother is the next in line...I was just like to my brother 'okay, just get the grades, go to school.'

Yvonne expressed motivation to be "the first" but this motivation was coupled with feelings of discouragement as illuminated in this quote:

They are so proud of me so like I kind of feel discouraged after I got the grade I got. I haven't told them because I they really want me to do this. I am like the first person in our family that has gone to college. My cousin went but he dropped out. They want me to go through and they are real proud of me. I get homesick easy and I haven't gotten homesick much. I guess I get discouraged because I want to do good for them and I am trying to make good grades and stuff. It kind of makes me upset that I tried so hard and I thought I did so good and then I got the grade that I did.

Although there are many other students in my study that are also a first generation college student, these students can be differentiated for several reasons. Few of the other first generation college students in my study described that earning passing grades was a means to be "the first". I am not suggesting a causal relationships, but unlike the other first generation college students in my study, for these student neither parent graduated from a four-year institution, and they do not have other family members such as siblings or cousins who have graduated from a college or university. In other words, students with similar demographic characteristics may not have the same perspective on college experiences.

PERCEPTIONS OF STUDYING ACTIVITIES

Unclear expectations for what studying entailed, a perceived high need to study in order to make up for a deficiency in academic skills, and a preference for group/community studying activities, describe the three elements of perceptions of studying activities for "Collaborative Progress" students. Students in this pattern were skeptical of their academic capabilities and frequently were surprised at their exam grades based on the amount of time and energy expended preparing. They repeatedly

expressed feeling overwhelmed by the amount of reading, writing and studying that was required to earn their desired grades on assignments. This feeling accompanies emotional and physical distractions these students experienced which will be discussed in the "Perceptions of Influences on their Mental Engagement" section of this Chapter.

Expectations for Academic Work Load and Studying Activities

Students describing this pattern reported being surprised by what college life was actually like for them. They took the clash of expectations in stride but seemed to be disappointed when their image of the academic rigors of college was not upheld. Eva's first day of classes caught her by surprise and is told in this class experience:

As the professor came through the door he handed us out syllabus, briefly explained it and dismissed us. A 15 minute class? No, not in 'college' I thought to myself. Things were definitely not turning out as I expected. I figured the guy would throw us 400 page book and tell us to have it read by Wednesday. I was wrong on my assumptions, yet again...

Margot's experience was similar as she had conflicting images of college life being spent in constant studying or constant partying. Her story went like this:

Since I know and have a lot of friends who attend SEU I sort of knew what college life was going to be like. Or at least I thought I knew. In ways it was not what I expected. I figured I would be going to bed early the first couple of days just because everyone would be tired and worn out from the days past. Boy was I wrong....My perspective on the whole college idea has totally changed since I have been her. Everyone thinks that college is a place to do nothing but party. In all honesty, I have found it to be very demanding. All of my assignments are fairly easy but you have to actually put time into what you are doing. It is nothing like high school. By coming to college I have achieved one of my goals. It may be tough but I will definitely stick it out.

Margot and Eva had experiences that contradicted their expectations while Tanisha's had unclear expectations so she was anxious as to what role to play and how to act. "I freaked out about my classes. I have no clue of how my professors will react or how big class is?" exclaimed Tanisha.

Considering college life prior to enrolling fall semester was a very anxious time for these students. They were consumed with a range of conflicting emotions and perceptions of academic performance activities and earning grades. Eva lay awake the night before classes contemplating her new life as a college student. Some of her thoughts were:

The night before classes started I was lying in bed realizing that I was totally unable to sleep. One of the most frightening experiences of my life was only hours away. What if I get lost? What if I don't make friends? Are my classes going to be hard? How is there going to be enough time for studying, class, work and a social life?

Similarly Margot had rambling thoughts racing through her head. Although I assume these anxious feelings are common among entering first-year students, the students within "Collaborative Progress" pattern of perceptions are the only students who described the "mixed emotions" that these students described. Margot articulated her concerns this way, "My thoughts varied as I decided to attend SEU. I had a lot of mixed emotions. In ways I was extremely excited but in other ways I was very scared".

Ray expressed an initial feeling of confidence and preparation to enter SEU. Interestingly however later in my conversations with him he reported he did not fully know what to expect of college life. For example, Ray in his UNIV 101 "Expectations" essay after the first week of classes he reports:

My idea of college is that it will be almost exactly like high school but I will have a lot more freedom and I will be able to do most anything I want...I am starting to get the hang of doing my work on time and I've stopped procrastinating so much.

However, later after receiving his midterm course grades, he was pleasantly surprised by his performance of 2.06 because he believed that he was unfamiliar with college and studying expectations. Ray reported in an e-mail message to me, "I was really happy because I didn't think that I would do so well especially my first semester. No one in my family has ever been to college before so I had no clue what I had in store for myself when I finally arrived."

These unclear expectations for what studying activities entails is perhaps not surprising given these students' perspectives of being the first person in their family to potentially graduate from a four-year college as discussed under the "Perspective on Grades Earned" section. Not knowing what to expect of college academic life, and believing that grades earned are the means to upward mobility complicate their perspectives on the need to study and their perceptions of their academic capabilities as discussed in the upcoming section.

Perceptions of the Need to Study and Academic Capabilities

"Collaborative Progress" pattern students perceived themselves as academically deficient. They anticipated and feared failing and related that perspective to their perception of their need to study. Charmaine's statement is a prime example of this:

I want to do good all my four years here. I don't want to make a D or F or anything like that. I don't want to get put on probation and stuff like that. I want to do good...I'm going to try. I don't know if I will but I am going to try.

Similarly, Yvonne's vision of studying activities coupled with concerns were communicated in the middle of the semester in an e-mail message when she wrote:

I opened the envelope that contained my (midterm) grades. I worked extra hard to achieve the grades that I received (2.1 GPA). Before coming to college I thought that I was going to be unable to handle the workload. I surprised myself, my academic standing is good.

Although "school is really important, it's my number one priority", Hannah anticipated experiencing academic difficulties with studying activities and feels she will need to overcome her skill deficiencies to be academically successful. She wrote in her "Expectations" assignment in UNIV 101, "the only concern I had was worrying about my academic achievement, which I still worry about. I am not real smart and I am a procrastinator which are not good qualities in college". She echoed this thought during the mid-semester interview when talking about how she would like to be graded in courses. "I want to be graded on effort. Pretty much because I'm not real smart so I don't want it to be on an intelligence level."

Terri's feelings communicated the first week of classes also reflects a self-perception of being deficient in academic skills. She reported, "The week before I came here I was thinking 'why am I even going to college?' I kept thinking that I am not smart enough and I would flunk out". Similarly, Jazelle described these mixed emotions in her "expectations" writing assignment:

My expectations for college was becoming a great student and later becoming a future elementary teacher...Before I arrived on campus all I wanted to do was party. Now that I'm here all I think about is what assignment is due...I know if I get in the habit of missing class I will fail! That is my greatest fear, failing.

Most of the "Collaborative Progress" students maintained their "fear of failing" throughout the semester and this fear in some cases become immobilizing. Jazelle often felt, "I just want to stay in my bed all day and relax but I know if I get in the habit of missing class I'll fail." Yvonne indicated, "I feel that my academic confidence is good in some aspects but can become distracted...Many times when one of my grades begin to fall I get a little nervous and begin to give up. I feel that I cannot do the certain task at hand and begin to feel discouraged."

Emotionally Yvonne said:

I'm scared that I am not going to make it. I'm like...I don't know what you call it, but I like worry about things and can get myself real stressed out about it and stuff... I just get really nervous and I want to do good for my family and stuff but it's like I always think of what's going to happen when I tell them I have to come home because I was suspended.

The comments on the "fear of failing" not only communicates these students' perspective on their academic skills, but it also portrays a need to "work really, really hard" to earn desired outcomes. The intense feelings associated with studying were magnified when students frequently earned grades drastically lower than they felt their effort and knowledge warranted. "Collaborative Progress" students often protested their grades because they had attempted to compensate for their skills by studying long hours on course assignments. As Yvonne exclaimed, "I studied for like for a week everyday for like two hours or more and I got a 58 on it!" Hannah asserted, "I studied really really hard and I knew the material so good and I just new I was going to do so good...the next

day we got them back and I got a 76. I mean people say that is still good, you know, but I thought no way!" And yet another example was Jazelle on her history exam:

Days before the test I studied until I couldn't think of anything but that history test. Finally when it was time for the test I thought I knew everything that I could possibly know that would be on the test but when I got my grade back I was amazed to discover that I had made another D. I was really depressed and thought what is the point of going to class and make a D.

Low academic confidence, regardless of performance, is more likely to characterize women, than men, in college (Astin, 1993; Erickson & Strommer, 1991; Gigliotti & Secrest, 1988; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pearson, et al., 1989; Smith, et al., 1994; Tidball, 1994). In the instance of "Collaborative Progress", this perspective also may be linked to the students' status as first generation college students. Their remarks reported in the "Perceptive on Grades Earned" section illustrate that these students perceive they are of a lower status than people who are college educated, because they believe that when they earn a college degree they will "have a better life". Perceiving themselves as being lower status may be associated with their self-perception of being academically deficient.

Preferred Style of Studying

"Collaborative Progress" students' descriptions of their preferred studying activities were specific and detailed. These students reported a preference for studying in pairs, and/or in a location that was familiar and comfortable. They believed that this strategy enhanced their concentration and learning. Additionally, in an effort to improve their grades, these students sought out feedback from faculty as to new ways to prepare for exams. This element of studying will also be discussed in the section "Perceptions of Faculty".

Although few students in this pattern explicitly stated that studying in groups or pairs was a preferred mode of study, each described extensive situations in which their peers were an integral part of their academic performance activities. For all the "Collaborative Progress" students except Hannah, friends were perceived to be an integral part studying. Tanisha spent a great deal of her study time with her cousins. She described their interactions and process of studying this way:

We talk about studying a lot, especially on the weekends... If I had work that weekend I go over to my cousin's house. It is a house on Elm Street. I stay there like the whole weekend. On Sunday we eat dinner and we have like a study session. We talk about studying. (Even though we have different classes) some people are better in biology than I am and they can help me out...I don't know whether I do better by myself or with (a group)...I don't know. Sometimes when we get together Sunday nights, I just do it. If I am not in the mood it will take me a long time to do something. Then I get so pressed to do it that it is like, am I going to get it done? I have like a bad spade. I try to do it anyway.

Margot's studying activities involved her roommates and suitemates. Their studying together was not a planned event but an assumed activity that the group engaged in. Her studying activities looked like this:

We sit there. We do our papers. I use her computer every night. We are always together in her room studying. We'll call out stuff to each other, so I like that....Like on Wednesday nights we watch 90210 together and as like soon as that is over, I use the computer first and she'll study and she uses the computer and then I study. It's just like an every Wednesday night thing.

Jazelle had regular study sessions with her cousins, both her roommate Tanisha and cousins who live off campus. These study sessions usually follow a meal they have shared together.

Yvonne and Charmaine relied on their study partners for supplementing their notes and explaining core concepts. This reliance was evident when Charmaine waited until 11:00 p.m. to meet with her partner because this was the only time her partner was available. Yvonne's reliance on a study partner did not always result in an increased understanding of the course content, but she felt better experiencing the frustrations of studying with a friend. The sharing of anxiety and frustrations while studying was also stated as a benefit for Jazelle.

Another reason why these students studied with another student was as Terri indicated:

If I study with "friends" I tend to remember things but if I am by myself I get distracted and I start looking around and don't know what to do. That's how it is in the study hall. I get so bored that I just sit there and start doing things that don't have to do with studying.

Since Eva is a commuter student and works 20 hours per week as a waitress, connecting with other students to study was difficult. She had a desire however to interact with other students when studying and said:

There are people I can relate to. Some are a little older. Some go here and some go to (Big U). Some aren't in school. It is the people I am working with in a team. I don't see that much in class (team work). It is probably good for me to have work. I keep saying I am going to go out and meet people. It might be next semester that I decide 'okay, I know where I am going.' Maybe in my next set of classes I can talk more in class.

Hannah's preferred mode of studying was different than the others characterized as "Collaborative Progress". She preferred to study by herself at home where she was more comfortable. Her studying pattern was:

On weekends when I go home it's a great time for me to study. I don't know why I just feel more comfortable studying at home. Like that's how I really studied for

my psychology test was at home. I don't know why I don't feel more comfortable here but it's like if I'm here I want to be doing stuff.

Their desire to study with friends, or in a comfortable location, was not accommodated well in the study hall structure since talking is discouraged in the hall and studying was done in a classroom and the seating was in small desk-chairs. Except for illness and/or family emergencies, none of these students missed the required number of study hall hours during the semester. As mentioned in the "Right to Party" pattern, group and interactive studying is not accommodated by the format of the required EXCEL study hall. While students in this perception pattern appreciated the opportunity to learn about structuring their study time, they felt limited by the types of academic performance activities they could engage in while in the study hall. Since these students were unfamiliar with the demands associated with academic performance, the structured study hall communicated that solitary study was the recommended and preferred mode of studying.

The study orientation featured in the study hall tends to be a masculine style in that the structure reflects an individualized, objective, impersonal "way of knowing" and learning (Baxter Magolda, 1994; Belenky, et al., 1986). The preferred mode of engaging in studying activities within the "Collaborative Progress" pattern are more likely to be categorized as feminine styles of collaboration, personalization, and connection (Baxter Magolda, 1992, 1994; Belenky, et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982). There is a programmatic assumption that students will comply with the expectations of the study hall and study quietly by themselves in the classroom for six hours a week. If EXCEL students do not comply, there may be negative consequences for future enrollment and receipt of financial aid. The structure maintains that regardless of preferred style of studying, learning and knowing, students must adjust to the expectations. In other words, the organization sets up an assumed obligation to conform to the "white male heterosexual able bodied norm" (Cockburn, 1991, p. 13).

PERCEPTIONS OF FACULTY

The perception pattern "Collaborative Progress" includes the perception that the role of faculty is primarily as an academic resource for a particular course. Beliefs about the "trustworthiness" and level of "caring" by faculty were perceived by the students to influence their interactions with their "teachers".

Role of Faculty

Students in the "Collaborative Progress" pattern of perceptions recognized the value of interacting with faculty, as indicated by their reported conversations with professors, or the expressed need to meet with them. The role of faculty and advisors was perceived to be one of an academic resource. In an effort to improve their exam and assignment grades, and ultimately their course grades, these students sought regular feedback from their professors and other academic support personnel. Students hired tutors, visited the writing center, and regularly dropped by for advice from me on tips to study more effectively. It was important to know "where they stood" in each of their courses so that improvements could be made.

Margot and Eva expressed a desire early on to meet professors so that they may enhance their academic performance. Margot reported it this way, "The one thing I feel I need to do to improve my grades is talk to my professors. Once I do this, I can learn what it is that they expect out of me. Then I can try my absolute best to try and meet their requirements." Eva recognized, "Getting to know my professors is not something I have done, but definitely something I need to do. To be one on one with my professors, I have not come across that yet."

Tanisha's example of utilizing her faculty as an academic resource was as follows: The good thing about it though I had talked to all of my professors prior to me getting my midterm grades. I had scheduled meetings with each of them. In the meetings I discussed my test grades and my overall grade and what I needed to do to pull up that grade. I had been having problems in history after 1650 and Biology 111. Those classes were kicking my butt. I didn't know whether it was from the fact that they were on days that the classes lasted an hour and fifteen minutes or what. I didn't know my problem.

Ray was assisted academically by his philosophy teacher:

We are doing like these problems (in philosophy). I did this problem that I didn't have to do. He just (while meeting with him) said try some of these problems and I tried the hardest problem and I didn't know. I did it and I did it perfectly. He was like 'I thought you could do any of it?' I said 'I can't!' He said I did it exactly right. We had an exam today so. We had it at 5 pm.

Charmaine declared in her midterm "reflections" UNIV 101 essay after receiving her midterm grades:

Now that I know where I stand and being on the verge of being suspended there is nothing else for me to do but work harder and get more help. To better my grades I plan to get help from a tutor if possible. For the rest of the semester I guess all I can do is work harder because I really can't get put out of this school.

As mentioned, faculty interaction is a form of academic integration and is positively associated with grades and retention. These students however, only engage in one type of interaction with faculty and interactions are solely focused on academics. This supports other research that suggests that academic integration is more important to students of color and first generation students (Eimers & Pike, 1997; Terenzini, Rendon, Upcraft, Millar, Allison, Gregg, & Jalomo, 1994). Because of this emphasis personal relationships with faculty that facilitate an opportunity for students to gain career and personal information may be slow to develop if focus is only on instrumental academic not on emotional or personal needs.

Approaches to Interactions with Faculty

All the students in the "Collaborative Progress" pattern reported examples of interactions with faculty outside of the classroom setting. These students felt positive

about their interactions. However, they rarely interacted with faculty who they perceived would not be "approachable", "caring", "trustworthy" and "helpful". Most interactions were described in reference to the connection felt between the student and the faculty. Faculty styles and personalities impacted interactions and learning as reported by the students. Receiving care from professors, having a personal relationship with professors, was believed by the students to have contributed positively to "Collaborative Progress" students' academic performance activities and grades earned.

For example, Ray emphasizes trustworthiness and authenticity in his interactions with professors. He valued interactions he had with myself and peer instructor:

My instructors, Sharon McGuire and (Cara Higgins), also helped me emotionally. During individual meetings with them, they would only give me positive feedback on my "Collaborative Progress" and they would always be excited to see me. It helped a lot for them to be there because I knew that I was having problems they would be there to help me through it and I feel they are trustworthy people.

He was also impressed by his high school art teacher's choice to teach when he could have earned a higher salary within another industry. His art teacher was described:

My art teacher from high school graduated from here. So yeah, that is why I really wanted to go to school here. He really liked it and said it was great and everything. This is the only school I applied for...See in high school the teachers, some of them, like my art teacher, he really cared. He really drilled things into your head and he really made you understand this and all the other things...My art teacher, he was an art designer. He could have made a lot more money but he decided he would be an art teacher because he enjoyed it.

This perception seemed to make the art teacher trustworthy. Overall, Ray felt, "When I interact with my teachers it brings me to their level where I want to do a lot more with myself and I am more confident in myself because the teachers know me. I get to learn a lot more."

Concern for being known by professors was echoed in Margot's comment:

I guess the professors here have so many students that they really don't know you one-on-one. Some of them like my biology and my English, I mean I know that they know me and you guys, I know that you-all know me and that's like it is in high school. I guess in some of the other classes they have so many people that they don't know you. I think that is kind of weird. Like I can't image going to "Big U" and being in a class with 600 people. I just wouldn't be able to do that because I need to be able to feel like if I do have a question, I need to be able to ask it. I would be embarrassed in front of so many people.

Similarly, one of the explanations Virginia gave for applying to SEU was "the class size" and "personalized attention, which makes you feel like you are a person and not just a number". Later in the semester she appreciates that "I don't have any challenges with them (faculty) like in high school. I had a number of teachers that I had a

number of challenges with. But here the environment, as far as the classroom is concerned, is definitely more relaxed and I appreciate the one-on-one attention. That is definitely on my 'A' list." Virginia described an example of a math teacher who extended an invitation to help all students, and he was believable because:

He told us on day one that he is sarcastic but he would never be sarcastic when he answers our questions. That is important to me...so to know right up front that I can ask him a question and know that he won't criticize me for it or make me feel stupid for saying it. It's great!

Tanisha, who reported how knowing that a faculty member cares can make a difference in her attentiveness in class, interviewed one of her professors as part of a UNIV 101 assignment. She chose, out of necessity, a professor whom, on the first day of class, "freaked the class out by hollering and cursing and telling the class that he is a manic depressive on medication". After meeting with him she felt "that he really does care about everything and the students he teaches." Knowing him better, she reported, makes the course more interesting and "makes you pay more attention to the teacher."

Yvonne had spent time with her history professor conducting the required UNIV 101 faculty interview just mentioned and also getting assistance for upcoming exams. After these interactions she felt this way:

I know him a little bit and he knows my pace. I was kind of embarrassed when he handed me my grade because I had that interview with him and I was kind of like 'gosh'. I want to tell him I studied and worked hard and just don't know what happened.

Interactions with faculty were important to all the "Collaborative Progress" students because feeling like the instructor cared affected their comfort in the course, and they believed their overall academic performance activities and grades earned. Jazelle spoke at length about how sensing her faculty cared about her impacted her perceptions and behaviors:

I mean I really feel like I can do it (make good grades) because he is like 'I care about the students and whenever you have a problem talk to me.' I told him how intimidated I was because when I walked in he started talking about history and I was like 'Oh my God I'm not going to remember this, I can't take good notes.' He just told me that whenever I have a problem just talk to him and he'll figure something out and now I feel more comfortable in class. I can speak out if I have a question. I can say pretty much what I want. I talked to him and I knew he wasn't out there to give everybody F's. He cares about us so it's easier.

Hannah also captures the connection between faculty caring and performance when she said:

I think that if you can't relate to your faculty that is a sense of being uncomfortable. Like, I don't know, like if a teacher was reading my paper, they would have no idea if you know. It wouldn't even matter what I made (grade) or

anything because they don't have any idea about me. But if a teacher did (know me) they could understand better and understand what I am doing wrong because I would know, and they would know that I know. That's important.

There are several implications for this pattern of perceptions of faculty. Southwestern University is a comprehensive, state institution that places an emphasis on teaching. The university's culture is more likely to foster an atmosphere in which faculty are rewarded for communicating care for students than is the case in a large Research I or II institution. Students in this pattern may be fairing better at SEU, than they would at a different type of institution.

Female faculty also have been found to be more likely to create a classroom environment in which students feel comfortable interacting and more are inclusive (Auster & MacRone, 1994; Crawford & MacLeod, 1990; Krupnick, 1985). However, given the gender ratio of faculty, 36 percent of faculty at four-year colleges and universities are women (National Center for Education Statistics in NAWA, 1998), students are more likely to enroll in courses taught by men.

"Collaborative Progress" students' perceptions of their faculty was reported to be shaped by past experiences of race and gender discrimination by high school teachers and community members. "Right to Party" and "Resourceful Preparation" perception patterns do not include a student perspective that articulates how students perceived their gender, race or class had influenced their experiences. While I did not expect students to report sophisticated observations of gendered, classed and racialized elements of their experiences, the contrast between students from different social structural positions perceptions was telling.

Several students in this pattern described how experiences of inequality influenced their feelings regarding education and educators. These students were very passionate in telling their stories, and how the experience shaped their views of the world. During the second interview I asked students to reflect on the ways their gender, race and class have impacted their experiences and perceptions of their academic performance activities and grades.

Ray's response to questions about perceived influences of his gender, race, and class was very telling:

Actually, being a black male doesn't affect me that much because not a lot of people expect that much of me. So you know I just have to give it all I've got and then from there they get this idea of me and how well I work. So from that they just form an idea of me...It's just like a black male from my high school, no other black males left my high school except me.

Tanisha described feeling excluded in her elementary school academic experiences. From this experience, she said she was inspired her to become an elementary school teacher focusing on racial representation in American history

That (race) has REALLY affected me. From the time I was in the 5th grade. That is when the race thing really started to come out. I pretty much knew that being female and black I had two things against me. I have always thought, my parents

taught me that things are not always equal but they are suppose to be. Not that they aren't...My race has shaped me a lot. That is why I want to do some things. I don't know. Because it is more of a black thing. Things are always black and white and I want to disprove them. That is my main thing...it is not so much that blacks don't have an education, it's just they (the people in her county) think all she (Tanisha) wants to do is graduate and get out of high school and get a job and stay there the rest of her life....The whole county, they irritate me. But our class is like the smartest ever in the school history of the high school and stuff. I think that kinds of pushes me too, that fact that our class was the smartest and we go to college. They will go back and say did you do this? At the reunion they would say did you go to college? Did you live up to what was said about your class?

Virginia who also reported discrimination she has experienced, felt working hard academically and earning good grades would help her compensate for inequality in her pursuit of "moving to the next level". She said:

I know that I am going to run up against stuff like that (discrimination). That's why I want to make sure that through everything my grades can speak for themselves. Hopefully that will help me with the potential race issues or the issues of being female. Once you think about it, I mean I have it like twice as bad, being female and because I am black. That doesn't bother me at all. I look at that as positive for myself.

Eva believed that she was expected to be perfect and her quest to please others by meeting gender expectations did not always take a positive form as it does now in her drive for an education. She reflected:

I don't know if I mentioned this, I have an eating disorder. I don't know why. I think that society creates an image for the female that is impossible to live up to. I think males and females alike try to...if the image is not met from others there is a tension. (I ask if her experiences affected school) It probably still affects me. It is one of those things I don't think I will ever get over. Definitely in high school it affected my grades. I only had time to exercise. It seems like I was focused on perfection. I was just worried about my body image. Consequently I broke off with my family and friends. It was difficult. Actually I was in a clinic for a while. I got so malnourished. I was there for about 17 days and an outpatient for 6 months or so.

Looking back, Eva feels that her experiences moving from New York to a small town in southwest Virginia impacted her view of herself and the meaning of her activities. She reported, "Actually that was the only time I moved. I think that also plays into my eating disorder. I wanted to please everyone. I wanted to be part of their little world. In retrospect I don't know what was going on in my head."

PERCEPTIONS OF MENTAL ENGAGEMENT IN ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Perceived to have influenced their mental engagement in academic performance activities of students in the "Collaborative Progress" pattern is the interconnection of multiple spheres of their lives as well as the needed and received support from family members and friends. The students in this pattern felt distracted by overlapping of the multiple aspects of their lives. Family and friends were believed to be both a source of distraction and comfort.

Perceptions of Academic, Social and Personal Life Spheres

As described in the section "Perceptions of Studying Activities", these students reported engaging in many hours of academic performance activities that take many different forms, such as studying activities and interactions with faculty and academic support. These students do not perceive the various aspects of their lives such as academic, social and personal as separate and distinct, but overlapping and interrelated. This integrated perspective was reported as troubling to these students.

Students disclosed how the perception of what was transpiring in their "personal" life impacted their perceptions of their "academic" life. Emotional distractions were common place. Evidence of the perception that the integration of various aspects of their lives influenced mental engagement in academic performance activities was provided in Jazelle's experiences. She laboriously stated during our first interview:

Right now this week has been horrible because I mean long distance relationships are so hard. It's just hard. My mind is elsewhere and I'm trying to keep it all in focus because I know I am going to mess up...I just want to quit everything but I don't know. I need to get this frame of mind - this is schoolwork, this is personal life, but I can't do it. I can sit in class...like my psychology teacher was talking and I could sit and I could hear him talk but then I don't hear him. Like 30 minutes later I forgot what he said and I have to look at my notes again and get it back again. It is so hard.

Hannah, who also maintains a long distant relationship, feels one element of her life influences another. She sighed:

I am so frustrated. I have so much in my head about everything else that it's hard to concentrate on studying. I mean you don't even want to but I decided yesterday that I am just going to stop thinking about all of it I hope. I'm trying to, so I hope it will be all right.

Yvonne's desired to integrate her "school life" and "home life" and her inability to connect the two aspects of her life she believed was distracting to her mental engagement in her academic performance activities. She emotionally disclosed:

I want to be closer to home...I have noticed that when I go home on the weekends that I find myself dreading to come back to school. I really do not like that feeling and want it to change. I have noticed that I have even failed to attend classes because I want to stay at home one extra day. I did go through this over

the weekend. On Sunday I was planning to leave and come back to get situated and to get my room organized for the upcoming week. I failed to do this, I decided to stay on extra night. I should not have done that but I find myself not want to leave. I feel so much better when I am at home.

Another example of how overlapping life spheres influenced mental engagement in academic performance activities was experienced by Terri when her mom's best friend passed away. The day that she received word of the death, Terri came to me feeling she was unable to attend class without breaking down in tears. Although she did not go home for the memorial service, the next few days were spent searching for a ride home and consoling her mom by phone. The emotional distractions of the woman's death continued throughout the semester.

Terri was distracted by the event just described and like other "Collaborative Progress" students she was also consumed by her role in the family. Terri illustrated how her parents place her in the role of "guardian or something" to keep her teenage sister out of "trouble...and check up on her". I probed, "do you think that is why you didn't do so well in high school?" Her hesitant response was, "It might be. I had a lot of things going on with my family and stuff...my grandmother says that too."

Students in my study frequently reported ways in which their ability or inability to compartmentalize their lives impacted their academic work experiences. Students in the other patterns of perceptions, viewed their experiences in separate spheres or compartments of family, friends, and "school work" which they also felt influenced their engagement in their academic performance activities.

Repetition and memorization were the types of studying activities these students engaged in to prepare for exams. The students in the "Collaborative Progress" pattern described quizzing each other and going "over and over notes" because "with classes it is all memorization". This strategy of memorization is easily interrupted by emotional distractions that "Collaborative Progress" students experienced.

The students who did not compartmentalize their lives expended a great deal more energy, than students who did compartmentalize their lives. Evidence of this is the numerous comments by students in the "Collaborative Progress" pattern about how "tired" and "exhausted" they were during their first semester at SEU even though they described similar academic performance activities as other students in my study.

Perceived Need for Support and Source of Support

Students perceived a need to receive support from their friends and family in pursuing their academic performance. Most of the support came in the form of encouragement, rather than as specific information on academic performance strategies for college success or in navigating the bureaucracy of the university. "Collaborative Progress" students described supportive experiences from family and friends yet, at the same time some of their family and friends, discouraged their involvement in higher education. And since these students' perspective is that their lives are not compartmentalized into academic, social and personal, family and friends were believed to influence their ability to concentrate on academic performance activities. I will begin with a discussion of the perceptions of support and discouragement received from friends.

Ray's support from his friends came in the form of encouragement and advice rather than working on specific content areas. He wrote in his essay reflecting on his midterm grades that:

I have got two great friends that make my academic performance easy for me and they hound me every minute of the day to make sure that I am doing what I am supposed to do. One of these friends is my girlfriend, obviously. She is always behind me one hundred percent making sure that I become what I want to be and that is a teacher...Because actually she gave me an ultimatum. Either I go to school or 'you are gone'. So I guess I go to school. So she makes sure...she is like my best friend. She makes sure I do everything. If need help, I go to the teachers. If I need her to help me she will help me...My other friend is Jared ...My girlfriend keeps on me about my grades and Jared keeps me from partying to often.

Margot's boyfriend is supportive of her academic work and shows it through their phone conversations and visits. Her roommate and suitemates are supportive of her academic work as described in her preferred style of studying. However, her friends "back home" do not.

Tanisha felt support from her cousins when she felt stressed she confided in them. She laboriously stated:

I get tired. I really do get tired. At work, when I work I get really tired. I don't know. Some nights I just go to bed. It is 10 to 8 and I just go to bed and wake up. I go to bed a lot of nights with headaches. I don't know, I just hang out, me and Jazelle (roommate and cousin) and Casandra (cousin). We just talk about a lot of stuff...yea me and Jazelle just lay there. One time I found myself falling asleep in the day time. I never sleep in the daytime. I was just tired. I really, I don't think I have ever slept in the daytime. It is just not me. I find myself going to bed at 10 pm and I am more of a 12 midnight person."

Jazelle provided her perspective on how she and Tanisha, her cousin, are supportive of one another by decompressing their tensions with long talks lying on their beds commiserating about their workload and stress. Ray's friends served as a diversion from the stresses of academic performance activities because he said, "When I hang out with my friends, it is just a lot easier to go to class like directly after you have been with your friends. Because some of the stress is relieved so I just say 'I got to go to class'." This support from friends was perceived to be particularly necessary since as mentioned in the section on "Perceptions of Studying Activities", the perception of these students was one of "exhaustion" and feeling "overwhelmed" with their academic performance activities.

Friends were also discouraging because they did not understand the "Collaborative Progress" students' higher education goal. These students described a need to separate from their past community when they described leaving old friends and how they responded to accusations of "acting white" and/or "being something they are

not". Some examples of this perception within the "Collaborative Progress" pattern are clearly described by Ray, Virginia, Margot, Eva, and Terri.

Ray tells of his perceptions of this type of experience:

Basically the ones that aren't in college they look at the ones that are in college and just be like they are trying to be something they are not. They are trying to do this, they are trying to do that and for that reason they don't like us, but other than that, I don't bother myself with that too much. Then when I am here I get to meet a lot of guys that are like me and want to do something with themselves.

When Ray goes "home" he tries to shut out friend's comments. Having a white girlfriend helped prepare him for this experience. "I expected a lot because my girlfriend is white. So that just prepared me for everything to come. Once we started dating and I had to deal with a lot of things from a lot of people in terms of that."

Another student was perceived to be "acting" as someone else. Virginia reported that friends have inquired " why do you talk like that?" She continued, "since I'm older and I still do say excuse me and stuff (friends say) why do you act white? Just because I choose to speak correct English and you know act like I have some sense because I have been raised well, that doesn't mean I am trying to act white. It's just a matter of being educated."

Virginia goes on to tell of how she thinks her classmates perceive her in her courses:

It's (race and gender) definitely affected my English class because English class I sit all the way over here by myself and I really don't think that a lot of students, I know they haven't gravitated towards me and I personally don't think that they like me, but I don't really care about this. She (English teacher) asks questions and if I know the answers I'm going to answer it. I can't help it if she likes what I say or if she like my ideas...I don't want to say they are intimidated by me, but well, I know one girl. I think when you have a really really intelligent person, especially a black female, I think other races can be intimidated by that because, I mean especially kids my own age."

In another example, she reported:

Even in history class you know, she asks questions and I will answer them. I mean she asked like five questions one day and no one said a thing, so I answered all of them. I felt guilty for knowing. I mean I don't feel like my peers. I really want to be with them but I don't understand why it is so different.

In reference to friends that "stayed home", Margot lamented:

I have been friends with (these people) since kindergarten but it's like they don't even care to include me. They have their own thing now and I can't say what I like about school because they are not in college so it's kind of like they don't want to hear it. I don't know I can't stand it anymore to be honest...I don't know if it's that they are jealous of me because I'm here and actually moving on. I don't

even talk to them. We see each other and just say 'hi'. I am happier now that I don't have to deal with all their immature stuff. It is kind of, I don't know."

Similarly, Eva noted that, "A lot of my friends don't understand why I am doing this. A lot of them are not going to school. I am trying to tell them that school is important. I spend more time on academics than I do social (activities)".

It is not surprising that students described a process of separation from their friends "back home" because college students make a transition from home communities to campus communities (Tinto, 1987). This perception of high school friends is noteworthy, however, because none of the other students in the other patterns reported this experience. If students in the "Right to Party" and "Resourceful Preparation" patterns did experience a separation from peers, they did not perceive that the separation impacted their mental engagement in their academic performance activities as it did the students in the "Collaborative Progress" pattern.

Similar to friends, students in the "Collaborative Progress" pattern believed family members also were a needed source of emotional motivation for engaging in academic performance activities. This support was believed to be crucial to the student's ability to mentally engage in academic work.

Ray also reported, "My grandfather he just gets a kick out of it (him being in college). He gets a kick out of anything I do as long as I keep my head straight. My grandmother is basically the same way." His community also supports him and his pursuits in college, as described in our conversation towards the end of the semester:

In my community it is like being a black kid and going to college is a big thing. I mean especially being a black male. In my community if you leave and go out and go to college or something, I mean you are looked up on by many people. The older citizens will look at you with a lot more respect rather than the younger kids. I mean the younger kids will respect you also because they have someone to look up to.

Similarly, Tanisha's grandparents are supportive of her education "...because when I see people they are like 'oh, you are in college!' She (grandmother) is really into me being in college. She says 'are you doing your work?' and stuff. She is like 'I had a dream about you.' I go and visit her and it some kind of pressure."

Margot said her parents "help me a lot. Like my mom e-mails me everyday. Like one night I could not do this paper. I had no idea what I was supposed to talk about. So she (mom) stayed on the phone with me for like an hour helping me think of things to say and to write and everything." Margot also felt she would not be able to perform in college without her family's support as she reported in our final interview:

I am happy to say that I have my family's support through everything. Without my family's support I do not feel that could make it leading a college life I would be expected to. If I did not have my mom sending me letters and e-mails of encouragement it would be hard. Another thing that is great is that neither of my parents attended more than two years of college. Now that I am here at SEU and I am planning a degree in teaching they are the proudest parents ever. May be this

is because I am fulfilling their dreams. I cannot image being here alone. I call my mom whenever I start to feel homesick or just when I need advice on certain situations.

Support for academic performance activities and grades came in the form of material incentives for Virginia. She portrayed her relationship with her parents to be "very close" and described their motivational support this way:

My parents, they have a lot to do with it (motivation to do school work) too because I really want to make them proud of me but not just them, myself. My dad, one of the incentives he is giving me is like well, all you do is bring home A's and B's and we'll go jeep shopping for you this summer. So that's in the back of my mind all the time, so I working to get those A's and B's.

Eva and Tanisha received support from their families in the form of a "reality check" which helped them focus on their academic performance activities. Both women had regular conversations with family members about the stresses of academic work during which family members reminded them of their goals. Tanisha described a typical phone conversation with her mom:

We don't talk on that much because I am not a person to talk on the phone and they know that but she calls maybe twice a week. Or I might call them to talk to my 2-year old brother. Other than that I don't call home. She does ask me 'Am I getting my homework done? Am I going to class and stuff?' Right now I am telling her the truth. I tell her if I go to class or if I missed a class. She is like 'why?' I explain it to her. As she says 'you know that you're not suppose to miss stuff.' She says studying comes hard to me. I guess she pretty much knows me more that I know myself. She is always telling me before I came to SEU 'college is not like high school.' I would say 'I know, I know, I know.'

Eva, who struggled with balancing school, work and social life often felt overwhelmed. She said "My parents are definitely drilling into my head school, school, they don't understand I need time for me. I think my parents probably win because I see where it is important." Also when she felt stressed she would confide in her dad which helpf her deal with her stress and increase her concentration on her "school work". She described her strategy for reducing stress this way, "Well I pretty much, I try to talk to him about it. It is usually my dad. I tell him 'I am not trying to have you solve my problems, I am just telling you.' ...He will give me advice."

While the overlapping of "personal" and "academic" was distracting to Charmaine's emotional investment in her academic performance activities, her personal life was also a source of support. Speaking with her "auntie" was helpful to Charmaine. She relayed that her aunt told her "Don't get stressed out, don't over work myself because I won't care. She said just relax and don't worry about what people tell you down (home). She said even if you do good people are still going to talk about you." Similarly, Terri coped with the influence her family life had on her mental engagement in academic performance activities by interacting with her grandmother via letter and telephone.

Families and friends were perceived to be a source of needed support to reduce distractions and be free to concentrate on academic performance activities as discussed but also they were perceived to be discouraging by students in the "Collaborative Progress" pattern. These students reported feeling discouragement from their families when the families had conflicting role expectations for the student. To illustrate the conflicts, here are few examples of students' roles in their families. Terri serves an emotional care taking role to her immediate and extended family through her role as peace- keeper and guardian to a younger sister.

My sister...I think she stayed in school this week, those two days I was home. She knew I would check up on her....My parents told me to tell him (sister's boyfriend) not to see my sister and my sister yelled at me for telling him....It's strange. I'm doing the extra walking between everybody. My sister yells at my mom and then my dad steps in and my mom yells at my dad and then my dad fusses at me because he doesn't get to ground my sister because my mom spoils her so much.

Charmaine's role in her family includes a financial and a parental role:

I just don't have time for a job. My mama can give me a car but I have to pay the insurance but I can't get a job and go to school too...I like money. I like paying the bills and stuff like that. My friends they be like 'I've got a job and don't pay no bills.' One of my best friends was like 'man Charmaine you are responsible too soon.' But it is what I want to do. I want to help my daddy pay bills and buy my own stuff and help my brother and stuff like that. Like before school I will work the whole summer and buy my clothes and my brother's school clothes."

She went on to say:

(My brother) got an F on the exam and my aunt thought that was one of his grades and they all were going crazy. Everybody was calling him and everything.....I mean I am trying to make sure he does good because I want him to go to school.

Hannah and Yvonne's role in their families also are of a parental nature. Hannah indicated, "I have a lot more responsibility. He (her brother) is 21 and I have a 7 year-old sister. I am more like the second mom...My mom and stepdad decided to get a divorce. I need to help my mom and get a job even now. She can't pay for me." While Yvonne casually stated:

I'm the oldest (of seven kids). My youngest is one. I mean I play with them whenever I see them. When I go home I help with changing diapers and stuff like that and I discipline some but they don't listen to me...My sister don't do anything. She doesn't really help much.

In the students' minds, these family roles contradicted the college student role. Terri receives mixed messages because her parents want her to be both at home taking an

active role in the family and in college at the same time. One time while home visiting, her mom "was so happy for me to be home. She was like 'I missed you so much. I don't want you to go back to school.' I was like well, I gotta go." During the interview a week before final exams, Terri described a time when her dad communicated the same mixed message, "I was going to apply there (a university closer to home) and then I got in here and I was like there is no point in applying. My dad's like '(Sarah), (a friend) went there. She didn't have to go away to school.' He really misses me."

The perception of conflicting roles was particularly troublesome and distracting for students in the "Collaborative Progress" pattern because their reality was that one role could not be disentangled from another role. Their role of family caretaker/provider was also embedded in their role as students because as described in the "Perceptions of Grades Earned" section, being the "first" to graduate from college was a responsibility these students felt toward their families. As the oldest in the family and the first to potentially graduate from a four-year college, these students were paving the way for their siblings. The interconnections between the multiple facets of their lives were perceived to have influenced these students mental engagement in their academic performance activities.

The message "Collaborative Progress" students were receiving from their family and friends was contradictory. Since family and friends were an integral part of their academic experiences, the mixed messages may have influenced their mental engagement in their academic performance activities. The message communicated was that you cannot be both a minority and educated, or a college student and actively involved in your family. These students held tight to their goals of upward mobility and attempted to act accordingly by doing what they perceive is necessary to achieve success in higher education. Simultaneous to moving toward this goal, "Collaborative Progress" students butt up against class and race ideology of their peers that maintains you can't hold two positions at once. You can't be both educated and minority, educated and equal to working class. In their present state, these students chose to cultivate the ideology of mobility through education and relinquish their past race and class ideology/identity. A complication of this process is that the middle class ideology held by "Collaborative Progress" students is one that was cultivated from outside the middle class structural position, therefore this ideology is constructed from an outsider's standpoint. These students were constructed as "outsiders" to higher education both in their own minds and in the minds of people that they care about.

As described above, the "Collaborative Progress" perceptions of academic performance are contradictory. One of the ways students sought to resolve the contradictions was to attempt to integrate their roles as care-giver, parental figure, and breadwinner, and as college student. The integration strategy involved thoughts of transferring to a college or university closer to home. Being close to home allowed the student to resume the care-giving role and reduce the perceived financial burden on the family. Terri declares "Next year I am going home...It's a lot cheaper for me to go there and if my grandmother gets sick, if she is still alive, it's easier for me."

Another example is Hannah whose mom and step-dad decided to get a divorce. She says:

Right now they are in counseling. That is probably what made me decide (to transfer). That is the first thing that changed my mind. I need to help my mom

and get a job. She can't pay for me....but I think when it comes down to it, it will be cheaper because I am living at home. My mom has to pay for a babysitter for my sister after school. I can help out that way. It is just better for me to be home.

Not only does the conflict of the physical opportunities to give care need to be resolved but also emotional conflicts need to be reconciled in some fashion. Hannah who has described intense emotional conflicts with her explorations in college confesses:

This guilt of my experience has brought me to the conclusion of moving back home and attending the same school as my fiancé. Although I feel as if this is what I should do, I cannot help to think about if this is what I want to do. My experiences have corrupted me.

Yvonne also wanted to integrate her caring family role and college education but her mom and grandmother squelched this idea as is evident in this passage:

Everybody puts a lot of stress on me. Like one time I said I was going to transfer to (a community college) ...I mean I didn't see a problem with transferring to a community school and it would be a lot cheaper on my dad. I would be back at home and it would be a lot, lot cheaper than coming here. My grandmother and my mom threw a fit. They said you will never stay in school that way. They are just basing that on what my cousin did (he dropped out).

Another way "Collaborative Progress" students sought to resolve contradictory perceptions of academic performance was to develop coping strategies. Sometimes the coping strategy was derived internally, as was the case with Terri. Her strategy is to minimize distractions by avoiding situations that cause her stress. In her case, phone calls home since they always brought unfortunate news. This is Terri's strategy:

I won't call my mom until after I have finished studying. I learned my lesson not to call until after I am finished....I always get bad news when I call home." Later she restates this. "I'm not even going to talk to my parents. I don't want to talk to you all...don't call until after I am finished (with finals)."

SEMESTER GRADES EARNED

Students who have patterns of perceptions of their academic performance that can be characterized as "Collaborative Progress" experienced a roll-a-coaster of levels of performance throughout the semester. Student grade point averages at midterm were Charmaine 1.30, Tanisha 1.35, Virginia 1.92, Terri 2.10, Ray 2.06, Margot 2.07, Jazelle 2.10, Yvonne 2.10, Hannah 2.30, and Eva 2.38. Charmaine, Yvonne, Ray, and Hannah around the 9th week of classes withdrew from a course they were failing at midterm. For these students, withdrawing from the failing course was intended to raise their final GPA but this was not always the case. Charmaine (2.6), Ray (2.53), Hannah (2.8), Eva (3.3), Margot (2.4), and Tanisha (1.6) raised their final grades. Terri fell from a 2.1 to 1.7 and

Yvonne went from a 2.1 to a 1.4. Virginia maintained her 1.9 GPA from midterms. Jazelle who went from a 2.1 to 1.2 and was suspended experienced the largest drop.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

All but one of the students in this pattern of perceptions is female (9/10 are female). Five students are white and five are black. These gender and race ratios contribute to the notion that students' patterns of perceptions of their academic performance are shaped by gender. Only one of the ten had a parent who graduated with a four-year degree. In addition, only one of these students has a sibling who has attended a four-year college. One student is an only child, seven students are the oldest child in their family, and two have an older brother who has not attended a four-year college.

CHAPTER 6
"RESOURCEFUL PREPARATION" PATTERN OF PERCEPTIONS

I finally realized that as long as I learn the stuff then everything else will kind of fall in place. Really that's how I look at my classes. I try to learn it and when I do understanding something or if I have a question and it's answered...if I learn it, then I know the grades will follow. Jacob

It is scary because in high school I always thought 'just get by and everything will be alright. You can't do that here, the next step is the real world and you want to be prepared for the step. Joseph

I tend to study by myself than with other people but like for a quiz or something if it's one-on-one I study really well. But in a group I sort of...I don't like that much.. Bo

OVERVIEW

The pattern of perceptions of academic performance for this group of students can be characterized as "Resourceful Preparation" because these students believe that learning leads to grades, which ultimately prepares them for their chosen career (Table 5). Individual studying activities and multiple interactions with all of their faculty is the best way to learn, according to "Resourceful Preparation" students. These students compartmentalize and seek to balance aspects of their lives into two categories: social and academic. This seemed to facilitate a consistently high level of mental engagement in academic performance activities. The EXCEL program was appreciated and believed to be compatible with their style. Changes in perceptions across the semester were few.

Table 5
Patterns of Student Perceptions of Their Academic Performance Activities and Grades Earned

	Perceptions of Grades Earned	Perceptions of Studying Activities	Perceptions of Faculty and Advisors	Perceived Influences on Mental Engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Purpose of Grades 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perception of Need - Style - Expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What Entails • Level of Capability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role - Approach/Interaction Style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic, Social, Personal Spheres - Support/Encouragement
The Right to Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get By 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Slacker" in past still do not choose to do work • Group - Social • Little Time or Effort • Capable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make and Enforce Rules • Friendship/Authoritarian 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate Spheres • No support from family, Discouraging and Supportive Friends
Collaborative Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upward Mobility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deficient in skills, need to develop new skills • Group - Academic Community • Unclear as to what involved • Incapable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Resource • Trustworthy & Caring/Intimidating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Spheres • Discouraging & Supportive Family, Discouraging & Supportive Friends
Resourceful Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn/Prepare for future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reformed "Slacker" now work hard to achieve goals • Individual • Lots of Time and Effort • Capable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Resource • Resource and Mentor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate Spheres • Supportive Family & Friends

STUDENT PROFILES

To set the "Resourceful Preparation" perception pattern in a context, I have included brief profiles of the students within this pattern.

Bo, who attributes his low high school grades to being overly involved in service clubs, was excited to join a fraternity where he could continue these activities. In the fraternity, as well as the EXCEL program, he is required to complete study hall hours for a total of 12 hours per week. He welcomes and has internalized this structured study routine. Bo came to SEU from New England and has received "words of wisdom" from friends and family members who have attended college. A likeable, polite, clean cut student who says that his teachers "egg him on" because they believe he has potential. He has been hired to be a study hall monitor for the coming year. (White, Male)

For **Bill**, balancing the two parts of his life, "student life" and "social life" was very important. Bill has an older sister who just graduated from SEU, so he reports feeling familiar and comfortable on campus. After arriving on campus he is disgusted by the number of students who smoke cigarettes. As the semester progresses he becomes closer with his parents indicating that the few times he has been home he has spent more time watching movies with his parents than going out with friends. Bill was deeply affected by an incident in which he got kicked out of class for talking. After following up with the professor he discovered there was a misunderstanding and the professor apologized to Bill and the class for his behavior. Bill had a single dorm room because his roommate moved in with another student and was not replaced. This was fortunate for Bill because he could study in his room and not be bothered. (White, First Generation College Student, Male)

Jacob, spent his high school years in Germany where his dad was stationed. While in Germany he met his girlfriend of three years in his cooking class. They correspond via e-mail and visit each other during winter and summer breaks. Jacob describes his relationship with his family as "very close". History and religion are especially interesting to him this semester because history focuses on areas of Germany he has visited. His religion course contrasts his strong Christian beliefs, which he feels strengthens his faith. Jacob doesn't drink alcohol and has found others like him to hang out with. He attended a college last fall and dropped out mid-semester. He really never explained his reasoning, although vaguely mentioned that not having a roommate impacted his experience. At SEU he has a compatible roommate who, like himself, is serious about studying. They both quietly study in the room, working individually on their projects or computer. (White, Male)

Joseph, from the beginning, intended to transfer to Mountain University. The reason for the transfer was so that he could attend a school where he knew no one and also so he could be near downhill skiing. He is the youngest of three children. The middle sibling dropped out of college due to poor grades and lack of interest and the oldest earned a degree at a small liberal arts college and now is an elementary school teacher. Preparing for the real world is a big motivator for Joseph. His girlfriend of five years is very studious according to Joseph, and he believes her study habits have "rubbed off" on him. Seeing other students stumbling drunk frustrates him, and he thinks these students are immature and stupid. He prefers studying by himself so if his roommate is home Joseph will either go to the library, or his roommate will study in the residence hall study lounge. (White, First Generation College Student, Male)

Suzanne, like Jacob, was an "army brat" but completed her high school years in "the states". She spoke often of hiding her upper-middle class background so that peers and teachers would not make assumptions about her. College was very welcome to her because she wanted to experience "more up-to-date teaching techniques". Suzanne is known for her follow through. Several times during the semester she gave me feedback on the effectiveness of class procedures, reported residence hall incident to resident assistants and campus police, and sent e-mail up-date messages to her faculty. She communicates regularly with her family and talked little of "old friends back home". She does not consider herself a leader, but she says her friends respect her and often seek her opinion. Suzanne was selected to be a Peer Instructor for UNIV 101 the coming year. (White, Female)

Paige has a quest for life experiences, a tie-dye uniform, and dreadlock blond hair. She thought about taking time off before college, but her parents were only paying for her education if she enrolled immediately after high school. This motivated her to attend. Friends are important to her, but she often described doing her "own thing" separate from her friends. In high school she was very involved in theater but was disappointed in her college theater course fall semester. Paige did not go home frequently but she missed her sister who is very close in age and in spirit. She said she and her sister are "like twins". She enjoys learning new things in all her classes and learning from all the interesting people she has met. Upon receiving her midterm grades she was very proud of herself. Paige tended to study by herself and did not like the structure of the study hall. (White, Female)

Jim attended a military academy his senior year of high school so that he could raise his grades to get into college. The academy imposed structure and for Jim, reinforced that you cannot trust people because he had several personal belongings taken from his room. Self proclaimed as a procrastinator, he was surprised by his midterm grade point average of 3.4. He reported that he relaxed the second half of the semester because he was working harder than necessary in the beginning. Friendships are slow to develop for him. He said he knew people to do things with, but had no good friends. Jim's grandfather gave him regular "words of wisdom" about school, which he quickly rejected because "I am not them." He usually studied by himself. (White, Male)

PERCEPTION OF GRADES EARNED

Perceptions of grades include both the perceived purpose of grades and reasons students gave for enrolling in college. The purpose of grades from the perspective of students in this pattern is to demonstrate learning. Once the learning occurred these students believed, not only would they earn the high grades they aspired, but also they would be qualified for the career of their choice. In other words, learning leads to grades, which leads to career opportunities. Their perspective on grades was at the forefront of the interrelated perceptions of studying, interacting with faculty and their mental engagement in academic performance. This then is the perspective from which I begin the discussion of "Resourceful Preparation" pattern.

To illustrate student views on the purpose of their grades, first I will report examples of the expressed desire to learn and the value placed on learning. Paige, half-surprised by her feelings on college, exclaimed, "I just like learning all of sudden. I

really just want to know lots of stuff...Wow. I want to learn stuff now that I didn't really want to learn before."

Jacob described his focus on learning while in college in his perspective on his math teacher:

When I first met him, he like had a lot of jokes and trying to be really funny and stuff. I was kind like I don't want to laugh right now, I want to learn this math stuff and you show it to me and make sure I understand it and he's over here cracking jokes and everything,....He stops the jokes if you ask a question. If you really have a question or if he asks you a question, he won't make fun of you.

Suzanne's emphasis on learning was broad-based to include all aspects of her college experience. She wrote in her UNIV 101 "Expectations" essay, "College is a whole new learning experience." And later in an interview just before finals week she reported "I worked to learn now that I'm here at college."

When discussing high school academic experiences and anticipated college academic experiences, Bo communicated his desire for learning. He specifically highlights learning experiences, which contrasts student perspectives from other patterns whom focused on "fun" experiences or "boring" classes. In one response during an interview he referred to "learning" seven times. During our conversation just before midterm grades he enthusiastically reported "Now I am either studying or I'm working on something in a group. I am just constantly learning."

Grades represent how much the student knows, understands and has learned, because students believed their grades were earned through the process of learning and understanding. "Well, like with math," said Jacob, "it is more of what you understood. Getting the C on the test showed what I understood. That was my C and I earned it, as little as it was or whatever, that C was correct. That is how much of the information that I understood. Now, I know what I did wrong, so I'm not going to do it wrong again."

Bill believes that "midterm (grades) showed me my talents and my faults. I've learned new ways of studying for exams and specific characteristics of each professor. I will maintain studying hard and hope to continue the hard work I have put forth so far." Suzanne believes that grades represent the knowledge that you have. To Joseph grades reflect "just how well you understand things. How well you understand the stuff you went over. That is what I think."

Since grades were believed to reflect knowledge, this may explain Bo's account of a conversation with his mom and how he felt:

I mean I will tell her like I have told her about the papers I've had to do. I have told her the grades I've gotten on papers and topics of papers. You know like this paper had to be about whatever I choose and I decided to write about this. I don't really get into the specifics of every assignment but I tell her every now and again. I tell them about the assignments that I got (grades on). It made me feel smart.

Each student in this pattern spoke of learning in connection with future experiences. Joseph spoke of this connection between learning, grades and career this

way, "I need to do something now because it is not too long before I am on my own. I don't want to be a bum." He later stated, "It is scary because in high school I always thought 'just get by and everything will be alright.' You can't do that here, the next step is the real world and you want to be prepared for the step."

Bill shared his focus on his future profession in his comment:

I want to get the best grades I can so that I won't have to worry about getting out of school and not being able to find a job. That is like the main reason I am here so that is why I am starting to get up earlier and studying and everything so I can make it. So that almost all the time is academic and I can have a social life on the weekends and stuff. I think they (grades) are real important. I want to do this real good...(Grades reflect) what you've learned here. I want to at least end here with a B or an A. So that when I go into somewhere and they look at my grades then there won't be any question about whether they are going to hire me or not.

"I'm here to get a good education," said Bo. According to him, this leads to job opportunities as indicated in this statement, "I mean this is where it starts. If you get good grades here you can get a good job. If you don't, this is the springboard for me and this is where I have to do my networking."

Suzanne's description of the connection between learning, grades and career are a bit different than the other students in this pattern. She focused on cultivating experiences that will assist her in her chosen field of education. A few examples are:

I chose to do an art project (in Dance Appreciation class). It would be centered around dance. You could use it in the classroom. It is another method to get through to the kids, especially in special education...Because I would like to know before my junior year if I am really interested (in teaching special education). I can use that toward my portfolio.

In another conversation with Suzanne I suggested that she explore the possibility of being a peer instructor for UNIV 101 the coming fall. Her response was "Sure! I think it would really go along with my teaching (interest)."

The emphasis on jobs by students with the "Resourceful Preparation" pattern is different than the types of perception characterized as "Collaborative Progress" discussed in the previous Chapter. Students reporting "Resourceful Preparation" perceive that grades earned represent learning which prepares them for a chosen career, whereas, students within the "Collaborative Progress" pattern view academic work as a means to greater economic independence. Economic independence is not part of the discussion within "Resourceful Preparation", nor is the importance of making a difference in the community once mobility has been achieved.

Implications for this emphasis placed on learning are many. Approaching college as an academic learning experience may motivate students to seek information and gather feedback on their performance to enhance their learning. These behaviors are illustrated in the upcoming sections. Although I did not collect data specifically on where students perceived their viewpoints stem from, comments by students reported in "Perceptions of Studying" suggest that past experiences with college educated persons and expectations

for "doing well" in college shaped their perspectives on academic performance activities and grades earned.

As discussed in Chapter two, research suggests that educational aspirations and vocational directedness are associated with performance and persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Although these students viewed grades in connection with career goals, only two of the six described a commitment to their current major. Suzanne and Bill were confident and intentional in their majors as indicated by their specific conversations with advisors and faculty regarding career preparation. The other five mentioned that they needed assistance in choosing a major. This observation contradicts the literature on academic performance that suggests students who have a career focus will be more successful than those without. "Collaborative Progress" pattern students described a greater commitment to their academic major and career emphasis than "Resourceful Preparation" students, but based on their semester grades were less successful.

PERCEPTIONS OF STUDYING ACTIVITIES

For the three dimensions of perceptions of studying, expectations, need to study and style, "Resourceful Preparation" perceptions are characterized as clear specific expectations, a need to increase the amount of effort spent studying, and preference to study individually.

Expectations for Academic Work Load and Studying Activities

As discussed in the Chapter on the "Right to Party" pattern, students' expectations for academic performance, especially expectations for grades earned, have a positive relationship with actual grades (Brower, 1994; Kraft, 1991; Volmer, 1986). In the case of the "Resourceful Preparation" pattern the students' grade expectations were the same as students in the "Right to Party" pattern, 2.5 - 3.0 GPA. Final grades were higher for "Resourceful Preparation" processes than the "Right to Party" pattern, 2.9 average GPA and 1.27 average GPA respectively. Since my research emphasis is on within group variations I did not compare these students with traditional students. As illustrated in the "Right to Party" pattern, the issue is not only expectations for grades, but also expectations for behaviors associated with grades. Brower (1994) supports this notion in his finding that both grade expectations and "time spent on university activities" (p. 22) predicted first-year GPAs. At-risk students (defined by high school rank and socioeconomic status) have been shown to have lower grade expectations than "traditional" students (Brower, 1994), but grade expectations may not be relevant for this group of students in my study because expectations of these students do not appear to be related to behaviors or grades.

Associated with "Resourceful Preparation" students' expectations for their grades, were relatively clear expectations for studying. These students expected academic performance to require a lot of work and they felt confident to handle it. Bill expected classes to be "loads of work and big long papers lasting 10 to 11 pages, but it's not." After the first week of classes he exclaimed, "The classes and work are nothing like I expected. My teachers are laid back and easy to talk to and the workload is perfect for me. The work is still hard but think that I over imagined the whole work schedule."

Joseph described his first experiences with academic work this way:

The biggest different between the two so far is that there is a lot more reading you do in college. It seems like you are reading all the time....so far I feel I'm doing well. I seem to be more interested in class now than in high school and I also understand my professors so that is a plus.

Suzanne described her familiarity with college experiences this way, "The weekend the students moved in I was not too excited but yet I was not nervous. I knew what I was suppose to do and I just wanted to get all the moving over with."

Having attended a military high school, Jim felt, "that pretty much all your time is spent studying. I think I can put more time into studying. I thought I had a pretty good idea with all the studying."

These students always had the impression they were going to attend college and the people they spent time with either were enrolled in college, had earned a bachelor degree, or were planning to attend a four-year college. For example, Jim commented "my dad went for like a year (to college) and my mom went to "Big U", so I have some (college education) in my family. It is really not a choice to go to college. My dad didn't finish and my mom didn't finish college. I have just always looked at it as I was going to college."

Bo described an example of the development of expectations. Going to college was a "given" for him because of where and how he grew up. He characterized his high school this way "Everybody there (high school) has gone to college. So academics was always high and everybody always worked really hard." Joseph described his assumption of college:

My sister graduated a long time ago from "George University". Then when I wanted to go, it wasn't 'do you?' it was 'you are going'. All through high school the question was where, a junior college. I wanted to get out. My mom said if it were her, she would get out and go.

Yet another example is Bill's comment, "I kind of like knew about the school already because my sister graduated from here. So I had been down here and stayed here before because we had to bring her down here."

Advice from a close friend was perceived to have helped Bo with his study habits in college. He reported:

Before I got to college I asked my friend, my best friend that went to college before me, he's a year older than me... He basically said that college is just be responsible, that's basically what it is. You have to be responsible, you have to know to get your work done you have to do all this. And that is basically what I have realized is that yea, I can go out and go to dinner right now or I can get my work done. I think I have learned that a lot more.

This climate of college expectations was reported by these students to have influenced expectations for college and for studying, in particular. These expectations

contrasted with those reported by students in the "Right to Party" pattern that were based on media images and a desire for freedom.

Not only did they assume they would go to college and but they also believed they would perform well academically. Bill's initial feelings during summer orientation were "I am most excited about taking new classes and doing great in them." Later he stated in his expectations writing assignment that, "my expectations for the upcoming school year is that I do great and I have a good experience at what I do." Bo echoed this confidence in his essay statement:

Now that it has been a week into my college experience I have answers to some of these questions. Yes, I will make friends. No, the work will not be too difficult as long as it is my number one priority. I will not fail classes as long as I work hard. I still don't know what activities I will end up doing.

Jacob's "expectations" essay revealed that "after a week of attending classes, I feel confident enough that I can compete with everyone else."

Variations in perceptions of preparedness for college have been explained by variations in entering characteristics such as: first generation college student status, (Pascarella, et. al., 1996; Terenzini, et. al, 1994), and race and ethnicity (Brower, 1994; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). First generation college students and non-white students have been said to feel less prepared than traditional students (Brower, 1994). Students in this pattern are all white, all but two are men, and two of the six students' parents did not earn a four-year college degree.

Perceptions of the Need to Study and Academic Capabilities

Similar to students describing Party processes, these students described themselves as "slackers" in high school meaning they did not apply themselves to their schoolwork. They did not view their low high school grades as an indication of deficiency in skills. Therefore in college, in order to do well, they needed to put some effort into studying. Because they believe that college is preparation for the "real world", they reported changing their study habits and felt capable to do so.

Bo explained that he did not do well in high school because, "I spread myself too thin. I joined numerous amounts of clubs and service organizations, which left little time for me to study. Thankfully I remedied the situation during my junior year (and raised my grades)." Jacob reported, "I was really laid back my senior year. I only went to my locker once or twice the entire year, I even forgot the combination."

Similarly, Joseph described his motivation in high school:

I don't know...for some reason I just didn't think of it as "I got to get this done." I just pretty much went on with the flow. I didn't really plan for it. Here you get so many things that are due on the same day that you have to star things way before. It seems like you are at it all the time. My first two years in high school I didn't worry about anything. I would say 'oh its a C'. I was getting C's without doing anything. Now I wish, if I could get a C without doing anything. I say gosh if I had just put something into it I could have gotten A's."

"In high school I slacked off," reported Paige. "I didn't care about grades and saw no real point in learning. I had a wake up call the middle of my junior year. I realized that in order to get into any kind of decent college, I would have to bring up my low GPA." In another conversation she repeated, "I didn't get real good grades in high school but I knew I was capable of getting them. I didn't put enough time in, whereas here I have been putting more time in and I've seen how my grades have gone up from that."

Bill's motivation to apply himself academically in high school was tied to tangible rewards, but he was able to perform academically when needed as was evident in his comment:

When I was in high school and you would get like honor roll you would get something from mom and dad or I would get to go out somewhere. I always had like ski trips and stuff with scouts and it would always cost money...so the only thing I would be looking for is, like say I had a hike in three weeks and I had a report card coming in two then I would have to work on it so they would let me go. It's kind of more like if I didn't have something coming up then I wouldn't really worry about school work.

Suzanne was the only person in this pattern who did not perceive herself as a "slacker" in high school. Her high school grades, she explained, were low primarily because during her junior year her father had open-heart surgery and this was distracting to her. She did not tell any of her high school teachers because she did not feel she should get special consideration in this situation. Initially she was denied admittance to SEU, but she appealed the decision and wrote a letter of explanation. She was admitted under the condition of participating in the EXCEL program. As will be discussed later, she did not feel that her personal life should be intertwined with her academic life.

Perceiving of one's self as a "slacker" is associated with a different perception of the need to study than a self perception of being deficient of skills as is the case with students in the "Collaborative Progress" pattern. Students in the "Resourceful Preparation" pattern, because they have been procrastinators in the past, perceived a need to increase their effort but perceived themselves as capable, whereas students in the "Collaborative Progress" pattern viewed themselves as lacking in skills. Therefore their need to study was to compensate for deficiencies which occurred simultaneous with a perception that they may not be capable of college level work.

An explanation for this variation in self-definitions, and perceptions of the need to study, may be rooted in the understanding of how people in different social structural positions perceive themselves and their environment. McIntosh (1995) in her insightful essay on gender and race privilege suggests that as a member of the dominant culture she:

...received daily signals and indications that my people counted and that others either didn't exist or must be trying, not very successful, to be like people of my race...my racial group was being made confident, comfortable and oblivious , other groups were likely being made unconfident, uncomfortable, and alienated. (p. 82 - 83)

Students describing a "Resourceful Preparation" pattern of perceiving their academic performance all experience privileges grounded in their race and four of the six

experienced gender privilege. Whereas five of nine Progress students experience race privilege and only one experiences gender privilege. This standpoint may shape students' perceptions of themselves as students in the context of higher education.

As discussed in previous Chapters, student perceptions of their overall academic performance are interrelated. Demonstrations of students' perceptions of studying also demonstrated their perception of grades earned in college. I chose to place students' reports of studying to learn in the section on Grades. Additional examples of reports that demonstrate that learning was the primary purpose for grades are highlighted under the Perception of Grades section of this chapter.

Preferred Style of Studying

Lengthy descriptions of approaches to studying were common in my discussions with Bill, Bo, Jacob, Jim, Joseph, Paige, and Suzanne. They described where they studied, the specific types of studying activities they engaged in and the effectiveness of the strategy. Their primary mode of engaging in academic work was by themselves, although other students might be present. Bo declared, "I tend to study by myself than with other people but like for a quiz or something if it's one-on-one I study really well. But in a group I sort of...I don't like that much." Paige reported that her preference was to study alone but that "we (she and her friends) sometimes go to the library together." She went on to say, "it depends on what kind of mood I am in. If I know I can get certain things done there, then I will be like 'yea sure (I will study with friends)'. But if I have hard core studying to do I would rather do it on my own."

Jacob indicated a lack of preference for group studying when he said:

There has never been an out of the way attempt to make a group or go study. I've only done that once and that was studying for a history exam with someone else. Other than that I study in my room and chances are my roommate is in there studying too.

Similar to Jacob's roommate situation and preferred mode of studying, Joseph said:

Me and my roommate know each other from home. We get along good. We don't have any problems. I study in the study hall and he studies when I am gone. If I am done and he isn't I will go somewhere. If I don't have anywhere to go he will go to the study lounge. He studies with people sometimes in our room but I went to the library and had things to do. I haven't studied with anyone yet because I have only had one exam. I just studied in the study hall..... I don't think I would study in a group. I don't think I would get anything out of it.

Additionally, these students described involvement in a peer subculture that encouraged and supported academic work. Some of the quotes previously presented on studying styles communicate this preference as well as a few other comments by the students. Peers studied together as in Suzanne's case:

I have to have complete silence. So I tend to do most of my homework with my neighbors.....One of the guys is a biology major but he is taking chemistry

courses. He will talk out loud sometimes and ask questions that are free for anyone to answer. I have been able to give him feedback and he has been able to give me feedback.

Jacob's studying activities with his roommate were described this way, "We go down to the computer lab together and try to figure out the e-mail stuff and just mess around on that stuff." Joseph also discussed studying with a roommate:

With my roommate, I think I have been fortunate in having him also because our study habits are really alike. We both study in the same room. Like when I am studying he is probably there doing the same thing, so we both respect that and understand that this is when we will study.

Bo's fraternity brothers come together to study, "I see a lot of my friends in the fraternity that I am pledging, they work really hard...All my pledge brothers go to study hall at the same time. Some of the brothers show up and they study too which is really cool."

The "Resourceful Preparation" preferred style of studying, individually in a quiet place, is the studying style that the EXCEL study hall was most likely to accommodate. Unlike the "Right to Party" and "Collaborative Progress" perspective on studying, the structure of the study hall was compatible with the preferred studying style of students in this pattern. Time studying in the study hall was well spent for students in the "Resourceful Preparation" pattern. Although they reported spending additional study time outside of the program requirement, the six hours per week were productive. Students communicating this preference were privileged in that they did not need to expend physical or emotional energy in adjusting their learning orientations to fit the structure of the individualized studying expectation of the study hall. Since the students did not need to make up for lost time due to incompatible studying environments, this perhaps afforded them the opportunity to get involved in other curricular and co-curricular activities. These students are privileged by the structure of the study hall because they did not need to adapt to a style that was not preferred.

The preferred style of studying described by students in the "Resourceful Preparation" pattern tend to reflect a masculine style of knowing and learning of impersonality, individualism and objectivity (Baxter Magolda, 1992, 1994; Belenky, et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982). Interpersonal, collaborative, "interindividual", receiving approaches tend to be associated with women's style of learning (Baxter Magolda, 1992, Belenky, et. al. 1986; Gilligan, 1982). The study hall structure requires that students work quietly by themselves in a sterile classroom environment where students learn their material for their classes. Interestingly, the structure of the study hall is more likely to be compatible with masculine patterns of learning and knowing than feminine (Baxter Magolda, 1992, 1994; Belenky, et. al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982).

Both men and women are represented in the "Resourceful Preparation" pattern of preferred studying style. All of these students can be said to be doing a masculine form of studying. Although there is no uniformly masculine studying style or "way of knowing", these characteristics are patterns most likely to be exhibited by men (Baxter Magolda, 1994). Saying that behaviors tend to be associated with a particular gender

does not preclude both genders from exhibiting the behavior or perception. Gendered behaviors are behaviors that are typically associated with masculinity or femininity and can be demonstrated by both women and men (Hall, 1993a; Hagemann-White, 1987 in Hall, 1993a); as was the case for students in the "Resourceful Preparation" pattern of perceptions. People engaging in behaviors traditionally associated with masculinity have a higher status than people engaging in traditionally feminine behaviors (Hall, 1993a).

Like all of the EXCEL students, these students were required to participate in a structured study hall for six hours per week. They appreciated the study hall and viewed the structure as an opportunity to enhance their academic performance activities and grades earned and thus increase their grades. For example Bill said:

I think mainly just the study hall that helped me a lot. I think if I hadn't had it then I would not have gone (to study) and would probably be where I was when I first came in because I wouldn't know when to study or I wouldn't study. This study hall I'm there, I have my books so I may as well do it and that hour over with."

Bo reported that as a result of the study hall and he believed "they're (grades) much better, yea. Much better because I'm sort of learning how to manage my time." And felt he, "is learning how to manage my time", because of his experiences in structure study hall. Bo also had a 12-hour study hall requirement for his fraternity that was consolidated with the EXCEL requirement.

Joseph stated in a conversation the middle of the semester, "I never really minded the study hall. I minded the amount of time you had to sit in them. I would find myself sitting there not doing anything and thinking I am wasting my time by being here and that would bug me."

Jacob described two types of studying, "intensely preparing" and "going over notes." He reported that he spent his time in study hall doing:

A lot of reading assignments, I highlight my notes and kind of get them back together...Basically I will take my Religion notes and decode them or whatever. I don't do more intense cramming in study hall. I usually just go over my notes, highlight things, read. I guess I do use the study hall.

Students reporting the "Resourceful Preparation" pattern of perceptions appreciated the structure of studying and the structure was not just held externally but was internalized by the students as something they "needed to do". This was particularly evident in the students' comments after the close of the study hall the 10th week of classes. Bill reported, "Now that we don't have study hall I have to go there. I am always in my room studying." He went on to say in our interview:

I got into a good habit about doing my study hall hours and everything like that...I study hard even if I don't think I need to. I read extra stuff in my books even though it may not be covered. And the best thing is that I can get this done in time to still go out and have free time to have an even and equal experience at college. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday I don't have class until 1:00 So I

slept 'til 1:00. So now I have been getting up earlier and go down and work out, then I can study because I've been thinking and that is a waste of time. So, I can start using that time now. It's still hard to get up but I do.

Similarly Joseph got in the habit after study hall ended. He said:

I have just transferred that time over. I have just switched from after class then I will watch TV. I get out of class at 2:00 pm. He gets out a 3:00 sometimes he doesn't get home until 3:30 so I have an hour and a half to study in the daytime. I would just rather do it then right when I get out of class... Now I like the thought of going in there (study hall) to get stuff done."

Suzanne described how her "self-reliance" has served her well because she felt she, "learned to balance my academics with my social life." Additionally, the study hall structure was "beneficial because like now (that study hall is over) I know if I don't study I feel like something is missing."

For students whose pattern of perceptions of their academic performance activities and grades earned is characterized as "Resourceful Preparation", study hall was perceived a beneficial experience. Not only was the study hall structure reflective of these students' studying style but also their perspective on grades and the need to study facilitated an appreciation for the support and structure imposed by the EXCEL program. This contrasts with the "Right to Party" perceptions that led to a resistance of the EXCEL program because students in this pattern perceived the intervention program was infringing on their rights of freedom.

PERCEPTIONS OF FACULTY

The perceived faculty role as described by students in the "Resourceful Preparation" pattern was a general resource for personal and academic issues and students reported comfortably and assertively approaching their faculty to learn and prepare for their chosen career.

Role of Faculty

Interacting with faculty to gather information on a broad range of topics was a common activity for students reporting a "Resourceful Preparation" pattern. Faculty's and advisors' role, as perceived by these students was one of an academic, career and personal resource person. The descriptions by the students of utilizing faculty as resources were lengthy.

To begin this discussion of student's perceptions and interactions with faculty, Suzanne's given reasons for interacting with faculty demonstrated a perception that one of the faculty's roles is as a resource to gather information concerning course grades. She described in an interview:

The only reason for my (midterm grade of) F in Dance is because that has been our only grade in the class and it was a midterm exam. I take extensive notes in class and I prepared myself for the exam. I felt confident during and after the test, and I was shocked to see how poorly I did on it. I was concerned about my grade

so I went to the professor and explained all of that to her. She went over what I did incorrectly on the exam and gave me some pointers on how I could change my study tactics for her tests. I felt better after I went to talk to her. I feel like I can definitely pull up that grade...hopefully she will give more assignments that will average in. [she raised the grade to a C]

Bill also got feedback on his grades from his professors:

My midterm (in English) reflected only a C exam and not an A paper that I had revised and turned back into her (professor) the following week. I feel that I will do very well in this class and have no more problems. I have talked to the teacher numerous times on what she expects and she has given me tips on my own writing style. I believe that I will have not trouble bringing my grade up in the class.

Yet another example is Joseph who indicated:

My English class, I like it. I made a C on the first paper and that is because I did a bunch on it...I wasn't really in a hurry. I had worked on it all week and had it done. I was kind of want to go somewhere and trying to get it typed and didn't really proof read as much as I should have. I messed up on some grammar. He told me if I could get it written before then he would go over it and help me out. I have a paper due next week and I already started working on it.

All the other students in this pattern reported meeting with their faculty to receive pointers on how to improve their course grades.

In addition to discussing academic issues, students also sought out general information on careers, areas of interest, employment opportunities and letters of reference. For example, Bill described conversations with his advisor about preparations for a career in criminal justice. Along with Suzanne, Bill consulted with me concerning university grievance procedures to respond to difficult situations with roommates and professors. Paige, who was applying for scholarships, requested a letter of reference from me. Joseph was considering transferring to another university and discussed procedures with his academic advisor and me. And Jacob shared his experiences living in Germany with his history teacher since events in Germany were the topic of the class lecture. Students in other perception patterns did not describe participating in this range of topics of conversations with their faculty or advisors.

Interactions with faculty are a form of academic integration. Lack of academic integration may lead to academic failure (dismissal) which is one example of "leaving college" (Tinto, 1987, 1993). Researchers suggest that formal and informal interactions with faculty engage "students in intellectual materials" (Auster & MacRone, 1994, p. 289) and contribute to the academic integration of the student with the university (Tinto, 1987). The byproducts of academic integration typically are higher grades and persistence to graduation (Astin, 1977; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1987). The benefits of this interaction with faculty not only may have an immediate academic benefit, but also the benefit multiplies. The contact with faculty typically leads to career

advisement, nominations to leadership positions, and letters of reference. Not that these "rewards" are not warranted, but the gap in academic performance between these students in the other patterns clearly will increase.

Approaches to Interactions with Faculty

Faculty had an instrumental function as indicated in the discussion about faculty's perceived roles, but faculty also were the means by which students in the "Resourceful Preparation" pattern learned. Students reported an ability to learn under various pedagogical styles. Bo was enthusiastic about the various teaching styles he has encountered because:

I sort of thought (in high school) that this teacher is my teaching style or this teacher is that teaching style. I don't think that anymore. I think that everybody sort of has their own different teaching styles but I think that you can learn from everybody's different teaching style and that way you can learn more.

Suzanne and Joseph talked at length, contrasting all of their different faculties' styles. They described acting as a chameleon and adapting to the various styles of their professors. Bill described faculty styles and the impact each had on his learning, "Like my math class I am taking now, he's just like states the stuff. He doesn't give any personality to it and so he just puts the stuff on the board and then he'll talk about it." Bill went on to say how he responds to the different styles:

It really doesn't matter how the teacher teaches as long as I get the information and if we have to read the book then I will read it anyway. Just for me it is kind of like if a teacher is really really bad then that will affect it a lot but if I study and do all the work it's like there's no problem with it.

In describing the interactions they had with faculty, these students recognized and accepted the power differential between themselves and their professors. This however did not preclude them from asserting themselves to negotiate course expectations and the nature of the faculty/student relationship. Jacob provided a vivid example of this process when he was uncomfortable presenting personal writings to his English class:

He (professor) started off with our first assignment that was a description paper and we had to make 23 copies for each student in the class to read. It didn't bother me until he started talking about you should really try to make this paper interesting to where the other people in the class will want to read about your personal stuff... I told him how I felt about it... I kind of made it clear in class, too, but in class I said that I wasn't going to share anything personal just to entertain the class that I don't even know. So, when we had this meeting thing for UNIV 101 (a required faculty interview), I told him that I didn't mean any disrespect it was just how I feel. We didn't have any problems so the meeting went well.

Before reporting about this conversation with his English faculty, Jacob described his view of professors. It went like this:

He (math teacher) is one of those teachers that would like you to call him by his first name so that's kind of...From the start I was like I don't know about this. His name is Rob and he said 'you can call me Rob or Robby.' I just have a problem with that...I'd end up calling him something like Mr. Rob. I don't know. I can't get past calling my professor Robby but hey if that brings in the grades then I can call him Robby. Whatever he wants.

Suzanne asserted herself on an assignment for her dance class in which she wanted to make a dance pop-up book for her creative project. The teacher did not respond favorably but Suzanne forged ahead and completed the project successfully. Suzanne reported:

I presented the topic to her. It was all written down and explained out. She told me she didn't feel like I was able to do this because I was a freshman in college. I should not be allowed to do something like this yet. She said she'd think about it and get back to me. That kind of bothered me. Because I would like to know before my junior year if I am really interested (in teaching). I can use that toward my portfolio. I thought that would be...she hasn't said anything. I am assuming it is okay. I still need to go back and talk to her.

Another situation in which a student asserted themselves in a faculty relationship was Bill who was "kicked out" of his math class while seeking help from another student. Immediately after the incident Bill came to see me. He was visibly upset. Bill met with the professor to confront the misunderstanding. Bill reported the incident this way:

The girl behind me started to try and explain it (the math problem) to me again, the class started getting louder so he was asking the people on the other side to be quiet while she was trying to explain it to me. So when he looked at me and asked me if I understood the question I thought he was talking about the problem still. He just blew up. (the question was really if he (Bill) knew how to shut up).....Then the next day he (the professor) told the class and said he was sorry. It was nice.

Bill approached his professor in an attempt to remedy the situation through a respectful conversation to seek clarity on the situation. This incident contrasts with Todd's experience of getting "kicked out of class" in that Todd described a hostile confrontation with his instructor. Todd described the conversation and incident this way:

I came down there (to the instructor's office) and we had it out basically. It was like we were yelling at each other and saying how we didn't appreciate all this. He kept saying that my attitude toward him would greatly affect my grade and told him it wouldn't...I was in the very back of the (classroom) leaning up against the wall. Without any warning he just said 'Young man, would you like to see

how my book tastes?' I asked if he was going to throw it at me. He just said, 'Get out! Get out!'. I walked out...The whole entire class was acting up because his fly was down. He kept saying 'what is so funny' but we just kept laughing. I met with him after class. His fly was still down but I still didn't tell him. He deserves some embarrassment.

Faculty student interactions are valuable to student experiences. Institutions of higher education have attempted to create an environment and culture that maximizes the likelihood of relationships developing between faculty and students. Researchers have explored factors that impact interactions in the classroom (Auster & Rome, 1994; Crawford & MacLeod, 1990; Hall & Sandler, 1982; Pace, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Whitt, 1994). However, students' social structural position is typically not considered. These students' acknowledgment and comfort with the power differentials between themselves and their faculty may be a function of their standpoint as white, family educated students. "Resourceful Preparation" students' parents earned four-year college degrees or higher and are more likely to be professionals. Therefore these students may be more comfortable and familiar with interacting with persons at that status level than students from different social structural positions. Students in the other two patterns described an awareness of the power differences between students and faculty, but their attitudes did not illuminate a comfort interacting with persons of different status. Also as discussed under "preferred studying style", "Resourceful Preparation" students' perspectives are fully integrated into the expectations of the community so they are less likely than students in the other patterns to conceive of themselves as being outside the culture of the institution.

PERCEPTIONS OF MENTAL ENGAGEMENT IN ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Separating and balancing the academic and social elements of their lives was reported by students in the "Resourceful Preparation" pattern as having influenced their mental engagement in their academic performance activities and grades. Although not a perceived need of these students to help them concentrate on their academic work, family members and friends were supportive of their academic pursuits.

Perceptions of Academic, Social and Personal Life Spheres

College student experiences have been categorized as social, academic or personal (external to the college context) (Tinto, 1987). These experiences are constructed as being distinct from one another and each is associated with retention and academic performance (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1987). Students in the "Resourceful Preparation" pattern perceive their experiences similar to researchers in that each "sphere" is separate, and they seek a balance between each.

All the students in the "Resourceful Preparation" pattern noted striving for and achieving "balance" between "school" and "fun". Bill's comment captured this perspective clearly, "I study hard even if I don't think I need to. I read extra stuff in my books even though it may not be covered. And the best thing is that I can get this done in time to still go out and have free time to have an even and equal experience at college."

Bo observed, "The people that I live with in my dorm, I don't see them study that much...I think that like here my studying and social are different". Suzanne states proudly, "I do feel I have learned to balance my academics with my social life.

Perceiving elements of their life experiences as "separate" and "balanced" contrasts the perspectives of the "Right to Party" and "Collaborative Progress" perception patterns. Several of the "Resourceful Preparation" students described incidences that could be considered troubling and thus impact their mental engagement in their academic performance but when asked, they believed their concentration and emotional work had not been influenced by their troubles. For example, Suzanne had roommate conflicts such that she requested a transfer, she filed harassment charges against two students on her residence hall floor, and her parents filed for divorce. She repeatedly maintained that these experiences did not negatively influence her concentration on her academics that might ultimately impact grades earned on course assignments. Two of the students maintained long distance relationships and did not feel distracted by the energy they spent cultivating those relationships. Students in the "Collaborative Progress" pattern by contrast reported that their feelings about their long distance personal relationships strongly influenced their level of concentration on their academic performance.

Perceiving various life experiences as separate while in college was beneficial to these students. This perception was presumed in the theoretical models (see Astin, 1993; Pace, 1990; Tinto, 1987) to be the only way students can excel in their academic performance activities and grades. This expectation is communicated in Tinto's (1987) highly regarded model of retention that constructs a dichotomy of experiences, and also suggests that students should separate from their former communities (family and friends) to make a successful transition to college. Additionally, SEU and other institutions have constructed the integration of the spheres of a student's life as a counseling problem that needs to be disentangled. As was evident in the discussion of the "Collaborative Progress" pattern of perceptions for some students, compartmentalizing one's life is neither desirable nor possible.

Perceived Need for Support and Source of Support

Students whose perceptions are characterized as "Resourceful Preparation" perceived their families and friends to be very supportive of their academic performance activities and grades earned. These students described support functions provided by their families and friends, but did not believe that they needed or relied on these supports. Joseph's comments illustrate a matter-of-fact view of interactions with his parents and friends regarding his performance, "Everyone is pretty much supportive of me. My parents pretty much want me to do good. Friends say 'hey, you did pretty good on that test.' Stuff like that....My roommate and my girlfriend, she goes to (another school). I talk to her through e-mail. She is pretty much support. My roommate he encourages me and I do the same thing back." Joseph did not make a connection between other's positive comments and his mental engagement in academic performance. These students' descriptions of their studying activities with roommates and friends also illustrated support for academic performance.

Students within the pattern titled "Resourceful Preparation" are the epitome of "fit" between the individual and the institution. As described in this chapter, "Resourceful Preparation" students are academically and socially integrated into the

institution and share a common commitment to the institution. Their values and orientations match the institution's and they perceive their integration activities as positive. These students have successfully separated from family and community to transition into their new community. Having most of the institution's values prior to entrance, the transition and incorporation phase were accomplished quickly and easily therefore there is little need to adapt their meanings or behaviors associated with academic work.

SEMESTER GRADES EARNED

As perhaps can be assumed, the students in this pattern earned the highest midterm and final GPAs of the three patterns. These students earned the following grade point averages at midterm and finals Bo 2.76/3.0, Bill 2.0/2.74, Jacob 2.84/2.615, Joseph, 3.28/3.7 Suzanne 2.54/2.786, Paige 2.68/2.5, and Jim 3.45/2.57. None of these students withdrew from a course during the semester.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

All seven of the students within this pattern are white. Two people in the group are female while the other five are males. Similar to the Collaborative Progress pattern, the gender and race ratios further reflect the ways in which perceptions are shaped by gender. Three of the students are first generation college students in that neither parent earned a four-year degree. Of the three first generation students, two had an older sibling who graduated from a four-year college. The other four students are following their parent's academic experiences.

CHAPTER 7

THEORETICAL DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

My study is designed to explore at-risk, first-year students' perceptions of their academic performance activities and their grades, and the ways in which those perceptions are shaped by gender. As described in the previous Chapters, students in my study held three different patterns of perceptions of their academic performance activities and grades. Implications and theoretical understandings were discussed in the context of the different patterns, but there are also themes of implications and possible theoretical explanations that cross all patterns. This chapter discusses those implications and theories, highlighting gender, race, and class dynamics.

PATTERNS OF PERCEPTIONS

General research findings on academic performance and student perceptions illuminate one or two "variables" associated with grades and behaviors positively associated with grades. On the other hand, evidence in my study suggests that there are patterns of student perceptions that are interrelated and connected. The three patterns of students' perceptions of their academic performance activities and grades are characterized as: "Right to Party", "Collaborative Progress", and "Resourceful Preparation". Each pattern includes major variations in students' perceptions of their grades, their studying activities, their interactions with faculty and their mental engagement in academic performance activities.

Demonstrating patterns of at-risk, first-year students' perceptions and the interconnection between perceptions has several implications and is useful for several reasons. The findings respond to the critique of literature presented. First, social constructions of dichotomies of experiences and perceptions associated with college grades are challenged. Insights are gained into the diversity of perceptions of behaviors associated with academic performance and college grades. Variations in the prediction of first semester college grades may be partially explained. Interventions are more likely to be effective when considering the patterns of student perceptions of their academic performances. And finally, patterns of perceptions may be a context from which we can explore the ways in which student perceptions and experiences are shaped by gender, race and class social structural positions. A discussion of each of these implications follows.

Traditionally research on academic performance in college has suggested that there are dichotomous factors associated with grades earned in college. New paradigms, however, call for exploring multiple perspectives not just identifying the cause and effect elements of a given phenomenon (Smith, 1995). An implied element of my research agenda and design was to challenge the notion that student experiences and perceptions fall into dichotomous categories. As illustrated in the findings, my approach allowed me to "see" overlapping and sometimes contradictory elements of students' academic perceptions and experiences that dichotomous constructions do not (Oleson, 1994; Schwandt, 1994; Smith, 1987). Student perceptions are human experiences and do not fit into neat, mutually exclusive categories (Acker, 1992b; Smith, 1987). The emphasis in this study was on understanding at-risk students in "their own right" (Smith, 1995, p.

234), as opposed to, exploring problems in their perceptions compared to non-at-risk students. The patterns of students' perceptions of their academic performance illuminate the complexities and contradictions of students' lives and perceptions of their experiences during their first year of college.

Similar to constructing student perceptions and experiences as dichotomous, in that elements of human experiences are viewed as discrete and distinguishable, the literature on college student perceptions isolate and separate perceptions on multiple aspects of students lives in college. For example, students' attributions for grades/academic performance (Gigliotti & Secrest, 1988) are discussed separately from students' perceptions of satisfaction with courses, faculty, social life, etc. (Astin, 1993). Providing evidence that student perceptions and experiences do not occur in isolation of one another but instead, occur in patterns contributes to the understanding of the whole student. Student perspectives and realities are more likely to be represented in patterns of perceptions than by disconnected perceptions of a single activity or phenomenon. I believe the most important observation of my study is that at-risk, first-year students' perceptions are interrelated. They do not have uniform perceptions of their grades or behaviors typically associated with college grades earned. Not only did students' perceptions studied fall into patterns, but also, there were variations in the patterns of perceptions.

To support this notion of variations in student perceptions and that one student perception or experience cannot be considered without considering another perception, I will recap a few of the nuances of overlapping, interrelated perceptions reported by students categorized in each of the patterns. The "Right to Party" pattern of perceptions is such that students in this pattern believed that college life was about freedom and socializing with friends which they report influenced their mental engagement in academic performance activities. Simultaneously, their perception of studying activities was that they were capable of doing the work but had not applied themselves. By understanding the "Right to Party" perspective on what influenced their mental engagement, namely their assumptions that college life is about "partying", it becomes understandable that these students will not "try harder" because studying is antithetical to what they perceive college is all about. The students in the "Right to Party" pattern did not hold two opposing perspectives. Additionally, requiring these students to perform specific academic performance activity sparks resistance in them because they perceive that their earned freedom is being infringed upon.

The fruitfulness of understanding patterned, interrelated perceptions is also provided by the "Collaborative Progress" pattern. This pattern includes the student perception that multiple aspects of their lives are intertwined and cannot be disentangled from one another. The integration of academic, personal and social spheres is distracting to these students and often they felt pressure to separate their lives into personal and academic spheres. However, their "personal" is deeply rooted in the "academic". They believe that grades are the means through which they earn a college degree and become the first in their families to receive a bachelors degree and progress economically. Upward mobility is crucial to their family and their academic performance activities and grades earned. Therefore, even though the interconnection may be problematic, disconnections between spheres are not feasible nor desirable.

The "Resourceful Preparation" pattern of perceptions demonstrates a slightly different phenomenon associated with understanding multiple overlapping student perspectives on their academic performance activities and grades earned. As discussed in the Chapter on "Resourceful Preparation" these students' perceptions were congruent with higher education values and the structure of the EXCEL program. The average GPA earned by the students was the highest grades of all the patterns. Could this GPA outcome be associated with one or all of these students' perspectives on their academic performance activities, such as perceptions on faculty, grades, studying activities or influences on mental engagement? Researchers and practitioners may oversimplify the dynamics involved in earning various grades in college, and attempt to enhance only one or two perspectives such as faculty interaction, rather than stimulating the multiple overlapping perspectives "Resourceful Preparation" students described. These students' success may be associated with the overlapping of perspectives rather than extrapolating one perception to focus on and enhance.

The students in this study demonstrated a variety of perceptions regarding their academic performance activities and grades. The study participants were predicted to perform poorly based on their high school GPA and SAT scores that are factors suggested in the literature on academic performance to be the best predictors of college grades. Despite statistically significant predictors of college grades, researchers can only predict a portion of college student grades earned using the cognitive variables of high school grades and college aptitude scores. Literature on academic performance reports findings that explain a portion of the variations in performance and at most 23% of variations in grades is explained (using high school GPA). As predicted, a portion of the students in the EXCEL program were unsuccessful academically and were suspended and a portion were highly successful academically as indicated by their 3.0+ GPAs. Understandably, there would be variations of student perceptions of their academic performance activities and grades since there were variations in the grades earned by students predicted to be at-risk of academic failure during their first year of college. Variations in the patterns of perceptions may help us understand the variation in the outcome of course grades.

My findings challenge the construction of students' perceptions and experiences as dichotomies and shed some light on student perceptions of academic performance activities and grades earned. These insights will be helpful in developing appropriate academic intervention programs that reflect a diversity of students' standpoints. Since students in my study demonstrated multiple, overlapping perspectives on their academic performance, perhaps, multiple overlapping criteria should be used to identify students who are at-risk of poor academic performance rather than simply using cognitive variables or one or two discrete noncognitive variables.

Understanding perceptions according to Tinto (1987) is paramount because student academic experiences depend on, "the manner in which the individual comes to perceive them as rewarding" (p. 27). Perceptions also construct the various social contexts in which students frequent as part of their college experience. "If student cultures are not addressed, even the most ambitious, elegantly designed institutional renewal strategy will fall short because students themselves determine the social context in which learning occurs" (Kuh, 1996, p. 141). We need to understand social context because social contexts influence what is important, how students spend their time and

who they perceive to be useful resources. For example, as described in the "Right to Party" Chapter, the social context those students described was one of resistance to the EXCEL program that they perceived to be infringing on their right to freedom. The students in the "Resourceful Preparation" pattern perceived the program to be helpful and compatible with their personal style. Because social contexts are made up of student perceptions and behaviors, emphasis should be placed on adapting the program to the student culture, not changing the student to fit the program. This point will be brought up again when discussing the incorporation of diverse perspectives based on social structural positions into colleges and universities and specifically academic intervention programs.

Understanding student perceptions also is a means to inspire and motivate students in a learning community such as a college or university. As carefully articulated in the Student Learning Imperative, "the key to enhancing learning and personal development is not simply for faculty to teach more and better, but also to create conditions that motivate and inspire students to devote time and energy to educationally purposeful activities both in and outside the classroom (American College Personnel Association, 1994). We have to "know" students before we can motivate and inspire them to learn. Describing at-risk, first-year students' patterns of interrelated perceptions of their academic activities and grades may move us closer to understanding students and thus motivating them to learn.

PERCEPTIONS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURAL POSITIONS OF GENDER, RACE AND CLASS

Perceptions are shaped by a person's social structural position in society and in organizations (Acker, 1990, 1992a, 1992b; Collinson & Hearn, 1994; Ferguson, 1984; Kanter, 1976, 1977; Yoder, 1994). As previously discussed, gender is conceptualized as a social structural position of power. From my theoretical standpoint, I assumed that gender would be a lens through which students' perceived their experiences and was a major component of my research agenda. However, in my analysis gender was not dominant in shaping students' perspectives on their academic performance and grades earned.

In many respects I am not surprised that gender was not easily isolated as a phenomenon shaping student perceptions. I am not surprised for several reasons. One, researchers and theorists argue that gendered processes exist, but it may be difficult to see the ways in which processes are gendered (Acker, 1990, 1992a; Cockburn, 1991; Smith, 1987; Collins, 1990). Gender permeates language throughout social structures and organizational components. Therefore, it may be difficult to identify the ways in which perceptions are gendered (Acker, 1990; Gherardi, 1995). Additionally, the presumption that gender can be effectively and usefully isolated from race and class has limited feminist theorizing (Grant, 1993; Spelman, 1988). West and Zimmerman (1995) illuminate the understanding that people cannot experience gender without experiencing race and class at the same time. Therefore in my study and others, gender cannot be analyzed and illuminated without analyzing the intersections of race and class with gender.

Traditional cognitive predictive variables of high school GPA and SAT or ACT scores are more likely to be biased toward race and class dynamics. These predictive variables are less likely to predict students of color's first semester course grades (Hood,

1992; Nettles, et al., 1986; Tracey & Sedlacek, 1987) and students from poor school districts have lower SAT and ACT scores than students from school districts in higher socioeconomic areas. There is a difference between women's and men's scores on SAT with men scoring slightly higher (Smith, 1995), but when considering both high school GPA and SAT the difference is less important because girls have higher GPAs in high school than do boys. The proportion of women and men in my study reflect the gender ratio of all students enrolled at SEU, but race and class may be more salient factors because students identified as academically at-risk utilizing these criteria are more likely to be students of color and lower class, as indicated by their first generation college student status.

Although there is bias in the indicators of at-risk students, the gender ratios within the Collaborative Progress and Resourceful Preparation patterns were disproportionately female and male respectively (Table 6). The students of color are also concentrated in one pattern, the Collaborative Progress pattern. As discussed earlier, male and female students may increasingly participate in similar in higher education but this equality may not be coupled with similar perceptions of their experiences (Acker, 1990; Kanter, 1976, 1977). Gender differences were found in the types of perceptions women were most likely to exhibit and in the types of perceptions men were most likely to exhibit. As will be discussed, not only were there differences in who might exhibit a particular pattern, but also the ways in which the gender shaped the perceptions themselves.

What follows in the next sections are theoretical discussions of the ways in which students' perceptions of their academic performance activities and grades might be shaped by gender, race and class. Three categories of perceptions can be theorized as gendered and will be discussed: 1) the integration of academic, social, and personal spheres, 2) privileging academic styles, and 3) perceived power differentials. Within each category the ways that the perceptions are gendered, racialized and classed are

Table 6
 Characteristics of Participants by Patterns of Perceptions

Entering Characteristic	Right to Party (8)	Resourceful Preparation (7)	Collaborative Progress (10)
Names - High School GPA/SAT SEU Fall Semester GPA	Courtney - 2.3/920 1.4 Jermaine - 2.5/820 2.4 Kristy - 2.4/860 1.5 Mandy - 2.3/770 1.2 Pam - 2.6/830 0.6 Todd - 2.2/890 1.0 Steve - 2.6/880 1.5 Bud - 2.3/880 2.1	Bo - 2.1/1030 3.0 Bill - 2.2/860 2.7 Jacob - 2.3/900 2.6 Joseph - 2.7/910 3.7 Suzanne - 2.3/1000 2.7 Paige 2.5/1000 2.5 Jim - 2.0/1010 2.5	Eva - 2.4/870 3.3 Charmaine - 2.7/700 2.5 Margot - 2.4/870 2.3 Ray - 2.3/940 2.5 Tanisha - 2.4/840 1.6 Virginia - /840 1.9 Hannah - 2.6/800 2.8 Jazelle - 2.7/880 1.2 Terri - 2.3/960 1.7 Yvonne - 2.5/800 1.3
Gender	4 Male 4 Female	5 Males 2 Female	1 Male 9 Female
Race	7 White 1 Black	7 White	5 Black 5 White
Class = First Generation (FG)	6 FG 2 Not FG	3 FG 4 Not FG	9 FG 1 Not FG

discussed. The ways in which dominance and subordination are maintained are illuminated.

Integration of Spheres: Separate is Not Equal

The first aspect of student perceptions to be theorized as being shaped by gender is the integration of the various spheres of their at-risk students' lives. Students in my study frequently reported ways in which their perceived ability or inability to compartmentalize their lives into separate spheres impacted their academic performance activities and grades. The students in the "Collaborative Progress" pattern were highly distracted by concerns of loved ones and integrated their personal lives and college lives in their efforts to "survive" in college and to address personal experiences of inequality through public means. Additionally, the message to "Collaborative Progress" students from communities outside the institution was that multiple elements of their lives could not be maintained - you could not participate in higher education while simultaneously maintaining your race and class identity. On the other hand, the "Resourceful Preparation" students spoke of maintaining and balancing the academic and social aspects of their lives. "Right to Party" students also spoke of separate spheres of academic and social but did not strive to balance the two.

The conceptualizations and perspective of separate, dichotomous spheres in one's life are traditionally a white, middle-class, masculine assumption, whereas women and people of color tend not to easily differentiate their private life from their public life (Collins, 1990; Smith, 1987). Students who perceive their lives as separate spheres of academic, social and personal were exhibiting masculine perceptions and associated behaviors. When I speak of gendered behaviors, these behaviors can be distinct from the gender of the student (Hagemann-White, 1987 in Hall, 1993a). People engaging in behaviors that are traditionally associated with masculinity have higher status than people engaging in traditionally feminine behaviors (Hall, 1993a, Williams, 1995). Kanter (1976) suggests "A tough-minded approach to problems; analytical abilities to abstract and plan; a capacity to set aside personal, emotional considerations in the interests of accomplishing a task," (p. 43) is an assumed and a valued manner in which people should approach tasks.

An implication of students separating or integrating the various elements of their lives is that there is a theoretical assumption posed in the literature and an organizational assumption communicated through program structures that students need to "separate" from their previous communities, in order to make a successful "transition" into a college or university (Tinto, 1987). Some researchers suggest this notion needs to change to include variations by race, gender and class, and suggest that in some instances connections with home communities can provide much needed support in the transition to college (Hood, 1992; Kraft, 1991; Lavine, 1992; Tinto, 1993). The admission that there may be a need for some students to remain connected to their home communities does not acknowledge that the basic assumption that students can, and should, compartmentalize their lives into academic and social, collegiate and personal, is a gendered notion.

The students who did not compartmentalized their lives expended a great deal more energy than students who did "balance" and separate elements of their lives. Evidence of this is the numerous comments by "Collaborative Progress" students about

how "tired" and "exhausted" they were during their first semester at SEU even though they were describing similar academic performance behaviors to "Resourcefull Preparation" students.

Although I spoke informally with students about all aspects of their lives, the EXCEL intervention only structured meetings with students who were having difficulty in the academic realm. Students that missed study hall hours or had low midterm grades were required to meet with an EXCEL staff member. While it is likely that students who were having personal difficulty were also having academic difficulty the focus of the intervention was on the academic sphere. In some respects the personal dimensions of their lives were rendered off limits because admitting personal issues was defined as clinical problem and should be referred to the university counseling center. The shared perception by students that faculty did not care about students personally reinforced the understanding that academic and personal lives are separate and integrating the various aspects of one's life would be an indication of not being a serious or capable student.

Privileging Academic Styles:

Another perception that can be theorized as gendered concerns perspectives on academic styles. Students in my study described a variety of preferred studying styles and styles of interactions with faculty, as well as, their style of approaching academic performance (discussed in the preceding section on integrating spheres). Studying styles included group-social, group-academic community and individual. Faculty interaction approaches included broad interactions with all faculty to facilitate learning, informal friendship interactions with a few faculty perceived to be "fun", interactions focused on academics with a few faculty perceived as caring and/or trustworthy, and avoidance of interactions with faculty perceived to be "intimidating".

The patterns of style preferences for studying, faculty interactions and integrating/separating spheres fell along gender, race, and class lines in that minority students, first generation college students, women and men were concentrated in different patterns. These differences in preferred style could be seen as individualized gender, race and class differences (micro level), rather than group or institutional differences (macro level). However, making a distinction between the two removes the person, perceptions and experiences from the context in which the gendered, raced, and classed phenomenon is experienced and the context in which policies and practices are constructed and maintained (West & Zimmerman, 1995). Gender, race and class variations in perceptions may most appropriately be theorized as indicators and symptoms of broader distinctions shaped by positions in the social structure.

In many cases, gender was exhibited not in the student's "sex", but in the characterization of their behaviors as being traditionally masculine or feminine. Students' preferred style of studying was a gendered behavior. In other words, students tended to prefer and engage in feminine or masculine styles of academic performance activities. Students whose preference is toward collective, collaborative academic performance activities and who desire integration between their personal and private lives are exhibiting feminine styles of academic performance activities (Gilligan, 1982; Baxter Magolda, 1992; Belenky, et al., 1986). "Collaborative Progress" and "Right to Party" students demonstrated and preferred these gendered learning and knowing styles, and these styles that are not easily accommodated by the structure of the EXCEL program

and various aspects of the university. Whereas "Resourceful Preparation" students who preferred individualized studying, and did not desire personal relationships with their faculty, were in congruence with the values and structure of the intervention program strategies.

Since the goals of the EXCEL program are articulated as providing students with academic support, the message communicated by the structure is that studying individually in a structured sterile academic setting is the expected and preferred way to study. Those students who have styles that are outside this model may internalize the message that they are outside the academic system and not a serious or capable student because they do not fall within this orientation. I attempted to alter the format of the study hall and students were told that the six hours in the study hall should only be a portion of the total hours studied. However, there is no denying that students whose studying and learning orientations are accommodated within this structure are privileged while those outside expend more energy and are expected to accommodate the system. The orientations most likely to be accommodated are white, middle class, and masculine perspectives that are primarily a characteristic of the "Resourceful Preparation" pattern.

Similar to Acker's (1990) argument about workers, the abstract "ideal student" has been conceptualized in traditional research and theorizing as a gender-neutral universal figure. While this universal figure may come with different background experiences, the assumptions of the role of a student are universal. To construct a universal figure the individual must be disembodied from the construct thus creating an illusion of a gender free being (Pateman, 1986). The social reality as indicated above is that "student" is constructed from a male identity and therefore represents masculinity. "The abstract, bodiless worker, who occupies the abstract, gender-neutral job, has no sexuality, no emotions, and does not procreate" (Acker, 1990, p. 151). This description is also applicable to the abstract "student". The ideal "student" as perceived by EXCEL students as eluded to through organizational practices is assumed to have characteristics such that they: 1) have the ability to separate academic and social, public and private aspects of their lives, 2) interact comfortably with faculty, which ultimately represents a comfort with power differentials between themselves and faculty, and 3) engage in academic performance activities both individually and in groups as necessitated by university support structures, evaluation procedures, and expectations. These characteristics of the ideal student tend to represent masculine characteristics rather than feminine characteristics (Baxter Magolda, 1992; Belenky, et. al, 1986; Gilligan, 1982).

Students' preferred style of studying and perspectives on faculty roles and interactions were accommodated to varying degrees by the university and namely the EXCEL intervention. As discussed earlier, Tinto's model maintains that "fit" between the student and institutional values and orientations are necessary to facilitate academic and social integration that is associated with student retention and the academic outcome of grades. From this perspective some patterns of student perspectives are more likely to "fit" and be compatible with the institution values and structures, then are others. For example, the "Resourceful Preparation" pattern is the most compatible pattern with the organizational values of emphasizing learning, comfort with interacting with faculty, and independent knowing strategies. The "Collaborative Progress" pattern is less compatible with the organization because students in this pattern desire a personal relationship with their faculty to facilitate learning, prefer a community approach to studying, and seek to

integrate the multiple aspects of their lives. My findings extend the theorizing of student "fit" and congruence with organizational values and structures and incorporates gendered organization theory.

Gendered organizational theory suggests that organizational practices and values are not gender neutral (Acker, 1990; Britton, 1997; Cheng, 1996; Collinson & Hearn, 1994). Instead, it is argued that organizational structures and practices reflect "masculine values such as rationality, hierarchy, and objectivity (Acker, 1990, p. 42), and "appeal to highly masculine values of individualism, aggression, competition, sport, and drinking" (Collinson & Hearn, 1994, p. 4). The gendered nature of organizations serve to maintain dominance and subordination among women and men, thus defining who is "inside" and "outside" institutional values (Acker, 1990; Britton, 1997; Cheng, 1996; Collinson & Hearn, 1994). Acker (1990) refers to this "organizational logic" as gendered because the values and practices of the organization reflect, and privilege masculinity over femininity.

The social structure of colleges and universities have been said to be based on, and value objective knowing, individualism and independence, rule orientation and power (Baxter Magolda, 1994), and the dominant paradigm of higher education represents masculinity (Fried, 1994). In addition, researchers assert that universities were established for men, by men and therefore reflect male values, processes and structures (Fried, 1994; Pearson, et. al., 1989;). Therefore, the compatibility between student perspectives of their academic performance and the values of the organization may be an issue of congruence and compatibility between the gendered nature of patterns of perceptions and the gendered nature of the organization.

This theorized gendered incongruence has several implications. One, since qualities of individualism, objectivity and competition are valued by the organization, those students who also hold these values are rewarded and fully incorporated into the social structure. The options for students with perspectives outside the dominant ideology of the organization are limited. As Cockburn (1991) suggests, students are assumed to conform to a, "white male heterosexual able bodied norm" and "assimilation is the price for acceptance." (p. 13). Students in the "Collaborative Progress" perception pattern began shifting their perspectives on academic performance activities and grades to meet the assumed expectations of the university and EXCEL program. Their standing in the university may be based on the degree to which they can be white and male and not based on them being true to themselves (Acker, 1990; Cockburn, 1991).

Perceived Power Differentials

The final aspect of student perspectives on their academic performance activities and grades earned, that may be theorized as gendered concerns students' perception of power differentials. Students in my study were at various levels cognizant of the power differential between themselves and their faculty and/or academic support personnel. The ways in which they perceived and responded to this power differential were gendered, classed and racialized. As suggested by many feminist (Collins, 1990; Fried, 1994) and critical theorists (Friere, 1970) persons outside the dominant culture may "see" the structure more clearly and/or differently than those within the dominant culture because they are in conflict with it. This is evident with the students in my study. "Resourceful Preparation" pattern of perceptions tended to represent the dominant culture

and the students in this pattern did not articulate how their gender, race or class had influenced their experiences. The "Right to Party" students did articulate this in a limited way. While I did not expect students to report sophisticated observations of gendered, classed and racialized elements of their perceptions and experiences, in contrast to students in the "Collaborative Progress" pattern, the omission was telling. Students in the "Collaborative Progress" pattern reflected on multiple ways in which their social structural positions of gender, race and class impacted their perspectives (all the students in the pattern are women except one male and the students of color disproportionately fall into this pattern).

Students who perceived themselves to be outside the system were more reluctant to interact and negotiate the power structure represented by the faculty. Issues of trust and authenticity tainted "Collaborative Progress" students' perceptions of interactions with persons of a perceived greater power position. Faculty and person's in positions of authority were suspect in the views of the students in the "Collaborative Progress" pattern. These students could sense when a person was "receptive to diversity", and a desire to be known by the faculty also reflects a distrust of the structure which may label a student as outside the system. Intimidation by faculty was a common emotion expressed by students in the "Collaborative Progress" pattern and some of the "Right to Party" students. By contrast, students in the "Resourceful Preparation" pattern "respected" but negotiated the power relationships with their faculty. Perhaps feelings of inclusion in the structure facilitated a perspective on faculty that allowed students in the "Resourceful Preparation" pattern to interact freely with faculty and other authority figures

OVERALL IMPLICATIONS

At-risk, first-year students participating in a structured academic intervention program in my study illuminated various patterns of interrelated perceptions of their academic performance activities and grades earned. This finding demonstrates that students identified as academically at-risk are not uniform but have a diversity of perspectives and experiences that must be taken into account, accommodated and responded to by institutional practices and policies. The diversity of perspectives needs to be taken into consideration, but also, the complexity and sometimes contradictory nature of perceptions needs to be considered when exploring students' academic performance.

Not only is understanding the diversity of at-risk student patterns of perceptions important, but understanding the ways in which perceptions are gendered, racialized, and classed, and consequently rewarded or not rewarded, is also crucial in addressing academic performance of college students. Since there may be some incompatibility between feminine, first generation college student and minority "ways" and the gendered "ways" at SEU and the EXCEL intervention, the focus of change should be on eliminating this incompatibility. Following one of the recommendations for "feminist practice in organizations" put forth by Cockburn (1991), differences in perceptions and activities must be legitimated and we must shift from an ideology of "equality" to the ideology of "parity"; from "women (people of color) joining male (white) culture" to "women (people of color) as a sex having full representation in the organization" (p. 233). Additionally, Fiske's (1988) case study on Hispanic first generation college

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Appendix A

EXCEL Contract

Welcome to EXCEL! Detailed in this contract are requirements of the EXCEL program. Your admission to Southeastern University stipulates that you are required to participate in the EXCEL Program. It is important therefore, that you read and understand the following contract before you sign it.

As a participant in the EXCEL Program, the following conditions will be required:

- * Enroll and participate in UNIV (101) (a one credit course) during the Fall 1997 semester. UNIV (101) will address issues and skills related to academic success (see enclosed flyer for more details).
- * Participate in a university sponsored study hall by completing a minimum of 6 study hours per week.
- * Enroll in no more than 14 semester hours for the Fall semester and grant permission for EXCEL staff to review academic schedules and make adjustments if necessary prior to the beginning of the semester.
- * Complete the College Student Inventory (CSI)
- * Grant permission to the EXCEL staff to speak with your counselor, your professors, your family and other administrators about your academic progress on a need to know basis.
- * Schedule and attend two meetings with your academic advisor, one meeting should be prior to October 3rd, and the second prior to November 14th (verification is required).
- * Attend a mandatory information meeting on Sunday, August, 24th at 7 PM in (XX) Hall, Room 200.

I agree to participate in the EXCEL program during the Fall 1997 semester. I understand that failure to meet any of the terms is justification for my administrative removal from the University and any reimbursement will be in accordance with the policies established by Student Accounts.	
Student Signature	Date
Name (please print)	Social Security Number

Note: The purpose of the EXCEL program is to help monitor your academic progress. Should certain circumstances arise, your contract may be subject to revision in order to provide adequate levels of support.

Please return one copy (white) to the Admissions Office, along with your room deposit, within 30 days of the date of your offer letter. You may retain one copy (yellow) for your records.

Appendix B

Data Collection Schedule

June	Summer New Student Orientation
August 25	First Day of Fall Semester Classes
September 4	Writing Assignment #1 - "Expectations"
September 22 - 26	Interview #1
September 30	"Gender" E-mail
October 13	Midterm Grades Issued
October 16	Midterm Grades "Initial Impressions" E-mail
October 21	Writing Assignment #2 - "Midterm Reflections"
November 18	Writing Assignment #3 - "Semester Reflections" Last day of UNIV 101 Course
December 8 - 12	Interview #2
December 22	Semester Grades Issued
January 5	First Day of Spring Semester
February	Interview #3

Appendix C

UNIVERSITY 101, Fall 1997 Introduction to Higher Education

Instructor:	Dr. XXXX	Peer Instructor:	XXXXX
Office:	Student Center	Phone:	####
Phone:	###	E-mail:	@.edu
E-mail:	@.edu		
Office Hours:	By appointment		

CLASS MEETING: Tuesday, Thursday, 11:00 -11:50 A.M., XXX Hall

TEXT: UNIV 101, Southeastern University, 1997-98:
Getting to Know You and SEU

ADDITIONAL SUPPLIES:

- *Academic Advising Manual
- *Student Handbook
- *Notebook in which to take course notes

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will assist you with the transition into college life and help you make connections with other students, faculty and staff. It will articulate the meaning and value of a comprehensive liberal arts education, teach problem solving and decision making, and promote academic success through readings, presentations, discussions, and experiential learning opportunities. You will learn and practice a variety of specific techniques for learning and self management.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

We are excited for the opportunity to interact with all of you in this course and together with the coordinators of UNIV 101 we have set several objectives. These objectives are to:

- * Grow into a community of learners who are also friends
- * Become involved in the Southeastern University community by participation in the many educational, cultural and co-curricular opportunities and resources available within our community
- * Learn to balance the freedoms and responsibilities that are part of college life
- * Explore a variety of campus issues that affect all students, but especially students in the first year of college, including transitions to college, relationships, drug abuse, and health related issues
- * Improve skills such as writing, study skills, e-mail, using the library, and time management
- * Gain insights into the process of career decisions making
- * Learn about diversity and the value of a diverse college campus and world

HONOR CODE

"I DO HEREBY RESOLVE TO UPHOLD THE HONOR CODE OF SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY BY REFRAINING FROM LYING, FROM STEALING OR UN-AUTHORIZED POSSESSION OF PROPERTY, AND FROM VIOLATING THE STANDARDS OF STUDENT ACADEMIC INTEGRITY." (Student Handbook).

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance, coming to class on time, and active participation in class are reasonable expectations we must have of each other. If this does not occur than our entire class experience will suffer. If class must be missed for an illness or an emergency, you must notify one of the instructors within 24 hours of the missed class session. In addition, it may be required that you speak with one of the instructors to discuss what was missed. Attendance is worth 100 points each day missed up to 3 days, is minus 10 points. Because the class is centered around class participation and involvement, students missing 3 class meetings will receive, at best, a "D" grade for the class. Students missing more than 4 class meetings for any reason will get an F for the course.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS

Experiential Assignments – 10 Points Each

- *Attend a cultural event on campus (ex: a play, an art exhibit, a concert, or a lecture)
- *Attend a Southeastern University sporting event
- *Miscellaneous e-mail responses
- *Interview your faculty members
- *Interview your roommate
- *Meet individually with one of the instructors
- *Interact with SIGI
- *Time Management Log

Graded Writing Assignments – 50 Points Each

- *"Expectations" paper due 9/2
- *"Academics" Reflection paper due 10/21
- *Final Class Project – Web Page due 11/18

In-class Participation – 10 Points Each

- *Learning Styles Worksheet
- *Library tour
- *Come to class prepared for that day's work
- *Prepare and present an in-class, group oral report
- *Attend special topic presentations

Three or more missed/and or late assignments will result in an "F" grade for the class.

GRADING

As you may have already noted, the major emphasis for this class will be active participation. Your level of involvement will be assessed through various means for both in-class and out-of-class assignments. Grades will be awarded on a point system. There are three categories of assignments each worth varying number of points. Since attendance and class participation/assignments are a priority for this course attendance is worth 100 points, note the guidelines above. There are a variety of experiential and in class assignments that you must complete each worth 10 points, see the lists above. The number of assignments may be increased or decreased as agreed upon by the class. Finally, there are three graded assignments each worth a maximum of 50 points. The following is a brief description of our expectations for graded assignments.

- A = Creative and insightful application and analysis of related materials and concepts
- B = Assignment covered and also included evidence of personal thought or involvement in the assignment
- C = Assignment completed. Minimum expectations met.
- D = Assignment turned in but it is not appropriate (i.e. little or no evidence of thought).
- F = Assignment not turned in or turned in late.

Grading Points:

Attendance	100
Experiential Assignments	100 approx.
In-Class Assignments	50 approx.
Writing Assignments	150
	<hr/>
TOTAL	400

Students earning ninety percent of the total points will earn an “A” for the course, 80% a “B”, 70% a “C”, and 60% a “D”. Please refer to the attendance and missed/late assignment section above for additional grading information.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Theme for the Week

“Welcome to SEU”

8/26 Course Introduction
Getting to Know Each Other

8/28 Where Have You Been, Where Are You Now
READ PAGES 125 - 135

ASSIGNMENT: ATTEND CLUB FAIR 8/29 4 – 7 PM

“Building Relationships”

9/2 Roommate Relations
Communication Styles
READ PAGES 109 – 117

DUE: EXPECTATIONS WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1

9/4 Faculty as Resources
READ PAGES 16 - 20

“Life as a Student”

9/9 Making Choices
READ PAGES 145 – 149

Attend “What You Don’t Know Could Hurt You! SEU Talking About Alcohol”, 7:00 PM, Ballroom

9/11 Money, Food, Sleep, and Exercise: Not Enough or Too Much

DUE: E-MAIL RESPONSE TO “GET TO KNOW A PROFESSOR” pages 20 – 21 (cc. the professor)

“Living in Community”

9/16 NO CLASS

9/17 Attend Performance “When a Kiss Is Not Just a Kiss”
8:30 PM, Heth Ballroom
READ PAGES 164 - 172

9/18 She Said, He Said: Why Does It Matter

DUE 9/19: E-MAIL MESSAGE ON GENDER

“Time is of the Essence”

9/23 It’s All a Matter of Time Exercise

9/26 Managing Time

DUE: * BRING ALL SYLLABI TO CLASS, BRING COMPLETED ACADEMIC PLANNER

READ PAGES 26 - 29

“Knowing Your Resources”

9/30 Resource Scavenger Hunt

READ PAGES 93 – 105

10/2 Sharing What You Know

Group Presentations

FALL BREAK

10/7 NO CLASS

“Take a Break”

10/9 Feedback on Class So Far

“Academic Rigor”

10/14 Learning Styles

READ PAGES 30 – 36

10/16 Making the Most of Notes and Tests

READ PAGES 36 – 53

DUE: E-MAIL RESPONSE TO “TALK TO A PROFESSOR” Pages 22 – 23 (cc. the professor)

THIS WEEK COMPLETE TENTATIVE SPRING SCHEDULE

“Real World Choices”

10/21 Major and Career Exploration

READ PAGES 173 - 181

DUE: ACADEMIC REFLECTIONS WRITING ASSIGNMENT 2

10/23 Choices that Can Hurt

READ PAGES 150 – 163

THIS WEEK DO SIGI PROGRAM

“More Academic Stuff ”

10/28 Touring the Library
READ PAGES 74 – 87

10/30 What’s in a Grade?

“Living in Community II”

11/4 Culture of Cultures
READ PAGES 118 – 123

11/6 Cultural Exploration

“Students’ Choice”

11/11 – 11/14 Topics Chosen by Students

“Final Celebration”

11/18 Last Day of UNIV 101 Celebration
DUE: FINAL WEB PAGE UNVEILED

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9/2 Roommate Relations
Communication Styles
READ PAGES 109 – 117
PAIRS LEARN E-MAIL

DUE: EXPECTATIONS WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1

9/4 Faculty as Resources
READ PAGES 16 - 20

“Life as a Student”

9/9 Making Choices
READ PAGES 145 – 149

DUE: E-MAIL RESPONSE TO “LETTER TO MOM”

Attend “What You Don’t Know Could Hurt You! SEU Talking About Alcohol”, 7:00 PM, Ballroom

9/11 Money, Food, Sleep, and Exercise: Not Enough or Too Much

DUE: FACULTY INTERVIEW

“Living in Community”

9/16 Attend Performance “When a Kiss Is Not Just a Kiss”
8:30 PM, Ballroom
READ PAGES 164 - 172

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DUE 9/19: E-mail MESSAGE ON GENDER

“Time is of the Essence”

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Group Presentations

FALL BREAK

10/7 NO CLASS

“Take a Break”

10/9 Feedback on Program So Far

“Academic Rigor”

10/14 Learning Styles

READ PAGES 30 – 36

10/16 Making the Most of Notes and Tests

READ PAGES 36 – 53

DUE: E-MAIL MESSAGE ON FIRST REACTIONS TO MIDTERM GRADES

THIS WEEK COMPLETE TENTATIVE SPRING SCHEDULE DURING STUDY HALL

“Real World Choices”

10/21 Major and Career Exploration

READ PAGES 173 - 181

DUE: ACADEMIC REFLECTIONS WRITING ASSIGNMENT 2

10/23 Choices that Can Hurt

READ PAGES 150 – 163

THIS WEEK DO SIGI PROGRAM IN STUDY HALL

“More Academic Stuff ”

10/28 Touring the Library
READ PAGES 74 – 87

10/30 What’s in a Grade?

“Living in Community II”

11/4 Culture of Cultures
READ PAGES 118 – 123

11/6 Speak Out by Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Student Union

“Students’ Choice”

11/11 – 11/14 Topics Chosen by Students

“Final Celebration”

11/18 Last Day of UNIV 101 Celebration
DUE: FINAL REFLECTIONS WRITING #3 ASSIGNMENT

Appendix E

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY Informed Consent for Participants

Title of Project: FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS' PATTERNS OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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Dr. Carol A. Bailey
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Dr. Elizabeth G. Creamer
Women's Studies
Virginia Tech
Phone 231-8441

I. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH PROJECT

The purpose of this research is to explore how students' patterns of academic performance vary by gender and what might account for these patterns. Participants will be asked to report experiences in each of their courses that they perceive to be associated with their academic performance.

II. PROCEDURES

Participation in this research project requires that you 1) grant permission to access academic transcripts and file notes, 2) grant permission to review written assignments from your orientation course, and 3) participate in three one-on-one interviews. Participants must be at least 18 years old.

Signing this form constitutes informed consent for completing the, access to transcripts and file notes, and written documents as part of orientation course requirements. I am also giving permission to tape record the interviews and create transcripts of conversations.

III. ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The results of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Personal identifiers will be deleted from the transcripts. Your name will not be associated with the content of the interview, written documents, transcript/file information, or on-line conversations. Publications about the findings of this study will mask the identity of the individual and the institution.

The interviews will be tape recorded and a verbatim transcript will be completed with personal identifiers deleted. Transcripts of on-line conversations, written documents and interviews will be identified and coded using participant number only. The transcripts and documents will be read by one or all of the investigators. The tape recordings, transcripts, and written documents will be erased or destroyed after the research is completed.

IV. BENEFITS OF THIS PROJECT

There is no physical hazard to the participants. The benefits of this project are not only information about the patterns of academic performance across a semester but information as to why students fail and succeed academically. This information may lead to more effective programs to assist students with their academic success.

V. COMPENSATION

Since you are required to complete 6 study hall hours per week as indicated in your contract, participating in this project shall release you from some study hall hours. For each hour you participate in the study, you will get credit for one study hall hour. For example, when you participate in an interview, you will be credited with one study hall hour. There is no monetary compensation for participation in this project.

VI. FREEDOM TO WITHDRAW

You are free to withdraw from this study at any time. You may request that the tape recorder be turned off at any time or that specific documents not be reviewed.

VII. APPROVAL OF RESEARCH

This research project has been approved, as required by the Institutional Review Board for projects involving human subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institution and State University and Radford University.

VIII. PARTICIPANTS PERMISSION

I have read and understood the informed consent and conditions of the research project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this study. I have made note of any special requests I have for handling the data. If I participate, I may withdraw at any time. I can keep this form for future reference as needed.

IX. CONTACT INFORMATION

Should I have any questions about this research or its contact, I will contact

Sharon Paterson McGuire	(540) 231-6878 or (540) 831-5041
Elizabeth G. Creamer	(540) 231-6630
Carol Bailey	(540) 231-6878
H.T. Hurd	(540) 231-5281

Chair, Virginia Tech. IRB Research Division

First Year Student's Academic Performance

I have read and understood the informed consent and conditions of the research project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this study. I have made note of any special requests I have for handling the data.

Signature

Local Phone

Name (Print)

Date

Note any individual requests about data handling below:

(This signature page kept on file by Sharon P. McGuire, the principle investigator)

Appendix F

UNIV 101 Writing Assignment Instructions

Writing Assignment #1, Due Week Two:

In this writing assignment please discuss all your thoughts about coming to south Eastern University. Before arriving on campus this week what did you think college life at SEU would be like. Specifically talk about all aspects of college such as your classes and professors, social life, relationships with family, friends new and old etc. How has your perspective on college changed now that you are in school?

Written Assignment #2: Due Week 9 after receiving midterm grades

Now that you have received your midterm grades reflect on the following:
Why did you earn the midterm grades you did?
What will you do the second half of the semester in regard to your academic performance?

Written Assignment # 3: Due Week 13, The last day of UNIV 101

What have been the most significant experience you have had this semester (does not have to be academic)? How has this experience effected you, please be specific. This section should be one page long.

Thinking back over the semester in UNIV 101, please give us your thoughts about this course. We are purposely leaving this vague because we want to hear what matters to you. This section should be one page long.

Appendix G

E-Mail Correspondence

E-mail Assignment: Due Week 4 after discussion of diversity in community:

How do you think being a women or man has shaped your academic experiences?

E-mail Assignment: Due immediately after receiving midterm grades (week 8)

Complete the sentence "When I opened my midterm grades I felt....." This entry should be at least one computer screen long.

Miscellaneous E-mail:

Students corresponded with me via E-mail to report problems with assignments or in their personal life and to ask questions regarding class or university policy and resources.

Appendix I

Interview Protocol

Interview One, Week Five: Conducted in person, one-on-one

Introductory Statement to begin conversations about academic performance:

When people think of academic performance they often think of grades in courses and grades on assignments. When I refer to academic performance I am thinking about all the different things that go into grades. For instance time studying, meeting with faculty, study groups, thinking about class assignments are all part of academic performance.

Q1. Tell me about your experiences thus far in the semester. I am particularly interested in any interactions, conversations, correspondence, etc. you have had that you think have impacted your academic performance. These interactions/conversations can be with other students, friends in other places, family members, faculty etc.

Prompt for:

Details of interactions ie. who said what

Context of interaction ie. location, method (e-mail, phone, in person)

Feelings associated with interactions

Comments on faculty, family and friends

Question Two:

So far this semester you have earned grades on different assignments in your classes, what do you think of those grades? What do those grades reflect?

Prompt for:

What accounts for the grades

What do the grades mean to them

What have other people (ie. family, friends, faculty) said about their grades

What did they think other's comments about their academic performance

Follow up on:

First writing assignment on expectations

Anything they feel is important that they would like to talk about in relation to their performance

Interview Two, Week 16: Conducted in person, one-on-one

Q1: *Now that you have received your midterm grades and had an opportunity to reflect on your academic performance in a writing assignment and e-mail, and in the first interview, is there anything you would like to add or reiterate? Has anything changed since your last reports?*

Prompt for:

What if anything has changed about their performance?

Follow up on:

Writing assignment on midterm grades

Experiences student feels has impacted experience but had not yet mentioned

Clarify issues raised in class, e-mail correspondents, and general conversations

Q2: *We have discussed this some in class but I would like you to discuss how you feel being female/male has effected you. I not necessarily suggesting discrimination but how being male/female has shaped your perspective.*

Probe for:

Gender impacts within their family, with friends and faculty, etc.

Intersections of race, class (first generation college student), and gender

Interview Three, Week 5 of Spring Semester: Conducted in person or over the phone, one-on-one

Q1: *Now that your first semester of college is over, what do you think accounts for you academic performance?*

Q2: *When you opened your final grades what did you think? What surprised you about your grades?*

Q3: *What if anything are you doing differently this semester?*

Prompt for:

Interactions at end of semester that impacted performance

Other's comments about grades

Other experiences that participant feels had impact on academic performance

Appendix H

Contact Summary Form
Academic Performance

Name of Student: _____

Date(s) of contact: _____

Today's Date: _____

What were the main issues or themes that struck me in this contact?

What Information did I get (not get) from this contact?

What struck me as interesting, important, etc. about this contact?

What follow questions do I have for the next contact?

Coding thoughts...

What should I improve on the next contact?

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EDUCATION

- Ph.D. Sociology, Specialization: Inequality, Work/Occupations, Higher Education.
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, December 1998.
Dissertation: At-Risk, First-Year Students' Patterns of Perceptions of Their Academic Performance Activities and Grades Earned.
- M.S. Higher Education/College Student Personnel, Southern Illinois University, 1988.
Thesis: Relationship Between Student Involvement in Cocurricular Activities and Grade Point Average, Class Standing, and Satisfaction at Southern Illinois University
- B.S. Sociology, Minor: Communications, Oregon State University, 1986.

RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE

- RETENTION PROGRAMS COORDINATOR, Radford University, Radford, VA. July 1996 - May 1998.
- ACADEMIC ADVISOR, Interdisciplinary Studies, Virginia Tech, August 1997 - May 1998.
- DIRECTOR, Student Support Services, Radford University, Radford, VA. July 1993 - December 1993.
- ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, University Center, Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, WA. September 1991 - May 1993.
- WOMEN'S CENTER DIRECTOR, Women's Studies, Pacific Lutheran University, September 1990 - February 1992.
- ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR STUDENT ACTIVITIES, Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, WA. 1990 - 1991.
- STUDENT ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR - 1988 - 1990.
- INTERIM ASSISTANT UNIVERSITY PROGRAMMING COORDINATOR/ GRADUATE ADVISOR - Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL. Aug 1987 - May 1988

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching strategies include lectures, simulated experiences, service learning, on-line activities, and group experiences.

Social Inequality, Instructor, Sociology, Radford University, Fall 1998.

Academic Strategies/Student Transitions Course, Instructor, Virginia Tech, Spring 1997.

New Student Transition Course, UNIV 100, Radford University, Fall, 1996 and 1997.

Social Problems, Instructor, Sociology, Virginia Tech, Spring 1997.

Introduction to Women's Studies, Instructor, Virginia Tech, Spring 1996.

Gender Relations, Instructor, Sociology, Virginia Tech, Summer 1995.

Minority Group Relations, Instructor, Sociology, Radford University, Spring 1995, Virginia Tech, Summer 1996.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS AND INTERNSHIPS

Academic Advisor/Research Assistant, Interdisciplinary Studies/Women's Studies, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA August 1997 – May 1998.

Graduate Teaching/Research Assistant, Sociology, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA, August 1996 – May 1997.

Graduate Teaching/Research Assistant, Liberal Arts and Sciences/Women's Studies, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA, August 1994 - May 1996.

Intern, Academic Advising, College of Business and Administration, Southern Illinois University. August 1987 - May 1988.

Intern, New Student Orientation, Office of Student Development, Southern Illinois University. Summer 1987.

Intern, Office of Student Services, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR. September 1985 - June 1986.

PRESENTATIONS

"Gendered Academic Interventions", Refereed Roundtable Paper, American Sociological Association, 1998

"Advancing Women College Students: Gendered interventions for academically at-risk students", Refereed Paper, National Association of Women Educators National Conference, 1998

"Structured Interventions for Academically At-risk Students: An experience shaped by gender, Concurrent Session, Freshmen Year Experience, National Conference, 1998.

PRESENTATIONS (continued)

"Preparing for Faculty Careers: A Gendered Experience", Paper, Southern Sociological Society, 1996.

"Women in Academe: Still Marginal Research in Higher Education Journals", Refereed Roundtable, Midwestern Sociological Society, 1996.

"Elements of Doctoral Programs that Prepare Women for Faculty Success", Refereed Concurrent Session, American College Personnel Association, 1996.

Four Cultures (Intercultural Communication Exercise) Group Facilitator, 1988 - present.

Star Power (Economic Stratification/Power Exercise) Group Facilitator, 1988 - present.

Passports (Emerging Leader/Skill Development Seminar), Instructor, 1992 – 1993.

Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers, National Association of Campus Activities Conference, 1989 - 1990.

Eating Disorders, Association of College Unions - International Region 14 conference, 1990.

How to Become a Successful Student, Southern Illinois University Orientation, 1987.

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

"Applying the Cumulative Advantage Perspective to Scholarly Writers in the Field of Higher Education", Co-authored with E.G. Creamer, The Review of Higher Education, 1998, 22, 1, 73 - 82.

Perceived Contributions University has had on the Multicultural Development of Students Who Are First Generation College Students, Ethnic Minorities or from Rural Hometowns, 1994.

Affects of Positive Outcomes and Family Structure on Adult Four-Year College Enrollment, 1994.

Impact of New Student Orientation on Freshmen and Transfer Students' Transition to College at Pacific Lutheran University, 1992 - 1993.

Cutting Red Tape, Editor, 1988.

Relationship Between Student Involvement in Cocurricular Activities and Grade Point Average, Class Standing, and Satisfaction at Southern Illinois University, Masters Thesis.

PROFESSIONAL AND CIVIC ACTIVITIES

Co-Coordinator of Awards, 75th Anniversary of the Admittance of Women to Virginia Tech Celebration Committee, 1996
New River Valley Women's Resource Center Shelter/Crisis Hotline Volunteer and "Rape Companion", 1993 - present
Graduate Student Faculty Representative, Sociology, Virginia Tech, 1994 - 1995
Service Learning Student Council, Virginia Tech. 1994 - 1995
ADA Task Force, Pacific Lutheran University, 1992 - 1993
Committee on Enhancing PLU Environment for Students of Color, 1990 - 1991
Conference Chairperson, Association of College Unions - International Region 14, 1989 - 1990
Co-Chairperson, University Professional Women, Pacific Lutheran University, 1989 - 1991
AIDS Task Force, Pacific Lutheran University, 1989 - 1990
Community Service/Volunteer Center Grant Committee, Pacific Lutheran University, 1989 - 1990
Program Coordinator, Association of College Unions - International Region 9, 1987 -1988

ORGANIZATIONS AND AWARDS

Outstanding Graduate Research Award, National Association of Women Educators 1998
American College Personnel Association
American Sociological Association
Sociologists for Women in Society
Southern Sociological Society
National Association of Women Educators
New River Valley Women's Resource Center, Crises Hotline Volunteer
Outstanding Young Women of America, 1988
Sphinx Honorary, Southern Illinois University, 1988

REFERENCES

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