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UNDERSTANDING THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE OF TRADITIONAL-AGED,
COLLEGE-READY STUDENTS AT A PRIVATE, NEW ENGLAND LIBERAL ARTS
COLLEGE

A DISSERTATION
submitted by
PATRICK A. FLYNN

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

LESLEY UNIVERSITY
Date of Conferral, November 25, 2019

UNDERSTANDING THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE OF TRADITIONAL-AGED,
COLLEGE-READY STUDENTS AT A PRIVATE, NEW ENGLAND LIBERAL ARTS
COLLEGE

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Graduate School of Education
Lesley University

Ph.D. Educational Studies
Adult Learning and Development Specialization

*In the judgement of the following signatories, this Dissertation meets the academic standards
that have been established for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.*

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Dedication

I am one of those educators who never forgets a face and rarely remembers a name. I engaged in this research surrounded by the faces of high school students who returned home from college early; of college peers who seemed to have their lives much better ordered than mine ever felt; of professors who supported me through a difficult transition from high school to college; and of colleagues in the high schools where I have served who worked fearlessly to push their students to understand themselves better before making the leap to college. However, as deserving as all of them are of my admiration and respect, I have from the start dedicated my work studying the first-year experience to my two children. I know that what I have learned through the dissertation process will help them shift their lives from home to away.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful for the courage and openness shown by the five men who allowed me into their lives as they experienced one of the most disorienting and frustrating, but also exhilarating and affirming, events in the life span. I am inspired by the thoughtfulness and accomplishments of Chad, Kurt, Scott, Gary, and Michael.

Jo Ann Gammel saved me. She picked me up in September 2018 after a long, dry stretch of writer's block and frustration with the dissertation process. Her tireless and deeply insightful review of everything I wrote or otherwise expressed gave me a sense of security and a light for my path. I hope to offer as much of myself to a student in the future as she offered to me.

Amy Rutstein-Riley started the Ph.D journey with me in 2014. She served as my conscience when I felt like pulling back rather than moving forward, or when I lost sight of the reasons I had begun the research in the first place. I am grateful for her wisdom and her compassion.

Jennifer Tanner and Lisa Ijiri were patient, creative, and rigorous in their critique of my work. Their guidance led me to several significant changes in my study design and literature review, which resulted inevitably in a more accomplished final paper.

Cari Medd, the principal at Poland Regional High School where I have had the honor of working the last eight years, supported my writing and thinking throughout the entire process. The staff at PRHS and the district administration encouraged me all the way to the finish line.

Sue and Jim Stockard and Gene and Meredith Thompson graciously housed me during my residencies, conferences, and meetings in Cambridge, MA. I am grateful for their support and encouragement.

That just leaves my partner, Rachel. Five years is a long, long time when you're also raising two children, establishing a new home a thousand miles from the old one, rehabbing a house, and planning a family's future. She found space and time in the corners of our life and offered them to me so I could pursue a dream. She made it possible for me to spend six weeks and a year of Sundays away from the boundless energy of home. If there are words to express my gratitude and love, I haven't found them yet.

Abstract

The current study's research problem concerns the forty-year trend of college-ready, traditional-aged students stopping out of undergraduate programs across the United States. While literature concerning gender theory, the college transition, emerging adulthood, and college student development provide a foundation for considering the problem, there have been very few studies conducted concerning the FYE of this study's participants, a set of five white cisgender males. Understanding their FYE at a substantive level will lead to further research and hopefully open pathways to increasing retention.

The present study collected significant data concerning the daily experience of five students with the hope of answering three research questions: 1) How do college-ready, traditional-aged male students experience the first year of postsecondary education at a small liberal arts college in Maine? 2) How can we understand the first-year experience of college-ready, traditional-aged male students at a small liberal arts college in Maine through the lens of Tanner's theory of recentering? and 3) What is the impact of campus support services on the experience of college-ready, traditional-aged male students in their first year at a small liberal arts college in Maine?

The analysis was conducted using grounded theory and case study. The study's conclusion is that students in transition to college who exhibit social resilience; a capacity for self-reflection; a willingness to reset priorities; and who set a tangible goal that extends beyond the first-year experience are more likely to persist beyond the first year.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Problem Statement

Currently, a third of students enrolled in a four-year postsecondary institution will not graduate (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). The attrition rate raises a number of questions and has made student retention a centerpiece of most institutions. Anecdotally, when I talk with friends and coworkers about my research interest, they inevitably tell stories about someone they know who has stopped out, who knows someone who has stopped out, or who knows the parents of someone who has stopped out. With very few exceptions, the student is male. There is an issue developing in the postsecondary community surrounding male students' lack of success and there is room to explore the field. Generating theory from the substantive area of the male first-year college experience (FYE) will be more valid and authentic than attempting to understand the FYE of specifically white, privileged students (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). My research questions therefore focus on male students and address differences as they arise.

Research Questions

1. How do college-ready, traditional-aged male students experience the first year of postsecondary education at a small liberal arts college in Maine?
2. How can we understand the first-year experience of college-ready, traditional-aged male students at a small liberal arts college in Maine through the lens of Tanner's theory of recentering?
3. What is the impact of campus support services on the experience of college-ready, traditional-aged male students in their first year at a small liberal arts college in Maine?

Context and Background

Undergraduate enrollment in the United States increased steadily from the 1970s to 2012 (Renn & Reason, 2013). Female enrollment surpassed male in 1979 and the gap has increased virtually every year since then (Renn & Reason, 2013). However, overall undergraduate enrollment in United States post-secondary institutions has decreased every year from 2013-2018, most likely due to the economic recovery and the high rate of indebtedness awaiting most potential college students. Demographic shifts have also impacted enrollment; high school enrollment will remain largely flat for the next few years and then gradually decline (Nadworny, 2018). As enrollment declines, retaining students who have already matriculated becomes more urgent for US colleges and universities.

Understanding the FYE is one step on the path toward increasing student retention. Retention benefits post-secondary institutions in at least three ways: 1) students prepare themselves for a more rewarding life after college; 2) institutions earn more money through tuition and fees; and 3) society benefits from the skills, talents, and knowledge imparted to students in pursuit of their degrees (Tierney, 1992; Renn & Reason, 2013). Many male students arrive on campus with deficits in both academic performance and social capital compared to their female peers (Riegle-Crumb, 2010).

My belief that there are no easy answers to why some students thrive in their FYE but others spend their time reconsidering their decision to enroll comes from personal experience and professional observation, but also from Dewey's logic: When faced with the dislocation caused by a sudden transition, "[t]he easy thing is to seize upon something in the nature of the child, or upon something in the developed consciousness of the adult, and insist upon *that* as the key to the whole problem. When this happens a really serious problem--that of interaction--is

transformed into an unreal, and hence insoluble, theoretic problem” (Dewey, 1902/1956, p. 4).

There can be no single cause or condition that characterizes a student’s FYE: not financial, not first-generation status, and not academic readiness. Rather, there’s a matrix of interconnected conditions that create the FYE and lead to the decision to persist, transfer, or stop out.

Significance and Rationale

“While the extant literature on college adjustment is extensive, much of it does not focus exclusively on first year students,” indicating that “a more comprehensive exploration of college adjustment is warranted” (Kahn, et al., 2019, p. 33). One in three first year undergraduate college students do not return to their institution for a second year (Kahn, et al., 2019). Since Perry (1968/1999) offered broad sociological theory based on observation of primarily white, male college students, scholarship has reached out to other populations to determine the quality and character of their experience of postsecondary education. Rightly so, Perry’s findings and the findings of similar early studies (Jones & Stewart, 2016) should not be assumed to apply to students who live outside the protection of white male privilege. A wealth of studies have been conducted concerning female students; students of color; first-generation students; and low-SES students. Researchers are currently studying at an increasing rate the experiences of LGBTQ, transgender, older, and returning students. However, there has been little attention paid to dominant or majoritized populations such as the traditional-aged, male, college-ready first-year population (Jones & Stewart, 2016).

There may be resistance to the proposition that studying male, college-ready students will contribute substantively to the conversation about the first-year experience. For many, “college-ready” is a stand-in for “white” and “privileged.” Middle class white men are both invisible (the generic person) and oblivious to their own power, since they are not triggered to think about race

or gender as they move through the world the same way as non-white males. There is a need for research on masculinity, not the “accomplishments” of cultures commonly attributed to men, but on how masculinity affects the lives of average, everyday men (Kimmell, 2011, pp. 6-7; c.f. Jones & McEwan, 2000). The very act of studying white males as being at risk of stopping out suggests that there is some element of victimhood or poverty (spiritual, social, economic) inherent in being male. As one highly-educated and sensitive, progressive and compassionate individual remarked to me recently, privileged males who stop out have squandered their considerable social capital and are to blame for their lack of success. How can someone who was not intent on failure otherwise manage to ride off the rails of the express train to the upper middle class? How can there be reasons behind that failure that exist outside the motivation and maturity of the individual male, privileged student?

Purpose of Study

The research questions ask what those reasons are (see p. 1). They do not assume reasons or even rationales for why male students are stopping out. They do not acknowledge a monolithic FYE for traditional-aged, college-ready male students. They seek to discover the experiences as a way of beginning a conversation about male persistence. By starting with the population most of society considers least vulnerable, the study contributes a new lens through which to view the retention issue. Members of the population in this study have been defined by their difference from other groups (women, low-SES, racial and ethnic minority, LGBTQ, transgender, and first-generation students). The vast majority of the scholarship of the last forty years has been focused on individuals who are *not* like the participants in this study. The current study attempts to discover characteristics on their own terms through analysis of the lived experience.

Assumptions and Biases

I came to the study with a set of biases about emerging adults in the transition to college that I recognize and acknowledge as part of my own background. My personal history includes an uncomfortable transition from high school to college that led me to transfer to a different institution in another region of the United States. Based on my parents' expectations and on my own belief in the value of a college education, I come to the study presuming that students who go to college have always wanted to do so. Before choosing the sample, I assumed that students in the sample talked with family members, teachers, and counselors about their desire to attend a postsecondary institution and earn a degree. I also assumed the students in the sample had made college a goal since they were young and were entering college with a clear idea of who they were and what they wanted to accomplish. Finally, I took it for granted that the students in my sample had support at home and in the community for their decision to attend college and that all those people believed they would succeed in their postsecondary endeavors.

I am fully aware that these biases and assumptions have found their way into my pilot study research design, sample selection, methods implementation, and data analysis. I am also aware of the potential impact they may have had on any conclusions or recommendations that emerged from the study. There is a risk that my predisposition toward enrolling in a residential college after high school, as well as my own troubled experience in my first year of college, may have framed my conclusions concerning the validity of each participant's preparation for college or the seriousness of their commitment.

As a constructivist who believes that individuals create their own reality through their personal responses to their environment (Patton, 2015, pp. 122-123), I am attracted to grounded theory's capacity for identifying the meaning individuals make through their perception of

themselves in the world. For the population under consideration, the opportunity to reflect upon their personal experience in a largely unstructured setting benefited both the participant and the research by providing an outpouring of data.

Methodological Approach: Case Study, Narrative Method, and Grounded Theory

I have chosen methods that complement each other, and have not “adhered slavishly” to the confines of any one of them (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014, p. 9). There is nothing haphazard about my methodology: case study, narrative methodology, and grounded theory work together in the study to advance an understanding of how my five participants experienced their first year of post-secondary school. Throughout data collection and analysis, I wrote memos documenting my experience of the data as they emerged; questioning the methods I had chosen; formulating trial responses to the research questions; processing new reading and research; and acknowledging my biases, assumptions, and ill-formed judgments as they arose (Yin, 2018).

Case Study

The case study method is appropriate when conducting research over time concerning experience within a particular setting, set of conditions, or program (Cresswell, 2013).

“Qualitative case study is highly personal research. Persons studied are studied in depth....The quality and utility of the research is not based on its reproducibility but on whether or not the meanings generated, by the researcher or the reader, are valued” (Stake, 1995, p. 135). The subjects of study in the case should be observed in their “ordinary activities and places” (Stake, 1995, p. 134). All case study is subjective, “relying heavily on our previous experience and our sense of worth of things....Our observations cannot help but be interpretive, and our descriptive report is laced with and followed by interpretation” (Stake, 1995, p. 134). I treat each of the

participants in my study as a discrete case (i.e. I examined five cases) and compared data to arrive at an understanding of the FYE (RQ 1).

Narrative Method

The key to narrative methodology “is the use of stories as data, and more specifically, first-person accounts of experience told in story form having a beginning, middle, and end” (Merriam, 2009, p. 32). The purpose of narrative inquiry is to make sense of another’s person’s life as lived, creating a new sense of “meaning and significance with respect to the research topic” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 42). Narrative inquiry is *not* intended to or suited for “yield[ing] a set of knowledge claims that might incrementally add to knowledge in the field” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 42). Narrative allows the researcher the opportunity to “restory” data provided by participants, which “is the process of reorganizing the stories into some general type of framework...[which] may consist of...rewriting the stories to place them within a chronological sequence” (Cresswell, 2013, p. 74). By restorying my participants’ FYE, I am providing readers with the opportunity to “imagine their own uses and applications” of the theory that emerges from my data (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 42).

Grounded Theory

My interpretation of the data was guided by Charmaz (2014) and her method of constructivist grounded theory. A researcher using grounded theory gathers rich data, reviews that data again and again, writes memos to aid analysis and become familiar with the data, and pursues more data when theorizing in order to fill the gaps in the major categories (Charmaz, 2014). The constructivist grounded theorist acknowledges that the act of research influences the participant’s perception of experience and that the researcher actively shapes both data and the analysis of data (Charmaz, 2010, p. 360). At the start of the study, I anticipated that my

participants would experience their first year of college as a series of social interactions, exchange of views, and incomplete understandings, all in an attempt to redefine themselves within the new context, both socially and academically.

I decided to use grounded theory for this particular research project because my question, “How do college-ready, traditional-aged, male students experience the first year of postsecondary education at a four-year college or university?”, addresses a social process (persisting through the first year of postsecondary education) subjectively experienced by each participant. Grounded theory, developed as it is from the data collected and without reference to a set of hypotheses or predictions, “renders quite well the reality of the social interaction and its structural context” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 32). A theory grounded in the data I collected becomes part of a larger discussion concerning the first-year experience, the transition to college from high school, retention, and gender inequality in undergraduate higher education.

Study Setting: Saint Joseph’s College, Standish, Maine

Saint Joseph’s College is a private, Catholic, primarily residential, coeducational liberal arts college in Standish, Maine. It was founded in 1912 by the Sisters of Mercy and is located on 474 acres on Sebago Lake, 40 minutes by car from Portland and 2 hours from Boston. The 2017-2018 residential student ratio was 64% female to 36% male out of a total population of 1,533. Tuition in 2017-2018 was \$35,650 and room and board cost \$13,680. The college is accredited under the auspices of the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) and runs academic programs in the liberal arts, sciences, education, nursing, and business.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 1, Introduction to the Study, introduces the problem statement, research questions, context and background, assumptions and biases, methodological approach, and the study's setting. Chapter 2, Literature Review, reviews the literature pertaining to gender theory, college student development, emerging adulthood, recentering, personality development during the First-Year Experience, and the impact of campus services on the First-Year Experience. In Chapter 3, Methodology, I detail the study design, data collection and analysis, and the methods selected for the study. Chapter 4, Study Setting and Participant Profiles, introduces the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data for Saint Joseph's College, 2017-2018 and includes narrative profiles of each participant. In Chapter 5, Findings, I present the NVivo nodes and themes that emerged from the data, a set of summaries of participant data organized by theme, and detailed NSSE data for Saint Joseph's College, 2017-2018. Finally, in Chapter 6, Analysis and Conclusions, I review the study's methods, conduct data analysis, develop a theory based on the participants' FYE, draw conclusions, and explore implications for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

To begin to understand the problem of college attrition in the first year, I have prepared the following integrative literature review. The review synthesizes relevant literature concerning the transition of emerging adults from high school to college through the first year of postsecondary education. This type of literature review is especially suited to both established and nascent research topics (Wright & Sandlin, 2009). To date, a significant amount of research has been conducted concerning the first year college experience (Renn & Reason, 2013), but very little has been concerned with the particular context at the center of this study's research question: the first-year experience (FYE) of male, college-ready, traditional-aged students. The research questions at issue are:

1. How do college-ready, traditional-aged male students experience the first year of postsecondary education at a small liberal arts college in Maine?
2. How can we understand the first-year experience of college-ready, traditional-aged male students at a small liberal arts college in Maine through the lens of Tanner's theory of recentering?
3. What is the impact of campus support services on the experience of college-ready, traditional-aged male students in their first year at a small liberal arts college in Maine?

Definition of Key Terms

For purposes of this study, I use the following definitions of key terms (listed alphabetically):

College-ready: "readiness for success in credit-bearing college courses" (State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, 2016); possessing adequate self-esteem, self-confidence, and

ability to make friends to transition from high school to college (Boulter, 2002; Fitzgerald, 1993).

Emerging adulthood: Stage in the lifespan corresponding roughly to ages 18-25 in which individuals experience relative independence from social roles and normative expectations (Arnett, 2000)

FYE: First-year experience of college students

Identity consolidation: “harmonizing the component parts of personality” (Blos, 1962, p. 149; Tanner, 2006); “a synthesized and agentic sense of self that can facilitate effective decision making and can support creating a life course without much external help” (Schwartz, 30)

Identity formation: individualizing one’s identity through the formation of working and personal relationships, gaining educational credentials and/or employment experience, and planning for the future (Schwartz, et al., 2005); exploration beginning in late adolescence that leads to identifying personal values and vocational goals (Nelson & Barry, 2005, p. 245)

Identity synthesis: “internal sense of coherence that reflects a synthesis of individuals’ identities across context and time” (Azmitia, et al., 2013, pp. 745-746)

Recentering: adapting life skills developed in adolescence to a new life context (Tanner, 2006)

Social-emotional skills:

1. Self-awareness: the ability to identify and recognise one’s own emotions, thoughts, and their influences on behaviour.
2. Self-management: the ability to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts and behaviors effectively, including stress management, impulse control, motivating oneself, and working towards achieving personal and academic goals.

3. Social awareness: the ability to take the perspective of others – including those who come from a different background and culture, to empathize with others, understand social and ethical norms, and to recognize resources and supports in family, school and community.

4. Relationship skills: the tools to form and maintain positive and healthy relationships, communicate clearly, listen actively, cooperate, negotiate constructively during conflict, and to offer and seek help when needed.

5. Responsible decision-making skills: the ability to make constructive and respectful choices about their own behavior and social interactions, taking into account safety concerns, ethical standards, social and behavioral norms, consequences, and the well-being of self and others (CASEL, 2013).

Spirituality: “an awareness and honoring of wholeness and the interconnectedness of all things through the mystery of...[a] higher power” (Tisdell, 2003, p. 28)

Traditional-aged: Students who enter college at the age of 18 or 19

Transition: a shift from one context to another that requires the individual to make sense of the new environment and establish a conceptual framework within which new events can be understood (Buchman, 1998)

Context for the Research

The “small” liberal arts college that serves as the site for the research had an undergraduate enrollment in the 2017-2018 academic year of approximately 1,000 students. An assumption underlying the research, and reflected in my own attitude toward adult development, is that post-secondary education is both desirable and beneficial as an experience for emerging adults. The population at the heart of the current study consists of students who value education,

anticipated college, and seek to better their chances of happiness and success as adults through the post-secondary experience.

The three research questions place the study squarely into literature concerning gender theory, the college transition, emerging adulthood, and college student development. Gender theory questions arise due to the homogeneous nature of the sample and is addressed first, but the study is not primarily interested in exploring gender.

There is significant literature on the college transition, but very little research appears to have been published on the first-year, traditional-aged male experience (Ide, et al., 2018; Kahn, et al., 2019). Baker & Siryk's (1989) Student Adjustment to College Questionnaire (SACQ) measures the adjustment to college for freshmen, which appears infrequently in published research (Estrada, 2006; Johnson, 2010; Lapsley, 2002; Meehan, 2003; Melendez, 2010), and usually for very different populations. The reliability of the questionnaire for measuring adaptation for first-year students has been recently confirmed (Clinciu, 2013). Results from the SACQ indicate that transition is primarily a psychological event focused on "stress, emotional adjustment, goal commitment, and a sense of institutional attachment" (Renn & Reason, 2013, p. 66). I argue later in this chapter and in Chapter 5 that this definition ignores the social and psychological components of transitioning to college, both of which require attention when assessing the FYE of traditional-aged students.

Many factors impact the transition from high school to college. Traditionally, academic preparation has been viewed as one of the most predictive factors (Renn & Reason, 2013, p. 64). Family context and high school experience (Tinto, 2006) are also commonly cited factors. Students who have parents or siblings who have attended college are more likely to persist themselves (Tinto, 2006), as are white students and students from upper middle class

backgrounds (Tierney, 1992). The purpose of this study is to explore the experience of students once they cross the threshold of college and wind their way through the first year.

The field of emerging adulthood has developed along several lines since Arnett (2000) coined the term and identified the stage in the lifespan. Considerable research has been devoted to determining the universality of emerging adulthood across cultures and socio-economic groups. Arnett's basic findings have been tested and there is now consensus that economically and technologically advanced societies have delayed decisions associated with adulthood, which creates the opportunity for people 18-25 (Arnett, 2000; Hinton & Meyer, 2014), or even 18-30 (Tanner, 2007), to experiment with the major components of adult life before committing to a specific lifestyle. Emerging adults on average take more personal risks, have more intimate relationships, explore a variety of careers, and move from place to place at a higher rate than either adolescents or adults. This is an age of identity consolidation (Tanner, 2006) rather than formation.

The youngest emerging adults, those who are leaving high school and transitioning to college or a career, have a particular task in front of them as they separate from the community they experienced through the age of 18. Tanner (2006) calls this task "recentering." Transitioning to college, in particular, "disrupts existing social support networks that are essential to buffering stressful life events" (Renn & Reason, 2013, p. 66; c.f. Mattanah, et al., 2011). Recentering also requires emerging adults to reconsider and reposition themselves regarding the relationships they depended upon before leaving home. Successful recentering helps individuals consolidate their identities and build the confidence and competence they need to transition to adulthood (Tanner, et al., 2008).

General Areas of Relevant Research

Gender Theory

Gender identity forms in response to familial and social influences (Messerschmidt, 2016; West & Zimmerman, 1987). The drive to maintain the identity promoted by early influences affects the development of self-image (Bernard, P., et al., 2018; Francis & Paechter, 2015; Martin, 1998; Quayle, et al., 2018), identification of strengths and weaknesses (McDermott, et al., 2018; West & Zimmerman, 1987), the exercise of social power (Freeman, 1970; Hoff, et al., 2018; MacKinnon, 1982), definition of acceptable risks (Krupa, 2018), the viability of interpersonal relationships (Buss, 2000; Crispin, 2017), and the capacity to envision multiple, acceptable futures (Lee & Lee, 2018; Risman, 2004). Gender identity limits social and economic opportunity by sanctioning the assumption of some professional positions in society over others (Lee & Lee, 2018; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Biological gender assignment at birth begins the process of gender identification, but only because socialization proceeds from biology (Freeman, 1970; Lorber, 1993; West & Zimmerman, 1987). A parent who sees their child's genitalia for the first time maps a course through life for that child (Messerschmidt, 2016). As a result of the social construction of gender, expectations flow from the moment genitalia become apparent (Davis, 2017; Francis & Paechter, 2015; Risman, 2004; West & Zimmerman, 1987). The child then navigates the process of identity-formation by the lights of familial and community expectations (Brown, 1991; West & Zimmerman, 1987) and the low hum of the child's own developing interior self, often driven by conflict between what the child feels and what they see around them (Erikson, 1964; Gilligan, 1982; Kegan, 1982; Piaget, 1968).

The first year of college tests the resilience of the gender identity shaped in high school (Kimmell, 2011; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Individuals who have matched their exterior gender presentation to their interior self-perception, i.e. who feel little conflict between their social and emotional identities, have an advantage in the transition from external to internal locus of control required when separating from family and friends. Individuals who do not loosen ties with family and friends from high school may find it difficult to shift the locus of control (Kahn et al., 2019; Mattanah, et al., 2004).

Even though hegemonic masculinity dominates Western social contexts, a range of masculinity and femininity is present in most social situations (Bernard, et al., 2018; Caruso & Roberts, 2018; Jewkes & Morrell, 2018), inflected by the complex relationship between power and resistance (Francis & Paechter, 2015; Kimmell, 2011; Sabo, 1997) (consider the different presentations among individuals nominally of the same “gender” at a college dorm social event or a pop music concert). The nature of masculinity is relevant to the FYE of this study’s participants, all cisgender males who entered college at the shift from adolescence to emerging adulthood. Masculinity is not monolithic, despite the monoglossic presentation in Western society (Francis & Paechter, 2015). There are benefits to researching masculinity, “NOT the ‘accomplishments’ of cultures commonly attributed to men, but ... how masculinity affects the lives of average, everyday men” (Kimmell, 2011, pp. 6-7). “As with any structure of power and inequality..., it is essential to study the powerful, and this includes men” (Messerschmidt, 2016, p. 1). This study does not *focus* on masculinity, however; gender is one of several branches of the theory that grows from the study’s data.

College Student Transition

A review of the literature shows that there are several topics related to transition that are receiving more attention than others. These areas of concern include the degree to which the emerging adults in transition have formed and synthesized their identity by the first year (Azmitia, 2013; Davis, 2014); the impact of structural supports on individual adaptation (Laden, et al., 2000; Murphy, et al., 2010); the impact of family, home life, and socio-economic status (SES) on the likelihood of successful transition (Hendry & Kloep, 2007a; Tierney, 1992); the ability of emerging adults to recenter themselves after leaving the home community (Mattanah, et al., 2011; Tanner, 2006); mentoring (Ahrens, et al., 2010; Parks, 2000); the efficacy of college counseling services (Hayes, et al., 2008); and college students' attitudes toward risk-taking (Blinn-Pike, et al., 2008; Kimmell, 2011; Ravert, 2009).

Identity Formation and Synthesis

A recent set of studies addresses the transition issue of identity formation leading into the first year of college. Azmitia, et al. (2013), found that first-year college students who are not successful at identity synthesis are less likely to continue enrollment. Azmitia collected data through a survey and interviews of 212 diverse first-year students at a northern California state university. From that sample, 167 participants completed all parts of data collection (fall and spring surveys, three interview sessions) and formed the pool from which the data was analyzed. The purpose of the study was to examine the association between first-year college students' mental health, their level of identity synthesis, and the emotional support they received from family, friends, and professors. The authors used the Erikson Psychosocial Inventory Scale (EPSI), the Perceived Social Support from Family and Friends Scale, the Rosenberg (1989) self-esteem scale, and the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (Azmitia, 2013, pp.

747-48). The interviews were semi-structured and took between 45-90 minutes. After analyzing the survey data, the authors conducted a phenomenological analysis of the interviews looking for an understanding of the participants' lived experiences as they related to the survey data.

Azmitia, et al. (2013), found that students who demonstrate positive and greatly improving mental health report higher levels of identity synthesis and perceived greater emotional support from parents and friends. Most relevant to the research question at hand, however, is the study's conclusion that "students with strong emotional support...during their high school years already came to campus with social and academic skills that allowed them to connect with university staff and peers on campus *and* made them feel optimistic about their adjustment to college" (p. 758). This conclusion calls for further research into the reasons why some students who arrive at college academically and socially skilled do not succeed in the first year. What are other factors outside academic preparation and social skill that influence a student's ability to persist through the FYE?

Similarly, at the secondary level, students who feel isolated or who do not trust the adults in the school are more likely to withdraw from high school and are developmentally delayed (Davis, 2014). Davis (2014) conducted an ethnographic study of twelve of her own GED students, ages 18-25. She used narrative created from the transcripts of a semi-structured interview that asked her students about their high school experiences. The students then participated in the creation of an ethnodrama, which they and other GED students performed publicly on two different occasions. Davis concludes that understanding the individual student's life both in high school and in a GED program is a prerequisite for providing the most effective and appropriate support for that student in their attempts to achieve both socially and academically. Clearly, students who earned a high school diploma in the traditional fashion and

enrolled in a traditional college environment differ from the participants in Davis's study; however, the finding that individualizing attention can lead to student success raises the question whether increasing individual attention to first year college students has an impact on persistence.

More generally, Schwartz, et al. (2005) propose that identity formation is most coherent (Erikson, 1968) when the individual possesses a greater degree of agency, defined by Schwartz, et al. (2005) as "a sense of responsibility for one's life course, the belief that one is in control of one's decisions and is responsible for their outcomes, and the confidence that one will be able to overcome obstacles that impede one's progress along one's chosen life course" (p. 207). Students who have a more developed identity (i.e. a greater degree of agency) also possess greater degrees of self-confidence and efficacy (Schwartz, et al., 2005). The "optimal sense of identity...is experienced merely as a sense of psychosocial well-being... [characterized by] a feeling of being at home in one's body, a sense of 'knowing where one is going,' and an inner assuredness of anticipated recognition from those who count" (Erikson, 1968, p. 165).

Schwartz, et al. (2005) examined the role of personal agency and individualization in identity formation, which is the primary task of adolescence (Sznitman, et al., 2019). The study's hypothesis was that greater personal agency leads to stronger identity formation, which supports college success. One of the authors' goals was to investigate the agency-identity relationship across three American ethnic groups to determine whether ethnicity had an impact on agency and identity formation. The authors recruited sample members at a public, urban, multicultural university in order to ensure a diverse population. Participants were given a series of questionnaires related to identity formation, including the Identity Style Inventory, Ego Identity Process Questionnaire, and the Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (p. 211). To

measure agency, the authors used the Multi-Measure Agentic Personality Scale. Results were subjected to statistical analysis and led to the findings that there is a consistent relationship between agency and identity across ethnic groups, and that agency is most closely related to exploration and commitment. The findings suggest that students who enter college with a greater degree of agency are more likely to form strong identities, which predicts a higher level of success in the new context of the first college year.

First-year college students who bring a highly developed sense of personal spirituality are frequently more prepared for the disorientation of the college experience than those who do not (Barry & Nelson, 2005). Barry & Nelson's (2005) study found that Mormons, who came from a highly structured and clearly delineated faith with high expectations for behavior and fidelity, adapted most readily to the college environment away from family and friends. Catholic students, who reported a moderate level of compliance with the articles of their faith, found the transition more unsettling. Non-religious students, unsurprisingly, reported not having a spirituality readily available to them in their attempts to adjust to the first year of college.

The literature also suggests that first-year college students who are most likely to continue their education into a second year are those who have come to the experience with strong social-emotional, spiritual, and identity-formation skills. Transitioning students who have a high level of separation-individuation (defined primarily as the absence of negative feelings about the process of separation, including feelings of anxiety, guilt, or expecting rejection when separating) are more likely to persist after the first year. "[S]eparation-individuation is seen as a developmental process that begins with separation from parents, peers, and other significant persons, but that extends to individuation and the development of a coherent, autonomous self" (Mattanah, et al., 2004, p. 213; Turner, 1991). A complementary predictor of college persistence

is the existence of a student's secure attachment with their parents or guardians (Mattanah, et al., 2004). The combined effects of separation-individuation and secure parental attachment have been found to be the best predictor of college adjustment for men (Mattanah, et al. 2004).

Impact of Structural Supports

First-year college students are also impacted by the existence and efficacy of social supports, the individual's expectation of adversity, optimism about making the transition, evolving identity formation, and the adjustment to life away from home (Murphy, et al., 2010). While Murphy, et al., were focused on the transition out of college and into the workforce, the same categories of experience apply to the youngest emerging adults leaving high school for college. The categories most applicable to the transition from high school to college include social support during transition; expectations of adversity and adaptability; optimism regarding the future; and adjustment to a new context. Murphy, et al., used consensual qualitative research (CQR). CQR features multiple researchers ("judges") who conduct qualitative interviews; share their biases concerning the participants and their responses; norm the coding of the interviews; and work with an auditor who "serve as an independent check on the judges' coding procedure and to review the extent to which judges consistently captured the essence of each response without drawing inferential conclusions" (p. 176). As a protocol, CQR is designed to standardize interpretation of qualitative data and make findings more generalizable. Therefore, Murphy, et al.'s findings are more available to other research on college persistence.

Murphy, et al. (2010), selected a sample of 10 emerging adults who had earned undergraduate degrees within the previous three years and were currently working in an urban community in the northeastern United States. The authors used an interview protocol designed for studying the school-to-work transition. The authors note that one of the most consistent

findings of the study was the significance of social support in the transition from college to work. Participants noted repeatedly the importance of family and friends as they made the jump into the working world. The study also found a clear relationship between realistic expectations for work and current life satisfaction. Overall, the participants who were unfulfilled by their first job retained a positive outlook on their life in general if they had strong social supports. Research into the transition from high school to college will benefit from the identification of these themes and the findings that transition can be eased through realistic expectations and the support of family and friends.

Ultimately, many students who struggle in the transition to college stop out. Contemporary student retention scholarship began fifty years ago (Tinto, 2006), and post-secondary institutions have been offering a variety of transition supports over the last forty years (Renn & Reason, 2013), although some researchers have questioned their effectiveness in increasing retention (Tinto, 1999). The most popular interventions include orientation programs; summer bridge programs; so-called “living-learning communities,” learning communities, first-year seminars, and programs targeted to specific populations (Renn & Reason, 2013, pp. 68-76). Ahrens, et al. (2010) found that peer-to-peer mentoring is not as effective in helping students develop the emotional skills necessary to transition from high school to college, especially for students with learning disabilities. The emotional well-being of first-year college students can be affected by the environment a college or university has created, with a clear difference between a culture that nurtures the new students and one that isolates them (Parks, 2000). Programs and policies, both administrative and governmental, are necessary supports for first-year college students struggling to make the transition away from home (Mechanic & Tanner, 2007).

According to Tinto (1999), there are four institutional conditions that impact the student's first year experience: 1) information and advice, 2) support, 3) involvement, and 4) learning. The institution controls all four elements of the college experience, and each element can be shaped to support retention. Students are more likely to persist to a second year if: 1) they receive clear and consistent messages about institutional expectations and the path to graduation or certification; 2) they have access to personal, social, and academic supports; 3) they have a variety of opportunities to participate in the college community outside of the classroom; and 4) they make steady academic progress through courses they find relevant and challenging. For Tinto (1999), in general, a student's active involvement in the learning process through coursework is the best predictor of persistence. He recommends institutions implement learning communities (characterized by shared knowledge, shared learning, and shared responsibility), collaborative classroom work, and other strategies to engage students with each other, the content, and their instructors rather than working in isolation. Tinto's (1999) model FYE includes shared learning; integrated academic advising; seminars embedded in the core curriculum; support for "doing college" by acknowledging the first year is developmental and functionally different from subsequent years of college; and collaboration between academic and student affairs professionals.

Over the last decade, Tinto's model has come under scrutiny (Renn & Reason, 2013), especially his lack of attention to applying his model in different institutional settings (Braxton, et al., 2004; Laden, et al., 2000) and his model's emphasis on assimilation into a hegemonic community, which harms students from non-dominant traditions (Tierney, 1992). Tierney (1992) proposes framing colleges and universities as institutions where difference should be highlighted and celebrated rather than treated as secondary to the educational purpose. Tinto (2006) himself

recognizes the limitations of his model and the need for further research, especially into the essential differences between two- and four-year institutions, the experience of commuter and work students versus residential students, the cultural impact of college on students of color and low-SES, and the role of the instructor and the classroom in meeting first-year student academic and social needs.

One component of a successful transition from the home to college or career is the extent to which the political process in a particular locale matches the individual's moral values. If there is a disconnect between the individual's moral values and the college's policies, the individual may find it difficult to remain at the institution. Vulnerable youth, in particular, feel isolated and rejected in a school culture that does not recognize their status as valuable (Mechanic & Tanner, 2007). Sources of vulnerability can include poverty, race, a lack of social support, physical/cognitive impairments or illness, emotional trauma, and economic deprivation or limited opportunities at home (pp. 1223-1225). Likewise, if there is a disconnect between the high expectations society places on emerging adults and the limited resources available to assist lower SES individuals in meeting those expectations, then the chances of a successful transition outside the home decrease (Tanner, 2007). These linkages argue for further research into the role of moral challenge and resource scarcity in a first-year college student's level of persistence.

Influence of Family, Home Life, and Socio-economic Status

Other research concerning the transition to college investigates the expectations a family sets for the child moving away to college. In general, parents who grant autonomy to their children during emerging adulthood foster more coherent identity formation (Zong, et al., 2019). Students whose parents lack educational experience beyond the secondary level or who have low expectations of their children's educational attainment are more at risk for stopping out in

college (Bynner, 2001). On the other hand, more educated parents have greater aspirations for their children both academically and socially, leading to their children's higher efficacy (Bandura, 1997, p. 238). Emerging adult theory posits that the children of wealthy middle-class parents are much more likely to make the transition to college successfully than the children of lower SES families (Hendry & Kloep, 2007a). However, the difference between parents' perceptions of their children's autonomy in the transition from high school to college and their children's perceptions is significant (Kenyon & Koerner, 2009) and can impact first-year college students' expectations for their own success.

Kenyon & Koerner (2009) used the College Adjustment and Transitions Study (CATS) to collect data from incoming freshmen and their parents at summer orientation and during class the first week of the semester at a southwestern university. Participants totaled 204 students and 226 parents. In addition to the survey, the authors used an open-ended question concerning conflict that might be caused between the student and the parents based on one of the items in the survey. The goals of the study were 1) to document the expectations regarding students' autonomous behavior from the students and the parents and 2) to examine the discrepancy between the students' and parents' perceptions. By analyzing both the survey results and the themes that emerged from the open-ended question, the authors determined that parents have a significantly higher set of expectations for a student's autonomy at college than the students have for themselves. Further research may show that a disconnect between parental and student expectation of autonomy is related to the struggle of academically college-ready students to persist in the first year of college.

There is often a disconnect between the child's vision of how much autonomy she or he can exercise in the first year of college and the parents' perception of how much should be

expected (Kenyon & Koerner, 2009). This difference can lead to unrealistic expectations on the part of family and create a barrier to success in the first year of college for the child. If a student is unable to find a hospitable environment at college for their personal spirituality, the chances of succeeding in the first year and remaining enrolled are reduced (Tisdell, 2003). In addition, if a child has not renegotiated their relationship with their family and find themselves “stuck in a process of ruminative exploration, in which they feel incapable of closing down the exploration process and are unable to make firm commitments” (Sznitman, et al., 2019, p. 1235), they will find the transition from the family setting difficult.

Johnson, et al. (2010) examined the family’s role in supporting or deterring first-year college students as they navigated college. The authors hypothesized that greater academic, social, and emotional adjustment to college would be correlated with greater cohesion, greater expressivity, and less conflict in emerging adults’ families. The sample consisted of 320 first-year undergraduate students at a state university in suburban Philadelphia, all of whom participated in the Coping with the Transition to College (CTC) project conducted by the university over a two-year period. Participants were enrolled in the university’s Introductory Psychology course and answered a series of questionnaires in the second semester of their first year. The questions asked for information about family environment (The Family Environment Scale), coping style (Emotion Coping Trait Meta-Mood Scale), and individual functioning (Student Adjustment to College Questionnaire). Descriptive data analysis showed little difference in results based on gender. Students who managed their emotions well and had established coping skills found little difficulty transitioning to college. The most striking finding, however, is that “[w]hen emerging adults perceived their families to be less cohesive prior to beginning college, they reported experiencing less academic adjustment, more dissatisfaction

with their social adjustment, and more general psychological distress and/or somatic consequences of distress after making the transition to college” (p. 618). The study’s findings suggest that there is a significant impact on college adjustment made by a student’s perceptions of her or his family dynamics. This research provides a line of inquiry for a study concerning the maladjustment of college-ready high school students in their first year.

Because Arnett (2000) sets the criteria for transition to adulthood as accepting responsibility for oneself, making independent decisions, becoming financially independent, and establishing self-sufficiency, it is clear that socio-economic status (SES) has an impact on how successful emerging adults can be at this transition (Hendry & Kloep, 2007a). First-year college students without the resources to consider themselves progressing toward adulthood may feel a disconnect from the expectations of both the school community and the family back home. Arnett (2007) himself acknowledges that SES can have an impact on the emotional experience of emerging adults. In a study of ethnically and socio-economically diverse first-year college students, Azmitia, et al. (2013) found that significant peer support counteracted the effects of the isolation and lack of resources that marked the students experience in their transition from home to college.

Recentering

Recentering, or the successful adaptation to a new context, can be understood as achieving six different benchmarks: “developing a mature sense of self, making choices about education and occupation, leaving the parental home, establishing intimate relationships, making independent decisions, and learning to accept responsibility” (Tanner, 2007, p. 190). First-year college students who have made progress toward achieving these ends are more likely to experience a successful transition to college. Students who successfully recenter also learn to

exercise self-restraint in favor of supporting the interdependencies within their new community (Crow & Laidlaw, 2019). Adaptability is characterized by the existence and efficacy of social supports, the individual's expectations of adversity in the new context, optimism about shifting to the college world, a developed sense of identity, and the capacity to adjust to a new life (Murphy, et al., 2010). Individuals who identify themselves as adults have a lower incidence of depression and are less likely to engage in risky behavior than those who do not identify as adults (Nelson & Barry, 2005). Self-perception, therefore, has a measurable impact on mental health, stability, and risk-taking in emerging adulthood (Blinn-Pike, et al., 2008). Similarly, students who choose social approach behaviors (e.g. going to parties with friends, engaging in campus-wide extracurricular activities, pledging a campus social organization) over social avoidance (e.g. remaining in the dormitory when others go out, returning home for weekends) integrate socially earlier and feel more connected to the community (Braxton, et al., pp. 26-27).

Generally, successful first-year college students are those who are able to recenter themselves once they leave home (Tanner, 2006). This process includes re-evaluating childhood relationships; negotiating a new context by drawing on skills developed in childhood; moving from dependence to independence in decision-making; and placing past success in the context of present challenges. A first-year college student who is unable to recenter in these ways is more likely to stop out. In addition, successful first-year college students are more likely to be aware of their personal spirituality (Tisdell, 2003), and spiritually aware students are more likely to adopt their tradition's cultural norms, which can be a source of strength in the transition to college (Barry & Nelson, 2005). Religious adherence is currently decreasing and spirituality increasing among Millennials in college (Renn & Reason, 2013).

Mentoring

School-based mentoring programs have a long history in the United States (Cornelius, et al., 2016; Jacobi, 1991). Ahrens, et al. (2010), examined the impact of mentoring through a meta-analysis of the data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), a six-year study that collected data from 80 high schools and 52 middle schools from the United States. The study's objectives were to 1) increase the understanding of the descriptive characteristics of mentoring for youth with learning disabilities (YLD) and 2) determine whether the presence of natural mentoring relationships (i.e. mentoring relationships that form easily in the context of the campus) improved the outcomes for YLD. Analysis of the data determined that mentoring at the high school level for YLD is more effective when the mentors are adults rather than peers, and that the mentoring relationship supported high school completion and improved self-esteem. In addition, and more relevant to the question at hand, is that the study found a positive association between mentoring at the college level and degree program completion (Cornelius, et al., 2016; Lin, et al., 2016). This finding supports the theoretical contention that mentoring in the college environment can move the emerging adult toward college completion and full adulthood (Eby, et al., 2008; Jacobi, 1991; Parks, 2000).

In a meta-analysis of mentoring studies published between 1985 and 2006, Eby, et al., (2008) found that the greatest impact of mentoring in youth, workplace, and academic (college-based) was on the mentees' attitudes toward themselves, their tasks, and their place in the world. Academic mentoring had the greatest impact on outcomes (e.g. raising academic performance) compared to workplace and youth mentoring (p. 263). Jacobi (1991) identified three components to a mentoring relationship: 1) emotional and psychological support, 2) direct assistance with career/professional development, and 3) role modeling. Skaniokos & Piirainen (2019) conducted

a meta-analysis of two phenomenographic peer group mentoring studies in teacher education programs. The two programs featured in the studies they analyzed were formal, academic mentoring programs. They found that peer groups “work as non-hierarchically as possible, sharing and learning from each other” over a period of 8-9 months (p. 21). Group members who participated actively found that their peers were useful in their professional development, which led the peer group to create a learning community that supported each member (Skaniokos & Piirainen, 2019). In formal, facilitated peer groups at the undergraduate level, “support of the group [is] essential for the individual’s self-reflection process” (p. 28).

Faculty, staff, and peers are all important sources of mentoring in an undergraduate institution (Crisp, et al., 2017). Faculty members often serve as academic advisors and research supervisors, and, in those roles, have a significant impact on students’ growth as scholars and members of the community (p. 24). Staff members, including non-faculty academic advisors, counselors, student services personnel, and coaches play a mentoring role for many undergraduate students (p. 25). In particular, however, “[r]elationships with peers ... serve as vital sources of social and academic support to students in college” (p. 26).

Impact of Counseling Services

Counseling services provided by the college or university help students find meaning in life, an important task in emerging adulthood (Trevisan, et al., 2017). Counseling can ease the transition from high school for many students in terms of adjustment, academic success, and retention (Hayes, et al., 2008). Many students who were “successful in high school may have difficulty identifying the effects of adjustment issues on their academic and emotional well-being” (p. 250). The authors describe a counseling program that caters to the adjustment needs of first-year students by destigmatizing “counseling” as a form of psychological support. The

program uses psychodrama in the form of mock counseling sessions to explain and demystify psychoanalysis. Surveys showed that 76% of students who returned the survey found the activity “extremely helpful or helpful” as they considered whether to engage in counseling (p. 253).

Summary of Current Transition Research

As Murphy, et al. (2010), found, the existence of structural supports at the college level, including adult mentoring (Parks, 2000) and positive peer interactions (Azmitia, et al., 2013), increases the likelihood that first-year college students will make a successful transition from high school. There are barriers to this success that can be reduced by the supports. In particular, the incidence of mental illness and social disconnection rises steeply between the ages of 18-25 (Tanner, 2010). Family dynamics and predilections continue to exert a strong influence on the emotional development and ability of first-year college students to manage the new setting away from home (Tanner, 2010). The emotional health of first-year college students is improved by significant peer support (Azmitia, et al., 2013), but not necessarily in a mentoring capacity (Ahrens, et al., 2010). According to Parks, it is more effective for students to find adult mentors to guide them through the first year (Parks, 2000). Likewise, students with a strong sense of their personal spirituality are more likely to be emotionally developed (Barry & Nelson, 2005). Barry & Nelson (2005) found that these individuals have a greater sense of interdependence; a stronger ability to comply with social norms; a clearer understanding of the biological transitions they are going through; and a higher capacity to contextualize family dynamics.

The issues related to college students’ transitions generally provide a useful context for considering the youngest emerging adults’ transition from high school to college specifically. Understanding the impact on transition of personal spirituality; social supports; perceptions of autonomy; mentoring; identity formation/synthesis; mental health; and adventurousness creates

space for research concerned with the question of why some successful high school students do not survive their first year of college. For some, the issue may be that the student has not prepared adequately for the experience away from home, although critics call this “blaming the victim” (Tinto, 2006, p. 2). The elements of emerging adulthood highlighted by my study’s data include personal spirituality; social supports; perceptions of autonomy; identity formation; mental health; and adventurousness.

Emerging Adulthood

In general, high school graduates are more prepared to enter college now than at any other time because Western society has delayed many of the life span events that define “adulthood” (Arnett, 2006; Schwartz, et al., 2005). These include marriage, starting a family, and beginning a career. The extra time that comes with delaying cultural rites of passage into adulthood enables individuals 18-25 years old to experiment with risky behavior, engage in a series of intimate relationships, repeatedly adjust academic focus, explore a variety of employment opportunities, and change residences many times in a short period. The level of commitment expected of emerging adults in their college years has significantly diminished. Some students thrive in this environment and successfully recenter themselves; other students do not find ways to adapt the skills they attained in high school and at home for use in college. While “preparation” for college is often limited to a good high school education in popular thought, students must also attend to their social-emotional and spiritual lives in order to withstand the disorientation of the first year.

Adulthood is marked by accepting responsibility for oneself; making independent decisions; becoming financially independent; and establishing self-sufficiency (Arnett, 2000). Individuals who believe they have made progress toward embodying these criteria before their

first year in college are more likely to consider themselves successful and capable of existing in the new context. Similarly, first-year college students who arrive with a clearer sense of identity (Azmitia, et al., 2013) are more likely to make the transition successfully whether the institution's policies are nurturing or isolating (Parks, 2000). The change in self-perception in college is best managed by individuals who are more successful at identity formation, are more self-sufficient, and hold themselves more realistically accountable for their own actions (Tanner, 2006). All emerging adults have a need for "ideological affirmation" (e.g., the desire to have their own belief system confirmed by a source outside themselves) as a way of gaining confidence in their identity (Erikson, 1964, p. 65). In short, both theory and research suggest that emerging adults who have come closest to completing some of the tasks of adulthood (e.g. accepting responsibility for their actions; making independent decisions; becoming financially independent; and becoming self-sufficient) have a better chance of continuing college beyond the first year.

Emerging adults age 18-25, regardless of whether they are enrolled in college, all find the transition to adulthood more manageable if they trust the adults they work with and feel part of a larger community with a common goal (Davis, 2014). Emerging adults who demonstrate resilience (i.e. the ability to persist and develop founded on social supports, capacity for self-determination, successful adaptation to new environments, and sophisticated coping mechanisms) are more likely to have the emotional development necessary for weathering the first year of college (Hinton & Meyer, 2014). Resilience can lead to autonomy, which is a necessary component of finding success for this population (Kenyon & Koerner, 2009).

Hinton & Meyer (2014) conducted a review of the literature concerning resilience and support in emerging adulthood, basing their review on a search of documents in the ERIC and

PsycINFO databases for studies published between 1990-2013. They determined that resilience is defined by both the presence of a threat and the individual's ability to adapt once the threat has passed. The authors conclude that "[c]ontinuing to adapt to current conditions regardless of past negative experiences demonstrates resilience to adversity" (p. 145). Unsurprisingly, given the earlier research cited above, the authors also found that "protective factors such as positive relations with adults, self-determination, and agency lead to more positive outcomes for youth" (p. 145). While the focus of the study is on emerging adults with disabilities, the findings invite further research into the population of emerging adults without disabilities. The concepts of resilience and support are as applicable to first-year college without disabilities as to those with them. Much of the literature cited and reviewed for this article deals with the non-disabled population of emerging adults.

Autonomy "can be defined as the sense of volition, the desire to self-organize experience and behavior, and to have activity concordant with one's integrated sense of self" (Inguglia, et al., 2015, p. 1). Autonomy, realized through resiliency and support, is significant to development generally but in particular to emerging adults (Inguglia, et al., 2015). Students who begin the process of individualization in the first year transition more smoothly to the new college community (Crow & Laidlaw, 2019). Kenyon & Koerner (2009) found that parents frequently assume their children will possess more autonomy in college than their children believe themselves capable. The study suggests that the level of autonomy, and therefore the ability to control one's actions and act in one's own interests, may distinguish students who succeed in their transition to college from those who do not. However, persistence for many students also depends upon maintaining past connections to family, church, or other community groups (Tinto, 2006).

College Student Development

Contemporary study of the intellectual development of the college student can be traced to Perry (1968/1999), whose seminal study featured both male and female participants but whose conclusions were based entirely on the male experience of college (Belenky, et al., 1986; Perry, 1968/1999). Perry's conclusions have been challenged based on his exclusion of the female experience (Belenky, et al., 1986; Knefelkamp, 1999; Renn & Reason, 2013). Perry himself found the study's conclusions limited by his team's own "relation to [their] data" (Perry, 1968/1999, p. 231). His work, however, "anticipated most subsequent lines of exploration in constructive-developmental psychology" (Kegan, 1982, p. 228).

Perry maintained that college student's greatest need in the classroom was to be recognized by the instructor, not assessed (Knefelkamp, 1999), and that growth occurred in "surges," not linearly or consistently (Perry, 1968/1999, p. 198). He conceived of his study after he and his colleagues at Harvard became intrigued by the variety of responses their students demonstrated to the relativism characteristic of the pluralistic university environment (Perry, 1968/1999). He sought to understand the students' responses through the lens of development, supported by the "systematic descriptions of the experience through time" of his participants provided through multiple qualitative interviews over the course of their undergraduate career (Perry, 1968/1999, p. 7).

Perry's cognitive-structural scheme (Jones & Stewart, 2016) consists of nine positions, with development occurring in the space between them (Belenky, et al., 1986; Perry, 1968/1999; Renn & Reason, 2013). Clustered in logical groups, Perry's scheme consists of:

1. Dualism Modified: consisting of *duality*, or the sharp perception of right vs. wrong, good vs. bad, adherence to authority; *multiplicity*, acknowledging contrary views but only as separate from the self; and *subordinate multiplicity*, recognition that authority may not be all-knowing.
2. Relativism Discovered: beginning with *relativism subordinate*, the rejection of absolutism; moving to *relativism correlate*, the intrinsic recognition of relativism as a way of perceiving the world; and followed by *commitment foreseen*, when relativism has been accepted for all secular purposes.
3. Commitments in Relativism Developed: consisting of the student's *initial commitment*, characterized by acceptance of the self's origin in personal choices and experience; followed by *orientation in implications of commitment*, the tension between feelings of freedom and constraint, action and reflection; and culminating in *developing commitments*, revealed as growth through balancing competing conditions identified through experience.

(“Chart of Development,” Perry, 1968/1999; Perry, 1981; Terenzini, 1987).

“Self-authorship,” one integrative approach to college student development (combining the cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal aspects of growth), describes the process of shifting meaning making from outside the self to inside the self (Baxter Magolda, 2008). Self-authorship was introduced by Kegan (1982, 1994) and advanced by Baxter Magolda (2008, 2009). The theory proposes four phases of the evolution of meaning-making: 1) following formulas, or relying upon outside experts to guide meaning making; 2) negotiating the crossroads, or rejecting outside definition without the means to define the self independently; 3) authoring one's own life, or attaining the ability to understand oneself apart from the relationships that defined earlier self-perception; and 4) establishing internal foundations, or acknowledging outside influences without allowing them to determine personal beliefs, values,

or actions (Baxter Magolda, 2008; Jones & Stewart, 2016; Kegan, 1982; Kegan 1994; Renn & Reason, 2013, pp. 118-121). Self-authorship allows individuals to reconstruct existing relationships or build new relationships that are more authentic and mutually satisfying (Baxter Magolda, 2008).

Risk-taking and experimentation

Regarding self-perception as adults and risk-taking, Blinn-Pike, et al. (2008), collected survey data from 450 undergraduate students enrolled in introductory psychology classes at two public universities in a southern state. The survey consisted of 149 short-answer questions establishing students' personal backgrounds and about the following four areas of adulthood: 1) intimate relationships; 2) independent decision making; 3) financial independence; and 4) personal versus parental religious beliefs. The study's purposes were to determine how many of the students surveyed considered themselves adults and the relationship between this self-perception and a student's background, risk behavior, disinhibition, and family income. The study found that in the sample, 38% considered themselves adults and 62% considered themselves emerging adults. The participants who self-identified as adults were found to engage in risky behavior at a significantly lower rate than the emerging adults, and were significantly more likely to have been raised in a family that received public assistance.

Ahrens, et al. (2010) conducted a study in response to Nelson & Barry (2005), a similar study of students at a mid-Atlantic university which obtained similar results regarding self-perception, risky behavior, and SES. Nelson & Barry (2005) surveyed 232 undergraduate students at a large, public, mid-Atlantic university. The survey asked participants for their "background information, perceived adult status, identity, criteria for adulthood, achieved criteria for adulthood (which includes risk behaviors), and depression" (p. 249). Nelson & Barry found

that students who perceived themselves to be adults (as opposed to emerging adults) had also achieved greater identity formation, suffered less from depression, and engaged in fewer risky behaviors (p. 255). While neither study is on point with my own research, they both beg the question whether self-perception as an adult, someone who understands what it entails to be an adult and who behaves in ways that demonstrate their understanding, is more likely to persist. Self-perception as an adult is one more data point available to persistence researchers.

In a related study, Ravert (2009), determined that college students value exploration and experimentation in large part because they see college as the last time to engage in this kind of risky behavior. Ravert (2009) recruited 248 undergraduates at a Midwestern state university to take a brief qualitative survey regarding the desire to behave in ways that the participant believed would not be available or acceptable in full adulthood. The questions were open-ended and designed to elicit personal perspectives. Responses were coded by the researcher and the research assistant, and the team identified themes and categories based on analysis of the data. Analysis showed that the mean response to the question concerning whether the student tried behavior now because it would not be available or acceptable in full adulthood was “sometimes.” The most common activities associated with this belief were travel/adventure, social events, and substance use. The study concluded that undergraduates valued exploration as something that was best done as emerging adults. However, further research is needed regarding whether this desire to explore is an indicator of persistence. It raises the question of how desire to explore and take risks contributes to the quality of the FYE and to a student’s decision to stop out or persist.

Room for Further Research to Address Gaps in the Literature

With the exception of Azmitia, et al. (2013) and Kenyon & Koerner (2009), most of the studies reviewed in this article recruited participants outside the first-year postsecondary

population. Median ages varied from 12-18 (Ahrens, et. al., 2010); 18-20 (Barry & Nelson, 2005; Johnson, et al., 2010); 18-23 (Ravert, 2009); 18-25 (Blinn-Pike, et al., 2008; Davis, 2014); and 19-25 (Nelson & Barry, 2005). Hamilton & Hamilton (2006) and Murphy, et al. (2010) studied emerging adults who had graduated from college. There is a need for research that measures the adaptation of traditional 18-19 year-old first-year college students who come from a successful career in secondary school but fail to maintain a similar performance at the college level.

The college stop out rate has been significant since the turn of the 21st century. In 2002, more than half of two-year college students and one-fourth of four-year students left without earning a degree (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2006). That rate has increased to 40% of undergraduates who do not earn a degree in six years (Velez, 2014). Velez used data from the National Longitudinal Study of Youths 1997, which was compiled based on interviews of 12-16 year-olds in 1997, and then interviews of the population every year through 2011 as they aged. The descriptive data show that most college stop-outs have considerably lower high school achievement than college completers. There is a gap, however, in the study of students who show high academic performance in secondary school and stop out of college in the first year. Research concerning the particularized FYE will reveal the needs of this population, assist both school districts and postsecondary institutions in their transition planning and programs, and provide foundations and other nonprofits with data and direction as they set funding priorities in their efforts to increase college retention and graduation rates.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Overview

Chapter 1 established the problem at the heart of the current research: the rate of first-year attrition at colleges and universities has continued to be a concern. The trend began in the late 1970s and has continued to the present. The literature concerning gender theory, the college transition, emerging adulthood, and college student development provide a starting point for considering the problem. However, more research is needed to address the issue of the male college experience directly. Studying the first-year experience of traditional-aged, college-ready male students raises questions that will lead to a better understanding of how the FYE affects the students' persistence.

There is no clean line between subject and object such that experience can be reified and observed outside of/free from the influence of the observer's own experiences. In fact, "[scrutinizing] the connection, intellectual and emotional, between the observer and the observed" creates the "possibility that a personal voice, creatively used, can lead the reader...into the enormous sea of serious social issues" (Behar, 1996, p. 14). The observer's experience frames interpretation and creates meaning that emerges from the synthesis of experiences (Perry, 1968/1999). Experience is the only authentic evidence of human behavior (the action that flows from experience), and the study of the experience of others is rooted in the researcher's inferences about the other's experience (Laing, 1967). There is no stability to experience, which means that interpretation does not need to appeal to or lead to epistemological justification. Instead, theory arising from data analysis contributes to conversation rather than creating an objective set of new rules; theory is descriptive rather than normative.

Data are limited in their power to establish “truth” in that there can always be more data collected. Sampling enables a researcher to consider a segment of reality, and that segment can never be universalized because it does not account for data not collected and experience that lies in the future. Objectivity is unattainable and undesirable since claiming knowledge as independently verifiable ignores the impact of the observer’s bias and perspective. The value of collecting and analyzing data is to describe, not predict, the lived experience of human beings in a particular setting at a particular time governed by the way they interpret their past, present, and future. My experience as a college student, filtered through memories created in the decades since I attended college, does not diminish or alter the experience of my participants. Instead, by acknowledging my memory of my experience, I provide a context for the conclusions and theory that the data produce for me as a researcher.

I am an interpretivist in that I see the value in research as contributing to conversation and promoting collaboration (Glaser & Strauss, 2008, p. 31) among servant leaders who dedicate their efforts to improving the lives of others. In this study, I am interpreting “the interpretations [my participants] give to their own actions and their interactions with others” (Smith, 1993, p. 19). I see “no possibility for abstract and general criteria, at least in any epistemological sense” (p. 20), emerging from the theory my analysis generates. Generally, I believe that “no epistemic privilege can be attached to any particular research procedure or set of research practices” (p. 44), but that instead research practices allow a researcher to arrive at interpretation that describes a particular set of experiences observed in a particular setting with particular participants (Maxwell, 2013). Theory can be messy and not universally applicable and still contribute significantly to the conversation about improving lives and the human experience (Risman, 2004).

What, then, is the value of conducting case study research in grounded theory? Action (to improve the lives of others) flows from careful consideration of the “object” under study, not from cursory observation of surface-level characteristics. Grounded theory allows the researcher to “understand[] the ways reality is socially constructed” (Schram, 2006, p. 104). The rigorous data review of grounded theory paired with the keen eye required by case study yields thick data that root interpretation in experience. This is not a claim to universalism, but instead a new set of tools to be employed in the effort to assist first-year college students in their transition out of high school.

Pilot Studies

Pilot Study 1 (2015)

A very limited pilot study conducted in 2015 addressed the question, “How do students who leave college in their first year, but who were not considered, and did not consider themselves, at risk for leaving, experience the first year of college?” The sample (n=2) consisted of students who had made the decision to transfer or stop out of college entirely during their first year of college. Data were collected through a single semi-structured interview from a position of empathy, from which a researcher “enter[s] the world of the participant and tr[ies] to understand how it looks and feels from the participant’s point of view” (Josselson, 2013, p. 80). This study found that while both participants experienced “homesickness,” their primary struggle emerged from a disconnect between the impressions of college life they brought with them to campus and the reality they encountered once they arrived. Both participants noted the difference between the criteria they had considered significant when making the college decision and the criteria they ignored. I determined, based on this study’s results, that further research was needed

to explore the difference between expectation and reality for first-year, non-at-risk college students.

Pilot Study 2 (2016)

A larger and more complex pilot study followed the initial inquiry. The second study, conducted in 2016, used grounded theory to begin an inquiry into the expectations non-at-risk high school seniors have for the college experience. Grounded theory was employed because it permits the researcher to simultaneously collect and analyze data; develop new conceptual categories; construct new theory; and use comparative methods (Patton, 2015, p. 111). All of these actions appealed to me as productive, natural, and familiar elements of research and analysis.

Design

The study's participants (n=5) were all 18-year-old white women in their last semester of high school. All participants attended high school in Maine. Two participants attended High School P, which serves three rural towns in western Maine. The towns are, for the most part, economically, racially, culturally, and ethnically similar. No identifiable minority group comprised more than 3.1% of the population, and English is the primary language. Approximately 85% of seniors attend a postsecondary institution after graduation. These participants were selected out of convenience; I have been their assistant principal for their entire high school careers, and I have been their student judiciary board supervisor for two years.

Three participants attend High School W, which serves two suburban towns in southern Maine. Like High School P, the towns served by High School W are largely homogeneous. No ethnic or racial minority group comprises more than 1.59% of the population. English is the

primary language. Approximately 82% of seniors attend a postsecondary institution after graduation.

All participants shared a number of characteristics:

1. they had been accepted to a four-year college or university,
2. they planned to enroll in a four-year college or university in August or September 2016,
3. they ranked in the top 10% of their senior class academically (based on grade point average),
4. they participated actively in a minimum of four co-curricular or extracurricular activities, organizations, or student government positions over the course of their high school career, and
5. they engaged in multiple activities or took advantage of multiple opportunities to prepare themselves for transitioning to postsecondary education.

All five participants were identified by a high school administrator as not “at risk” of stopping out of college in their first year. “At-risk” is defined as having low self-concept, low social supports, low academic achievement, and a limited ability to make friends (Boulter, 2002; Fitzgerald, 1990).

The primary differences between the participants are their socio-economic status, as described in the initial interview, and the selectivity of the postsecondary institutions they have chosen. Two participants attend High School P and three attend High School W. Table 1 provides descriptive data about each participant.

Table 1

Pilot Study 2: Participants Descriptive Data Collected through Initial Interview and Follow-up Questions

Participant	High School Enrollment	2015 AGI	Postsecondary Institution (enrollment planned for August/September 2016)	Selectivity ¹	Post-Undergraduate Plans
A (CK)	P	(not provided)	University of New England, Biddeford, ME	72/99	Graduate school: dentistry
B (KS)	P	(not provided)	Maine Maritime Academy, Castine, ME	66/99	Starting in a profession: marine biology
C (KH)	W	(not provided)	Colby College, Waterville, ME	94/99	Graduate school: medicine
D (EM)	W	\$85,374	University of Maine, Orono, ME	80/99	Graduate school: biomedical engineering
E (SB)	W	(not provided)	Colby College, Waterville, ME	94/99	Graduate school: neuroscience

¹Selectivity rating from Princeton Review (2016) based on scale of 60-99. A higher score indicates more selective admissions.

After identifying participants, I held a group meeting at each high school to explain the study, what I expected from the students, and what the students should expect from me and the study. The study features five principal data collection points:

1. a brief 29-question survey asking the participant to consider how she prepared for college,
2. a brief (less than 20-minute) interview in March or early April addressing how the students thought about themselves in college,

3. a video journal entry responding to two questions regarding the participant's latest thinking about transitioning to college, completed and submitted in May/June, 2016,
4. a brief survey for each school's college counselor to determine college preparatory services and experiences provided to students, and
5. district descriptive data collected through the Maine Department of Education and district staff.

The initial surveys and unstructured interview sessions were conducted at each participant's high school, a location familiar to the participant (Josselson, 2013, p. 54). The data's validity was established through the method used to conduct and preserve the interview and the follow-up video journal. The location was convenient, local, and mutually agreed-upon. The questions were inviting and open-ended and minimized the researcher's role in the exchange. Each participant provided informed consent to participate in the study and granted specific permission to record the interview. I announced clearly when the recording had begun and when it had stopped. Interview data was validated through transcription by myself or a professional transcriptionist; reading through each transcript word-by-word; coding the data by hand; discerning themes and/or creating descriptions; interrelating the themes and/or descriptions; and interpreting the meaning of the themes and/or descriptions (Cresswell, 2014, p. 197).

The participants' third data point was a video journal recorded on the participant's own equipment, in a place and at a time chosen by her. The video journal entries for the current study were recorded by each participant at a location and on a day and time of their choosing. I allowed for a two-week window in May and early June between requesting the video and following-up on those videos I had not yet received. Participants maintained near total control

over the video journal recording process. I asked that the participants submit the video journal entry to my Dropbox account, but when participants struggled to access/use Dropbox, I accepted the video through other means such as Google Docs. I transcribed each video journal and noted data particular to video recordings, including tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, and eye contact.

Findings

Reviewing the data revealed 23 themes. I analyzed the data by determining which themes appeared in each participant's initial interview and their video diary. Table 2 (below) demonstrates the prevalence of each theme and enabled me to analyze each participant's primary focuses as she considered her transition to college.

Table 2

Pilot Study 2: Themes Found through Analysis of Data from Participants' Interviews and Video Journals

	Part. A Int Vid		Part. B Int Vid		Part. C Int Vid		Part. D Int Vid		Part. E Int Vid	
1. Excitement	X		X		X	X		X	X	X
2. Making the right decision	X	X			X			X		X
3. Leaving home		X			X		X			
4. Difference between high school and college	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
5. Experience on college campuses	X		X				X	X	X	X
6. Leaving high school		X		X	X	X		X		
7. College preparation offered by college	X									
8. College preparation offered by high school			X							

9. Independence or freedom in college	X				X	X	X		X	
10. College selection process	X				X		X	X	X	X
11. Post-college plans, goals	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	
12. Finding friends	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X
13. Co-curricular activities at college	X		X		X	X	X		X	
14. Time management	X						X		X	
15. Preparation for college courses coming out of high school	X	X			X		X	X		X
16. Anticipated rigor of college courses	X	X		X			X	X	X	
17. Picking courses for college					X	X	X	X	X	
18. Dorm life/roommates	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	
19. Own responsibility for paying for college	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
20. Concern for parents paying for college				X				X		X
21. Parents paying for college	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
22. Stress caused by paying for college	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
23. Optimism	X	X		X	X	X				X

Dominant Themes

Paying for College

Triangulating the data presented a fairly common picture of all five participants in regards to the most dominant theme, paying for college. While descriptive data on each student's SES might have distinguished participants from each other, the interview and journal data

suggested that all five have common concerns about paying for college and the stress paying for college causes for the students. All five raised issues regarding their own responsibility for paying for college, but only three students mentioned concern for their parents, and those comments were responses to the journal question concerning how they felt the last time they spoke with their parents regarding college costs. None of the three participants mentioned the concern in the interviews, which did not prompt them to consider finance issues.

There are extremes: Participant A indicated in both her interview and her journal that her parents were paying for college and she was more concerned about graduate school, while Participants C and E went through their financial situation in great detail in their journal entries while shifting eye contact away from the camera more significantly than they had at any other point in the video. However, all three participants *stated* that they were not concerned, that they knew “it would all work out in the end.” The other two participants expressed varying levels of concern and optimism along with different levels of responsibility to pay for their college costs.

One possible conclusion from this pattern, coupled with the decision of four of the five families not to supply their AGI, is that the students have embodied much of the financial responsibility, even if they are not personally responsible for the costs in the same ways. These students register worry and concern that is not necessarily reflected in their words. One pattern related to the financial concern is that each student mentioned (in the interview, journal entry, or both) plans for life after college. Four of the five participants linked college to a “job” that would make it easier to pay off their debt or somehow compensate their parents. All five had a specific professional plan for life after college, making it appear that as high school seniors, they saw college as one rung on a ladder to an identified goal and lifestyle. This mindset might have one of two general effects: 1) putting significant intellectual and emotional pressure on the student to

reach that goal, or 2) providing the student with a sense of identity and responsibility that will motivate them through the hardest parts of college life.

College Life: Social Context

The second most dominant theme arises from the challenges and opportunities that come from joining a campus community. All five students expressed excitement and optimism about going to college, and all five were quick to identify (perceived) differences between going to high school and going to college. Only Participants A, C, and D raised the issue of leaving home, and of the three, only A was concerned about being away. All but Participant E mentioned leaving high school, but again, only one participant (B) expressed any worry about doing so. The primary sources of concern were for finding friends (all five, with C, D, and E expressing concern in both the interview and the journal entry) and managing dorm life and roommates (all but E, and C just in her journal entry). All five mentioned joining co-curricular activities as a way of meeting people, but only one of them, C, raised it in both the interview and the journal entry. The data here are not surprising given that the focus of the lives of these students in high school, with the exception of Participant A, has been joining co-curricular activities and forming friendships around their out-of-class activities. Participant A reported that she joined sports and a governance board because they were fun and interested her, not because she expected to make friends.

Connected to the theme of establishing one's self socially on campus, the participants ranked on-campus experiences as significant factors in their college-selection decisions. All five listed at least one college campus experience as one of their approaches to making the right decision. Participants D and E mentioned it in both the interview and the journal entry. Participants A, B, C, and D ranked a college tour as having the greatest or second-greatest

impact on their college selection. Participants C and D ranked an overnight stay as the greatest or second-greatest impact. None of the other three listed overnight stay as one of the ways she prepared for college. The only student to observe a class on campus, Participant E, ranked it as having the greatest impact on her selection decision. Interestingly enough, Participants A and C indicate they enrolled in college courses held on a campus, but neither listed the experience among the top three most impactful. Clearly, going to campus and getting a personal feel for the way it operates, looks, sounds, and smells shapes the way these five students think about the college experience.

College Life: Academic Context

The data concerning academics are mixed and patterns are less obvious. Four participants, A, B, D, and E, all commented on anticipating the rigor of college courses to be more difficult than what they faced in high school, although only B expressed concern about “surviving, academically.” Participants A and D wondered how prepared they are for the workload and expectations, while C focused primarily on life out of the classroom and E sees academics as consisting primarily of labs, which she lists among other ways of occupying her time (along with doing community outreach and theater). Three participants, C, D, and E, discussed stress felt from choosing courses for college and four, A, C, D, and E, mentioned the preparation they received from their high school courses for college courses. Participants C, D, and E appear to have a disconnect between how well their high school courses prepared them and how confident they were choosing courses at the college level (see Table 2, compare responses to item 8 to responses to item 17). This disconnect may come from the overarching belief that high school and college are different animals (all five participants agreed in the

interview that they were significantly different, and Participants A, C, and D mentioned it again in the journal entry, plus a sense of ownership over their academic work in high school).

Only Participant A mentioned the college's preparation of her for the transition, and only Participant B mentioned her high school's preparation of her for the transition in their data. Both made their mentions in the interview, which may have been skewed due to the prior relationship I have with them. Despite the extensive services and opportunities offered by both high schools, the preparation they provided registered at a very low level for these four of the five participants. Jogging the students' memories with the list of opportunities and services did not create a sense in the interviews or the journal entries that they were memorable or impactful.

Conclusions

At the second pilot study's conclusion, I was not prepared to formulate a theory in response to the study's research questions, "How do second semester high school seniors perceive the upcoming college experience? How do they prepare for college life?" There are issues of data reliability and the study's design, discussed below, that make such an attempt moot or at least unadvisable. However, the second pilot study prepared me for the current research study in a number of ways. I learned that developing theory requires a significant depth and breadth of data; establishing a comfortable relationship with participants from the start can increase data reliability and responsiveness; and identifying themes requires persistence and repeated review of the data.

Reflexivity

As discussed in Chapter 1, I came to the pilot study with a set of biases about emerging adults in the transition to college that I recognize and acknowledge as part of my own background. I am fully aware that these biases and assumptions have found their way into my

pilot study research design, sample selection, methods implementation, and data analysis. I am also aware of the potential impact they may have had on any conclusions or recommendations that emerged from the study. There is a risk that my predisposition toward enrolling in a residential college after high school, as well as my own troubled experience in my first year of college, may have framed my conclusions concerning the validity of each participant's preparation for college or the seriousness of their commitment.

Summary of Pilot Studies (2015, 2016)

Pilot Study 1 (2015) provided me with my first experiences in study design and semi-structured qualitative interviewing. I chose as participants two first-year college students I had known previously through my role as assistant principal at their high school. Our familiarity with each other created an immediate sense of shared purpose, allowing me to devote all of my attention to writing the interview questions and practicing transcription, data analysis, and data presentation. The results were inconclusive and the design flawed, two outcomes that enabled me to increase reliability (i.e. acknowledging my own biases and the influence of my experiences on subjectivity; preparing more open-ended and comprehensive qualitative interview questions) for Pilot Study 2 (2016).

Pilot Study 2 (2016) narrowed my interest in the transition from high school to college. In Pilot Study 1 (2015), I sought two students who had enrolled in college directly from high school. My concern was limited to their impressions of the recent transition. Pilot Study 2 (2016) raised the specific research question regarding the transition experience of students who had been academically and socially successful in high school. I learned from Pilot Study 2 (2016) that my skill lay in qualitative interviewing and building relationships quickly. I also determined that I was not well suited to conducting research through video diary data collection, primarily

for technical reasons. My rejection of video led me to consider other methods of more personal, self-directed data collection. I chose social media/texting for my dissertation study in part because it allows for the participant to control the conditions and content of their response, like a video diary but without the technical issues.

Both pilot studies provided me with useful feedback from faculty and doctoral peers. I incorporated feedback regarding interview question formation; data collection; and data presentation in the design for my dissertation study.

Overview of the Current Study: Introduction to Methodology

Over the last forty years, male student enrollment and graduation rates at four-year residential colleges and universities have significantly declined. There is very little current research examining the trend, and even less looking at the FYE's role in students' decisions to persist, transfer, or stop out. The current study builds on research focused on the transition year, emerging adulthood, and college student development in order to explore the FYE of a small sample of male, traditional-aged, college-ready students. The data consist of a year's worth of varied, daily experiences expressed in depth and rich detail. The rest of Chapter 3 describes the study's design, data collection plan, methods, and validity.

The current research consists of a case study of the first-year college experience of traditional-aged, college-ready, male students at Saint Joseph's College in Standish, Maine. The case study approach allowed me to contextualize the FYE by referencing the participants' environment (Tinto, 2006).

Access, Recruitment, and Sample Selection

I chose a nonprobability, purposive sample for the study based on my desire to learn about the male college FYE without any concern for generalization (Merriam, 2009; Cresswell,

2013; Maxwell, 2013). In August, 2017, with the assistance of a Saint Joseph's College administrator, I distributed a recruitment email in the first week of August to all incoming male Saint Joseph's College first-year students. I followed the initial email with a reminder encouraging students to participate. I then created a flier for the first week of classes, which was distributed to all first-year male dorm rooms by residence life staff. Recruitment brought five interested students, all of whom agreed to meet me personally on campus to discuss the project the first week of September, 2017.

The study's participants (n=5) were all 18-year-old men in their first semester of a four-year college or university. In case study research, a sample of four or five participants is sufficient "to identify themes and conduct cross-case theme analysis" (Cresswell, 2013, p. 157). All participants shared a number of characteristics establishing their college readiness:

1. SAT and/or ACT composite score(s) at or above their institution's admissions criteria,
2. high school GPA at or above their institution's admissions criteria,
3. class rank at or above their institution's admissions criteria, and
4. active participation in a minimum of four co-curricular or extracurricular activities, organizations, or student government positions over the course of their high school career.
5. a strong interest in engaging in the study

After identifying participants, I held a group meeting to explain the study, what I expected from the students, determine the modality and frequency of social media data collection, and define expectations for participation, me as a researcher, and the study. Involving participants throughout a research project can increase rigor and deepen the researcher's

understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Redman-MacLaren & Mills, 2015).

Participants “bought in” to the study during the group meeting, when we worked together and each participant had a voice in decisions regarding study design and conduct. They helped me decide to use texting to communicate; counseled me on frequency and timing of the texts; admonished each other to respond in a timely fashion; and determined the number of qualitative interviews they would sit for. Collaboration with my participants came naturally. As a high school administrator, I have made it a hallmark of my practice to work with adolescents by inviting their input and making decisions based on the needs they identify for themselves. My background in restorative practices has enabled me to see the value in allowing individuals to determine next steps in a process through their own reflection and self-assessment. By asking my participants to engage in study design decisions with me, I established a level of trust and respect that enabled all five men to see value in the project and in their FYE. The quality of their responses increased as a result.

Description of Plan and Methods

Data Collection: Overview

The study features seven principal data collection points:

1. the aggregate 2017-2018 NSSE data from Saint Joseph’s College for the cohort of first-year students including the participants,
2. a semi-structured interview in September addressing how the students are experiencing the transition to college (Appendix B),
3. irregular text communications with me about the participant’s experience (“Describe a high point and low point in your day.” “What do you remember

affecting you the most today?”), collected several times a week through April 2018,

4. a written survey followed by a semi-structured interview in January addressing how the students perceived their first semester experience (Appendix C);
5. a final semi-structured interview in May asking each participant to reflect on the year’s experience (Appendix B),
6. structured interviews with Saint Joseph’s administrators and other employees engaged in student life services (Appendix D), and
7. descriptive data provided by St. Joseph’s College.

Document Review

Many postsecondary institutions in the United States survey students at some point during their first year of enrollment. Two of the more commonly used instruments are the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) survey (Higher Education Research Institute), delivered between March and October of the year students enroll, and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), distributed by Indiana University at Bloomington and delivered in the winter of the first year of enrollment. While the two survey instruments overlap in some areas (e.g. academic behavior, some census information), they ultimately provide complementary data. CIRP collects more and deeper demographic information, including political views, gender orientation, and high school experiences. Since CIRP is delivered before the student has accumulated much college experience, the data provide insight into the student’s expectations of the transition and initial impressions. NSSE collects data about academic, social, and personal behavior and attitudes demonstrated in the first year of college. Data from NSSE suggest how successfully the student has transitioned into the college environment. Because my

research question focuses on the first-year experience in particular, and not the transition to college, it is more appropriate to use NSSE data to supplement the qualitative data collected through interviews and frequent texting communications. I received permission from St. Joseph's College to use NSSE data in the aggregate (see pp. 217-219).

Interview Protocol

The initial unstructured interview sessions were conducted in person at St. Joseph's College. The location was familiar to the participant (Josselson, 2013, p. 54), which increases the interview data's reliability. Data validity was also established through the method used to conduct and preserve the interviews and the texting communications. The location was convenient and mutually agreed-upon. The interview and texting questions were inviting and open-ended and minimized my role in the exchange. Each participant provided informed consent to participate in the study. I announced clearly when the interview began and when it stopped. Interview data were also validated through

1. transcription by myself or a professional transcriptionist;
2. reading through each transcript word-by-word;
3. coding the data by hand at first and then through Nvivo, a proven academic software program;
4. discerning themes and/or creating descriptions;
5. interrelating the themes and/or descriptions; and
6. interpreting the meaning of the themes and/or descriptions (Cresswell, 2014).

Texting Protocol

The primary source of data was random communication through texting at several points during each week. Because written journaling can create anxiety for younger participants who

are concerned about the quality of their writing, social media and texting have emerged as a more productive method of data collection (Palmer, et al., 2014). Concerns regarding video journaling are centered on the use or misuse of the technology (Patton, 2015) rather than substantive issues regarding the reliability or validity of the data. Texting has become the preferred method of communication for undergraduate students (Chen & Lin, 2016; Palmer, et al., 2014).

Non-digital natives are quick to note that social media, while often intimidating for them, are a familiar and comforting technological means of communication for late adolescents and the youngest emerging adults. Using social media or texting as a research tool reduces the impact of age-based “disadvantages with regard to language skills, their capacity for concentration, and their need for confidence when interviewed by an unfamiliar adult” (Buchwald, et al., 2009, p. 14). Combining texting with other data collection methods makes the process more interesting for younger participants and increases the data’s relevancy (Buchwald, et al., 2009). When the study began, I was afraid that the frequency with which I planned to communicate with participants would lead to a drop-in engagement; maintaining active participation in participatory research is often difficult (Redman-MacLaren & Mills, 2015). While two of the participants sometimes delayed their response or ignored text prompts altogether, the overwhelming number of responses were timely and descriptive.

Data Analysis

Coding Procedures

I reviewed all data three times during data collection (October, January, and April), then again in June, 2018, after the final interviews. I identified themes from June to October, 2018, and modified the list after each new review. I continued to modify the list as I entered data into

NVivo starting in July, 2018. I reviewed the data closely again while preparing the profiles, and again when preparing Chapters 4 and 5 (Findings) and Chapter 6 (Analysis and Theory).

I created seventeen nodes in NVivo in June, when I began learning the software, one for each theme. I then created five cases in NVivo, one for each participant, and included information on where the data came from. I then discovered that I could add attributes to each case. I started with notes on athletic participation; GPA; Hometown; and Work on campus. I took these attributes from my review of the data and considered them ways to eventually compare and contrast the FYE among the participants. In September, as I reviewed my third participant's data (Gary Anderson), I realized I did not have enough data on SES. I texted each participant and posed a range of annual family incomes to them (less than \$40K, \$40K-\$60K, \$60K-\$80K, and over \$80K). Four of them provided me with the range that applied to them and one refused, citing confidentiality. In April, 2019, I solicited additional descriptive data from the participants, including sources of funding for the first year of college and parents'/guardians' level of educational attainment.

When it came time to prepare the data for coding, I began with cutting each participant's texts in the Excel spreadsheet into separate documents. I did this to isolate the responses and allow me to read through the exchange without distraction. I read through the entire list, including my prompts, and paid attention to dates, patterns, and missing information. I then converted each participant's Excel sheet to a Word document. I tried importing the Excel document into NVivo but to no avail—the data was unreadable. After saving the sheet in several different formats and failing to import correctly, I settled on converting the data to Word. I imported the Word document into NVivo and realized that there was too much data and the formatting was distracting. I went back to the Word document and cut out the prompts, my

responses, and the set of texts and other communications I sent to the group. The new document was workable.

In the process of entering and coding data, I discovered that two of the themes were misidentified. I eliminated one (Time on Campus Before Enrollment) for lack of data and split another into two separate themes (HS Social Engagement became HS Social Engagement and HS Social Preparation). As I coded data, I added a sub-theme to HS Social Preparation called Family Attitude Toward Transition. However, as I continued to review data from other participants, I noted that only one participant provided data that fit the sub-theme and therefore abandoned it.

Interpretation and Synthesis of Data

Grounded Theory

My interpretation of the data was guided by Charmaz (2014) and her method of constructivist grounded theory. The common features of grounded theory include (Charmaz, 2014, p. 15):

1. conducting data collection and analysis simultaneously in an iterative process: I began data analysis using open coding after the initial interviews in September, 2017, as a way of determining what text prompts might help me fill gaps and follow leads. I repeated the cycle of collecting and analyzing data throughout the school year and continued to use the data to shape future text and interview questions.

2. analyzing data inductively rather than imposing themes or structure on the data: I used open coding of the data to identify tentative themes, many of which did not survive the next data analysis process. I did not settle on themes until I began the initial coding in NVivo, and, even then, I dropped a theme in the process of axial coding (The dropped theme was “time spent on

campus before enrollment.” Only two participants provided data and the experience did not appear to have a significant impact on their FYE or decision to attend).

3. using comparative methods: I compared data within and between participants’ interview responses and texts. I used the comparisons to find gaps in the data and to conceive early themes. By the time I began coding in June, 2018, my comparison method persuaded me to use a matrix to present data by theme (see Chapter 4).

4. drawing on data to develop new conceptual categories: As discussed above, I reviewed the data multiple times throughout the year to identify tentative themes, look for patterns, and write new text prompts and interview questions. The data were the foundation for both collection and analysis. I used selective coding as a final data analysis method in order to identify relationships between categories and themes and synthesize the final list.

5. developing inductive abstract, analytic categories through systematic data analysis: Through NVivo, I used open coding to find themes and nodes based entirely on data. I then used axial coding to relate many of the themes to each other and settle on 14 that provided different lenses through which to view the FYE. Those themes included the participants’ attitude toward Saint Joseph’s College (SJC); their connection to their professors; communication with family; preparation for college academics in high school; high school co-curricular experience; level of personal social engagement while in high school; communication with high school friends or supports while at SJC; social experiences in high school the participants considered to be preparation for college; self-perception and its development over the course of the FYE; experience in the academic major department at SJC; academic performance at SJC; co-curricular involvement at SJC; services accessed at SJC; and social engagement at SJC.

6. emphasizing theory construction over description or application of current theories: I approached the study with a thorough understanding of emerging adulthood theory, including recentring, as well as deep reading in the literature of personality development (see Chapter 2). Along the way, I read literature in gender theory and college student development when it became clear that they were implicated by the data. However, throughout the process, I have used the data to determine the direction of my thinking rather than existing theory.

7. engaging in theoretical sampling: After categories and themes emerge from early data analysis, grounded theory researchers test the robustness of the themes and categories through theoretical sampling. Most often, this is accomplished by inserting questions into interviews to seek specific data on the identified themes or categories (Charmaz, 2014). In my study, after my review of first semester of text-responses, I discovered that communication with family members seemed to be diverging among my five participants. I suspected the divergence may be a reflection of a different level of comfort with the FYE. In order to determine what the impact might be, I added a question to the second interview (January, 2018), a text prompt in February, and a question to the final interview in May.

8. searching for variation in the studied categories or processes: My initial analysis of the categories or themes that emerged from the data revealed that my participants used time in very different ways. Their use of time impacted their level of confidence and their connection to the campus community. I arrived at this conclusion by noting differences in particular between responses coded under the themes of self-perception, academic performance, social engagement, and co-curricular engagement.

9. pursuing developing a category rather than covering a specific empirical topic: Grounded theory researchers analyze data inductively, allowing the data to guide category and

theme formation as a preliminary and necessary step in the process of developing a theory. In my study, the data I collected through interviews and texting formed the basis for coding in NVivo. Categories and themes coalesced around the data itself. As an alternative, I might have begun by forming topics based on hypotheses regarding the FYE or taken from existing literature and attempted to find data to fit. Such an approach is not supported by grounded theory.

A researcher using grounded theory gathers rich data, reviews that data again and again, writes memos to aid analysis and become familiar with the data, and pursues more data when theorizing in order to fill the gaps in the major categories (Charmaz, 2014). The constructivist grounded theorist acknowledges that the act of research influences the participant's perception of experience and that the researcher actively shapes both data and the analysis of data (Charmaz, 2010, p. 360). At the start of the study, I anticipated that my participants would experience their first year of college as a series of social interactions, exchange of views, and incomplete understandings, all in an attempt to re-define themselves within the new context, both socially and academically.

I decided to use grounded theory for this particular research project because my question, "How do college-ready, traditional-aged, male students experience the first year of postsecondary education at a four-year college or university?", addresses a social process (persisting through the first year of postsecondary education) subjectively experienced by each participant. Grounded theory, developed as it is from the data collected and without reference to a set of hypotheses or predictions, "renders quite well the reality of the social interaction and its structural context" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 32). A theory grounded in the data I collected will become part of a larger discussion concerning the first-year experience, the transition to college from high school, retention, and gender inequality in undergraduate higher education.

Case Study

I chose the multiple-case study method because I planned to use a sample consisting of multiple participants and predicted that analysis of their experiences would produce contrasting results (Yin, 2018, p. 55). Case study method is particularly suited to grounded theory because case study is “progressively focused”: the organizing concepts shift as the data are collected (Stake, 1995, p. 133). The data I collected through familiarizing myself with the Saint Joseph’s community allowed me to contextualize the first-year experience of the five students who transitioned into their new environment.

Data Preparation*Profiles*

Throughout the process of identifying themes and creating nodes in NVivo, my guidance was the feeling that I wanted to use all of the data in one way or another and leave nothing behind on a first pass at the profiles. As I began writing profiles, I realized that some data I had coded was repetitious or not descriptive enough to be meaningful. I lost the sense that I was negligent if I did not code every phrase and began to be more aware of how complementary data fit together rather than looking for significance in every piece.

I prepared the text Excel document for each participant as the first step in writing the profile. Consequently, I did not engage the data for any participant other than the one I was about to focus on. I kept my reading to the individual participant’s data and did not stray or consider the differences between participants’ experiences as I read and drafted.

I created the profiles in the following order (all names are pseudonyms):

1. Chad Brunswick (July 2018)
2. Kurt Nolan (August 2018)

3. Gary Anderson (September 2018)
4. Michael Brown (September 2018)
5. Scott Combs (December 2018)

My goal in writing the first profile (Chad Brunswick) was to organize the data. I chose his profile first because I had developed a rich relationship with him over the course of the year. I believed his data to be complex and highly revealing, so I thought starting with him would be a good test of my themes. I coded and pasted phrases with dates into each node. I looked for multiple themes for each piece of data and often found them. I wanted to think as expansively as possible and not miss the potential for a piece of data to resonate in different ways.

My second profile (Kurt Nolan) was also rich and complex. The participant self-identified as neural atypical in our initial, informational meeting at the end of his first week of college. I was touched that he trusted me so quickly with such a personal part of his life. I hypothesized that each time I texted, he would provide an idiosyncratic response, something I would most likely not see reflected in the responses of the other neural typical participants. I was often wrong about that, which led me to reconsider my own biases about autism and the experiences I have had with many autistic students at the secondary education level. Reading his data all at the same time with the focus on coding led me to deeper insights (i.e. finding self-reflective patterns based on illness; seeing recursive language as a shield; and externalizing self-doubt) that stayed with me as I moved on to the next participant's profile.

Data from the third participant, Gary Anderson, led me to make changes to the NVivo Case files and to request additional data about SES. I did not have a specific reason for choosing Gary Anderson over Michael Brown. The fourth participant, Michael Brown, ended up in this position because I knew I wanted to leave Scott Combs for last. Scott Combs is the only student

who did not return to SJC after his first year. He transferred to the University of New Hampshire, which has a campus in his hometown. He moved back home with his grandfather for his sophomore year. A few weeks into his sophomore year, he withdrew from the University of New Hampshire and secured a position at a manufacturing plant. He began taking courses through his employer to become certified in the field.

My thinking in holding Scott Combs to last was that I would develop a sense of what worked for each of the other participants at SJC before delving into what didn't work for Scott Combs. I wanted the opportunity to see the successful FYE (success defined as returning to the institution for a second year) in its iterations. Once I identified the successful FYE, allowing the data to present an image without prejudging them, I felt prepared to view Scott Combs's experience in light of what worked for the others. I consider the preparation of Scott Combs's profile the first analysis step. I did not prepare the actual profile any differently, but I kept notes on the differences I saw and used them to construct theory.

Summaries by Theme

The second format I chose for data presentation consists of a summary of each participant's data organized by theme. Reducing the profiles to summaries by theme enabled me to examine the data more closely and prepare for analysis in Chapter 6. I used the summaries to compare FYE across participants and to look for missing data.

NSSE Data Tables

Indiana University reported NSSE data to Saint Joseph's College in several formats. I reviewed the data and extracted data relevant to the FYE into a series of tables. The extracted data provided an institutional and cultural context for the participants' FYE. The context permitted me to root the participants' experiences in a common environment and provided

insight into the interventionist and support opportunities that were available to all students. The tables led to my discovery that some participants availed themselves of opportunities that others did not.

Rationale for Methods Selection

As a constructivist who believes that individuals create their own reality through their personal responses to their environment (Patton, 2015), I am attracted to grounded theory's capacity for identifying the meaning individuals make through their perception of themselves in the world. For the population under consideration, the opportunity to reflect upon their personal experience in a largely unstructured setting benefited both the participant and the research by providing an outpouring of data. The use of texting as the primary medium of communication and reflection acknowledged the strong preference among Millennial emerging adults for rapid and broadcast messaging (Palmer, et. al., 2014).

The case study method presents an opportunity to explore and understand the "bounded system" in which the participants live and learn (Schram, 2006, p. 107). The method is appropriate for the current research since all participants were students at the same college. As the primary and common context for the students' experiences, understanding the environment enabled me to compare participant experiences and arrive at more valid themes and categories in data analysis. Based on Mertens's (2015) explanation of the four major research paradigms, case study qualifies as constructivist, matching my own epistemological orientation. The theory emerges within the design phase (Mertens, 2015), and requires the researcher to organize a study around a problem, a context, an issue, and a set of findings (Schram, 2006). This structure provided a frame for me to pursue grounded theory.

Yin (2011) states that case study can be used to improve understanding of particular concepts, such as the first-year experience of college-ready postsecondary students. Any generalization made from a qualitative case study serves as a “working hypothesis” rather than a conclusion (Yin, 2011, p. 101), which matches the purpose and method behind grounded theory. In order to conduct a case study, the researcher must collect a variety of data over a sustained period of time (Cresswell, 2014). The variety and depth of data in a case study supports the analysis necessary in grounded theory. The study’s purpose was to use the case (the set of students selected for participation) to arrive at a theory of how the students experienced the first year of college at St. Joseph’s College; to examine how their experience can be understood through Tanner’s (2006) theory of recentering; and to measure the impact of campus services on the students’ first-year experience. In other words, the study’s purpose was to develop an adequate description, interpretation, and explanation of the first-year experience rather than constructing a theory that can be generalized to other contexts (Maxwell, 2013).

By its nature, a longitudinal study generates an abundance of data. The researcher’s task is to sort through the data and display them in a way that responds to the study’s research questions and informs the reader. Constructivist grounded theory asks the researcher to “locate participants’ meanings and actions in larger social structures and discourses of which they may be unaware” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 240). Narrative data should be rich and thick enough to allow the reader to imagine their own uses and applications for the theory that emerges from the data (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In qualitative research, narrative data is most authentic in the first person and as a “story” with a beginning, middle, and end (Merriam, 2009, p. 32). Narrative inquiry recognizes that “people in most modern cultures, at least, attempt to make meaning and sense of their lives by generating an account of their past, present, and future selves that is

grounded in critical episodes of their experiences and helps to generate a sense of unity and purpose across both time and context” (Pratt & Matsuba, 2018, p. 12). At its root, a case study is a portrait of an experience (Marton, 1986). This description fits philosophically with the underlying purpose of constructivism, which is that individuals make interpretations of their own experiences (Brookfield, 2005). The researcher’s responsibility is to respect the participant’s ownership of their story (Riessman, 2008) by collecting extensive information about the participant and arriving at a clear understanding of their life (Cresswell, 2013).

Trustworthiness, Validity, and Reliability

I employed specific strategies to enhance the study’s trustworthiness, including prolonged engagement and persistent observation (nine months of data collection through three interviews, over forty texts, and a written survey); triangulation (data collected in three different forms) (Maxwell, 1996, p. 76); clarifying my bias as a researcher; and the use of rich, thick description (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

“Justifying qualitative research largely consists of developing and articulating methodological design and analysis standards” (Howe & Eisenhart, 1990, p. 7). While validity is not per se established by the selection of specific methods (Maxwell, 2013; Smith, 1993), the validity and reliability of a research study can be judged by the extent to which the study meets five criteria (Smith, 1993; Howe & Eisenhart, 1990): 1) a match between the research question and data collection/analysis techniques; 2) the correct application of the data collection and analysis techniques; 3) an explicit revelation of the researcher’s biases and prior experiences that may affect subjectivity; 4) the overall warrant of the study, established through a “robust and rigorous theoretical examination” of the study’s conclusions (Smith, p. 85); and 5) a

demonstration of the study's value to the field, including relevance, consisting of newsworthiness and importance (Smith, p. 87).

1) Matching methods to research questions is not a matter of “operationalizing” the research questions. “[M]ethods are the means to answering your research questions, not a logical transformation of the latter” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 100). In my study, semi-structured interviews and regular reflective prompts were calculated to provide the data I needed: both moment-to-moment experience and interpretation of experience demonstrating each participant's development during the first year of college. Other data collection methods (NSSE aggregate data, interviews with college administrators and service providers, and descriptive data about St. Joseph's College) provide institutional context for the participants' experience.

2) I consulted Josselson (2013) and Seidman (2013) to prepare interview questions; engage respectfully with the participants; choose appropriate settings for the interviews; and interpret the data collected through the interviews. Charmaz (2010, 2014) and Glaser & Strauss (2008) governed my use of grounded theory. I conducted the case study according to the methods laid out by Yin (2018) and Stake (1995). All interview questions were open-ended, inviting, and designed “to obtain a view of the participant's internal world” (Josselson, 2013, p. viii) (see Appendix B for interview questions). I scheduled interviews with participants individually through email or text and did not reveal the identities of the other participants in my communications. We met for interviews on campus in a location chosen in consultation with the participant (cafeteria, cafe, classroom, or meeting room). I engaged in the layered, repetitive data analysis prescribed by grounded theory in order to honor the information each participant offered me.

3) I have acknowledged my biases and prior experiences that may have affected my interpretation of data and the conclusions I draw from them (see *infra* and Chapter 1). My bias is toward the utility and advisability of completing a degree program at a residential college. My prior experiences include my own difficult FYE and decision to transfer for my second year; two pilot studies; and my role as a high school administrator whose responsibilities include preparing students for college.

4) The study is warranted based on a) my experience with the two pilot studies and b) the rigor with which I analyzed the data collected in the current study. In the first pilot study (2015), I developed a research-based interview protocol and data collection method that I refined for the second pilot study. The data I collected was insufficient to formulate a theory. In the second pilot (2016), I continued refining the interview protocol with reference to Josselson (2013) and Seidman (2013). The data collected in the second pilot study was once again insufficient to formulate a theory; however, the experience taught me how to collect personal information more effectively, a skill I used in the current study. In the current study, I reviewed, coded, analyzed, and organized data on five separate occasions. The rigor with which I evaluated the data ensures that the claims I make are supported by the data.

5) Relevance and Ethics: I establish relevance in terms of newsworthiness and importance in the Introduction to the Study (Chapter 1.) I have adhered to ethical standards by receiving permission to proceed by both the IRB at Lesley University (October 26, 2016; extended April 18, 2017) and the IRB at Saint Joseph's College (March 31, 2017); obtaining informed consent from each participant; maintaining confidentiality in data collection; disguising each participant's identity through aliases; keeping data on a laptop in password-protected

software; respecting each participant's voice by retaining their words throughout data presentation; and by listening well (Josselson, 2013).

Validity is established through the number and form of interviews conducted with participants. The three-interview structure I employed "places participants' comments in context," "encourages...participants...to check for the internal consistency of what they say," and enables the researcher to "connect [participants'] experiences and check the comments of one participant against those of others" (Seidman, 2013, p. 27). I accomplished all three goals through repeated review of the data, checking each interview data set against earlier data sets, and comparing the interview data to the data collected through texting and the survey.

Researcher Biases and Assumptions

"[C]ase study is subjective, relying heavily on our previous experience and our sense of worth of things" (Stake, 1995, p. 134). I came to this study with a set of biases about emerging adults in the transition to college that I recognize and acknowledge as part of my own background (see Chapter 1, *infra*, p.). I am fully aware that these biases and assumptions have found their way into my research design, methods implementation, and data analysis. In order to counteract the biases, I kept them in mind and accounted for them as I read my participant's responses, coded the data, identified themes, and arrived at a theory of the FYE. I also reminded myself regularly that "narrative inquirers need to reconstruct their own narrative of inquiry histories and to be alert to possible tensions between those narrative histories and the narrative research they undertake" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 46). I wrote memos documenting my reflection on both my own experience and the experiences of my participants as a way of recognizing how my personal struggle may or not be appearing in my interpretation of the participants' FYE.

I am also aware of the personal significance the study holds for me. I experienced the onset of depression associated with the transition to college in my first year (Chen & Lin, 2016), which led to my decision to transfer from a highly selective university a thousand miles from home to a less rigorous institution closer to friends and family. My memories of my first-year experience remain fresh and clear. My sister had a similar experience in her first year, but left her first institution without a plan for enrolling in a second school. Her year away from school was disorienting, and she also experienced depression. We both found our second schools ultimately satisfying socially and academically, but our feelings of rejection and failure continue to color our perceptions of our transition from high school. To increase the study's validity, I attempted to bracket my own experiences as described above and open myself to an honest understanding of my participants' lived experiences in the first year of college (Cresswell, 2103).

Ethical Considerations

There are several ethical considerations behind the research design as I have described it. The first is that encouraging texting as a means of data collection may have increased the participants' reliance on them as a communication tool. Despite the clear preference by over 94% of emerging adults for using electronic devices to communicate (Palmer, et al., 2014), there was the potential that at least some of my participants might have balked at being required to rely on texting as part of the study. Problematic Internet Use has been associated with depression in late adolescents/emerging adults (Chen & Lin, 2016), and I am ethically bound to recognize and intervene when a participant demonstrates PIU in the course of my study to his detriment.

Another ethical consideration implicated by the research design is the possibility that a participant might have communicated thoughts of self-harm or harm in the course of data collection. I am a mandatory reporter due to my profession (secondary school educator) and

clearly identified myself as such in the consent letter. If a participant had sent a message that suggested harm to himself or another person, I was ready to intervene by contacting the appropriate service provider on campus and remove the participant from the study. Thankfully, no such incident arose.

A further ethical consideration that emerged from the study design was the possibility that frequent and intense communication with me may have established me in my participants' minds as a counselor or therapist. The researcher-participant relationship cannot safely exist on this level. While "a human response [to a participant's story] is ethically necessary, ...an effort to make a therapeutic response is ethically suspect" (Josselson, 2013, p. 111). To address the possibility of forming such a relationship, I stated clearly in my letter introducing the study to potential participants that the text communication would be almost entirely one-way. I also used impersonal texts (e.g., generalized rather than tailored to a specific participant) and refrained from personalized commentary unless necessary to clarify a response. The participants learned not to expect me to respond once they had answered my prompt. This approach also increased the distance between them as participants and me as the researcher. Keeping myself distant encouraged more self-reflective and honest reports from the participants.

Text communication requests occurred several times a week during regular business hours. At first, I established convenient times to communicate with each participant, but then determined that developing a rigid pattern for texting would reduce the level of detail in the participant's responses. Keeping the communication convenient but not routine encouraged more direct and sincere responses. Asking for daily communication was likely to deter and/or standardize responses. This part of the study design was finalized in consultation with the

participants at the group meeting. Participant input into a study design can increase the study's authenticity and produce more reliable data (Redman-McLaren & Mills, 2015).

Limitations of the Study

1. The students were volunteers in a single college. One benefit of limiting a qualitative study to a single site, however, is the ability to examine data within a shared context and environment. Comparison between participants' experiences becomes more reliable when they are rooted in the same institution.
2. The sample size was small. However, a small sample size in a qualitative study allows the researcher to achieve depth and acquire thick description, both of which contribute significantly to theory formulation.
3. The same researcher who conducted the data collection abstracted and interpreted the data. While this may be perceived as a limitation, my status as the only researcher allowed me the opportunity to listen more closely and become familiar with each participant's personality, history, and self-perception.
4. All participants identified as SIS male. There were no selection criteria that determined the participants' status. I simply took the first five volunteers.

There are also limiting factors inherent in the study design. The semi-structured interview has the potential to lose its effectiveness in the hands of a novice researcher because it yields an excessive amount of data (Maxwell, 2013, p. 89). Lack of experience can affect the researcher's ability to discern good data from bad and may lead to improper emphasis on some themes over others. Inexperienced qualitative interviewers run the risk of influencing the participants' responses through the unintentional revelation of the interviewer's personal biases or preferences (Yin, 2011, p. 137). As a novice qualitative interviewer, I also ran the risk of failing to elicit

responses that address the research question by not structuring the interview process tightly enough (Josselson, 2013, p. xi).

In addition, even though social media and texting have become the preferred method of communication for the majority of college-aged emerging adults, there is a risk that asking for frequent and regular responses to researcher prompts may discourage active participation (Tinson, 2009; Redman-MacLaren & Mills, 2015). To reduce the risk of losing participants mid-study, I offered a chance to win a gift card to a local or online establishment each month (p. 93).

Chapter 4: Study Setting and Participant Profiles

Overview

The problem at the center of the current research is the significant undergraduate attrition rate at American colleges and universities. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the literature review, little research has been conducted concerning the FYE in particular of traditional-aged, male, college-ready students. Understanding their FYE at a substantive level will lead to further research and create a space for conversation regarding more effective interventions, thereby increasing retention. The present study was designed to collect significant data concerning the daily experience of five students with the hope of answering three research questions: 1) How do college-ready, traditional-aged male students experience the first year of postsecondary education at a small liberal arts college in Maine? 2) How can we understand the first-year experience of college-ready, traditional-aged male students at a small liberal arts college in Maine through the lens of Tanner's theory of recentering? and 3) What is the impact of campus support services on the experience of college-ready, traditional-aged male students in their first year at a small liberal arts college in Maine? The analysis was conducted using grounded theory and case study. The study's trustworthiness was established through the use of three interviews and over forty text exchanges over the course of eight months and the repeated and rigorous review of data throughout the data collection period.

Methodology: Narrative Evidence, Case Study, Grounded Theory

Narrative inquiry recognizes that "people in most modern cultures, at least, attempt to make meaning and sense of their lives by generating an account of their past, present, and future selves that is grounded in critical episodes of their experiences and helps to generate a sense of unity and purpose across both time and context" (Pratt & Matsuba, 2018, p. 12). In qualitative

research, narrative data is most authentic in the first person and as a “story” with a beginning, middle, and end (Merriam, 2009, p. 32). In order to honor my participants and present data in the most useful form, I have chosen to re-story (Cresswell, 2013) the data collected throughout the FYE into a fluid narrative for each participant. The narratives are in first person in fidelity to the voice participants used to respond to my interview and survey questions and text prompts. Each narrative is introduced by a short summary providing family history, secondary school information, financial information, and first-year (FY) academic performance. For larger context, I have also included a summary of the NSSE data from Spring 2018 and a description of the nodes and themes I discovered through data analysis in NVivo.

The case study method presents an opportunity to explore and understand the “bounded system” in which the participants live and learn (Schram, 2006, p. 107). The method is appropriate for the current research since all participants were students at the same college. As the primary and common context for the students’ experiences, understanding the environment has enabled me to compare participant experiences and arrive at more valid themes and categories in data analysis. Based on Mertens’s (2015) explanation of the four major research paradigms, case study qualifies as constructivist, matching my own epistemological orientation. The theory emerges within the design phase (Mertens, 2015), and requires the researcher to organize a study around a problem, a context, an issue, and a set of findings (Schram, 2006). This structure provides a frame in which to pursue grounded theory.

By its nature, a longitudinal study generates an abundance of data. The researcher’s task is to sort through the data and display them in a way that responds to the study’s research questions and informs the reader. Constructivist grounded theory asks the researcher to “locate participants’ meanings and actions in larger social structures and discourses of which they may

be unaware” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 240). Narrative data should be rich and thick enough to allow the reader to imagine their own uses and applications for the theory that emerges from the data (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). At its root, a case study is a portrait of an experience (Marton, 1986), which fits philosophically with the underlying purpose of constructivism, which is that individuals make interpretations of their own experiences (Brookfield, 2005) and the researcher’s responsibility is to respect the participant’s ownership of their story (Riessman, 2008) by collecting extensive information about the participant and arriving at a clear understanding of their life (Cresswell, 2013).

Summary of Data Collection Methods

Study Setting Data

Data were collected through analysis of the 2018 National Survey of Student Engagement (Indiana University) (NSSE) results and semi-structured qualitative interviews with representatives of Saint Joseph’s College, including the dean of campus life, the director of counseling services, two librarians, and the registrar. Interview data were disaggregated and are presented in response to each research question. Survey data were chosen for their ability to represent the study setting and to provide a lens through which to view the FYE of students more generally.

Participant Data

Data were collected through three semi-structured qualitative interviews (conducted in September 2017, January 2018, and May 2018); one written questionnaire (completed in January 2018); and weekly or semi-weekly text messages exchanged over the course of 27 weeks from September 2017-April 2018. A small amount of data were collected after the end of the formal study in order to fill gaps revealed by the writing process. I used NVivo 12 software to store,

code, and determine themes from data (nodes/themes listed after the profiles). Themes that emerged from the data are presented *infra*, pages 191-192.

The data revealed patterns of behavior, including studying; communication with family; time with friends; down time; weekend activities; eating; sleeping; and substance use. The data also depict each student's development over the course of the first year. Development is indicated by changes in self-perception; relationship with family members; shifting friendships and intimate relationships; academic performance; goal-setting; and self-confidence. Finally, the data indicate the extent to which each participant used services offered by Saint Joseph's College.

Chapter Preview

The chapter begins with presentation of data collected in the 2018 NSSE survey administered by Saint Joseph's College to all first-year students. The survey data are followed by summaries of semi-structured interviews conducted with key administrators and staff members. The dean of campus life, the counseling director, two librarians, and the registrar work closely with first-year students as they transition to college. The summaries refer to each of the three research questions and together provide one view of the institutional context for the FYE.

The chapter continues with the presentation of data-based profiles I compiled by synthesizing data collected through interviews, the written questionnaire, and texts. I have created a narrative that relates the story of each participant's FYE (Webber, 2005). The language used in each profile belongs to the participant unless otherwise indicated. Ellipses (...) indicate language that was removed from the original data 1) to create coherence, i.e. eliminate verbal tics/fillers/speech disfluency, or 2) to avoid superfluous repetition. Brackets ([]) indicate stylistic alteration to the original data intended to create more fluid expression. The use of

ellipses and brackets obviates the need for quotation marks. Some grammatical and stylistic idiosyncrasies remain. Maintaining idiosyncrasies that do not obscure meaning insures that the individual participant's personal voice remains largely intact.

Profile data are presented by the month in which they were collected and are ordered chronologically, except when inserting some data slightly out of sequence enhances coherence and clarifies meaning. Instances of shifted chronology are indicated by an asterisk (*) at the start and end of the text. Each profile begins with a brief biographical summary providing context for the data presented in the profile itself.

In Chapter 5, I list and describe the nodes and themes that emerged from the data through the use of NVivo 12. I then present tables that summarize each participant's data within each theme. Finally, I provide more detailed descriptive data taken from the 2018 NSSE survey administered at Saint Joseph's College. I have selected NSSE data that are implicated by my three research questions (*supra*, p. x) and present some in summary form and in others in raw form as appropriate for analysis (Chapter 6).

Study Setting: Saint Joseph's College, Standish, Maine

Institutional Context

See Chapter 1, *infra*, p. 8, for a description of Saint Joseph's College.

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Survey Results

NSSE collects data about academic, social, and personal behavior and attitudes demonstrated in the first year of college. Data from NSSE suggest how successfully the student has transitioned into the college environment. Data are reported in multiple forms to the institution with comparison to data collected in the same administration period from similar, regional institutions of higher education (National Survey of Student Engagement). The data

collected through NSSE, including narrative comments, allows interested parties to understand the nuances and idiosyncracies of the FYE at a particular institution. Institutions plan FY events, interventions, supports, curriculum, and other cultural experiences based in part on NSSE reports.

Table 3

NSSE Survey Participants by Gender (2017-2018)

	Race (determined by NSSE Respondent Profile)	N/Ratio of Undergraduate Population (n=1,553)	N/Ratio of First-Year Population (n=261)	N Surveyed, % of First- Year Population (n=261)	N Surveyed, % of First-Year Population in Survey Sample (n=123)
Female	91% white	975/64%	?/261	76/29%	76/62%
Male	88% white	558/36%	?/261	47/18%	47/38%

49% of FY students reported their interactions with faculty were “high quality”

FY students spent 14 hours/week preparing for courses

Of FY students...

42% reported they were “highly challenged” by their courses

51% “frequently” worked with peers on course projects and assignments

58% “frequently” worked with peers preparing for exams

67% “frequently” had conversations with peers who held different political views

75% reported the college “substantially emphasized” the use of learning support services

60% rated their interactions with their academic advisors as “high quality”

53% rated their interactions with other students as “high quality”

86% rated their entire educational experience at the college as “good” or “excellent”

Academic Challenge

When compared to FY students at other regional institutions whose data was also collected in the NSSE data report (making it possible to compare SJC FY data to other institutions' FY data), SJC FY students have significantly less exposure to higher order learning; reflective and integrative learning; and discussions with diverse peers. All other academic challenge indicators show little difference between SJC FY students and FY students at other regional institutions.

End-of-Survey Comments

Instructions: "Please describe the most significant learning experience you have had so far at this institution." Comments are categorized as "social" (referring to interpersonal relationships not connected to academics); "academic" (referring to coursework, instructors, lessons learned, or executive functioning/study skills); or "adjustment" (referring to transitioning from high school to college).

Table 4

NSSE End-of-Survey Comments Data

	Total Comments	Social (N/% of total comments)	Academic (% of total comments)	Adjustment (% of total comments)
Female	38	9/24%	22/58%	6/16%
Male	13	3/23%	8/62%	2/15%

Table 5

NSSE Representative Comments: Social

Female	At this institution, I have had the pleasure in making more true friends than I ever have before. These people will be there for me in the future and I am happy to call them my friends. I have never had anyone in my life to call a friend, but at school I feel as though I belong. I thank this institution for giving me this opportunity to feel less left out in the world and more like myself.
Male	The most significant learning experience I have had at this institution has come from baseball and learning about the importance of everyone on your team/group being on the same page and competing for the same goal.

Table 6

NSSE Representative Comments: Academic

Female	The most significant learning experience I have had this year is in _____'s lecture classroom. She clearly explains her material and does not try and make the material more difficult than it has to be. She is a very well prepared teacher with lots of personal experiences connected to class material that help me relate my learning to the real world. Every time I am in her class, I can tell that she truly wants everyone to be successful and cares about our wellbeing.
Male	My history professor which ultimately gave me the desire to take on a minor in history.

Table 7

NSSE Representative Comments: Adjustment

Female	Probably learning about the change from high school to college is the most significant learning experience I've had so far. I've learned that with college you're more on your own than with high school.
Male	The most significant learning experience I've had so far at this institution is the major shift between high school to college. There is a major change in people's maturity level and this is noticeable. Also, here the environment is more friendly like a community than high school was. I found this shift to be my most significant learning experience since coming here.

Interviews with Saint Joseph's College Staff and Administrators

In the spring of 2018, I conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with five Saint Joseph's College administrators or staff members: two librarians, the registrar, the dean of campus life, and the director of counseling services. The information below summarizes and synthesizes the data collected through the interviews, arranged by relevance to each research question.

Research Question 1: How do college-ready, traditional-aged male students experience the first year of postsecondary education at a small liberal arts college in Maine?

Campus Life:

The campus life department uses the “classic student affairs model of challenge and support” as to work with students. The department's goal is to help students grow and develop. Ideally, through campus life programming, students become more connected with campus and staff. Most non-routine touchpoints for first-year men with campus life usually involve safety. The dean observed that “the role of [FY male students'] own masculinity is ... important [and] plays out in the first year.”

Counseling:

The counseling center engages and informs students through "passive programming," which includes promoting counseling services through campus events and swag, “validating or normalizing home sickness” in a playful way, encouraging students “to get out and explore the campus.” Recent program themes or marketing strategies include the Wizard of Oz; table tents; student and staff panels; and survivor or worst-case scenario cards. The center maintains a presence at admitted student day in the spring and student orientation in the summer and fall as a way of connecting students to services more quickly.

Saint Joseph's College mandates counseling for first-year students who violate substance abuse policy. The director noted that first-year students are more at risk in general. The center's approach has been to implement "early intervention and start [FY students] with harm-reduction strategies" as a way of helping them manage the transition to college. The director defined the purpose of counseling as "tending to our students' mental health and contributing to a sense of community."

The counseling center is housed in a first-year dorm building as a way of making the service more accessible. The center leaves its door open when not meeting with clients to encourage drop-ins and provides two therapy dogs that sit outside the office's entrance. The center has created close relationships with athletics, the faculty, the ACE student success program, and administration in order to increase referrals and awareness of both mental illness and interventions.

In the 2017-2018 school year, 266 students accessed counseling services (29% of the student body), 215 for individual counseling (24% of the student body). Ten percent of the individual counseling students were male and 30% of the individual counseling students were first year students.

Library:

The library purposefully avoids the new student orientation days because "it's too soon" and staff has observed that students are more concerned about their living situation than how the library works. However, the library does put an information card in the orientation parent packet as a way of building a bridge with the families. The library (which includes the college's writing centers) establishes a connection to first-year students through the first-year college writing class. The staff spend 3 hours working with students on information literacy skills. The library

also supports nursing program courses and the sports exercise introductory course. This arrangement, however, excludes first-year students who test out of college writing.

Unfortunately, the library staff do not collect data of first-year use but are reconsidering their data protocol in light of the positive impact they believe they are capable of having on the FYE.

There have been a number of significant changes in the operation/mission of the library in the last 20 years that have had an impact on serving students. First, the staff has established a stronger connection with online students. Second, the staff has made a more concerted effort to connect with first-year students in light of current retention research. The library now keeps a student at the service desk to make the experience more comfortable and welcoming for traditional-aged patrons. Like the counseling center, the library keeps in close contact with athletics and the ACE student success program in order to coordinate referrals.

Registrar:

All first-year students have their courses scheduled before they graduate high school, except students who have not declared a major or who have electives to choose (those students register during fall new student orientation). All placement tests have to be completed by June 1. The registrar's office relies on orientation staff to walk through the academic calendar with first-year students. In alternating years, the college surveys first-year and fourth-year students through the comprehensive National Survey of Student Engagement (Indiana University) and the briefer and more general Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (Indiana University). In school year 2017-2018, the registrar delivered the NSSE.

The registrar has noted some significant changes in registration over the last 20 years, including the normalizing of electronic registration and the extension of stopout and retention issues beyond the first year. At Saint Joseph's College, the FY retention rate has moved from the

high 70s to the low 80s in the last decade, mostly due to the work of the student success coordinator. From the registrar's perspective, most students who stop out are not prepared for college emotionally or intellectually. However, the majority of students who stop out instead cite financial pressures in exit interviews as the reason they leave as a way of avoiding a more difficult conversation. Similarly, students who stop out because of substance abuse or interpersonal conflict with their advisor rarely cite those as the reasons they are stopping out.

Research Question 2: How can we understand the first-year experience of college-ready, traditional-aged male students at a small liberal arts college in Maine through the lens of Tanner's theory of recentering?

Campus Life:

The dean believes that the key with first-year students is to "allow them the space to explore...new directions, [and] ... to make mistakes." Campus Life supports the transition to college by working with parents for some issues and not others. Campus Life will not contact parents when students flunk classes or do not attend class, but will involve them immediately regarding student substance abuse or other harmful behavior. Based on current retention research, the dean is sensitive to the needs of first-year male students, who are susceptible to the "majority myth [which asks] why look at men, they'll be okay." He cites declining male graduation rates, matriculation rates, retention rates, and campus involvement as indications that there is in fact a serious problem with the male experience of college.

Counseling:

The counseling center validates and normalizes home sickness through "passive programming" that encourages students to establish connections across campus as a way of finding comfort and acknowledgment of their strengths and interests. The "vast majority of

students are referred to the counseling center by their peers,” which indicates that students who form social connections in their first year are more likely to seek services to support their transition to college.

Library:

No data relevant to recentering emerged from the interview the library staff.

Registrar:

The registrar trains parents in the requirements of the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) at orientation as one way of helping students establish themselves as individuals at Saint Joseph’s College. The student success coordinator helps the registrar’s office address parent-student issues around academics and financial aid. Students are therefore provided with the space they need in order to re-center in their first year.

Research Question 3: What is the impact of campus support services on the experience of college-ready, traditional-aged male students in their first year at a small liberal arts college in Maine?

Campus Life:

The Campus Life department at Saint Joseph’s College encompasses safety, ministry, counseling, health, dorm life, activities, and recreation. Campus safety officers are unarmed college employees, “first responders...and community educators with a disciplinary and service slant.” The dean considers them frontline educators. Campus safety often encounters men through acts of physical violence, incidents related to mental health issues, and substance abuse. The campus disciplinary system is founded on restorative justice, which means very few cases are adjudicated. Most students who are found responsible for the alleged behavior engage in restorative circles or other relationship-mending activities. All but the most serious behavior and

conflicts are handled by the student Resident Advisors (RAs) in the dorms. The dean plans to establish a student conduct board to deal with specific behaviors that impact the campus community but are not criminal.

Based on the last several years' data, the dean believes that the health center does not see enough men. He believes male students are more likely to see a trainer if they are in athletics or to seek medical attention off campus with the help of family.

Campus life staff see themselves as “interpreters, advocates, support structures” for FY students. The campus life dean chairs the Student Intervention Team (SIT), consisting of representatives from faculty, counseling, housing, athletics, and student success. The SIT is tasked with identifying students in need of support, especially those experiencing events—medical, social, behavioral, or academic—that interfere with their success, and offering intervention.

Counseling:

The counseling center works closely with the RAs by training them and asking them to be ambassadors for the center. Saint Joseph's College mandates counseling for students who violate substance abuse policy, on the first offense for first-year students and the second offense for older students. Most substance abuse referrals are men, some of whom “circle back around or continue to come in” for counseling on other mental health issues. The center also identifies potential clients through a close relationship with athletics. Coaches are often early confidants for struggling students, especially men.

The center has identified three predictors of academic success, based on current research: “good mental health, social connection, and perceived support.” With those criteria in mind, the center has set a goal of creating a welcoming space in order to “challenge the stigma associated

with mental health.” As a way of meeting the goal, the director, who started the counseling center at Saint Joseph’s College in 1998, has installed a coffee bar in the office with complementary mugs and other branded items; hired three clinicians; and brought in two therapy dogs. The therapy dogs often greet students as they approach the office.

The center also serves the needs of first-year students through programming. Current programs promote social justice, inclusion, anti-hate behavior, and bystander intervention to reinforce “community values of respect and compassion and justice.” Overall, the center seeks to provide “down-to-earth professional services for college students” in the hope of destigmatizing mental illness and giving aid and comfort to students regardless of their prior experience with counseling.

Since 1998, the director has witnessed a number of significant changes in the campus counseling program. For one, the center is seeing many, many more students. The steady increase has helped the director justify hiring a third clinician in 2015. One consequence of devoting more time and resources to direct counseling has been that the center’s capacity to provide indirect services has decreased. The director has observed that more students are “experiencing greater levels of distress” than in the past. More people who struggle with mental illness are now able to attend college. For example, more students with anxiety are now enrolling. The counseling center has adapted by holding 3 anxiety workshops in classrooms over the course of the school year. Each workshop is usually attended by 13-14 students. All three of these changes in conditions has led to an ever-increasing rate of student participation in counseling. As a way of increasing services and empowering other members of the Saint Joseph’s College community to intervene, the center implemented the Respond program in 2017 to train faculty and staff on how to provide mental health first aid.

The increased need for counseling has created several issues impeding the delivery of services. The director is particularly concerned that the lack of a support staff person to greet walk-ins, schedule appointments, and provide a friendly face at the front of the office means that center misses students who come by and see all the doors closed for sessions. There is also a lack of privacy in the current office space.

Library:

The library does not generally keep data regarding how many first-year students take advantage of its services. Generally, unless students receive information literacy training through a first-year course, students only come in for help when they believe they need it. A few faculty members have arranged to bring their classes in for brief tours or walkthroughs. In order to increase accessibility, especially for first-year students, the library staff has made a concerted effort through redesign to create space within the main part of the library for assistance. The library has also established a satellite writing center to make the library system more attractive to students throughout campus. The staff's goal over the last several years has been to "be readily available to them, we're not hidden, and so we hope that they see us interacting with other students" and therefore be more likely to ask for help themselves. As part of the recent change in mission, the administrators started an open-door policy in school year 2017-2018 to encourage students to come directly to them for help.

Registrar:

FY students register for courses in the spring before they matriculate. When they arrive on campus, they can add or drop courses within the first week of the semester. Students can withdraw without penalty from a course at any time before the semester ends. Spring course registration starts in October. As a way of "checking in" with FY students who might be

struggling, the registrar and student success office personally contact students who have not registered for classes by the end of the first week of November. Students who stop out sit for two separate exit interviews, one conducted by the student success office and the other by financial aid staff.

Participant Profiles

Scott Combs

Total Text Prompts/Responses: 43 (average 1.6/week)

Scott was 18 years old when he enrolled at SJC in the fall of 2017. He attended Exeter High School in New Hampshire. He was adopted by his grandparents at the age of 6 due to his biological mother's lack of financial resources. He has infrequent and often frustrating communication with his biological father. His grandfather moved out of the home and out of state when Scott was in 11th grade. He has five siblings. One adopted brother passed away in 2016 at the age of 21. His biological brother, whom he has not met, recently turned 21. He has two sisters, one aged 12 and another aged 7. His mother is expecting another child in February 2019. During the first semester of his first year at SJC, he lived with his girlfriend in NH on weekends. He now lives with a new girlfriend while he attends classes at UNH.

Financially, Scott has been "on his own" since he turned 18 years old. He was offered significant financial aid by SJC and worked throughout high school and his first year at SJC to support himself. He paid for his first year of college through grant money, scholarships, and his own money. He paid roughly \$8,000 a semester out of pocket. The college reduced his tuition by the amount he earned each pay period in jobs he held at the college. His grandmother's net income varies from \$60,000-\$80,000 per year but she did not contribute to the cost of college.

He finished his first year at SJC with a 2.25 grade point average (GPA). He did not play sports at SJC, although he tried out for soccer and was not selected for the team.

September

[My first full week at SJC started with] [a] little sore throat[,] probably just because of humidity and air temperature changes, this that and the other. I don't think I personally prepped myself for college as much as I would like. ... I mainly focused on the aspect of I'm leaving everything that I've known to go someplace where I've never really explored and [have to make] new friends. There's only one other person from my high school that's attending here and I didn't even meet her before, so ... I guess my preparation was prepping to say goodbye to everybody at home. [K]ind of doing things that I did daily there for like the last time just kind of experiencing everything at home. [O]ccasionally I'd come up here just to tour and explore ... even though there's not tours at ... that time. I just came up here to familiarize myself. [B]ut as for like the work amount, ... I think towards the end of senior year, everybody slacked off, just ready for summer, ready to be done with high school finally. ... I kind of had to keep that volume of work up so I could remain in good standing for the college. ... I can say I kind of kept my work ethic up. ... I worked more ... to be able to pay for school, ... so ... I guess that would be my college prep.

I applied to two colleges, only two, accepted to both of them. St. Joseph's was my second choice I originally wanted to attend [Suffolk University] in the inner city, Boston. Applied for law school [at Suffolk], and that was my initial path. I'm something of an argument-oriented person, I love to debate, and ... when I found out that ... [Suffolk] filled up on their law program and I'd have to wait another year, I decided why hold off and try to pursue something that I have more of an interest in and St. Joseph's has an incredible athletic department ... with ... Coach

Dubois [as] the soccer coach. I [played] soccer ... throughout high school, I played all of my life and I love the sport. So I wanted to try and immerse myself in that program. The campus is absolutely stunning, being, you know, only 10-15 minutes away from that city life. If I really wanted, I can go over to Portland any time and explore and I do[.] [N]ow looking at it, I enjoy the fact that there's a little bit of a walk and scenery in between classes. And ... I like how there's the lake right on [campus] 'cause I love the ocean, I ... love anything with the water. I like the ... smaller class sizes. Both the schools had smaller class sizes but this one in particular I like how my high school is the exact same size total population so ... that really kind of nailed the head.

[When I talked about college with my family about SJC,] [o]bviously, money was one of the big ... topics of discussion considering there was already a previous understanding that I would be paying for school on my own. Being from my family being a little abnormal compared to the regular ... in the sense that I don't live with my mom or dad[,] I live with my grandparents. There's other legal backgrounds ... that are involved which ... helped tuition costs and this that and the other. So there were numerous advantages and disadvantages to it but there was obviously the tuition the financial areas that we discussed. We talked about the education and specifically what I was hoping to get out of it and the reasons why I was going to college rather than ... just work force or tech school or.... So we ... really didn't focus much on the reasons about college, more or less ... just generalizations about it like it's ... such a beautiful campus or class sizes are small that's great[. We looked at] basically everything you can read online on the front page ... that was kind of the broad scale of the topics at home. Now more or less when it comes to discussions ... it's about the food,... how classes are and ... I guess that would be the ... generalization about it.

[N]ow that I'm here, ... most of my communication with, I'll start with friends, ... would be via text and online emails, barely, but Facebook, any social media. [We] have our SnapChat streaks and just daily ... messages on what's going on, who's dating who, you know, just generally try to keep those tight knit connections. We try to formulate plans about when we all have days off, when I could come down there or we could all meet up somewhere in the middle. We are planning for winter to do ski trips, snow board trips just 'cause we all love that. We have the month off, obviously, coming Christmas break. So ... there's always that communication between just to try and ... keep the close-knit friendship that we've had for eight years. [A]s for [family], I'll start with ... my birth parents. I talk with my mom daily. [S]he's getting married in October. She wants to have the wedding here at St. Joseph's, ... so it's interesting ... to talk to her...

[Mom and I talk] [b]y text and on the phone. ...[G]enerally phone calls are for when she's not with my little sister ... who's three at the time and or when she's not at work. So, primarily it's just text conversations of what are classes like, when are you coming down to visit, what's new in the sense of her getting a wedding dress or finding a location she loves. I talk with her fiancé quite often, because he's my tattoo artist, and a good man and good friend. I ... occasionally get the ... funny picture or funny text of the day that he just likes to send. It's kind of a good memory of like home and everything.

[A]s for my grandmother, she's still been my rock here, you know. It's not easy to leave her ... back at home. The house is now ... too big for just one person so she's planning on ... moving out, so I'll go down and help her when the time comes. But, ... as for you know the amount we talk, every other day normally by text. Occasionally I'll call her if I just want to see how her day's been or she sends me a joke. I mean yesterday I was sitting by the lake, ...[and]

she put up a group conversation text between me and my mom. [My grandmother texted:] “I wanted my family to know this first, I’m changing careers, I want to be a fitness model.” And ... I had to call her at this point, because this is a 67-year-old woman who’s going from accounting ... to fitness model. So there’s certain aspects when we can still joke like that, and she sends me, she sends me things that I left behind at home, like a cable cord for the TV. [W]e talk about her occasionally sending me \$10, \$20 so I can go to Walmart and stock up the fridge at the dorm with food or drinks or anything, even though I can go to the café all the time, just I don’t think they’re open at midnight if I get a late-night snack. But, that’s the kind of communication that we talk.

As for my dad, ... I don’t like to talk him that much, just based on who he is as a person. His outlook on life ... is rather negative, compared [to mine], and I don’t like to surround myself with that. You know, it’s better, ... in this new stage of my life when I’m finally away from the parents and I can kind of set up myself for my own success, my own path. He’s more of an acquaintance now rather than a father-figure. Just ‘cause he hasn’t been around that much. [B]ut I did meet up with him this past weekend. And ... my opinion of him had not changed. He arrived ... to lunch rather late, about forty minutes late, I mean, ... he did say he’d help out whenever he could with money for college but, as for the general communication between the two of us, it’s slim to none. But, ... I love staying in contact with family and friends just because it adds that home aspect to something that’s not really home yet. I really haven’t made ... a name for myself here just being, it’s only week [one], or beginning of week two now. So, ... as for friendships and everything, my roommate is definitely my best friend at the moment. And so, we shall see where this takes us.

[Academically and socially at SJC,] so far it's been positive. I would absolutely recommend this college to anybody looking for any type of [something different] getting out of it. They're looking for something different, this college really brings it to them. Socially, there's always something going on every night, whether it be in Baggott Street [Café] where tonight there's a pool night and pool tournament and I'm definitely participating in that. For week two in a row. Love pool. Socially, meet with anybody at the gym or in the café and just strike up a conversation about life, their majors, academics even just running into people in the hall like everybody on third floor Standish ... now they all know who I am. The soccer team knows who I am just because I look like one of their players. [Although I'm not on the team.]

I did try out for the team, past spring. I tried out for the team. And ... Coach Dubois at the time when I was at tryouts, [he decided that] tryouts [would be] moved from outdoors to indoors, they were originally supposed to be in the fall. We were pushed indoors and ... being a defensive player, you know really kicking and showing more powers, can't really do that much indoors. So ... I was kind of left to fend for myself. I was the only defensive player trying out versus forty other ... people, and one other goalie, so ... it was difficult. So, I didn't really have a shot for what he was looking for. He wasn't looking for defense anyways, but now I lost a lot of weight, I remember him throughout tryouts calling me "big man." And just ... that kind of irked me a little. I remember coming home that March and instantly hiring a personal trainer. And I lost ... fifty pounds, ... now I'm like training every day now, I'm at the gym every day, and I get texts from him now saying "Please try out for me in the ... spring." So ... I look forward to that as much. And I'll play intramurals to try and hone some skills, and just try and keep up, but, I thought about playing baseball this year as well, went to tryouts and everything, but based on

financials, working over sports ... just especially so I can understand how it will work for the following year. It will be better for me.

[B]ut, that was a, that's kind of like the social aspect of it. I'm still kind of getting my foot in the door. I'm not going to parties, because yes, there are parties, ... [but I'm] trying to stay away from that. I'm here to learn. [A]nd that's kind of a main focus. I'd rather not dish out the tuition to throw it all away by getting ... for lack of a better term wasted every night, you know, that I don't have class. [A]cademically, however, ... so far it's been stressful. ... I've almost missed two of my eight am lectures just based on still recuperating into waking up that early. I had the night shift back at home for work so I was used to going in mid-afternoon, ... so waking up early has been ... a challenge. It's also been difficult with my roommate, Cash. We've been butting heads on alarms. He'll turn mine off if I wake him et cetera. [T]here's a little bit of an overlap between classes as well on Monday is where my bio lab overlaps my college writing class by about a half hour. Which is, and I can't change those courses so there's gonna be a conflict there on Mondays, but I've emailed teachers and all the professors have been very helpful.

... I obviously have my favorite classes. I think so far college writing has been my favorite just because I've already had an essay to work on and ... after that it would be history with Dr. V, who makes it interesting not alone just because I love history and I love learning about it but just him being from Italy and you have to really focus because he has that accent and ... it's been ... definitely different. [S]ome of the classes aren't what I expected them to be. Just health and wellness, I wasn't expecting it to be like an overview. Rather, I figured it'd be more dietary and nutrition-based. Um, but rather it's more of stress and anxiety-based. Which, which will be kind of nice, but at the same time, just the class lingers on. [C]ertain little niches with ...

every ... professor, ... kind of get on my nerves. Specifically just the cymbals clanging when [the health teacher] wants to talk again[.] [E]very teacher has ... their own way of working around it.

... [W]e'll just say [the hardest part is] balancing time of day to work out and eating as well as getting homework done it's just having general time to do free things. ... I really have to crack down on myself to do the homework and get everything done. I have time, that's not the issue. It's the motivation, the drive to get the work done, which is really, really a pain. Before this [interview], I just finished my bio homework and ... tomorrow, I just have the lecture to do as well as I have to finish the essay that I've been writing. So, the workload, as rigorous as it may be, it's manageable. It's not overwhelming, I don't believe it will be until finals are coming around and everyone's procrastinated including myself. So we shall see about that. And ... so far so good though. I look forward to it. I look forward to the new challenges with academics and everything.

[I've thought about what I want] to get out of college. ... Everyone ... comes to college in hopes of getting an education, but there's also the social constructs that people want. I mean, personally, I would love to come out with life-long friends and ... create connections that will help me in my future career, ... the way I see it, coming into college, the more people you know, the better you are, ... especially ... if they are different majors, the same majors you are, the more connections you have you can create a giant web....If somebody in your profession years later has a question for you, you have that contact. So, I guess, my wants and wishes for college would be not only the education but to accumulate a large, kind of social, not following, ... but web, ... kind of like get everybody's Facebook, get everybody's number so I can stay in contact

with these people weekly or daily, however it may be. Just so ... I'm better off as well as I'm a resource for them. So, I guess that would be what I would like to get out of it.

[My third week at SJC] ... was definitely stressful but I guess good. Not so much school stressing as personal life (social) but it happens. The high point of my week would probably be Friday. Paycheck came in the mail and I got my laundry done. Wouldn't have expected clean sheets to make me so happy. [On September 19,] I woke up feeling very productive. I'm definitely looking forward to my gym workout the most today. Just in a really unstressed super productive mood!

[By September 23,] [t]here was an overabundance of tests later in the week that caused a lot of unnecessary stress. But with that being said it was a good stressor as it meant I need to focus more on school work.

October

[So far, the best part about SJC is] [t]he ability to live life on campus any way that I please as long as I show up to class on time and get the work done. All the free time allocated by my schedule is definitely a plus. [Over the first weekend in October,] [b]ecause there's no class on Monday[,] I went home I'm fixing my car this weekend. My week overall was good[;] I just wish I studied more. Intramural soccer just started on Tuesday so that was the highlight even though we didn't win. [At home, my friends and I] talked about what we'd all been up to for the month plus away. Specifically it was more oriented about college but more of the generalizations rather than specifics.

[After my first month at school, I am] [p]roudest of my exam grades. They've been better than I expected. I'm more concerned about my biology grade just because it's the hardest class. Just have to study more. [The weekend didn't go]... as planned but that doesn't mean it was bad.

I'm looking forward to Friday again to get my car back from the shop. [One nice thing that happened recently is that] I was elected student employee of the month which really made my week. Definitely a positive impact. [As far as academics go, on October 23 we] spent my bio lab class outside which was a pleasant change of events!

[So far, I have used the] [j]ob center [at SJC once; they] got me a job on campus which helps me pay tuition and for basic supplies[. SJC's] tutoring [center] for sure has been helpful when it comes to passing classes or studying for exams. [I've used the tutoring center] ... before major exams, specifically for biology. I'll probably go tomorrow as the next exam is Friday. [Reflecting on my time so far at SJC,] I was surprised about the day to day life. I have more downtime than expected which was a shock. I expected a lot more reading and homework to be frank. I wasn't expecting to stay in the dorm I'm currently in, not my cup of tea (a bit small). It's also different having a roommate when I've never shared a room in my entire life. But it's a good change. I've realized I'm more of a people person now. [Over Halloween, my plan is to] [d]rive back home to shower and get some homework done as the college has been out of power since Sunday. I just hope it's worth the gasoline and time....

November

[When I started in the study, I thought you would ask more for] [i]nformation on how late we stay up studying/just awake. [O]r what mornings are like with classes. How often we use different campus amenities. ... Things we find helpful on campus. How often we travel off campus for activities. [For example,] I prefer to study late nights. Around 10 o'clock in my bed or at my desk. I don't focus too well or hard but the skimming over notes always seems to work. Every weekend (Friday) I leave campus and go home to work. Roughly an hour and a half of driving one way. Otherwise I'll drive into town and go to Walmart or Bull Moose Music.

[The second week of November,] I spoke a few times through text with my grandmother about money. And I called my mom to ask for a haircut. My Nana and my mom both responded to Facebook posts as well. It was basically a typical week this semester [as far as communicating with family goes]. [Over the weekend of November 19, I was home] Friday Saturday and Sunday last weekend, and this weekend. As I work back home to pay for school. [At SJC,] I typically eat 1-2 times a day at the café, [and] I snack on almonds or cashews in my dorm. At home it's 5 meals a day because I can meal prep. [This has] been [a] very normal [eating week] for me. [When I'm in New Hampshire, I] can't wait to be back [on campus]. It feels like home up there now.

[During my most recent call home, right after Thanksgiving, my grandmother and I] talked about my relationship with my girlfriend [which just] ended. [We also talked about] [w]hat I wanted for Christmas, how my roommate was doing as well as trying to make plans for Christmas break.

[The last day of November, I had my first] Final Exam ... which was a personal event for me. ... It was my first final and it was a lot of stress.

December

[My plans over break include] [w]orking and working out. I'm a bouncer at a nightclub [back home in New Hampshire]. Finals went surprisingly great. I felt slightly underprepared but once I got the test everything fell into place. For the future I think I'd study a little more. I would change the way I studied, make flash cards and use quizlet more often than just rereading my notebook... I would study and focus more during the class and after to be better prepared. [The word that pops into my head first when I think about first semester is] "expensive."

January

[Reflecting on my experience this year so far, I have learned that] I easily overinvest in people I just met. I put more focus on others than myself and sacrifice personal goals/health to do so. I still procrastinate more than expected and have learned that I get pissed at a messy roommate. From the first semester ... till now, I kind of set aside my exercise and health goals in the gym, per se, and focused more on taking care of [my girlfriend].... [A]t the time, I was in a relationship, so [I found myself] taking care of my girlfriend, leaving [my health] behind, [and] putting my nutrition aside to go out. And I was more lenient and kind of had, in the back of my head, different ideas and things that I wanted to work on personally that I pushed aside so I could try to help everybody else be happy. So if she wanted to go out, I would go out with her, for an example. Rather than stay home, cook my meal that I know that I should've had instead. I was lenient that way.

[Also,] [i]f somebody needed something on campus, or they needed to go to Walmart, or the store, and I didn't have much gas, I'd still [drive them], because I have a car, I'd still be happy to help. And I'd use the last bit of gas that I had, even though I needed that, say, to get home. So I'd be stuck on campus for an extra two to three days, until a paycheck hit. Or things like that. Just smaller, little things that took away from personal goals. They just kind of pushed it aside for a little.

[I discovered that] [f]reshman year in college is basically a faster repeat of all of high school. Primarily the math and writing from high school carry over. The people skills [I developed] from going to a large high school [transferred to college] as well. [The]... closest example I have right now actually happened earlier today. [I compromised my schedule for my] [l]ab partner, for example, to work on a project or something I didn't really understand. I would email him, be like, "Hey, what time do you have that's free that we can meet up, so you can

clarify something for me?" Or, "We can work on a project together, or get homework done together." Or, "I'm having trouble using this, or that, any way that we can work on that?" Or I'd text a friend and be like, "What time do you not have class? Can we meet up, talk? I've got some stuff going through my head."

[I have become better at] [s]etting up conferences with peers and professors to get aid in academia or personal life. Just, it's more like scheduling. Maybe not conferencing. But I've been more scheduled and strict about trying to figure out times that work best for everybody. So it benefits both of us.

[Some things have changed. My] [f]amily connections are the same[, but] The amount that I talk and see friends changed. It's like we're drifting and I'm not a fan. [I've established a few routines at school.] Waking up before 8am and going to bed after 12pm. Not eating lunch but snacking continuously. My sleep schedule is healthy but my eating schedule needs revision.

[On a scale of 1 to 5, I'm a] 3 [when it comes to whether I'll come back to SJC in the fall. I'm indifferent on returning. First semester, I was 100% confident that I did not want to return. I didn't have a overall positive experience. It didn't go the way that I wanted it to go. Not positive, per se, if you rephrase. I had a different expectation coming to this college, than what the college actually was. And so, as the semester closed out, and the second semester started, I kind of really got my feet planted at the college, in the sense of, I really understood how the college worked, now.

So as for returning, I still have a month or two to put in a housing deposit. And I'm still not sure that I will. I have been looking at other colleges that are closer to home, for financial reasons. Not academic. Solely because credits and transferring, I'm not sure how other colleges

will see a private college, and deal with that. And I'd rather not retake any classes. But as for three, it's just because I'm not in love with this college as much as I thought. But I don't hate it as much as I did the first semester, if that makes sense. If I do come back, I'm pretty sure I'll stay in my athletic trainer major, [although I might switch to] kinesiology or nursing.

I was more so disappointed with my professors first semester. It seemed that they were too unorganized, at least a handful were too unorganized the first few weeks. Which I understand. First few weeks of academia starting up. But it just wasn't as structured as I would've liked it to be. I had a lot more free time on my hands than I expected. With winter coming, there's really not a lot to do around this area, as well. So you're kind of limited to the very few things on campus. As for nutrition-wise, you're kind of really limited. Because there's the only one [cafeteria]. It's not a university, there's not three or four dining halls. Which I understand.

So there was all that. And then, the social life, I didn't really connect with people in my dorm. Me and my roommate were roommates, we lived together. We don't hang out that much, we don't talk that much. Unless it's at midnight and I'm in bed, and he's just coming back to the room. Or starting to get ready for sleep. We don't really associate and socialize. I don't go out on weekends with everybody else, I go home and work. So I really have a different lifestyle than everyone else here, in that aspect. Most people stay on campus, I don't.

I guess that's because I always wanted to live off campus and commute, in a sense. But there's no real way to do that here. There's no place really that you can go and rent an apartment around, that's local. I think the further place ... I could probably find a few places, but a place that I'm thinking would be more like Portland. I really like the city life. But that's another story.

[Having said all that, the most help I've received this year has come from the] professors and other people. [I hope to use the] [l]ibrary [more often second semester.] The way that my

classes are this semester, they're more oriented towards my major. Rather than basic bio, like introductory classes. We're starting to get into more anatomy. My actual course structured majors, which are more involved. The classes are harder. And especially, the fact that it requires more research to do, I feel like the research that I'm going to need to do, and the citing and sources I'll need to find, I can only find in the school's library. So I think, by process of elimination, I'll have to really hone in on the library as my main resource.

And I'll probably like it better there, anyways, for studying, and quiet, and focus. Because everything's nice in the library, I know that. But I didn't really have to use it the first semester. There wasn't anything that required further things. So nothing that really required book research, or finding school verified sources that you couldn't find online. So I think, finding it in person, in the actual library, would have, of the school's library assistance, and people that actually understand what you're looking for. I think it'll be a key resource, as projects go on, and things get bigger.

[Here at the start of the second semester, I'm feeling] relaxed and open minded. [I feel this way due to the] [I]lack of a girlfriend [and because I have been] [m]eeting [and] surrounding myself with like-minded people. [I was with my first girlfriend] ... until Thanksgiving. And we were together from beginning of summer, until Thanksgiving. So [I] really got used to her being around. I would say, she was the first person that I kind of really emotionally invested in. And so that ending, the week of Thanksgiving break, that was difficult. She was not [here on campus]. She was from back home. And she came up to visit every week. And I'd go down and see her. And that ending took an emotional toll on me, for a week, I will say. I really wasn't in sorts to do any work, or any focus. A lot of behind the scenes things that caused issues, too. But that being over, relatively, reflecting on it, I'm a happier person now. I feel like I have more freedom, I have

more money, I have more time. Money's a nice one. And it was for the best. You know? We were two different people. She wasn't going to college, I am. And not to come off as rude or inaccurate, I had life goals, and she did not. So it just worked out. And so, it just put me in a happier [mindset], more focused on my education. Which was for the better. So I think it was for the best, and now I'm better off. So it was kind of nice, to say lack of somebody that I was emotionally invested in. That level of connection is beneficial. And it's funny, throughout high school, and just after I graduated, I even told myself that I wasn't going to get involved during college. Because college academia, rather than college, [encouraged me to]... go treat the girlfriend to something with my last 30 bucks. And that holds true.

One change [I would make second semester is to have] [e]ither no class on Fridays so I can relax an extra day or get rid of the lab class that keeps me busy until 6pm on Thursdays. [In my second week back from break,] [t]he high point was Thursday with history of Ancient Rome as well as I met an incredible girl. I struggled with getting up on time for class for sure though. [I have] 8am classes 5 days a week.

February

[I just lost my job at the café because I called out sick one day. Tonight, I'm going to get carryout from Amato's, but I should] feel fine to go back to the café to eat soon. [Some other bad news:] My [first semester] grades reflected my effort which could be better but it's not necessary. I'm going to stick with what's been working. Generally I'm happier with my professors as well as overall happier than first semester. The amount of free time I have stayed the same[;] it's a little much for me. [Lately,] I've been abnormally tired.

[My latest communication with home was] Monday morning [February 19.... [My grandmother and I talked] [f]ace to face about family matters. [I was home for the weekend.] [As

far as my personal life goes,] I have had 3 romantic encounters during my year. One girl I started my time with. [Another] girl I met on campus second semester and now currently have a lovely lass whom I met at my work and am currently involved with.

March

[I did not pick SJC because it's a Catholic institution.] I did not have a connection to faith in anyway [in high school] and still don't. It's always just been something I haven't taken an interest in and don't intend to as it appears to cause more problems than not.

[Over spring break,] I went out with a friend [back home] just about every night. [One positive development recently is that] the girl I've been seeing and I are planning a vacation[.] [One negative event is that] I lost my [bouncer] job due to new management regulations. [The] [a]ge requirement was increased to 21 to be employed. [I will do my best to find a new job because] [i]t's a necessity in my life to have a source of income.

I have a good group of guys in my dorm that I hangout with a few times a week. Probably like 5-6 guys. We ended up going to dinner last night...on campus at the dining hall. [However,] [w]ork has had the largest impact on my schedule and time. I definitely feel that the stress of finding a job has had an impact on my academic performance negatively. Once I find work or something to take up more [of] my free time I'll feel more pressure to focus on schoolwork.

[I have developed a pretty regular approach to my day.] I typically wake up around 7am-7:30am and get ready for my 8am classes. Around 9am I'll mosey on down to the café and grab breakfast then head back to the dorm room to nap again or play video games. I'll grab lunch then workout around noon time. Then go to my last class of the day and be done around 3oclock. That leaves time for homework, more eating at the cafe. I'll watch tv then end up asleep between 12-1am the next day. The only tv would be the Celtics games. [In the last two weeks, I haven't used

any of the services offered here at SJC except the gym and food.] Working out every day is a regular routine. Laundry day is Tuesday night after 10pm when the washer and dryer is free.

April

[For the summer,] I'll be working two jobs, one as a valet driver, one as a trainer for a gym. I'll be living in my own apartment [in New Hampshire] and [will be taking] no summer classes. [I will not be returning to SJC in the fall.] I already submitted my transfer paperwork to UNH for the fall semester. Just waiting on approval, as well as I have [had] a job by UNH campus [for a long time] which [means living there] makes more sense. Being accepted into UNH [has had] the greatest impact [on me] both ways as it means all my friends at SJC won't see me for too much longer and I'm going to a great university.

It's a great school, Saint Joseph's, it just doesn't suit my current lifestyle as much as I would hope. I would like to continue to take history courses and finish a minor in history with the college but that will come with time. I'm transferring [to UNH] and then when I can afford [it], [I plan to] pay for individual classes [in history] up at Saint Joseph's.

I don't think Saint Joseph's has much to relate when it comes to my technology use. Although I do tend to spend more time in my room playing video games or watching Netflix due to the amount of free time I have. I would say it's more positive because I can't think of how it's negative. [When it comes to talking with my high school friends,] [w]e don't talk as much as we all used to; [we] keep tabs with each other but [have] limited conversation.

May

[Here's how my year ended.] Exams were interesting. I had only three of them. One was an online exam, which was fairly easy and quick to complete, and didn't require much studying. I was curious as to why I had an exam on a Saturday for History, which made it a little interesting

to go to class on a Saturday, which I wasn't exactly thrilled about. But I figure that one went well. The last exam that I had, which was this past Monday, was probably the most difficult of the ones, because it was the most crucial for my grade. It was definitely a very unusual process compared to other times I've taken final exams back in high school. First semester finals seemed to just run smoother. I had projects instead of tests. They were not cumulative based on everything we did in the semester, they were just what we most recently learned. It felt like there was less pressure.

[Some things about my first year in college were the same as what I expected, other things were different.] The differences are easier to point out than the successes, in what my thoughts were of the year. What was different was how I imagined making friends. How campus life was really different than what I had imagined it to be. I spent more nights in my room than I can count, hanging out. My roommate and I didn't really hang out outside of actual school. We didn't make plans, or anything like that.

Classes seemed to be way more laid back than I had experienced, or even could dream of. But as for the successes, I'd say my academia was very successful in comparison to what I imagined it would be, as well as my experience on the campus in regards to level of difficulty of classes. The people I met were what I was expecting for the campus and the area. I wish, back in high school, I prepared more for tests, and focused harder. I think it would've shown better for being accepted into the college, as well as that level of preparedness would've transferred over into college. I wish I did more research on finances in high school.

[When I think about summer and next fall,] I think about working, and I think about trying harder. Putting more effort into everything that I do to try and get a better outcome, because you get what you give. It really shows that I'll just need to focus more, and be ahead of

the ballgame for the Fall semester. [Next year,] I may be living at home. I may have an apartment. I may be in between homes. Still undecided. I just know I don't want to be on campus. I think my academi[c performance] will improve if I'm in my own setting. I know it's more my lifestyle to be able to cook and prepare my own meals, which will keep me happier and healthier for my own goals.

[There are a few things I'd change from my first year.] First one would be the amount that I was involved in the campus community. I didn't go out to a bunch of the game nights and trivia nights, and I didn't really participate in a lot of extracurriculars. I will definitely try and be more involved. I would definitely like to focus more on getting to know people rather than just staying in my room alone. Make more connections. I think that would've helped me academically as well as socially, and feeling more confident and comfortable at the campus. Fitness-wise, staying focused and more motivated. Using fitness as a reward for good academia would've been definitely an interesting change, and an interesting aspect to think about. That would be something that I would do differently.

[However, even if I had made the connections and used fitness as a reward,] I think I still would've transferred, just because of the connections and ties back home still being strong. A little too strong to leave and push behind. I feel like, as much as the campus facilities are nice, and everyone on campus is really quite amazing, I feel like the area and location that I'm in back in New Hampshire is just too many vast opportunities still alive to pass up on. [For example, campus is a] [t]en minute drive from home. Very close.

[There really wasn't a service offered by SJC that improved my experience much.] ... [T]he person that helped me the most, I guess you could say, was more of a counselor, but he wasn't with the counseling department. He was with Student Life. The dean of Student Life. He

was really the counselor that I would go talk to, in a sense, but not really qualified as a counselor. He was definitely a very helpful and unique character to sit down for an hour with, have a cup of tea with, and talk to, just about daily life. Not really focus on everything. It was a good way to just vent, and explore different concepts and ideas with. Probably once every other week I'd do that.

[I never found a study group.] I don't believe anybody that I associated with was really focused on academics, per se, at the time. The people that I ended up associating with were more social life plus what to do after college, I think that was more of our focus. Academia [took] kind of a backseat, so to speak. [I never really used substances, either.] Little to none. Tobacco, celebratory cigar for Christmas with a friend, or them getting a new job. Not too much of anything, really. Really had no need to use anything else.

[My time in the Exercise Science/Physical Therapy department was good.] It was a very, very welcoming area. It didn't really feel like anyone wasn't welcome. The actual major classes associated with Exercise Science, I felt like I understood the professors and knew their background. As for "would I go out and go to a café and grab lunch with the guys" know them, no, I personally wouldn't. Not too well. We weren't on that kind of level of relationship. More of a, "This is my background of teaching. This is who I am. Now take my class," type of ordeal. Some of the professors I knew better than others, just because I had them for both semesters. Some of the professors like to keep their personal self and about themselves separate and quiet. [The communication from the department to the students was] [v]ery, very strong. very qualitative. There was always a sense of communication between the Exercise Science department and those majors, if you had any questions, or any concerns. They'd always do

check-ins with you. It was a very good department, compared to other classes that weren't associated, but more core requirements.

[Even so, there were some questions I had the start of the year that I wish had been answered.] Questions that I had. Questions that I asked when it came to new student orientation was ... What was, just, academia work like for Exercise Science majors, and how important it really was to be on top of the work and study? What were the professors like? All of it varies, to be quite honest. It really depends on the professors you have. Some professors are light on work, and other professors weren't.

I can imagine most incoming freshmen or students will wonder what the homework load's going to be like compared to high school, or what the professors will be like. What the classes will be like. A lot of it that I wasn't expecting was just lectures. I was expecting more classwork to be done, as well, which that wasn't at all the case.

[When I first began thinking about transferring,] I was struggling in Biology with trying to get in contact with the actual professor. He did not do a good job at communication with myself, personally. I can't speak on behalf of any other students. I wasn't meeting anybody that I would like to hang out with, or be friends with. I wasn't being academically involved. I was more just staying in my room. I wasn't socially going out. I wasn't being involved in campus life, as much. I just isolated myself and focused on heading back home to work every weekend, and that was about it. I think there was only one weekend I stayed on campus throughout the entire semester. That's just because I'm not a fan of the party theme that seemed to go on.

I didn't really talk with [my family] about deciding to transfer. I just said I put in an application to UNH, and I'm waiting to see if it gets accepted. That was the end of the discussion, there. [After that, though, when I talked with my grandmother and mother, I was] [v]irtually just

keeping [them] updated on whether UNH had accepted the application, where I was going to live, whether I was going to live on UNH campus or just at home. Just decided that it'd be cheaper and more beneficial for me to just be at home. I'd be happier. [Ultimately, I decided to transfer] ... to be ... close to everyone that I left behind, as well as being able to keep a job, and being able to work as much as I wanted or as little as I wanted. That really helped.

I'm definitely going to go into UNH with a strict academic mindset rather than making friends. That's not going to be too much on my mind. I'd rather focus strictly on academia, because that's why I am there. I would like my grades to reflect the kind of person that I am when it comes to work ethic. I didn't go into St. Joseph's with that mentality. I ... have a group of friends that go to other colleges around the area. I do have some friends that do go to UNH, but the overall lifestyle of UNH and the scene at UNH is not something that I'd like to succumb myself to. I like to keep my academia and personal life separate.

Coda: Scott left UNH after his first semester. He found a job and plans to take online courses through Strayer University (private, for-profit, primarily online institution) because his employer will pay for them.

Kurt Nolan

Total Text Prompts/Responses: 43 (average 1.6/week)

Kurt was 18 when he enrolled at SJC in August, 2017. He attended a small day school for students with special needs for grades 9-12. He identifies as neuro-atypical and has been diagnosed with autism. He lived in Oxford, Maine, with his parents, and has two older brothers. Financially, Kurt's parents have provided him with some college funding and he has paid some expenses through money earned in summer jobs and a job in the cafeteria at SJC. His family's net income is \$75,000 a year. He finished his first year at SJC with a 3.62 GPA.

September

[To get ready for college,] I ... took a couple [of online] college courses [from the University of Maine at Augusta]... my senior year[.] [M]y high school accommodated it, in that I had blocks of time in my day to go and do that instead, because the college course took precedence over the high school courses. I took Intro to Psychology and Models of Addiction, and Models of Addiction was a sophomore-level class. And ... I did well on that. And my hope with that [was] to ease anxiety with how to perform, to get the credits beforehand, and to see how I would perform in a college classroom. And ... I got a 100 in the intro one and ... my GPA in the other class was 3.8. So I had like ... [a] 3.6, so my overall was 3.8. [My grades told me] [t]hat I didn't have to worry about academics [in college].

...[M]y high school, the private one that I went to, ... they're really big on pushing kids to ... either to get them into a job or get them into [a] program, get them into colleges, so we went on, I think, my last ... three years, we went on tours of colleges. So ... I've been to U[niversity of] M[aine]..., U[niversity of] S[outhern] M[aine], U[niversity of] M[aine at] A[ugusta], C[entral] M[aine] C[ommunity] C[ollege], S[outhern] M[aine] C[ommunity] C[ollege], St. Joe's...I think there was another one[, too,] but I can't [remember it].

[I decided to enroll at SJC because i]t's smaller. I spent a lot of time visiting and meeting people before I ... made a decision. I went on a tour, I sat in on a class, I met with the director of the program I'm in [social work]. I met with the counseling department. So I felt like it was a good fit before I decided on anything. I had been here probably eight hours, just meeting people and talking about stuff before I had decided anything. I applied other [places]—

...like...U[niversity of] S[outhern] M[aine], and I'm sure U[niversity of] M[aine at] A[ugusta]

would have accepted me too, but I came here instead. St. Joseph's was also the closest proximity-wise that had social work.

[I've been interested in social work since] my sophomore year [of high school.] It was ... a slow process. [I]nitially I was [interested in] engineering, like civil engineering, and then I had some really good experiences with a social worker. And the more I went through that, the more I realized I wanted to do that. I wanted to do that for other people. And I realized that ... I'm good at math, but—numbers are one of my stronger things—so ... I could do engineering, but I wouldn't have enjoyed it. So it would have been just clock in, do math all day, and leave.

[Although] I didn't think about it directly at the time, but [know now] it was good prep[aration] for college, I ... played lacrosse. [It helped] [b]eing in large groups and around large groups of people that I had no contact with before hand. ... I walked on in my senior year. I didn't play the other years. And I went to a private school, but I was sent there from my public school, and I played lacrosse at the public school so I didn't know anybody on the team.

[When I made my decision to come to SJC, my parents and I mostly talked about] [f]inances. 'Cause it is a lot more expensive to go here than to go to CMCC. I tried to start [the conversation about money] early, but I kept getting brushed off, until... after I graduated [and] we were still, in ... basic talks about it. ...[I]t was mostly how, could we even do it? If I would take the loan, if my parents would take the loan. How much it would need to be, what scholarships could I get. [Right now, I feel] [l]ess worried [about money], but that's not a good thing. I don't feel like it's a good thing. Because I'm just not thinking about it. But ... I need to put it aside so ... I can do my work. But I also need to figure out how I'm going to do next year, because I haven't gotten that far. [My current] plan is to try and be an RA, so that's free room and board. That would save like 14 grand a year. I get 11 because of my high school GPA in

scholarships, so ... that would be half of it that I wouldn't have to worry about. [There is a place on campus I could go, but] ... I haven't gone there because I haven't been—there's a financial aid office. ... [A]dmissions could probably send me somewhere.

[As far as communicating with home goes,] I've only really talked to ... some of the guys from the lacrosse team, but the only person I talk to from the private school I went to are ... some of the staff that worked there and to my girlfriend, who still goes there. That's it. [I talk to my parents] less, but it's still there. Like last weekend I went, I—there was—It was Friday or Saturday, I—I went home for like, five-six hours and then I went out with my brother, we went to Auburn. So I spent some time with my parents, and the pets that I have, and then I went with my brother and then I came back here. [I usually talk with the school staff by] text [and my family by] text or in person.

[So far, in my time at SJC,] [t]he academics ... are kind of weird. I have anxiety, a couple of anxiety disorders. So seeing ... the syllabus, all the assignments, is overwhelming, but I can do it. It's just like irrational, I freak out because I see ... eighteen hundred word essays, [due in] October. That's stressful, but I can do it. Socially has been up and down. Like I alternate from feeling really isolated and alone to spending all night with people. Like ... I can't find a middle ground yet. [A middle ground would look like] doing something [with people] every other day. If I want to be out of my room—I have a single—[and] I want to be out with people, I'll just go into the common room in my dorm building and just hang out there and either do work or whatever. People usually come in and either my friends will come in, and we'll go do something[,] [o]r they don't and I just go back to my room. [I usually go to the cafeteria for] food.

[Something I'm interested in is,] being a social work major ... makes me think of college students [and their mental health issues], like, are you feeling depressed, do you feel confident. [My own depression] ... goes up and down. [The counseling on campus is] helpful. I've gone there...once this week, once the first week. [I feel like I have a support system both back at my high school and here on campus. You should also know that] ... my perspective might be skewed because I have autism. So I'm ... not neurotypical, so things may be different for me than other people.

[My first two weeks at SJC were] hard. Adjusting to a new environment geographically and new social expectations. I had a lot of emotional peaks and valleys. I alternated between depression and excitement quickly and often. A high point was making milkshakes with my building on the first or second night. I felt more like I belonged here being in the large group and having fun. [Some days are tougher than others.] I'm most looking forward to my Spanish test being over after class today. I've been sick for about a week so I just want to sleep, get this test over with, and sleep more[.] [The last weekend in September] ... was interesting. I spent Friday with my family [for] SJC's Family Weekend. On Saturday I went to a few parties with a group of friends. They had some drinks, I did as well, we were out until a little past midnight. Some of us hung out in someone's room. The others wanted to go back out to the parties so I stayed back to watch a friend who had too much to drink. Shortly after they left she threw up all over herself and the bed she was in. I texted my friends and they came back and helped clean her up. We all went to bed around 2.

October

[Reflecting on the first month of college,] I think the most significant experience thus far was in the first few days. I went down to the common room of my building looking for a place to

toss some cardboard, and got pulled into a group of people making milkshakes. It was all people from my building and most of the people I met for the first time down there are the people I spend most of my free time with now[.] [The second weekend of October] ... I'm going to my parents' house since most of my friends are doing the same. No point in staying on campus if everyone else leaves. The only eventful thing from this past week was opening dialog with the SJC hockey coach and setting up a plan for me to feel out the team in a few practices before committing to anything[.]

[While I was at home for the weekend,] I was asked about my time at St Joes and did share some experiences that stood out to me. We talked about academics, my grades (in a good way), social experiences, and my athletic and community efforts. I feel good about my college academic work as a whole, I have a B or higher in every class, but this week has been very stressful. I took an exam in sociology, I have to prep for a midterm in history next week, and I have a test in Spanish that I do not feel prepared for in the least. I am proud of the grade I got on the Sociology exam. I got a 94 and it only took me 15 minutes to finish it. I was the first to leave by far and got a near perfect grade.

[For the third weekend in October,] I am finally done with classes and hockey practice until Monday, so I'm planning on relaxing quietly in my room unless my friends go out and I feel like joining them. So, I don't really have any plans. I'm probably going to just rest and take it easy. I also hit my head at hockey practice last night and I've had a headache since then, so that'll impact what I do this weekend as well. [In fact,] [the] weekend did not go as planned, but that's alright. I had forgotten about plans with my girlfriend to go see the high school she went to compete for a football playoff spot and see her cheer. After that I went out with some friends and

partied until 2am. Sunday I rested and relaxed for a while and then finished my assignments that were due on Monday

This week I'm looking forward to its end. I have some stressful academic deadlines, and my first hockey game playing for SJC is this coming Saturday. That's pretty exciting. I think the event that as had the most impact on this week was getting a test back in Spanish. I felt like I was drowning in that class. I felt very unprepared. Turns out I got an A (91). That helped turn my morale around and helped me look at my recent academic stress in a more positive way.

[October 23] ... was "meh." Not terrible, but not great either. The only thing of note is that I started my job on campus today. I don't have strong feelings about it either way. It's money, nothing more. [As far as SJC services goes at this point,] I have used the counseling center pretty frequently. I've gone there about once a week since the year began. I've gone to the health center twice. I haven't used the gym, tutoring, or job center so far, but I will if a need requires it.

[Reflecting again on the first two months of the school year,] I'm most surprised by how seamlessly I was able to enter and solidify a group of friends who are pleasant and reliable. I expected it to be a much greater challenge, especially given my autism and struggles with anxiety. The workload is about what I expected. I took several college courses during my senior year of high school so it's nothing new doing it full-time. [Halloween was atypical.] Because of the storm SJC still has power only in certain spots (none of the dorms) thanks to a few generators. Classes were cancelled until at least Thursday, maybe longer if need be. I would be with my friends for Halloween but I went to my parents' house because they have power and wifi. I'm also very sick, so I don't want to sit without anything to do or sleep without constant noise (a fan, tv, or something else) unless I have to[.]

November

[At the start of November, I've learned that] [m]y study habits are very much structured and goal-oriented. I set a schedule for myself of studying and build in appropriate break times so that I do not burn out. I set goals like[,] "I will read x amount of this book or write x number of words in this amount of time" and usually study for 75% of the time I set aside and use the rest as a break and do something else. So far I have only studied in my room at my desk, or downstairs in my building's common room.

I go off campus a few times a week. It's usually with friends going to Walmart or the Portland Mall. My friend Matt has his car on campus. In the last week I talked quite a bit with my parents more than usual. We spoke over phone calls and used texts. I've been very sick and I needed prescriptions and food. My Dad went and got both for me and brought them to me. My mom usually texts me a handful of times a week to just check in and see how I'm doing. I talk with my brother that is closest to me in age (he's 27) quite a bit. [The week before Thanksgiving] ... hasn't been very typical [for my eating habits] because of my work schedule and hockey commitments. I usually don't wake up until 10, so I don't eat in the morning. I usually eat lunch and dinner at Pearson's, and fill my to-go box [from the cafeteria] and eat around 9ish. I have not yet eaten at Baggot [Street Café on campus] or ordered food from off campus[.]

[At the end of November,] ... I have continued to feel very ill and I've been swamped with classwork. I think the event that had the most impact on me this week was having to write a paper and create a 15-minute presentation for History, both with a migraine and last minute, and doing well. It helped rebuild some academic confidence[.] [I also talked with my parents this week.] Initially it was mostly about college. My grades, hockey, my friends. Then it was

catching up on what I missed while living out of my parents' house. After that it returned to normal family happenings[.]

December

[As far as semester break goes,] [m]y plans ... are to do nothing related to academics to refresh myself mentally. I'll spend a lot of time with my family, my pets, and as much time as possible with my girlfriend[.] My finals have gone great so far. Statistically I can't fail any classes, so that has taken all the pressure and stress off. I've been able to relax and study calmly and not worry too much. I still studied and did the best I could on the exams, but it wasn't a horrible experience like everyone hypes it up to be. It could also be that I tried harder during the semester and that gave me this cushion that cut down on the stress. The only thing I would change is how I structure my time during finals themselves. I've been winging it and not really following a schedule. I would change that next time. [When I think about SJC after being home for a few weeks, my first thought about my experience is that I had a lot of] class anxiety.

January

[Here at the start of the new semester] it's been a little crazy starting classes and hockey again. I would [like to] change my [class] schedule. I'm not very fond of how my classes are distributed this semester. That's the only thing I can think of [that I'd like to change right away]. [I learned first semester] [t]hat I have more extroverted tendencies than I anticipated. If I go more than a day or two without much social time I get over-emotional. I reach out to people more proactively than I used to. See what my friends are doing, see if they want to do anything, rather than waiting for them to propose something to me. [In high school, I already had skills like] ... [b]lending into social situations, [making] eye contact, [and] paying a speaker adequate

attention. [This semester, I got better at] [i]nitiating conversations, keeping them going, [and] establishing social connections.

[The] [a]cademic [skills that carried over from high school include] [o]rganization, time management, quality note taking, [being a] quick learner, [and paying] attention to details. [I haven't had to learn anything new to do college work.] *Last semester I didn't really set a study schedule for myself, I'd like to do that this semester[.]* *[So far this month,] I struggled with time management. Coming off a month where I had no deadlines or a schedule at all really was a hard transition, but I don't think it will take too long to correct.*

[When it comes to communicating with home from college, I've found that] [n]o conversation is pointless or idle. [Our conversations are] [l]ess frequent ... [and lately consist of] [m]ore questions about what I do and how I'm feeling. [I now talk to my parents] two or three times [in] every two week stretch[, usually by] [t]ext messages or phone call[s].

[The routines I've established in college include doing] [l]aundry on Sundays[,] [g]et[ting] work done M[ondays]-F[ridays,] leaving weekends free[, and] [w]ork[ing] 3 days a week (10-12 hours [total]). [I am happy here and 100% likely to return in the fall and to graduate from SJC out of the social work program.] [The campus resource I've found most useful this year so far is] the counseling center. [Not much has carried over from my hockey experience because] [w]e really didn't do much other than practice as a team.

[Here at the end of January, I feel] [c]ircumstantially volatile, due to romantic life problems. Aside from that, mildly anxious. [This is due to me] [f]alling in love with another woman [in my department] who has a boyfriend. *[We met last week and it was] a high point [because she is] one of the few people who are also in my major (there are not many at all) [and we hit it off]. [At first, I thought,] I have a girlfriend, so there is no romantic component, but I

really enjoy talking to people with similar goals and values.* [Now I think it's something more.] [I'm also] ... having issues with my girlfriend [back home]. *[We have been together] since June 2016.* [She and I] either need to iron out the issue or end [the relationship] before [she comes to SJC in the fall].

February

[Academically,] I feel great about my first semester grades. Aside from an attendance penalty (from being sick, not skipping), I had above average grades. I don't plan on doing anything different[ly] this semester[.] [However,] [o]ne difference I have noticed about this semester is that I have been less disciplined and rigid about studying. I believe that it is due to the intense interpersonal stressors I outlined recently involving the two prominent women in my life (Rebecca and Katerina). I would bet a lot of money that if I didn't have this looming over my head I would study more frequently and more in depth. It hasn't come back to bite me in any class aside from Spanish, which I struggled with last year also. That class seems to be difficult for me regardless of how I prepare. One thing that has stayed the same has been my friends' reliance on me to keep them... afloat in classes. They see me as "the smart one" of our friend group. They tend to lean on me for assistance, sometimes quite heavily. Last semester I pretty much carried Matt and Serenity through our history class on my back. This semester I've been helping Faith in theology and I've supported Katerina quite significantly in our social work courses (2) as well as theology. This is nothing new to me. I've always been seen as an academic overachiever by peers and teachers/professors. It doesn't take much energy out of me to support them in the ways I do, and fittingly for a future social worker, I love helping people. I don't mind it.

[In fact,] I am very confident in my academic ability. It has been my strength since Kindergarten I have been struggling lately with my work, but that is simply because I have been very ill and had a lot going on emotionally. If it were not for those problems I am confident I would be doing better than I have been recently[.]

[My communication with family has been down this month.] The last time I communicated with a family member was yesterday. I texted and called my mom because I needed a prescription and some groceries. I don't have a car on campus, so I needed someone to come up and she's the only one who could get my prescription anyway[.]

March

[You asked about the role of faith in my life.] I would say that I have no connection to faith. I don't follow any established religion, I don't pray to anyone or anything, and I don't believe in any being that offers judgment. I would say that since starting at Saint Joe's that, if anything, I have become more against religion and blind faith. It may stem from a history class where we discussed all of the wars and conflicts that religion has inspired, and all the deaths it has caused. I find it utterly ridiculous that so many people have died for things that no one can prove. That's why I pushed religion out of my life. I find it a crutch for those who can't find meaning in their own life, so they turn to whatever God fits their morals.

Over spring break [March 5-9] I really didn't do anything. My girlfriend, Rebecca, stayed with me from Wednesday into Friday. That time with her was probably the most impactful. Things with her have been better and less stressful since then than they were prior. [Socially otherwise,] I have [found a regular of friends to hang out with]. The group consists of mainly Matt, Frankie, Jackie, Serenity, and Faith. I also hang out with Katerina, who is in my major and in most of my classes. There are also people like Nick, Brandon, and Elesha, but those are more

sporadic and random. Most recently we went to dinner together. It was spring break so I can't recall the exact date. We also routinely go out to parties on the weekends[.]

[As far as what's affected me the most this year,] I think that working on campus has had the most impact on how I schedule my time. I work 10-12 hours a week in the cafeteria. I don't think it has impacted my academics at all, I just have to find times to study and do homework between classes and my shifts. I have been able to that well so far[.] [I've also developed some reliable routines.] On a typical Monday I wake up at 9:30. I usually don't eat breakfast, but I will eat between my first class (11:10-12:15) and my second class (1:45-2:50). When I'm not in a class or done with classes for the day I'm normally with my friends, talking to my girlfriend on FaceTime, playing a video game, or working. During the hockey season (November-February usually) I have to work practices/games/skates into my routine. I usually go to bed everyday between 11-1, depending on when I have to wake up the next day for my first class[.]

[Actually, when I think about it,] I don't have a ton of routine because of my schedule, but I do have a few. I do laundry on Saturdays usually because everyone else does theirs on Sunday, so I beat the log jam by doing it a day early. On the weekends, assuming all of our schedules are free and we're all healthy, my friends and I normally go out to party and drink. We're usually out from 10pm-2am most weekend nights. I don't watch much TV. I'll watch the Bruins when I can, but that's pretty much it. I've been so sick and injured this year I haven't been able to really work out outside of physical therapy. Those are the only things I can think of outside of normal daily routines[.]

[My use of SJC services has changed a bit over the course of the year]. I used the health center a few times last semester when I got really sick, but now I only go there for doctors notes or DayQuil (they have big buckets of it for students). They're really nice, but I go to my primary

care doctor if I think something is truly wrong. I got to the counseling center once last week. I have since day one here at St. Joe's. I actually met with them prior to committing and enrolling here. It's been nice having a reliable place to go and talk to someone who isn't a student or professor but knows what college life is like better than my family does. I haven't needed tutoring, up to this point at least. I haven't needed the writing center or career center. Writing is a strength for me and my high school prepped me very well for employment and career-related tasks[.]

April

This summer I plan to take care of my mind and body more so than I have been the past few years. In the summer I may have surgery to fix an issue with my hip that's caused a lot of pain and discomfort during daily activities, I'm going to try to get my license (4x concussions and chronic knee issues have made taking the road exam impossible previously), and I'm going to try to relax my mind. I'm not going to have a summer job unless it's working orientation at St. Joe's for a week in June. I'll be living with my parents in Oxford (30 minutes from SJC). Close to family, out in a relatively rural community, lots of nature and quiet time. In high school I was so preoccupied about college and once I got there I have been so anxious about failing or messing it up. Now that I have almost a full year of college in the books I feel confident about it. I know I can handle it. This summer I plan to relax and rest my mind and hopefully heal my body and get into a better physical state. I haven't been able to exercise much because of my hip issue and how busy college life is[.]

[I'm definitely coming back in the fall.] I've really enjoyed my time here, I like most of the professors, I have a job here, I have a solid network of friends and relationships, I've got a

life here. I have no intention of leaving and starting over again. My girlfriend is also committed and is coming here starting this fall, and I want to be in the same school with her again[.]

[Here at the end of the school year,] I haven't had much going on academically. I guess two professors' [recent] comments were encouraging. My ecology professor handed me back an exam that I got a 99 on and said there was an honors level class he thought I belonged in rather than the normal class. A social work professor said he thought I had all the trademark signs of a good social worker already. Those things were nice to hear. Socially things have been pretty normal. Nothing out of the ordinary or noteworthy really. I went out partying with my friends last weekend and that was fun, but that's a pretty normal occurrence. *[Socially, when it comes to my high school friends,] I've stayed in touch with the few that I wanted to. I went to a very small day-treatment school. There were less than 100 students total from kindergarten to 12th grade. The high school was around 15 students.*

[Reflecting on my use of technology this year,] [p]ersonal technology has had a very positive impact during my time at St. Joe's. Social media has allowed me to stay in contact with my family and friends, as well as helping make connections with new people I've met here. Video games have given me a leisure activity that I can do alone or with friends. It's also helped me pass time while I cannot do many physical activities because of a hip issue. I can't really think of any negatives.

May

[Exams] [a]re about the same [as last semester]. I'm taking one less class this semester. I dropped Spanish because the teacher was just a nightmare. So, I dropped one class. One class we didn't have a final, and two were done on the last day of the class rather than finals week. So, I think I'm the only one that isn't freaking out. [I've prepared] ... pretty much the same [as I did

first semester]. I just look at a study guide, or read over my notes, or whatever [material I think is relevant] the week beforehand, and then take [the exam].

[I know the social work department professors] pretty well. There's only ... three The chair, the head person of the department resigned, so they're looking for a new one. Right now, I don't have an advisor, technically. The chair gave me a tour before I came here. The head of the department, we walked around the campus and talked about the program ... [when I] was in high school, and I had my high school social worker with me. [Communicating with the department has] been pretty good. I haven't had any issues. Some other students have, but I haven't [We communicate mostly by] email. I haven't had to ask any questions [this year].

[Reflecting on the year as a whole,] [g]ood grades is probably what I expected, and that's what happened. Just because it's how I've always been. What's gone different is probably how social I've been. I went from having no social life to knowing everybody and knowing all their names, how I know them, what they're doing, what their major is. [I was] forced into it, kind of. There's no real way to be a hermit here. You can't ... [because] [t]he student body size is so small. It's like a small town. You can't help but know people. Overhear a conversation by this person, or whatever. There's no way to get away from it.

[As far as substance use goes,] I mean, all I used was alcohol. That was it. I had been offered other stuff, but I just wasn't interested. I said no, and that was the end of it. It started off as every weekend, for probably ... Actually, I don't know. After I had developed a group of friends, and we started going out regularly, it was ... every weekend And as the year went on, we stopped doing it as often. We had more classwork. We all had jobs. Whatever. We just kind of petered out. Probably it's still like once or twice a weekend every month. Every couple weeks, maybe.

[I didn't] really [find many students who supported me academically], but I don't think that's a product of who my friends were. I think it was just ... academics are my strength. I didn't need a ton of support from peers. I could talk to professors about support. The only support I got from my peers that I asked for was like, "What assignment is due on Tuesday?" I would occasionally have people proofread stuff for me. Nothing too major. [I found individuals each semester who could help me, faster second semester than first, but no real group of people.]

[I may have done better my first year if] I had taken more college classes in high school[. If I had,] I would have to take less now. That would be nice. I took two. I could've taken more, probably. [The transition itself wasn't a big deal because] [m]y high school had a big focus on transitioning. So, we did a lot. I toured a ton of campuses. Had vocational meetings with teachers about what do you like, what do you want to do, how can we get you there.

[One thing I would have changed about the first year is] I would have liked more information on the professors that I took. I probably would've known not to take Spanish. [It would have helped to have known] [h]ow many students [a class] usually [has] when [it] start[s], and how many do[es] [it] end with. A drop rate. How often do students drop that class in particular. Which, I imagine wouldn't be that hard to put together. It would be more of like a, "We don't want to insult this professor," type [of] thing. [Socially, things went well.] There's a lot of things to do socially. A lot of ways to get involved. I can't really think of anything [that could have made it better]. Maybe [the school could put] a wider variety of things that happen on a schedule. Like bingo happens on Wednesdays. I think crafts are Friday. And I think pool is Saturday. Trivia is Tuesday. Pool, I mean like billiards.

[When I started, I wish I had known more about] the sports teams. [I had questions like] What does it cost to do it? How many hours per week do you think it would take up? Probably an

easier way to know the schedule of when games are happening. That's kind of difficult. I mean, to go to them. When do they happen? I don't even really know. I just hear friends talk about it like, "Oh, I have practice today." Or, "We have a game tomorrow." I don't really know the schedule.

[When I think about the summer and next year, the first thing that occurs to me is that] I've had a hip issue for most of the year. I just finished physical therapy and it made it worse. It didn't help. So, I'm going to have an MRI done, where they inject dye into it, and it's probably going to reinforce that I need surgery. I'm probably going to do that. That's probably going to be my summer. Having that [procedure], and then rehabbing it. And then probably by the time I'm done, I'll be back here [at SJC]. [I think next year is] going to be similar to the first year, because I'm moving to a new building with a new floor people and a new building of people. So having that group of people down the hall is going to change. I'm going to have to work through all of that and get to know my floor and all that again. But other than that, it'll be the same. [It doesn't really concern me because] I did it once, I can do it again.

[My living situation on campus will be much the same as this year.] I had a medical single this year. I got it again next year. Whe[n] I went to pick [a] building, if you have a medical single, they just put you in a double and don't give you a roommate. It's not really special unless you're an incoming freshman, I guess. Then they give you, there are a couple single rooms. When I went to pick what building, I just asked my friends, "What building are you all going to apply to?" And I applied to that one. I didn't really put much more thought into it than that. [Also,] [i]t just so happens that the hockey team stores all of our equipment in the building that I applied to. And the health center is in that same building. So, being an injury-prone hockey

player, that building works for me. I don't have to leave. I can store my equipment downstairs and then go see the nurse.

[One service at SJC that really helped me make it through the year was] [t]he Counseling Center, probably. They were the second group of people I talked to after admissions when I was investigating here. I talked to admissions, and then I talked to the Counseling Center. That helped me feel more secure that I would have mental health care easily available. I wouldn't have to go find a new therapist or something. I wouldn't have to go pay somebody off-campus. I could just walk over to St. Joe's [counseling] and they would do it for free.

Gary Anderson

Total Text Prompts/Responses: 45 (average 1.7/week)

Gary was 18 years old when he enrolled at SJC in the fall of 2017. He attended a small public high school in central Maine. His parents are divorced and living separately. In high school, he split his time with them on a 2-day, 2-day, 3-day weekly schedule. Both parents have significant others living with them. He has a younger brother, aged 17, from his parents, and 5 "step" sisters, a 7 year-old, an 11 year-old, and a 15 year-old from his father's girlfriend and a 17 year-old and a 20 year-old from his mother's boyfriend.

Financially, Gary's family has funded his education at SJC. His family's household net income is between \$60,000-\$80,000 a year. He finished his first year at SJC with a 3.92 GPA. He did not have a job his first year. He played baseball for SJC.

September

To get ready for college, I took some advanced placement courses, AP courses, some dual enrollment courses, which are courses where I was able to take the college class at my high school through a system, so I did like college writing and intro to literature through UMA at my

high school. I did elementary statistics through UMA at my high school. I did public speaking through SMCC at my high school. I felt doing those courses [was] going to get me the workload to get ready for college and understand the curriculum and how there are deadlines, and deadlines need to be met. There's no extra time or retaking quizzes or any of that. So I felt just ... doing those harder classes, just mentally preparing a year before you go is a good way of doing it.

I came to St. Joseph's College [for the] academics[, which] was [the] number one priority; second was baseball. Three was...distance from home, and I wasn't sure if I wanted to be a long way away or close. ...I didn't really want that in-between where you could go home, but there's also—it's kind of a stretch. I wanted to be close so I could go home or far away so I couldn't go home. ... I decided that [close to] home would be best for me just because the thought of being away from my family was something I didn't want to deal with. So it's nice being here where I can stay on campus and I'm comfortable on campus but if there's something going on at home on the weekend, I can go home.

[Before I made my decision, my family and I] talked about academics, what I was looking for for the future. ...[I]f I was going in undecided, they were totally fine with that, just wanted to make sure my money was going to good use. I don't [want to] go somewhere where maybe my future job is not making as much as my student loans [are] going to [cost]. We're trying to find that balance where whatever my career is my student loans will even out. ...[So] we talked, obviously, financially. That's a huge piece. Secondly, ... we talked about where am I going to be comfortable. That's where we were talking about that distance from home, the community, stuff like that. And then to what I expected from college. So we kind of made a

checklist of things I wanted and things I didn't want. And then when we went to visit, we literally brought it with us and we made a check or used numbers for us to grade each college.

... I decided here on academics because of their pre-physician's assistant ... program, that prepares me right for PA school. ..., [O]ther colleges didn't have this exact program. There's kind of broad medical areas where maybe I'd have to do a couple courses during the summer or maybe I would have to take an extra year after my four years. So that was the number one reason I chose St. Joe's, academics. Two was baseball, and baseball goes along with community. This is a very small school. Walking around campus, there's always someone saying "Hi, how was your day?" and stuff like that.

So, when I first got here, first night was good. [The first] week was kind of a rough week for me. ...[N]othing to do with the college, love the college. I was homesick, and I'm close to home. I'm only an hour away. But it's a big change going from somewhere you've done the same thing for 18 years of your life. You get dropped off at a place where you essentially are starting all over. You have to create a new routine, new lifestyle. So last week was kind of rough for me. I ah--I had some homesickness. It wasn't even missing home. It was just missing the people and the routine I was in. So, I actually went to, St. Joe's has a counseling center, with a psychologist, I actually went to her [that first] week and kind of just talked it out and that really helped. ...I would say starting Friday, and [then] Saturday, Sunday, Monday I've felt a lot better. I feel good. I just—I just hung out with my family and I realized I wasn't that close—far from home. So, college had been good here. The life, I'm now getting used it. St. Joe's is awesome. But, that being said, I've met a bunch of new people here. You—you find your groups within the week.

I think the important part was, uh, socially. I've come to realize that even being not that far away, college is big and new for a lot of kids. You've gone from eight—like I said, eighteen years of doing the same thing to being dropped into a place where you're all by yourself. So, I think it was good to get that point across. Baseball helped, because, I must say, the friends that I have created have been baseball players. But these baseball players are up on the top floor. I'm on the bottom floor. So it's kind of going out and finding them. ... I've also made connections with people who don't play baseball, so, but that's something I knew coming in. I knew coming in to school I was gonna have friends because of baseball, but I feel even if I didn't have baseball, it would have been easy to make friends as long as you open yourself up. You can be a closed book and you won't find friends, but if you're open, there's plenty of people [who are] also in the same shoes as you. [C]ollege is what you make of it. Get involved, open yourself up. Some people have it worse, some people are coming from five, six, ten hours away, so it's even harder for them. *It's more, like, saying college is what you make of it. If you're gonna be open, you'll find friends, you'll find your groups. It will be good.*

[H]ere at St. Joe's, it being a small school, my biggest class is 30. Which I love, because the professors already—all my professors already know my name. Granted, I did that because I chose to sit front row in each class, so I'm right there to learn everything. Even the people in back, the teachers know who they are. There's attendance every day. It's not like if you go to a big school, there's ... no attendance. *... I'd say the science department is probably the best department on campus. As far as professors-wise, they're all pretty open and they want you to get involved with a lot of stuff.* So academics has been good. *Socially, like I said, I had homesickness at first, but I think doing the counseling and just kind of changing my mindset and being here for a week, it's getting better. And college can be fun if you make it fun.*

Academically, I feel those classes I did take in high school have prepared me. Because there's going to be these deadlines, I have deadlines coming up next week for homework and reading assignments, and I realize I need to do them. Some people who may not have taken those college courses may think that they can do it last minute, which may work for some. Some people are good at absorbing information quickly. [A]cademically I would say that course load and just understanding even if there is a quiz, you know you can get by without studying, maybe just studying so you get used to it. [My advice for high school seniors is to] actually do reading in high school because in college, you need to read. [S]ocially[,] ... I'm big on family. I love my family. We do gatherings all the time. But anytime I can, my [high school] friends ask me to go out or something I go out with them. That way, I'm getting that separation and getting ready for that college life where you're out on your own and you need to make connections with people. That ... was a good way of preparing [for college]. [Now, with my] *[h]igh school friends, [I send] a SnapChat here and there throughout the day. Just how are things going every couple days. But that's just me.*

[As far as contacting home,] ... I contact my parents—I say good morning to ... each of my parents every morning. I say good night to them every night. Some people try not to do that because they don't want to stay attached. I did that even when I was home. My parents are divorced, so if I was with my mom, that morning I would text my dad “morning” and then I would text my dad “goodnight.” So that's just something I've always done and I'm always [going to] continue to do.

... My [third] week went well, felt a little long though. My high point was probably doing well on my three quizzes, I had three quizzes on Friday! In addition, it was week three so figuring out time management and getting on a plan was good. It was the first week I felt like I

had a plan every day. [In my fourth] week[,] I had to write a short essay on the covenants of the Jewish religion. So I wrote the essay not feeling very confident, but when I got it back from my professor I had actually done well on it. I would say that had an impact on me because it was a topic that I didn't know much about or even didn't care much about, but I remained open minded and actually learned something about religion! I think a big part of learning is being open minded and trying to learn what you can even if you struggle learning about that topic.

... Today [at the end of the fourth week of school] I look most forward to playing baseball. We are currently in fall ball so I'm looking forward to playing. [The] [w]eekend was good! I need some time to relax and catch up on sleep so I did that. Just relaxed and watch[ed] the Patriots game with some friends.

October

Today [first week of October] has been laid back. I only had one class because my second one got cancelled, so I have been able to get stuff done like laundry and working out. This afternoon I look forward to playing in my intramural soccer game! I am going home for [the] weekend, I originally had planned to stay, but everyone is going home for the long weekend. My week was good! The highlight was starting intramural activities here on campus. [At home], I ... talk[ed with my family] about my time so far[.] Mostly [we talked] just about school, grades, and how the baseball guys are. Beyond that, [when I'm at school,] I talk a lot with them about what was going on [with them] around home.

[In the second week of October,] not too many plans for the weekend. Just hanging with friends, volunteer work with the baseball team, and studying Sunday night. [The] [w]eekend did go as planned, pretty relaxing and just got some homework done along with volunteer time. This

week I am probably looking forward to joining the outdoors club on a hike ... [on] Tumbledown Mountain.

[At the start of the third week of October,] [m]y day has been good. My high point was that I met with my academic advisor, we scheduled my class schedule for the upcoming semester and talked about my future here at SJC. [So far, when it comes to my time at St. Joe's,] I would say [there have not been] any surprises...it is what I expected. You are completely independent, you make your own choices. Nobody is there to hold your hand. But at the same time, everyone is willing to help! You just need to ask. Classes are tougher than high school, but I use my time wisely and study. It's fun! There [are] always activities going on and plenty of way[s] to make new friends. ... Academics this week have been average compared to the rest of the year. Got my homework assignments for each class and took lecture notes. Proudest moment was passing my ecology mid-term. I'm most concerned about my confusion in my religion class. It's hard for me to understand sometimes.

This week [the last week of October] for ecology class, I work[ed] 4 hours at the local farm. I think this impacted me in a positive way because it allowed me to help the farmers of the community here but also allowed me to understand the process of agriculture and its effects on our campus. [Looking back at my time so far,] I would say [I have taken advantage of services offered at St. Joe's] about 10 times. I have used the counseling center 4 times for counseling. I have used tutoring about 5 times and I have [used] the health center 1 time. [There was a big storm on Halloween, so] I am going home tonight, the school is currently out of power.

November

I don't travel off campus hardly at all...I have only left a handful of times. That was once to go to the movies, few times for Walmart, and once for Dunkin' Donuts. ...

My study habits I found have been best independently in the library. I will often re-read lecture notes and review slideshows presented in class.

My form of communication [with my family the first week of the month] was through text and phone. I called my mom and dad once last week to inform them ... about baseball. I also texted my brother and step sister just to see how things were going. Last week was typical [of my time at St. Joe's], besides the fact that I had 4 exams in one week.

[In the second week of the month], I ate my typical 4 meals a day all being at the campus café. However, on Tuesday instead of lunch at the café I had lunch with my grandfather in Windham[, Maine, the next town over]. I would say this [eating pattern] is usual. I mostly have all meals at the café, with a usual once a week off campus or at Baggot [S]treet [Café on campus].

[While I was home for Thanksgiving, my family and I] [t]alk[ed] about my classes, future plans, and summer job opportunities ... During winter break I am working as a runner for Fedex...and during the summer I am either taking a CAN or EMT-B course so I can start gaining Health Care Experience hours. [Socially, at St. Joe's this semester], I'd say the most impactful event has been a ping pong tournament we had in our dorm. It was a good time to relax and hangout with my new friends here.

December

Finals have gone well so far. I have one more. I feel I prepared well for all of them. Th[e] only thing I would do differently [if I could change something from first semester] is to take more notes throughout the semester. More specifically my theology class, but also in general I think all course I could have taken more notes. My plans for break are to work for the week and a half before Christmas. I will be working as a runner for Fedex...then for the rest of the

vacation I plan to spend time with my family, friends, and my girlfriend while preparing for baseball season by hitting[,] throwing[,] and lifting. I will try to fit in some skiing and hope to pick up a new hobby by trying photography.

January

As far as returning to Saint Joe's: I love the school here, I love everything. My program's going great, all the teachers are great. ... I came here playing baseball, and so far this semester, baseball's taking up a lot of time. I mean, it's three hour practices and everything. So mostly going into college, I was kind of debating whether I even wanted to play baseball? And I decided I might as well try one year, because I didn't want to go down the future and regret that I never tried. So I want to see how this season goes.

If I decide baseball's not for me, maybe I'll consider ... going to a different school, just so I can set myself up to gain into a graduate program there ... maybe go to a school that has a graduate program that I can just go right into at the same school, rather than coming here and transferring in. ... But I feel even [if] I didn't play baseball here, there's a good chance I'd probably stay, because I have a good [feeling about being here]... I'm a pre-med PA major, and they happen to have that here. Most schools don't. So I feel that's good. And I like the small school feel, 'cause I have personal connections with the teachers. ... I feel pretty confident I'll be back [next year].

In the beginning of last year's first semester, I used a little bit of the teacher hours, and found it helpful, but then once I got in the flow of things, I felt I didn't need it, and ended up finishing with fine grades. But now, like I said, with this new semester coming up, between baseball, my coursework is a little heavier, I feel it's going to be important to use those office hours. Say I have a game I need to go to, or practice I feel I didn't study hard that night, so

the next morning, maybe I'll get up and go talk to them, try understand the concept a little better. So I think that'll be vital this semester, just because I have a busier schedule with baseball.

... I'm excited [about starting classes again], because I had a good first semester, very successful first semester. So I was proud of myself for that. Just a little nervous, because course load's getting a little heavier, [I] have calc[ulus] now. Calc[ulus], biochemistry ... I think [I'm] just a little nervous just 'cause it's a little tougher classes, but [I still feel] pretty confident. In high school I felt it was more about doing the homework as far as exams. Exams would be pretty close to the homework and exams were more frequent, so it was less material and stuff. I feel like college really, besides counting the final, you're probably going to have four exams. So [you'll] have like a quarter, a mid-term, another quarter and then final exam. Which isn't a lot of exams compared to high school, but exams are more like every other week in high school. *So I'll spend time either two hours at night in my room if it's quiet, or I'll go down to the library and spend a good chunk of time studying. Where in high school I felt I could just review my homework that I did and I'd be fine on the exam.*

Some classes I've had even less, so there's only two exams during the semester and then there's the final. So I feel exams cover a lot more material and teachers will do their PowerPoints and everything, but they're going to expect you to go more in depth beyond their PowerPoints. They'll just pick up the highlights of each chapter. Say in biology [the] teacher's doing chapter 24, he'll have the bold stuff as important, but obviously on the exam there's going to be questions about that bold topic and he probably wants [you to respond] more in depth. So I feel finding time to study more material for more amount of time has been important for me.

[So far, in my time at St. Joe's,] I have learned that I am capable of learning on my own and to manage my time better than expected. I feel confident, organized, and mature [with] my

new college life style. [I've established a number of routines here, including] [s]tudy time, workout time, [and] nap time. [For second semester,] I want to try and get more sleep....Socially, [I've learned so far that it's important to] try... new things ([such as going to] game night [and] movie night). Academically, [I have developed new] study habits. [I've used one particular St. Joe's service more than any other, the tutoring service at ACE,] the Academic Center of Excellence. You can [sign up] through [their website], or ACE just sends out an email, and it's like a little brochure of all of the tutors for each and every subject that you can save on your computer and click and look, and it has their email and phone number, to contact. So that's all I did ... I have that saved on my computer... . This semester, I'm using one for calc[ulus] right now.

[As far as communicating with my friends back home, there have been some changes. One thing that has stayed the same is] [c]hecking in and seeing how everything is going. [One thing that's different is that we] [d]on't talk everyday, [which I] used to [do with] my friends. *I... have a relationship...it is one that has carried over from high school. She however, goes to a different school. [We] [c]ommunicate daily via text, FaceTime about once a week, [and] see each other anywhere from once a week to once every 2 weeks.* Socially, I still go out [with my St. Joe's] friends on weekends and [am] open to meeting new people. Academically, I carried over my work ethic and neat organization [from high school].

[The] [h]ighpoint [of coming back to school after break] was getting back into the routine of things...waking up, eating, going to class, lifting, then homework. Something I struggled with [the second week back] was a minor quiz I had. I had a brain fart, I knew the material but just second guessed myself. But sometimes that happens.

February

[In the first week of the month,] [t]oday... [I] have texted both my mom and dad. Other than that, I called my brother last weekend just to discuss how school and sports is going. [M]y academic skills I feel haven't been at a 100%...[I] feel tired. So [I'm] lacking concentration.

[In the third week of the month,] [I] had a baseball game last night. A typical day is waking up around 7:45 and going to breakfast at the café. The rest of the day involves going to class and getting lunch when I have an open window. After class, I either have baseball, workout, or just do school work. Usually get dinner around 6. After dinner, I either do more homework or if I am caught up I hang out with my dorm buddies. I usually go to bed around 11:45-12 pm. [I do] [l]aundry on Sundays...working out every other day after classes, and I like to take one hour before bed to relax (video games, Netflix, just hanging with guys in the dorm) I was proud of my first semester grades. They have not caused me to rethink my approach [to studying], I am going to continue the same approach. However, I do have a tougher second semester, so if adjustments are needed, I will do so. Time management is way more important this semester...that is because I am a student athlete though. My regular routine has stay[ed] the same[:] I plan my day for all 3 meals, working out, and when I go to class.

March

I have no connection to faith...it is nothing I have ever practice[d]. However, going to St. Joe's has made me realize it is something I should learn more about. I think [in] the future I may reach out to learn more about other people's beliefs.

Over spring break I went to Florida with the baseball team. It had a huge impact on me as it was the first time ... we were able to play as a team together. Positively, I got to experience

college baseball. Negatively, I feel I have forgot[ten] some of what I was learning before I left ... academics wise.

... I [usually] hang out with a group of the baseball team. It's about 5 of us. The most recent thing we did together was going out to eat, in downtown Windham. Baseball [has had the biggest impact on my experience this year]...I am on the varsity baseball team here at SJC. I think the impact has [been] somewhat [positive], I just need to manage my time a little better. [Second semester,] [t]he biggest [stress] is due to baseball and my courses throughout the day. I've need[ed] to stay up later doing homework/studying therefore I feel I am more tired than usual which I think sometimes can hinder my academic performance. [Over the] [l]ast two weeks I have used tutors for calc[ulus] and chemistry.

April

[For the summer,] I will be working at the same job I've had for the past 4 years for the first two months. Then I will be taking an [EMT] course for a month. I will be living from home. No summer classes [at St. Joe's], just the EMT course. As of right now I still plan to pursue my career goal of being a Physician Assistant. Here at SJC they offer the Pre-PA program that I have already started. With the set plan of the courses I need to take along with a great academic advisor who is helping every step of the way, I feel returning to SJC for classes in the fall makes the most sense for me. In addition, I have made great friends being here along with having a good time playing baseball here. I have noticed that the amount of friends from high school I talk to has decreased. I have only consistently stayed in touch with 2...the rest of I hear from here and there.

May

... I think there's good services [here at St. Joe's]. I think the services were good all around. I think they're promoted pretty well, the school does a very good job at getting the people to even try the services, maybe if they don't even have a problem, [like at] the counseling center. You may not feel like you need counseling, but they have dogs over there that you just go have a dog, take a dog for a walk or relieve stress if you want. I think this school does a lot of that, getting those things out there.

So since coming to college, I've used, I've kind of use all of these [services]. I've used the counseling center, I've used the dining services, used the gym and I've used the career development services. Of all of them, I would say the counseling center was probably the most beneficial for me. Coming in, the first couple weeks of school I actually, I don't even live that far away, I kind of got really homesick. It was just a big change, I was stressed about how much school, if I was going to be able to handle the workload because it's, you're going from something that you're so used to, to come into something that you honestly have no idea. You don't know what school is going to be like, you don't know who you're going to meet, you don't know anything. I kind of got really uncomfortable, got a little stressed out, got a little homesick, so I finally decided to go to the counseling center. In high school, [I] never had a problem with stress or homesickness. I could, it's just not something I ever dealt with so I had never used a counseling service before. My brother has back home, so he's been, I just never have. So it's kind of new for me to try that. So I tried it, I ended up doing probably 4 or 5 sessions. It really helped, made me adapt better. That was really beneficial.

The food services obviously, here it's unlimited buffet so, all you can eat. That can be dangerous for some people. Luckily I like a healthy diet, I don't crave fast foods. I actually crave

healthy food so, what's good about here is we have the farm across the street, we have a lot of healthy, organic stuff here that I really like so that was beneficial. Kept me feeling good, getting a good night's sleep and stuff. Gym, used all the time in the fall. The spring it's been a little more limited because of baseball and school, those two together are taking up a lot of time, so [I'm] finding the weight room isn't [happening] as often. But in the fall, I used it all the time. The weight room helped me with my confidence. Whenever I was lifting, I was feeling good about myself and then if I went two or three days without hitting the gym, I started to feel down, so I had to ... get back in the gym to make me feel better again. The career development [center], I had my mind set on what I wanted to be when I came into college. As I was going through [college], I just started questioning, maybe I would be better at something else, maybe I'd like something else. Went there, they talked to me, took a couple quizzes, turned out my number one thing was right what I was doing. It was a good thing to check out to make sure I was on the right track. So, I've used all those services.

I know ... all [my professors] very well. I sit front row of all my classes, just so I'm not distracted easily, I can answer questions, ask questions. With a small campus size, the teacher already knows everyone's name, but still sitting there ... and I use their office hours, if I don't understand a project I would go see them. I have a good relationship with all of my teachers I feel.

[Finals have gone well.] I just had two today and then I have two more Monday and that'll be all my finals I took. The two today, first one, I think I did fairly well on it. Once I got the stat[istics] test, I realized I probably should have studied a little more on that one, instead of the one I was going to take right after, the night before. It's hard to predict that though. So that one went alright, still think I did well in the class. Then the second exam, I did really well in. So

it was Chem[istry] and Calc[ulus], specifically. So [I] had those today, back to back ... 10:15-12:15 and then 12:30-2:30. So it was a rough day, rough night studying the night before. Got it done, feels good to have it done. Just to know that you've done it and moving on. I just have two exams Monday, get those out of the way and get home for summer.

[Finals second semester were different from first.] First semester, obviously it wasn't baseball season, for me. So I had a lot more time to prepare for it. For this one, I had to do a little more time management, just studying for these. Then just the course difficulty of these finals. Last semester I took Chem[istry] 1 so now I'm taking Chem[istry] 2. I feel like Chem[istry] 2 had more material because it kind of builds off that Chem[istry] 1. So, there's a difference there. Then the other classes I take didn't really correlate to the first semester. Depending on, as I go through years from now, I have Anatomy 1, Anatomy 2, Bio[logy] 1, Bio[logy] 2.

[As far as preparing for college,] I think I did pretty well doing what I could in high school, I took the AP classes, I took the college classes, so I kind of already had an idea of what college was going to be like. But, I can see how it can be very easy for someone to not take these AP or college classes. In that sense, if I never did, I felt like I probably ... would've been unprepared for college. Going back if I hadn't taken those classes senior and junior year, I think a lot more note taking would've been necessary to do, a lot more brushing up on notes later even if it's not homework, just kind of brushing up on those notes just so it's staying in your head. I'd say, if you want the information [about your major] you've got to reach out for it. Teachers will present it in class but that's about as far as it goes, I felt. You'll get emails, but as far as really getting engaged in the science department, you have to want to do it. They'll try to push you a little bit but then, it's all up to you to make the choice.

[Socially, here at St. Joe's,] I have two different groups of friends. I have my friends that I'm hanging out socializing with and then I have my group of friends that are my academic friends, I guess you could say, that I do a lot of academics with. Not that I don't socialize or have fun with them, but it's actually, it's two different groups of people. So ... I have my roommate, and then another kid that lives in the same dorm as me, and [we] get together a lot to study and stuff. [My academic group] developed pretty quickly, it was about after the first or second exam of fall. We just, we all happened to take the test and then after the test, we all asked each other how we did and we all saw that we all got pretty good grades so we're all like well we all must know, kind of have some secrets in our ways of studying, maybe if we put it all together, we'll kill it. So then we started getting together every time we had an exam, studying together, bouncing ideas off of each other, [like] study techniques that we all use.

[T]his semester I've been worried a lot about school so I wasn't even really thinking of where I want to live or who I want to live with. Obviously I had friends and guys that I would like, in my head I was like, oh I could live with them. But I didn't really do any talking around. One of the two guys on the sophomore [baseball] team ended up asking me if I wanted to live with them, real good responsible guys that care about their academics too. I'm like, "Yeah that would be a good match." So then I asked my roommate, because I want to continue to room with my roommate because we're the same major and get along great. So we both agreed, so we got with them two, searched for a couple other people, got them all together and picked the pods because that's nicer than the quads.

[This means that] [n]ext fall I will be living in a pod with a group of guys. So right now I'm in Standish which is a freshman dorm, three floors, boys, girls, boys and then two people per room. So it's me and my roommate, so we got along, it was good. So then we now want to go

into the pod which are usually for sophomores to get into. It can be difficult at times, but, the group of guys that are getting in, we have a good housing score [b]ecause we all have pretty good grades [and] stay out of trouble. We're moving into the pods, so that will be nice. We're going into an 8 person pod, so four rooms of two. Once nice pod, a bunch of good guys.

[My first year] went how I thought in the way of, time management was going to be really important. I knew I was going to have to manage my time in order to keep up with school, and baseball, and staying healthy in the weight room and stuff like that. It's exactly what I thought about being busy. I feel I was pretty well prepared for it, I think I've had a successful freshman year of school. But I also think it was a learning year, a lot of trials and errors with things, so moving into next year, I think I realize that ... I work hard in my academics so I sometimes I feel like I put academics over the social life of college.

... I would just say my biggest learning tip of this year was coming in, realizing how different it's gonna be. I think I've seen other...people have talked to me because I was open about it being very uncomfortable the first couple weeks. I think for a lot of people, they get here and they have that freedom and they kind of go crazy for maybe the first couple weeks to a month. Then I feel after that month, sometimes that's when they start to get the homesickness, all the fun's over, they've experienced it, now they're realizing, "Okay, I actually gotta do school." Then they start to get homesick. So I feel just being aware, it is a big change, you're going from everything you're comfortable with, to everything that you're not comfortable with. But here there's great counseling services, [which] I take advantage of.

[If I could change a few things about my first year,] [o]ne would [be to] give myself more downtime, I guess. I did intramurals, there's a couple I didn't do, I think if I had done those, that would [have] kind of been a stress reliever occasionally, a couple nights a week just go out, have

some fun with friends, playing a couple games. First semester, academically I felt like I was on page, taking good notes. The second semester, I felt like I got a little sloppy, I was still doing pretty well in school but I feel I need[ed] to go back to my ways of first semester where I keep up with the notes and, because here, the teachers will actually, they tend to give you the slides of the slide shows so you can just follow along and whatever. But I feel it really helped me to write down those notes even though I have them right in front of me because I think writing it down gets it in my brain better. I think going into next year I am going to go back to that.

So I feel now that I've gone through this and I've experienced [college], next semester I'm still going to obviously work hard on my academics, but give myself some free time to socialize. Last semester, for the first semester, I felt like I was more relaxed. If someone asked me to go do something, I would go do it and still make time to study. With this semester I felt like I always needed to study, study, study. Just [because of] some adjustments I've made [I think] this was a good trial year, [a good] learning experience.

[As far as substance use this year,] I don't do any tobacco, ... I don't do the marijuana. Socializing I do drink, I drank, I ... only drank actually during the fall semester and I'd say I'd do it, I'd probably only do it every other weekend but, it was fun. It was fun to do with friends, it was kind of like a stress reliever in a way. But I thought I was very responsible with it, I made sure that during the week, ... I'd only go out probably once, either once a week or once every week and a half. I made sure that Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, during that week, I was doing school work, even Friday night. That way for Saturday night, if I wanted to go out and socialize and drink with friends I could. [I would] make sure that I had all of my schoolwork caught up. Second semester, due to baseball, I haven't drank at all. I haven't done anything as far as substances in the spring. So academics is always first.

College is definitely, it's a bit of, how much stress can you handle, I feel. That's what college [is], it's a big test of stress management. Honestly, I think I should get better at stress management. I didn't realize how stressful [it would be], I knew it was going to be stressful I just didn't realize this much. I find myself stressed out a lot of times and I think over the summer I am really excited to finally relax, give myself a breather. But also during the summer, thinking about going into next year. I think over the summer I could work on trying to figure out stuff that could help me, that helps relieve my stress so I can bring it in next year when I do have those stress moments.

Michael Brown

Total Text Prompts/Responses: 43 (average 1.6/week)

Michael was 18 years old when he enrolled at SJC. He was raised in Boston and attended a small Catholic high school in Everett, MA. He is the middle child in a family of seven children. He has two older sisters (aged 24 and 23 in 2018), one older brother (aged 21) and three younger brothers (aged 17, 14, and 6). His parents have been married for over 25 years and the whole family still lives together. His entire street at home in Boston is filled with cousins, aunts, and uncles. His cousins have seven kids as well, each with the same age as somebody in Michael's family. He is close with all his cousins and extended family and is family-oriented.

Financially, Michael's family funded his education at SJC. His family's annual income is between \$60,000-\$80,000 a year. He finished his first year with a 3.79 GPA. He did not have a job on campus. He played for both the basketball and baseball teams at SJC.

September

[In order to prepare for college,] I went to a bunch of open houses at ... different colleges. ... [M]y school had ... some presentations on how college is different from high school

and stuff like that I [didn't] really [do] a lot to get ready for college, but I think I ... came in with an open mind to adjust however I needed to, but...and I had three siblings that already went through college, so they gave me ... advice, like what to bring and how to ... be ready and prepared for classes and stuff like that. So they were probably ... my best way to get ready for college. [M]y two older sisters ... both graduated from Westfield State and ... my older brother went to Bunker Hill Community College. *I'm the middle of seven children [and we're Irish]. A lot of people would think [my hair] was ginger, I prefer the term "cinnamon apple."*

I [came to SJC] thinking of playing sports here so I tried to get ready physically by running and lifting a little bit but ... I think that was the most I did. I didn't do a lot, I probably could have done more to prepare. [I decided to come to SJC because] my high school was pretty small, it was very small, and I loved it there, I loved high school, and what I was looking for in a college was a small college in New England so I could ... be somewhat on my own but ... I could still drive home if something happened that I need to get home with. And I wanted a D3 school so I could possibly play both sports [baseball and basketball], or tryout for both sports, try and play and ... I wanted ... a Catholic school 'cause I still wanted to be involved in my faith. So they kind of fit all of them, and I was ... I was looking at Colby-Sawyer, I was looking at St. Michael's in Vermont, Plymouth State, and a couple school[s] in Massachusetts and I just liked St. Joe's better than the rest. I just got a better feel when I was on the campus than ... the rest. ..., that probably is probably what did it for me.

[When my parents and I talked about college, we talked] mainly [about] ... maintaining ... grades, 'cause it costs a lot of money to go here and I'm not gonna throw away all that money and not have a good education. They told me how my ... education in this four-year experience is gonna prepare me and set me up for the rest of my life almost 'cause the degree I get is gonna

determine the job and where I go in life. So the main thing was grades. I mean, they talked about everything like sports, and ... socially and stuff like that, but the main thing was the grades.

[Since I started at SJC, my communication with my family has been] still intact. [M]y parents just came up two days ago. [T]hey came up and brought me a bunch of stuff up here. ..., they brought some food, they brought me ... a bulletin board, some calendars and stuff like that. And then we went out to eat at Applebee's. It was, it was nice. My mom and my dad and my little brother came up. *I pretty much FaceTime and call my mother almost every day. She wants me to ... always check up on her and my ... dad's really big with ... knowing how the sports are going[,] so after every game[--]like the fall ball games[--]every game I've called him and told him how it's gone, what happened during the game and stuff like that. ... I've called them every day.* *[W]ith ... communicating with my family it's ... not hard because I've been in the middle of a lot of chaos with my family and ... I've always--it's like the house is always--there's always somebody in the house when I get home so it hasn't been a problem to talk to my family and communicate with them.*

[During the second week of classes,] [m]y family came up to visit me and talk to me so that was very nice. I've been doing pretty good with my classes and I'm enjoying playing baseball. It wasn't a crazy week but it was good. My high point of the week would probably be me getting my first hit in baseball. I was in a bit of a slump and I broke out with a nice double over the right fielders head. So that was my overall week. [In the third weekend of school,] [t]he best thing about it was that my father, sister, and little brother came up to visit me. They saw me play baseball then we went to eat and go shopping. It was really nice seeing them. That would be the highlight of the weekend.

And [as far as communicating with] my high school [friends goes], I'm in ... a bunch of group chats with everybody in it so we still talk to each other ... make jokes and stuff like that. But ... I haven't seen [my friends] since [I] came up here but every single one of [us] is planning when ... I go back to Boston to definitely see [each other].

[In my first week at SJC,] [a]cademically, it hasn't been a struggle yet but I'm sure that, ... the more I go on the more of a struggle it will be. ... I haven't really had any big tests or quizzes. I've just had ... homework and I found ... I can handle the homework that they've given so far. So it hasn't been too hard for me and each class that I'm in, ... it isn't one that I can ... feel like, oh, this is gonna be a struggle. I feel like all five classes ... I can get good enough grades in each one of them. And socially, I think ... the more time I'm here, the more I meet people, and the more I can ... talk to people and ... I feel ... like for a while ... I'm in my shell a little bit, but it takes a while to get out of it. ... [T]he longer I'm here, the more and more I get out of my shell as I talk to people.

[In my second week of classes,] [s]omething academically that challenged me ... was I had my first quizzes in two classes. They were both pretty hard and I'm not sure how I did them. I am excited to get them back and find out how I did.

I think ... the main difference between college and high school is ... the parties and stuff like that It's a ... lot different than high school, but that's ... the only thing that I can really think of.

October

[In the first week of October,] [w]hat stands out to me was [that] I [learned I] got a 100 on one of my recent tests. I was very excited about that because I wasn't sure how I did on it. It proved to me that I can thrive in college and I am ready to take on the challenge. [At the end of

the week,] ... I met up with a bunch of friends and my family. I talked about my time at college and they talked about what they've been doing and catching me up with anything I've missed. It was really nice to see them and catch up.

[In the second week in October, I feel like] [a]cademics has been a challenge because I've been studying late nights this past week. I got a 92 on my midterm for a class so that would be my proudest moment. [However,] I'm most concerned about studying for finals and how hard they are going to be. My plans this weekend mainly revolve around basketball. There is tryouts Sunday and some running today and tomorrow. Besides basketball I don't have much planned. Mainly just hang out with friends and relax. I don't really have anything planned for this week besides working my butt off at basketball.

[In the third week of October,] [t]he event that had the most positive impact on me is that I got a B+ on my midterm.. It was a big test and I worked hard on it. [My week has gone well. I have practiced for basketball every day]. The high point was definitely being able to sleep in. I slept great. [At this point,] I think I've taken advantage of [services offered at SJC, including counseling, tutoring, job center, or the health center] like once or twice. I haven't really needed to use [any of them].

The main surprise about college life is how different Maine is from Boston. I knew that it was going to be different, but it is certainly different trying to live here. Classes are about what I expected because I think I prepared well for them. [My plans for Halloween on campus are] ... mainly to type a paper that I have due Thursday. There's not much I can do since the power is gone.

November

[I spend most of my time on campus now, but] I leave like once a week or twice a week. Since I don't have my car it's hard to leave campus. Whenever I do leave it's usually to go to Walmart or to eat at ... Wendy's or KFC. I try my best to communicate [with] home as often as I can. Probably around 5 times a week. I try to call usually once a day and check in with my family. The people I call are usually my mom or dad and sometimes my sister. I am a big family guy. I usually call, text, or FaceTime them. And last week [the second week of November] was a pretty typical week for me. One thing that stood out is that I got to catch up on a bunch of sleep.

[By the third week of November,] since I don't have a car and very limited money, eating off campus or ordering food wasn't an option. I usually try to go to the café 3 times a day because its free food and its pretty good. I go to Baggot Street [Café on campus] like two or three times a week and it is usually to get a snack or a drink. [During Thanksgiving break,] [s]ince I only got to go home for two days due to basketball, I didn't really get to talk to most of my friends or family. But when I was with them we did a lot of catching up. Mainly asking me about college and Maine life.

[During the last week of November,] [t]he academic event that had the most impact on me was my history exam that I had to study really hard for. The personal event that impacted me was the fact that I've had a fever and been really sick.

December

My plans for break are basketball. We have to stay on campus for most of break due to basketball. But when I get home I am going to see a bunch of my friends and family. [Now that the semester is over, I can say that] [f]inals were pretty tough but I do think I prepared a lot for them. Something I would do differently [if I could do finals over again] is get more sleep. [When

I think about the semester,] [f]riendships [I've made] is the first thing that comes to mind. I have made many new friends and I am very excited to make more.

January

[If I could change anything to start second semester,] I would change my living situation. I would change my room and how it's set up and where everything is in my room. A high point [of the month] would be talking with my family cause I haven't seen them in a while. A struggle would be ... having to go to both baseball and basketball practice and I get absolutely exhausted.

[Reflecting on my first semester,] I have learned to be somewhat independent. I have learned that I am a grown man and this is the real world. I think I've become a stronger person physically, mentally, and emotionally. My social skills have definitely transferred from high school to college as I am a people person and like to be social. Academically I am a heavy procrastinator. It is a bad habit but I've done it all my life. I think I've learned to become a better note taker because in high school, I was kind of sloppy and just all over the place, just put it on the page. But in college, the professor doesn't have as much emphasis on you, so it's all up to you and I decide I'm gonna try and make it more neat and more readable. But I don't know. I feel like I've always been a procrastinator. I think it's a pretty big flaw. But I try to not be a procrastinator, but sometimes just, it's tough.

An academic skill I have learned is to be a better note taker as college stresses notes. Socially I have learned to become more comfortable in a party environment. One college routine I have established is taking naps in between classes. [With my family, one thing that hasn't changed over the year] is my love for them and trying my best to stay in contact. [One thing that has changed] is not being able to see them all the time like before and I miss them more now.

[The biggest effect on my first year so far has been] ... physically being tested ... in sports like basketball. This month is an overlap between basketball and baseball, so I have to do both this month. So I guess it's pretty daunting, but it takes a toll on you and ... half of it's mental too. Knowing to push through and stuff like that and I think academics had an effect on my mental strength too, 'cause having to study, do homework, and [make deadlines] ... and stuff like that. And emotionally, I think just not stressing out over a small [thing]... if there's a pop quiz or something, not freaking out. Being able to stay calm or relaxed and have the confidence that I can pass the quiz or something like that.

[Right now, at the end of January, I feel like the chances I will return to SJC in the fall are 4/5.] I do plan to stay in [the Business and Sports Management program] but you never know what can happen in the future. I'm keeping an open mind. I mean, I'm pretty sure I'm going to go here all four years and graduate from St. Joe's, but I never want to count anything out. And depend[ing] on what happens, 'cause I don't know what's gonna happen in the future. Something could pop up with family. Something could pop up with a different offer from a different school or something like that. So ... I don't want to close that door, close any doors. I want to leave all my options open. [The service I used the most first semester] I think [was] the library because it helped me with my grades. [Second semester,] I would use the nurses more for when I get sick. I am very happy and excited to finish [second] semester.

The greatest impact [on my positive attitude toward SJC] would be playing for the basketball team and being a team with all the guys. ... I mean, in college, it's a little scary. New environment, new people, you don't know anyone. I've always had [a personal] conflict playing sports. I mean, I love it. And being able to play and then connect because now, we're in the end of the season so we've all blended together. So I'm not nervous around any of them. I feel like

they're all some of my closest and best friends. Yeah, we've been through a lot through practices, games to classes and I think being able to become a team with them was probably my best experience so far in this first semester.

February

[NB: Michael did not have the use of his cell phone for the first two weeks of February He missed three data collection prompts in that time]. One difference [in my experience this month] is that I have been more tired because of both baseball and basketball picking up. Something that has [not] changed [since first semester is] that I have to keep working hard for my grades. I feel around a 4 [out of 5] in my academic skills. I am always confident for the most part.

[At the start of the last week of February] I communicated last night with [my family] by FaceTiming. We just talked about how I'm doing and what everyone else at home was doing. [As far as dating goes,] I haven't had a relationship here. Just taking my time and not rushing into things with anyone.

March

I am very connected to my faith. I believe in God and try to do his work every day. I am actually an altar server back home. It has changed while being at college because it has been tougher to make masses and go to church.

[Over spring break,] I went to Florida with the baseball team for spring training. It was very fun and [I] got very sunburnt. The biggest impact [on me] was going home for the weekend when I got back from Florida. It was very positive and nice seeing my family. [In a typical week, though,] *[b]aseball, [b]asketball and hanging out with friends ... [all] impact[] my academic life because they are very time consuming and hard to keep up with.* [When I'm on campus

now,] ... I hang out with a bunch of people and it's usually like a group of like 8-10 people. The most recent thing I did [with them] was go to dinner ... on Friday[, March 16].

A typical day [now for me at the end of March] would be wake up at 8. Go to class. Then go to breakfast and head back to my room. Take a nap until my next class. Then head to baseball and then go to dinner. During the night I usually play video games with the guys in my dorms. And I usually go back to sleep right around midnight. Some routines include doing laundry every weekend. I go out to parties occasional[ly] on the weekends. I play a lot of video games, especially Fortnite. I try to leave a couple hours for studying. And I shower every day before I go to bed.

I haven't used [any services offered by SJC] recently but around ... a month or two ago I went to the health center to talk to the nurse because I wasn't feeling good.

April

[By the first week of April,] I have not made much plans for the summer. I will be playing baseball and working out a lot. I might return to my summer job as a teacher's aid but I'm not sure yet. [One thing I know for sure is that I will definitely be returning to SJC in the fall, a 5/5 chance.] I have already registered for my classes and planned out my rooming situation for next year. I loved freshman year and I plan to love sophomore year just as much.

[In the second week of April,] ... I took a big economics test so that was the event that had the greatest impact [on me] academically. Socially, the biggest event was going out on the weekend [with my SJC friends] and seeing everybody. *The changes I've seen over the year [with my high school friends] is that we've communicated slightly less because college has separated us and made us all really busy. Hopefully we can get back together this summer.* [As far as technology goes,] I don't really have social media besides Snapchat. So whenever I'm on

my phone, I'm on Snapchat or YouTube. Also, I play a lot of video games. Especially Fortnite. I would say that it actually has impacted me negatively because I've wasted time that could have been studying, playing video games instead.

May

Exams are going pretty good. Some I have to study for more than others. I had an 8:00 a.m. today, but ... you could take it home so you didn't have to take it in class. Me and a couple guys took it down to breakfast and we did it and worked on it there. That one was definitely easier than the economics test we had. [In t]hat class ... there's no quizzes, no homework, no nothing. It's just two tests, based on whatever he says in class you have to take notes on, so that one's definitely the hardest one by far. And that one I spent pretty much an entire night studying for that one. I'm not sure how I did on that one yet. That was kind of [hard,] even when I think I studied all of it, there's no way he can give me a curve ball question [,and] I'm going to know everything. The first question I see ..., I have no idea what that is. I took four finals. Three out of the four I'm pretty confident with. It's just the economics one that kind of stumped me a little bit.

[Finals are different this time from first semester.] I think I studied more in the first semester.... A couple of the classes were a little hard in the first semester. I think by second semester I figured out how much I need to study to get, at least, an A. First semester, I had no idea what a final would look like, so I just studied every single thing that there ever could be. Compared to now, when I understand what a final is going to look like. I understand how it's going to be set up. So that makes it a lot easier now.

I think academics has mainly been [what I expected coming into college.] I knew it was going to be a struggle, but I've been a good student. Basically I'll do any homework. I have no problem raising my hand and participating. I anticipated getting good grades. I knew it wasn't

going to be easy. I knew it was going to be hard. Coming in, I expected for it to be difficult and I wanted to work hard to get good grades.

[I'm in the Business and Sports Management department.] ... I felt welcomed [by the department from the start]. There's plenty of people with the same major as me. All the teachers that I had, I didn't really have any problems with any of them. I felt perfectly fine with all the teachers and the department. I know my professors pretty well. I have no problem raising a hand in class if I have something to say. I'm not going to be scared to say. I'm going to raise my hand and ask a question. Usually I try to put in a funny remark, every now and then, get the teacher to laugh. I try my best. I have no problem talking and communicating with the teacher. I have a pretty good relationship with all my teachers. I don't shy away from talking. I love talking, especially communicating with teachers because that is kind of a big part of getting a grade. I think some of the teachers in the department are kind of ... they're a big part of it because they really open up to having any questions. They kind of encourage talking more and they really try to get the best out of you. They truly do. So I think that was a big part of it as well. [The communication could be better, though.] There was obviously some communication, but there wasn't really a lot. I had my advisor, and of course you get the emails every now and then. You're definitely going to get emails saying look out for this or watch out for this internship or check your classes and tell you what to do. Besides the everyday email or common email, there wasn't really any other communication besides that. That was all you can really do beside sending a text or a call. All you can really do is send an email.

Socially and sports wise, I had no idea [what college would be like before I started]. Those were a lot different for me. I had no idea coming in. In high school, I went to school with 200 kids, so it was a really small school. Playing sports, I started every game and was the captain

of both teams. Come here, I've had to walk on compared to everyone getting recruited here. It's a lot different mentality, sports wise, but I don't have any less love for the game. I still love playing both baseball and basketball. Socially, it definitely took me a little while to come out of my shell I think. Going into any new place, it's kind of going into the real world. It was very intimidating at first, but after a little bit I opened [up]. Once I got to open up I didn't really have a big problem with it.

[One way I opened up socially was in my dorm.] The building I live in is ... set up [as] first floor boys. Second floor girls. Third floor boys and the third floor guys, a bunch of us are the closest of friends really. We already have a rooming [arrangement] set up for next year and I think it's set up beautifully. We are all in a quad together. I think mainly hanging out with a bunch of the guys, is what was the main point.

[As far as how I prepared for college,] I think I did everything I could in high school. I had no problem joining groups in high school and participating and doing whatever I could. I think I prepared the best I could for college. Just going in with kind of like an open attitude and trying my best not to be scared, and kind of being my own man out here has been the mentality that I got from high school. I think that's what got me where I am today, my first year.

[For the summer,] ... mainly I need a job because I don't have any money at all. It's tough. I definitely need a job. I'm not sure what I'm going to be doing yet. Probably some sort of summer job somewhere. I also think about doing a lot of baseball and basketball stuff. Because as much fun as this year was, I think it will be so much more fun next year and especially the year after that when I am a junior. So I want to step up my game as much as I can. Lastly, I think about just probably reconnecting with everyone after a little bit. I made a bunch of friends here and I'm leaving for a little bit. I hope most of the time friendships stay together so I'll try my best

to hang out with everyone [from SJC] over the summer. [B]ecause I'm from Boston, but ... [e]veryone else is from Maine, Connecticut, and Vermont[,] [h]opefully we can find a focal point and meet up somewhere.

[There are a few things I would change about my first year if I could.] ... Number 1 as I mentioned before was the sports. Not playing [was hard]. ... I understand that I had to sit down. I have to let the guys that have been through the process, the Juniors and Seniors[,] they're going to get their time. It's tough sitting on the bench and just having to be cheering everyone one. I don't have a problem with [sitting], but it's definitely different. So that's tough. I wish I did more with going to church and stuff. ... Back in high school I was in the campus ministry. Whenever I go home, I always go to church on Sunday. Here they only have a van that goes up to church on Sunday. And every now and then they have something in the chapel. ... [W]hen there is a big Mass, I go to that. Every now and then I try to make it to church when I can. I wish [I] went to church more when I was up here. If [mass] were [held] on campus I would definitely go. But most of [the time] they take a small van with some people and drive out to Portland or something. Which is like a 20 or 30 minute drive. Which isn't bad, but it would just be more convenient if it was on campus.

[When it comes to services at SJC, some had a bigger impact on my first year than others.] [O]bviously the medical center helped me out just a couple times. I went down there to check out what was going on. Actually, kind of around Christmas, ... actually a little before Christmas I had some sort of rash thing. I'm not sure what it was. There was a term for it, where you just get blisters. I got them all right here [*pointing to his right side*] and I've never gotten it before. I had to go to the nurse to get that checked out and I went to the hospital. They diagnosed

it and I forget what the term was. I definitely needed medication for it. So definitely the nursing staff and medical care and stuff like that.

Second of all, definitely the food and the café. I don't have to pay. It's just a free swipe so I come down here as often as I can. It's not bad food. It's pretty consistent. You know what you're going to get. Yeah, it's not that bad either. When I'm hungry I just come down here and grab something to eat, so it makes it a lot easier not having to pay or drive out every time to Walmart or Dunkin Donuts and grab something to eat.

I wish I'd reached out to tutoring every now and then. I like to think I'm a good student, I like to think that. Every now and then there's a rough patch where I just have trouble with one subject or trouble on just one length of period where I can't do it by myself and I need help. I do reach out to whoever is in my class that can help me with these notes, but I wish I went to the tutoring center more. They could have probably helped me out a little more.

[I also got help from friends academically.] [M]ost of the guys on the third floor in the building I live in, most of us have classes together. We all know that we are paying big money for an education. An education is the main thing that we are going to get so we don't fool around with [the attitude that] "Oh, I'm not going to do this for a grade. I'm not going to do this for a grade." We're going to try and get the best grade we can get. So if we ever have a problem with any class or grade, we all try to lend a hand to each other.

[Socially, I felt like I had a group of guys pretty early.] I mean ... most of them, they're pretty much all baseball, basketball guys. So basketball we had to stay here over the entire Christmas break. We couldn't leave, so I spent every day with them. Forced to stay there. That helped me with the basketball guys, basically completely open with them by this point. Baseball too. Having to go to baseball practice every day. Having to go to games every day. Just seeing

the same face every day and getting used to each other. That's kind of when I felt like, alright, these are some of my best friends.

[I didn't use a lot of substances this year.] I feel that I don't need anything in my body to have a good time. I like the way I live as it is, so I've never consumed alcohol once. I've never had a drug in my life ... although I'm getting harassed [at parties]. Usually [when I get harassed, I] just [say], "I'm alright." Usually I carry around Gatorade or a water, so if anybody says, "Here have a drink." I'm like, "I've got my own. I'm alright." Usually I just say, "No, I'm good. I'm good. I'm fine." I mean it's college though. I'm getting[, ""]here have this, have this[""]. I've never been a big fan of it and I don't ever plan on really doing it. It's not my cup of tea. Usually when someone is doing something they're not supposed to, I'll probably trip out a little bit. Say, "That's not the best of choices." I understand that's their choice. I'm not going to judge them or say you're not my friend anymore. I just kind of respect them and their opinion, but I don't drink. I haven't done any drugs at all. I expect that if I ever did get caught, my parents would probably be the last thing I see on this earth.

Some of the main questions at the beginning of the year [for me were], "What's around here? What's close?" The school is kind of isolated a little bit. Like, "Where can you go to get something to eat? Or where can you go to buy clothes or buy food?" It took me a little while to figure out especially since I didn't have a car.

Another big confusion was where ... can you park? Freshman can only park in the ball lot. There's a St. Joe's building. It's a freshman dorm. You can park behind that. That gets filled up easily. So basically [you can park] only [in] the ball lot. There's been so many people that have gotten tickets. One of my friends, he has almost \$700 due in just tickets alone. I mean, he's

a dope for it, but he just doesn't get the message that you can't park there and you can't do that. Definitely parking was a big question I had.

After a little bit, you kind of get into a groove and you know everything. Any questions you have, you kind of ask your friends Beginning of the year, mainly knowing which building is which and what each one does. Beginning of the year I had no idea where the mail room was and I had mail I had to go get from my parents. They kept telling me to go get it and I kept saying I had no idea where it is. I just stayed right where I was. The nurse's office. I had no idea where that was at the beginning of the year. So kind of having questions about each building, and which ones [were] which, were kind of the main ones. You figure it out after being around for a little while.

(NB: A significant drop in the use of fillers ("like" and "um" in particular) from the first interview, through the texts, and down to the final interview.)

Chad Brunswick

Total Text Prompts/Responses: 42 (average 1.6/week)

Chad grew up in Georgetown, MA, a little less than an hour south of Boston. He attended a small Catholic all-boys school in Danvers, MA. He is an only child and has lived with both parents since birth. Financially, Chad declined to provide his family's annual income range or the sources he used to fund his first year at SJC. He finished the year with a 2.77 GPA. He worked in the campus gym during the year and played baseball.

September

[I got ready for college my senior by] ... studying ... and really working hard on my classes, because I knew that ... not only was it time to transition to college but it was also time to, ... basically, figure out a way to cope with a brand-new lifestyle almost. Being so far away

from home and, ... just trying to manage how I was going to react to leaving. A lot of it was [internal], I did a little bit of meditation by myself where I listened to music, to figure out what my lifestyle was going to be here. Try to figure how it was going to be different and try to figure out how it was going to be the same. ... I really tried to meet everyone I could that was in the senior class. You know I came from ... a Catholic all-boys high school and I didn't know everybody, but I knew a good amount. So, by the end of the year I'd say I knew about everybody. The plan was to go into college almost the same as senior year and try to meet as many people as I can in the first amount of time that I had to create a bond

[I decided to come to SJC for a number of reasons.] [T]he biggest reason was Coach Sanborn, who's the head coach for the baseball team. He recruited me from see[ing] me play at the Bay State Summer Games, which is a five-day long baseball tournament, or rugby, or field hockey, what have you. ...[H]e saw me play, he asked me to come up and visit. It was my first college visit, ever, the first school I ever looked at. I came up here and fell in love with the campus. I loved what Coach was doing, I just loved being around this place. It was so beautiful it reminded me of my home. Actually, it reminded me a little of my high school It had the major I wanted, it had the minors I wanted, which was huge. And ... they have a good baseball program. So, that ... seal[ed] the deal for me. I didn't visit any other colleges, this was the only college I went to and the only college I applied to. I got in, got enough financial aid, and here I am.

[When my parents and I talked about college, we talked] [d]efinitely [about how] to make the smart decisions. ... [A] lot of stuff about peer pressure as well. Like, how to deal with peer pressure, or rather, trying to deal with it and figuring out to get out of it. I'm not, I guess, giving in to temptation. And the way I looked at college. [T]heir biggest thing is not get into a car with a

drunk driver or someone who was driving high. Or if everyone's—they kept telling me—they told me this everyday: Everyone can be drinking in a room, that doesn't mean you have to drink. And that made me think, I was kind of ... I wouldn't say appalled, but I was kind of concerned that they didn't talk to me about grades mostly, but I think it was because I was a pretty steady student throughout high school and they understood that I was going to get my act together as well. Do my studies, which I have been doing, so. The biggest thing was just watch out for drinking, alcohol and that kind of stuff.

[In high school,] I was never one to drink, or smoke. I mean, the first time I smoked was actually this year, or in my senior year, once or twice. I hardly drink, at all. I just don't find the appeal to it, so they knew that I was in good hands, especially that my roommates don't drink. One of my roommates drinks, but the other one is like a mellow guy, we all knew that. They never really saw me as a partier, 'cause I don't do those things at all.

... [R]ight now, [in the first week of college, communication with my] high school friends is ... very minimal. I have a group chat with ... my best friends from high school, my cousin's in the group chat because he's one of my best friends. I use that a little bit, even over the summer I used that a little bit. I haven't heard from another kid from high school, the baseball team, my high school class besides who I hung out with. With my parents, ... it's definitely a step back. I haven't talked to them as much as I expected I was going to, but I have talked to them enough where they know how I'm doing here at school. They know a little bit about my life right now, but it's not like I'm spending two hours on the phone with them every night. Just a text here and there, like, "How's it going. Good. And how are you guys? What did you do today?"

[As far as my time here so far,] [i]t's been ... pretty great. Academically, it's been a little odd. I have classes that I've taken in high school, [such as] Intro to Judeo-Christian So I pretty much know the gist of the entire class just by the name because I already took it freshman year in high school. ... [A]cademics are ok. Socially, it's going well. I'm really just hanging around with baseball guys and people I feel comfortable with like ... my buddy Simon and all his friends down in the pods. All the baseball guys are really nice and get along well. I don't really, a lot of other guys go to, it's called the suites, and they'll go party. And they'll go drinking and get crazy. I don't do that, I just lay low, and would rather hang out with, like, a group of five friends, watch music and have like a beer than go up, get drunk and look like an idiot, it's just not what I'm about. So it's, um, it's going pretty well. It's going pretty well.

[I'm also taking] Ancient Greece. It's a little boring but, it's ancient Greece. ... First-Year Experience, a class everybody has to take It's kind of like ... throwing us into the college environment, how we can prepare for everything, I believe, I've only had one class in that. ... College Writing, which is a fantastic class, I love that class. And ... Elementary Spanish 101. Which is ironic, because my major's English, so I'm literally taking the opposite of my major. I took eighth grade Spanish and did not do well. And in high school I took three years of German. I picked Spanish because it was either French or Latin. Latin's boring and French is—French would have been ok, 'cause I would have had wine, but that's about it.

[My schedule for] the week's a little scattered, so Monday and Wednesday I have one class and that's College Writing from 12:25 in the afternoon to 1:30. Tuesday Thursday I have Ancient Greece, Judeo-Christian, and Spanish. It's ... odd, it's like you have a class, and you have an hour, and so my Ancient Greece is 10 to 11:45, then I'm off until 1, then I have Judeo-Christian from 1 to 2:45, and then I'm off until 3:45, when I have Spanish from 3:45 to 5:30.

And then Friday I have two classes, First-Year from 9 to 9:50 and then College Writing from 12:25 to 1:30. So it's a little scattered, but it's a pretty manageable schedule.

[One more thing about my time here so far.] [I]t's about ... dating. Since I'm in college now I'll put quotes around dating. So, I met this girl at a student athletes day, which is a day where all [SJC] committed students in a sport go, they just meet each other and meet the team [on campus]. I met this girl in...November [2016] and we hit it off and started talking over Instagram and such. And around February [2017], early February, we decided to start dating. And so this is how, because we were both going to be freshmen at the school, [we got started]. She lives in ... Reading, Maine, which is two hours away from my high school in Massachusetts. So we tried to make it work. [W]e went to each other's proms. It was great, like we were in love. The day before the Fourth of July, we just kind of stopped—it was just kind of a hassle. We both just felt differently for each other for the most part. So, ... it's what, September 4th [the interview date]? And it's still a little ... tough to see her on campus, but ... I was glad that we actually [broke up] in the summer ... because we had ... all these plans [for] after college, [like] we'd find an apartment in Maine someday. In the back of my mind, I guess the whole time I realized that [the relationship] wasn't going to last longer than freshmen year. And we didn't even get to freshmen year, we went through seniors in high school to gonna be freshmen. ... I'm completely over her. It's just ... hard to see her. We're here all the time, so ...I would [recommend to incoming college students that they] just try to avoid [starting a relationship] ... before school starts because ... it's a little rough. Because then I realize she's completely different from the person I knew that ... used to come see me[,] and I was so happy to break up. Because we are two completely different people [now] and I really want no part in what she's doing. [It's] more than that, but that's the situation, it's a little tough to deal with

My [third] week [of school] went really well. A little long, but good. My high point was hanging out and drinking with my friends Friday night, cutting loose a little bit

[Academically,] I failed an open note quiz because I couldn't understand the teacher when note taking. I'm kind [of] peeved right now. [By the end of the month, I'd say the most experience I've had so far is] [a]ll the people I've met and the way my professors run the class. All very nice kids and very respectful and tactical teaching.

October

[In the first week of October,] [m]y plans are to go home to see my family and go to the Topsfield fair with some friends from back home. My week went well, classes were good and [I] started lifting for baseball. The highlight was my pitching performance on Saturday against USM. Coach told me after [the game that] I was going to be one of the guys to be pitching for the team quite a bit afterwards. [When I got back to campus, I called home and talked to my family about] ... [my] time at Saint Joe's and how I'm loving school and everyone I've met. I also talked about how it was good to see my parents and my friends back home.

My academics have been going well. A bit boring, but I've been keeping to learning. I am most proud of my willingness to open up more with my teachers and continue to perform to my standards as a student. I am most concerned about my classes for next semester, trying new things and learning new things as well.

[At the end of the second week of October, I made plans to] ... [hang] out with my friends [Friday night] and [on Saturday,] I am volunteering for Ride to the Top auction for baseball[. I'll be] ... watching football and [doing] homework on Sunday. [As it turns out,] [t]he weekend did go as planned[. I also ended up] ... getting drunk both Friday and Saturday night

.... I'm not really looking forward to anything this week. I've started to get a little homesick and my anxiety has been rough on me [the third] week [of October].

[By the end of the third week of October,] ... [I decided that the most significant] event was getting personal bests in the baseball workouts this week. I worked really hard this last month and have gained a lot of muscle that I didn't have so getting those PRs were big for me. [Some of the best time this week] ... has been playing some video games with my friends. [I've started doing more on campus, including] ... using the fitness center every day[. Also,] I have a job on campus and I am starting a radio station on campus, so I think I'm taking full advantage of the school so far

[By the end of the month, I can say that] I have been surprised about how people can handle themselves. Doing things for themselves ... [t]hat they weren't doing at home and all that. I was excited to come to campus for the first time [in September] because I wanted that independent feeling and I do have it now. [Even so, when the power went out on Halloween,] I [went] home [and ordered] Wings with my Dad and watch[ed] the World Series.

November

[Thinking about the study so far, s]eeing as it is the first semester of college, I was expecting more questions [from you] about how we have been feeling or if we've kept in contact with family and friends back home and if/how we have changed so far. [I can say that] *Last week, I texted my mom at least once a day, while I texted my dad about 3 times during the week. This has been typical behavior for the semester.* *I talked about school and being home and my friends and my plans for the rest of the semester at Saint Joes and a little bit of Christmas stuff mixed in.*

I travel off campus quite a bit. Usually just go to Bull Moose or Walmart a few times a week. Sometimes I'll go to Portland on the weekends when I can. Mainly Portland square, looking at the stores and one time went to Escape Room which was awesome!

[I've established some routines this fall.] I prefer to study at night and I tell myself to study and to avoid social media and other factors like that and hunker down to study. *[It] has been [a] struggle to start studying for finals coming soon.* Last week, I went to breakfast 3 times, lunch and dinner everyday. I usually don't eat breakfast. I ordered from Baggot Street Café [on campus] quite often and I ordered delivery once last week. This is a pretty typical week of my eating habits.

December

My plans [for break] are to spend time with my family, go back to work at Market Basket to make money ..., go snowboarding and just relax overall. Finals went surprisingly great. I felt slightly under prepared but once I got the test everything fell into place. For the future I think I'd study a little more. I would change the way I studied, make flash cards and use [online resource] Quizlet more often than just rereading my notebook. [As I think about SJC while I'm at home over break,] [t]he first thing I think of is opportunity. Coming back home, I went back to my job I had during the summer and everybody I worked with told me that because I'm at school, I'm on top of the world and making the smartest decision of my life.

January

[One change I plan to make for second semester is] [f]ocusing more on my studies. My high point [of the third week of January] was definitely moving into a new room with a new roommate because it has been much easier. My struggle would be adjusting with the schedule of having classes again after the long break trying to get my sleep schedule back on track.

[Reflecting on the semester,] I have learned that I have become more independent and I have a much more independent mindset than most other people. I have also learned that I can relax a lot more than throughout high school and I am a much calmer person than I have been before. ... [B]ack in high school I was a very high-strung person. Everything had to be done in a certain way. Everything had to be done in a certain order where it had to be on time, or it had to be perfect. And now, it just seems like there's more lenience towards that with me. I seem more relaxed, of not making sure everything is done in a perfect order, but just making sure everything gets done in a, I guess you could say, beyond adequate way. Where I know that it's acceptable for everybody in the situation involved, but it was also more of a personality thing, where I was, again, much more high-strung. I was much more closed-minded, and now I've become more open with people, meeting new people, learning new faces ... all of that stuff kinda came into play when I started college.

I have had the use of hardworking and thriving in my academics through high school which has transferred to college. I also have been more open and unafraid of talking to older adults, like teachers, in high school and that has helped in dealing with those people in college. [A few things that have changed in college are that] I have been more social than before and I have learned when to act crazy and foolish and when ... is a good time to use that emotion and not. [Also,] I have become closer to a lot more people [from home] and I learned to appreciate my parents in being farther away from them then when I was at home. There is more that I tell my parents about than what I wouldn't have told them in the past. [Why is this true?] I personally think it's the distance. It's not a great distance, about two hours, but it's still enough where I just feel like I'm more open to my parents than I have been, honestly, my whole life. Like there's some stuff where I'll just talk to them just to talk to them, and it will come up

because I haven't seen them in ... it's been a month and a half at this point probably, and being a single child that's pretty long ... you don't have your parents with you.

[The kinds of things we talk about now include] ... stuff I buy, or this stuff I go and do with my friends. My school or ... everything I've done. Baseball, or whatever[.] ... [W]hen I was a freshman or sophomore [in high school], my mom would come pick me up before I had my license. She'd always ask about practice, and I would just give one-word answers, just, "No, it was great. We had fun. We did pitching stuff." Now, I'm just ... I tell her everything that we did. I tell her how we did it, or how I did. It's just been more, I guess. [As far as how they talk to me now,] I noticed that it's a lot more respectful now. It seems like ... back in high school, again, [my parents would] just pretty much say whatever they were thinking, but now it's kinda more dialed back and they treat me like I'm an older person, and I've grown up a lot more because there's probably some stuff that I haven't told them that they don't know about, that obviously they're thinking, "Oh, maybe he's done this, and he's grown up to be a bigger person now than he was in high school."

[I've established a few new abilities so far at college. One is b]eing able to sleep as late as possible while still waking up on time for class. Also filling my free time with more activity. [I believe that adapting in these ways has made me healthier because] ... they keep me occupied so I don't think too much of unhappy/unwanted thoughts. ... I like to be a really outgoing and charismatic person. I think I'm funny, most people probably don't, but I think that I'm a pretty humorous person, so I used to always act foolish in middle school. That was like my big thing. I like to be crazy, I like to throw everybody off guard and just create like a more loose environment. Then tensed up more in high school, because I was nervous about my future. So now still keeping that emotion from awhile ago, like in six and seventh grade and all that. I still

have that emotion, but there's obviously a time when that emotion comes into play and when that emotion needs to be dialed down, and most of the times that's in the classroom. We're just hanging out with friends and trying not to make it awkward for people or trying to have some fun whenever we are having fun, and try to make that fun a little bit more fun for everybody else.

[I am certain, 5 on a 5 scale, that I will return to SJC in the fall. I intend to continue in the English department, but, if I didn't, my preferences would be to go into] [p]ossibly a program in education or more marketing through education. [The resources at SJC that have helped me the most are] [j]oining a sports team; preoccupying yourself with people who want/share a common goal. [The resource I plan to use more in second semester is] ACE (Academic Center for Excellence)[, the tutoring center.]

[Starting second semester, I'm feeling] Relaxed/excited/nervous/calm[, a] [b]it of everything in all honesty. [I feel like this due to the] [s]tart of baseball and new classes and classmates. A lot of it's from baseball starting up. I was ... I've been so excited to get baseball started. And, we [weren't] able to do a lot in the fall, obviously, because it's a spring sport. Now that we're starting up, I'm excited every single night to go to practice. At the same time, I'm nervous, because we're learning, everything's gonna be new, so I'm nervous about picking it up on the first time, or how long it's gonna take me to pick up. And, along with first semester, as well, just being more relaxed and being more calm. It was the start of school, I was really nervous about starting the whole college experience.

And, now that I have ... one semester under my belt, I think I've got a pretty good grasp of it, and I'm much more relaxed and everything. Plus, my roommate situation is a big thing, because I couldn't do what I used to do. I can't sleep ... I stay up 'til like one and two a.m. every single day, and they would go to bed at like 9:30, 10:00. Now my new roommate does pretty

much the same thing as I do, so it's just much more ... it's a much better situation for the both of us. And, that's helped a lot, with me feeling calm and feeling more attached to myself. Couldn't be telling that same person that I was before. That I'm changed.

February

[One problem is that] I was not very happy about my first semester grades. I have definitely started studying more and working harder in classes than before. It was much harder for me to wake up and go to classes in the first semester than now and I am staying in my room more than before because I can. I probably still talk to my parents about the same amount. [I was frustrated the second week of February because I] [c]ompletely forgot about Spanish homework [My academic confidence is] usually better than this.

[I communicated recently] over text with my mom. Just talked about the weather, work and my other family members. I have had a romantic relationship with someone before St. Joe's that now goes to the school with me. We met at St. St Joe's and it ended before school started back in July. Honestly, in the beginning of the year, I didn't do some school events out of the nervous feeling of seeing her and it makes me see her in a negative way now to the point where I wish we never dated in the first place.

March

[Despite going to a Catholic high school and college,] I have no belief in faith when it comes to religion.

Over spring break, I went to Florida with the baseball team to compete in the RussMatt baseball tournament. The event that had the biggest impact on me was my first collegiate start for pitching. My performance showed that I was ready to perform on the collegiate level.

[Socially,] I found [a] group [of friends] in the fall but I hang out with them less now. It was about 7 people. We did hang out last night for the first time in a little while. [The activity that has had the greatest impact on me socially has been] [d]efinitely baseball because my whole day pretty much goes school then baseball. I definitely seem to focus a lot more time on baseball than academics to be honest.

[A t]ypical day [for me by the end of March] is [to] wake up at 9:27 am (the latest I can wake up and shower while still being on time for my 10 am [class]), go to my classes (10-12:15 pm), grab lunch, go back to my room and do homework until about 2 pm, go to the gym until about 3:30 pm, go to dinner before baseball practice (depending on the time, usually anywhere between 5-8 pm), relax at night, play a little online poker or watch tv until about 12-1 am. * I've been doing laundry a little less, waiting for it to build up. I watch and rewatch the same tv shows, I tend to go out on the weekends.*

[As far as services offered at St. Joe's,] I have not truly utilized the other facilities [other than the gym and the cafeteria] at SJC or any other [service, like the health center, career center, tutoring center, or counseling office].

April

For the summer, I have signed with a Futures league team for baseball called the North Shore Navigators. I will be living at home and I will be looking for a new job. I don't plan on taking summer classes. [I am certain I'll come back to SJC in the fall.] ...Baseball has been great and the campus is the perfect size for me.

[In the third week of April, I was proud of] ... acing a math quiz because math has always been my worst subject so I was pretty happy about it. Socially[, a high point has been] ...

just playing Fortnite with some friends. It was a tough week with my anxiety and all so it was good to hang out with some good guys.

[My use of tech has stayed pretty much the same since I started at SJC in September.] I listen to my iPhone that has Spotify on it at least 16 hours a day. I constantly have my headphones in my ears, even during class to help with my anxiety. [My music d]efinitely [has had a] positive impact [on me] because it has helped with my anxiety. [As far as communication with home goes,] [m]y communication has been increased with my high school friends, especially the guys younger than me that I made a bond with for baseball. I love to see that I made an impact on their lives and we keep communicating while I'm in college and they're in high school.

May

[Finals are] ... actually going well. I just finished, I took my math final on Wednesday, and it was open note. It was relatively easy. Took my history final today right after I got out of work. I work [at the gym on campus] from 6:00 AM to 10:00 AM. I had my exam at 10:50 AM, and it went very well. I knew most of the stuff. And I have my Spanish final, which was broken into three separate parts, tomorrow. Still waiting for my teacher to get back to me, because we have a really important playoff game tomorrow. So, I'm waiting for her to change that for me. But yeah, everything's going really well.

[Finals this semester are different from finals first semester] obviously, [because of the] different classes that I took, so subjects changed. It seemed like I had more time pacing out my finals [second semester]. I had them on completely different days. I didn't have back to back to back. My first semester, I had three finals back to back to back in about a three and a half hour span. This semester finals, I had one day, I had one final in mid-day. The next day I had one final

in the mid-day, and that was it. I thought that was pretty nice. Along with having baseball at the same time, it showed me how to manage my time more, so I could study while doing baseball. Not having to miss practice and still getting a lot of my studies in. So, that worked out pretty well for me.

[Reflecting back on how I felt at the start of the year,] ... I think the thing I thought would go really well was baseball. I was really excited to come on team and play. I didn't know how good we'd be. We're a very talented team. I'm one of the best pitchers on the team as a freshman, so I've already got a number one and two starting spot, so that's good to have. I met a lot of great people here. I knew I would. I met some guys I know that will be my friends for a really long time.

Something I thought was different, [though,] I think the general structure of everything, there's still so much downtime. Even with baseball, I still feel like I'm--I wouldn't say I'm less active, but I'm getting more bored. Suffice it to say, I'm working out, and I'm going to work, and I have to work, and then go to practice and everything, I still feel like there's so much time. I was [also] expecting the workload to be much heavier. And it was very light. It was lighter than my senior year of high school, which was pretty incredible, I have to say. So, a lot of the differences, only the downtime thing is really bad. But the workload has been great.

[One thing that I wish I had done differently back in high school to get ready for college was starting a romantic relationship.] ... [But] I'd rather not talk about it at this point. All right. Fine. [I will.] So, my senior year of high school, I started dating this girl that I found out was going here [SJC]. We ended it before school started. And now she's dating another person on the baseball team. Yeah. So, it is difficult to have that lingering over me sometimes. It's not so much I hate the situation, but it's more annoying and everything like that. At the beginning of the year,

it was just weighing on me so heavily, and I just wouldn't go out of my room or anything. So, I'd say be careful with what you plan on doing, or get to know somebody a little bit better before you engage in that kind of stuff before going to college, and basically living right next to this person.

[I had a bunch of questions before starting at SJC. Questions like,] “What's it like?” “How are the people?” “How's the campus?” “What's the food like?” “What is there to do?” I think that's actually a big one. What is there to do, because ... there's not a ton to do. But you can do a lot of fun stuff. [Since I've been here,] I always get, "How's the baseball team doing?" Especially with the kids that I talk to that are recruits. “What department are you in?” “How good are the teachers?” “What are the class sizes?” I think those are big things. My decision to come here was based off of a lot of those questions. When I actually understood the answers to them, I realized that this was probably the best fit for me. This is what's going to help me most academically and athletically. [I was lucky—I got the answers on] April 9th, 2017. That was my day that I committed to this school to play baseball. It was my second visit. And I was planning on committing on July 27th, which was the first day I came here. I stepped out on Sebago Lake and I was like, "This is perfect." It's exactly what I wanted. Coach took me through everything. We had food. It was delicious. He brought me to the baseball field. He showed me the gym. He told me about the class sizes and everything like that. Then my second visit, my dad came up. I made that decision, and I just knew that it was the perfect decision for me through everything that I've looked at. This was actually the first and only college that I visited. I didn't need to go anywhere else. [It's been a good year.]

[When I think about summer, I think about [how] I just signed a contract to play North Shore Navigators baseball, which is basically like a minor league for minor league players.

Coach Lincoln, the pitching coach, helped me get that. So I think about my graciousness to Lincoln for helping with that, and the hopes that I do well in that.

[The money I make from working] during the summer I can spend here [at SJC], [and] I can save up and get a car so I can bring a car on campus. Next school year I'm living in a single room, so I'm thinking about that, how I'm going to decorate it and put all my weird stuff up against the wall, how I'm going to organize everything, and how much time I'm going to spend with all the people that I've become friends with now. [Living in a single was not really my decision, but it's going to work out anyway.] I was supposed to live with my roommate, who's currently my roommate, for next year. We were supposed to get a pod, which is a much bigger living space than what we're in now, of course. There [were] six other guys living in the pod, as well. I talked to all of them, and they were like, "Yeah, just take the room. It's fine. It's going to be good."

They do this thing here that [I] don't like at all, about housing scores. ... [T]he higher your GPA is, the higher your housing score is. I find that really dumb. That's not a way that you should pick who your roommate is, or who you should live with. My housing score was lower than another person's housing score, only by like barely lower.

The guys that were in charge of laying out the pods, saying who's going to live there, they kicked me out of the pod [because of my low housing score]. They said, "Well, if we put you in, we couldn't get a pod." I was like, "Well, we couldn't live somewhere else?" And they were like, "No, we planned on picking a pod." My roommate now isn't happy about that. He's like, "You just screwed him for next year." So I just said, "You know what? I'll just take a single. It's not a big deal."

Of course, it's a pain in the ass, but I'll just take it. Then I realized that's going to be better, because I have mild to high anxiety, so that might help me a little bit more, focus on myself and not worry about others around me too much. I feel like that's going to work out for the best. [Of course,] [t]hey pick the singles over summer, and then they tell me where I'm living. If they run out of singles, they're just going to put me with some random kids. So, I'm going to try to avoid that as much as possible. Yeah, so, I'm batting about a zero there. Yeah. A big goose egg with my roommate.

And I'm really thinking about next year's baseball team, as well, because there's supposed to be a lot of good kids coming. We have a kid that played at a rival school of mine that's coming. He was always very solid, so I'm excited to play with those guys and everything like that. I'm excited for my classes next year, too, because I got some sweet classes. I got one [Introduction to Film Studies] that takes place in a movie theater. Like 6:00 to 9:00 at night. [If I could change anything about my first year,] I'd like to go out more and do more activities on campus. They've got bingo, and they've got standup comedy and that kind of stuff. I didn't do a lot of that this year. I'm kind of regretting it, because I could've met some other people. I've been telling a lot of my friends from high school who are like my lifelong friends, I keep saying, "I can't find anybody up here that's like you guys." But it's probably because I haven't looked for guys like that.

I made a mistake with the baseball team. They're great guys and all, but they're not like me. They're not like my high school friends were, who were almost exactly like me. So, I think probably getting out more and experiencing new people, experiencing new things. I think that would be the best option to take.

... I think the closest thing I have [to an academic support group] is probably these four people that I kind of talk to, not really. I'm not in their friend group, but they consider me as, like we acknowledge each other. We talk. We'll hang out occasionally. But it's not like a regular thing. They're all really smart, and they're very nice. But I haven't, for lack of a better term, I haven't vibed with them as much as I feel like I should. I met them from our mutual friend Joey, who lives on my floor. He's a great guy. He's like one of my friends from back home. He acts just like them. We're very similar people. They were all great people. One of them was my neighbor, or both of them are my neighbors, Reggie and Nolan. Reggie and Nolan are brilliant. They're always open to talk and everything like that. I've talked to Joey a while, and his roommate, Mike, who's also on the baseball team. I think with Mike, [I got to know him well] ... right after Florida [around spring break]. Probably around late March, early April. We just started getting to know each other a lot more. We had like a four-and-a-half-hour conversation just about all this stuff. We just kept talking about personal heartfelt stuff. We were saying that we wouldn't tell anybody else and everything like that. They've [all] been really great. They're great people. Yeah, they're just really nice guys in that group.

[Thinking about the services SJC offers, things like the tutoring center, the counseling center, the health center, even the gym, the food service], I honestly didn't take a lot of advantage of that kind of stuff, like the ACE program, the tutoring. I definitely took advantage of the gym. In the winter, I was in there sometimes twice a day between like October and February I was in there busting my ass. I got a job at the gym, so that was huge. I could maintain a sufficient cash flow, at least for the most part, until I spent it on stupid stuff I don't really need. Food service has been great. I was nervous about the food, because I love food, so I was nervous. It had to be great food. And I knew it was good food from my visit. But the fact that you can

have basically whatever you want, unlimited. Right after this, I'm going down to the caf[eteria] to get food.

I don't know if this is much of a transition, but the fact that my parents aren't so far away. I'm about an hour forty-five to two hours to this campus. Well, an hour and like twenty minutes if I drive, about two and a half hours if my mom drives. I'm relatively close. So they come up to my games, and they watch some of the games at home. They'll watch the games that I'm pitching. That's nice to see them once in a while. It's not like I'm in California or anything, where I only see them at Thanksgiving and Christmas and that kind of thing. That was a big thing for me.

[Speaking of my parents,] [o]h, Jesus. I hope my parents don't read this. Oh, god. [This is confidential, right? My substance use has changed quite a bit over the year.] Tobacco use is zero. I do not smoke or dip or anything like that. My use of marijuana has gone through the roof. I didn't do it a lot first semester, but second semester I started smoking more. I started smoking my senior year in high school a little bit. But I've started to do it a lot more here. I think one week I did it every day during the week. And I just kept saying, "I can't keep doing this anymore." So, I haven't done it in a while. But between about March and late May, I was doing it quite consistently[. I mean] [l]ate April. Excuse me, yeah. Alcohol, it's between moderate and if you could say quite a bit. I haven't [had a drink] since St. Patrick's Day [in March]. But it's just because I really have no desire to do it. I did at the beginning of the year, because it's college. Everyone's going to start doing something eventually. That's really died down since after the first semester, I think, because everyone just got kind of tired of [drinking]. People still do it. I've been very lackluster about doing it. ...

[On the other hand, I'm very happy about being in the English department here.]

Professor Gibson is my academic advisor. I've had her both semesters for different classes. She's been wonderful. She's been very helpful. She's been offering me everything that she can whenever I need it. She's been great. [While] I really haven't heard anything [from anyone] else besides from Dr. Gibson..., the conversations that [she and I] have through email, or through personal things, or through teacher/student confidentialities, that has been really good. She's been helping me a lot. She's been telling me a lot about my major, what to expect, what classes I need to take to graduate with an English degree. Jobs that I can look forward to after I graduate from here, stuff that she can help me with interning a class if I'm into school, or working on theses for other projects, and everything like that. It's been great.

Chapter 5: Findings

Overview

The current study's research problem concerns the forty-year trend of rising attrition rates in undergraduate programs across the United States. While literature concerning gender theory, the college transition, emerging adulthood, and college student development provide a foundation for considering the problem, there have been very few studies conducted concerning the FYE of this group of students. Understanding their FYE at a substantive level will lead to further research and hopefully open pathways to increasing retention. The present study collected significant data concerning the daily experience of five students with the hope of answering three research questions: 1) How do college-ready, traditional-aged male students experience the first year of postsecondary education at a small liberal arts college in Maine? 2) How can we understand the first-year experience of college-ready, traditional-aged male students at a small liberal arts college in Maine through the lens of Tanner's theory of recentering? and 3) What is the impact of campus support services on the experience of college-ready, traditional-aged male students in their first year at a small liberal arts college in Maine? The analysis was conducted using grounded theory and case study. The study's trustworthiness was established through the use of three interviews and over forty text exchanges over the course of eight months and the repeated and rigorous review of data throughout the data collection period.

Methodology: Narrative Data Analysis

In qualitative research, narrative data is most authentic in the first person and as a "story" with a beginning, middle, and end (Merriam, 2009, p. 32). In order to honor my participants and present data in the most useful form, I have chosen to re-story (Cresswell, 2013) the data collected throughout the FYE into a fluid narrative for each participant. In Chapter 4, I present

participant narratives in first person and introduced by a short summary providing family history, secondary school information, financial information, and FY academic performance. For larger context, I also include a summary of the NSSE data from Spring 2018.

In Chapter 5, I describe the nodes and themes I discovered through data analysis in NVivo. I also present the data collected from participants summarized under each theme as a means of organizing and analyzing the data in preparation for drawing conclusions and developing a theory in Chapter 6.

NVivo 12 Nodes/Themes

Themes were determined through disaggregation of data from interviews, texts, and a written questionnaire into nodes in NVivo 12. Each theme emerged first from an initial, careful review of all data, and was then confirmed, reconsidered, or discarded through multiple readings of the data within the nodes. Classifying data by theme created a matrix (see Tables 9-22 below) comparing and contrasting the FYE for the participants.

Table 8

Themes Developed through NVivo Data Analysis

1. Self-Perception	Data tracks the development of and changes in the participant's understanding of his self, including reflection on growth and altered sense of what is important to the participant as an individual.
2. Attitude toward SJC	Data refers to first impressions of campus, reasons for enrolling at SJC, connection to others in the SJC community, perception of the benefits of attending SJC, value judgments about SJC generally, among other sub-categories.
3. Family Communication	Data refers to frequency, method, and content of communication between the participant and his family.
4. High School Academic Preparation for College	Data refers to coursework completed or attempted in high school to earn credit for college or to increase rigor in anticipation of difficult college coursework.

5. Academic Performance at SJC	Data refers to the quality of the participant's academic experience, grades earned, coursework assigned, perception of difficulty/rigor, and level of satisfaction with his own performance.
6. Academic Major or Department at SJC	Data refers to participant's satisfaction with his major department's communication, services, program resources, and course offerings.
7. Connection to Professors	Data refers to the level of personal connection to course instructors during the FYE, the impression made by course instructors on the participant's view of college-level academic work, and judgments about fairness and teaching ability.
8. High School Social Preparation for College	Data refers to social experiences the participant determined to be important for his preparation to leave home and become part of a new community in college.
9. High School Social Engagement	Data refers to the participant's social experience in high school, including friend circles, romantic relationships, and substance use.
10. High School Communication	Data refers to communication between participants and friends or staff from high school during the FYE.
11. Social Engagement at SJC	Data refers to social anxiety or confidence, building community, taking risks to find friends, establishing circles of friends, partying, substance use, identification with specific groups on campus, and off campus activities.
12. High School Co-Curricular Experience	Data refers to high school athletic teams on which participants played, as well as the quality of the experience and the participant's attitude toward the teams/sports.
13. Co-curricular Involvement at SJC	Data refers to SJC athletic teams joined or considered, scheduling, game play, team cohesiveness, reflection on personal performance, and any training, health, or interpersonal issues that arose during the season.
14. Services Accessed at SJC	Data refers to participant's engagement with services at SJC, including tutoring (ACE, Academic Center for Excellence), health, food service, job counseling, psychological counseling, instructor's office hours, library/research desk, housing, and the gym/pool.
Time Spent on Campus before Enrolling at SJC	Abandoned after determining there was very little data to support a separate node/theme.

Table 9

Participants' FYE Summarized by Theme: Self-Perception (Theme 1 of 14)

Chad Brunswick	<p>Although Chad attended a small Catholic high school, he did not consider himself a spiritual or religious person. He considered himself a strong student in high school. Generally, when he is with people, he “like[s] to be crazy, I like to throw everybody off guard and just create like a more loose environment.” He began the year seeing himself as someone who did not party, drink, smoke, or use substances of any kind. He ended the year regretting the impact of his regular weekend (and sometimes weekday) substance use on his grades and his self-perception. By the end of October, he was getting drunk every night over the weekend and also feeling homesick and anxious. He had been diagnosed with anxiety but did not mention it to me until the end of October. He was surprised to see himself becoming more independent and “about how people can handle themselves. Doing things for themselves ... [t]hat they weren't doing at home and all that.” He continued a job he had in high school, working at Market Basket, during semester break because he needed the money for second semester. Chad saw himself as high-strung in high school and much calmer in college and was impressed with how independent he had become. First semester, he learned to “relax a lot more than throughout high school and [became] a much calmer person than [he had] been before.” He saw himself as hardworking in high school and continued to work hard in college, even though he set goals of working harder after first semester. One of the skills he developed over the course of the year was being able to sleep right up to the time he needed to leave for class. Sleep became very important to him, especially with the time he spent playing baseball. He was concerned about his free time and made efforts to fill it with “healthy” activity such as working out. He considered himself an outgoing and charismatic person at SJC, qualities he did not see in himself in high school. He started second semester feeling calm and more “attached” to himself, but nervous and excited because baseball was starting up in earnest. He admits that he focuses much more on baseball than academics. To help with academics and with his anxiety, Chad used headphones nearly all the time to listen to music.</p>
Kurt Nolan	<p>Kurt started high school interested in becoming an engineer because he excelled at math. His sophomore year, he began meeting with a social worker and was moved by the experience. He decided his senior year that he would major in social work. Kurt worried about money when he was considering where to enroll in college. He was frustrated with his parents for not taking the issue more seriously, reporting that he asked to discuss finances repeatedly but “kept getting brushed off, until... after I graduated [and] we were still, in ... basic talks about it.” He found a job in the cafeteria on campus to help with tuition and supplies. His 10-12 hours a week working became the driver for how he scheduled his time studying, eating, and being with friends. He planned to be a resident assistant his sophomore year as a way of reducing costs. He is proud of the significant award he received as a result of his high GPA in high school and of his academic ability in general. Midway through the year, he reported that the</p>

dominant memory from the first month of school was feeling anxious about his time in classes. Kurt has been diagnosed with “several” anxiety disorders, autism, and depression, and is hyper-aware of his health status, both physical and mental. He was consistently surprised over the course of the year with how easily he made new friends and spent regular unstructured time with them. He believed that his autism, anxiety, and depression would have made socializing more difficult than it turned out to be. In fact, he discovered that he has more extroverted tendencies than he was aware of in high school. In high school, he was good at making eye contact; blending into social situations; and paying respectful attention to a speaker. In his first four months of college, he developed skills in initiating conversations; keeping conversations going; and establishing social contact. He is very close to his parents and his pets, both of whom he mentioned and visited many times over the course of the year. Kurt has no connection to faith or a personal spiritualism and never has. He finds “it utterly ridiculous that so many people have died for things that no one can prove” and therefore has “pushed religion out of” his life. Health issues prevented him for years from taking the road test for his driver’s license, but he planned to take it over the summer before he had hip surgery. He reflected on his FYE in this way: “In high school I was so preoccupied about college and once I got there I have been so anxious about failing or messing it up. Now that I have almost a full year of college in the books I feel confident about it. I know I can handle it.”

Gary
Anderson

Gary defined himself in many ways by his relationship with his family. He decided against attending colleges that were more than an hour away, just so he would always have the easy option of seeing his family. He felt that students who lived farther than an hour from their families “had it harder.” Gary has a tendency to moralize or generalize from his experiences. For example, he believed that “opening” his mind to consider religion from a different viewpoint directly led to a surprisingly strong grade on an essay early in his time at SJC. From that experience, he stated that “a big part of learning is being open minded and trying to learn what you can even if you struggle.” While he had no connection to faith before coming to SJC, his time there made him realize other people’s faith was something he should know more about. He declared that college was, at its root, a “big test of stress-management.” He was open to many different experiences throughout his first year. He stretched himself by exploring photography as a “new hobby” during his winter break. Gary learned a number of things about himself during his first year, including that he can learn independently and manage his time “better than [he] expected.” He also found confidence, became more organized, and considered himself to be mature in dealing with his “new college life style.” He discovered that when he’s tired due to baseball or other time-consuming activities, his academics suffer. His brother “back home” has struggled with stress and has been to counseling, but Gary did not need therapy until he arrived at SJC. Otherwise, he found that the transition went the way he thought it would. He learned through trial and error but also

	relied on the skills he had developed in high school (e.g. organization, work ethic, time management) to have a successful first year.
Michael Brown	<p>Michael is close to his family, his Catholic faith, and his teammates in both basketball and baseball. His connection to his family led him to put his chances of returning to SJC in the fall at 80% rather than 100%. His trust and love for his family led him to comment that if he ever made a poor decision regarding substance use, his “parents would be the last thing [he] saw” on this earth. He is an altar server at home, believes in God, and tries to “do His work” every day. It was harder to make it to mass at SJC, however, because there are few services on campus and he often missed the bus to church. By the end of the year, one of his biggest regrets was that he had not attended more services. He considers himself a relatively strong student. He was uncertain about his ability to succeed in college until he earned a perfect score on a test in early October, which taught him that he could “thrive in college and [was] ready to take on the challenge.” He continued to be proud of his work even as his text and exam scores decreased over the course of the second month. He admitted that “every now and then there's a rough patch where [he] just [has] trouble with one subject or trouble on just one length of period where [he] can't do it by [him]self and...need[s] help.” His recognition of the need for help demonstrated a shift in his self-perception, which he addressed by visiting the tutoring center on several occasions. By the end of October, the high point of his week was being able to sleep in, a reflection of his exhaustion from managing both the increased difficulty of his courses and the new experience of daily basketball practice. He continued to be grateful for “catching up on sleep” when he could throughout the first semester. He developed the habit of napping between classes. He reported being very sick with a fever in the last month of November. One of Michael’s defining characteristics is his habit of procrastinating, which hurt him academically both in high school and at SJC. He repeated several times the fact that he “had no money” and therefore stayed on campus most days and needed a summer job.</p>
Scott Combs	<p>Scott loves to debate. However, when Suffolk University, his first choice for college, deferred his admission to the pre-law program, he declined their offer and enrolled at SJC instead. He identifies himself very closely with the jobs he works in order to earn and save money. He complains of having too much free time despite his work schedule, full course load, and traveling home every weekend. He does not abuse substances. When the SJC coach called him “big man” at his unsuccessful soccer tryout, he immediately started working with a personal trainer and lost “fifty pounds” by the time he arrived on campus in September. He considers himself a procrastinator and began the year worried about his lack of academic motivation. He took the greatest joy from getting a paycheck and working out at the gym. He felt best when he was named “Employee of the Month” at work in October. By semester break, he determined that he wasted too much time investing in other people and not enough on trying to meet his own goals. Scott is hyper-aware of his food intake. He commented on the nutritional value of the food he was eating; the frequency; and the quality</p>

throughout the year. He does not believe in a religion and does not consider himself spiritual. He sees religion as causing more problems than it claims to solve. For the summer, he planned to work two jobs at home in order to save money for college in the fall at the University of New Hampshire. Like he did when he enrolled at SJC, he planned to focus on his academics at UNH and not put any effort into making new friends. He believed that he would succeed more at UNH because he'd be able to plan and cook his own meals living at home or in an apartment, something that fits his lifestyle better.

Table 10

Participants' FYE Summarized by Theme: Attitude Toward SJC (Theme 2 of 14)

Chad Brunswick	Chad was attracted to SJC from the first time he met the baseball coach at the Bay State Summer Games the summer after his junior year. The coach recruited him to play at SJC. At coach's invitation, he came up for a visit and "fell in love with the campus. [He] loved what Coach was doing, ...just loved being around this place. It was so beautiful it reminded [him] of...home." SJC became his only choice because of its campus, its academic programs, and the baseball program. He neither visited nor applied to any other colleges. At semester break, he was 100% certain he wanted to return to SJC because of the friends he had made and baseball. He continued to feel this way throughout the year. However, he became frustrated with SJC at the end of the second semester because he did not get the housing arrangement he was looking for. His grades were poor, which gave him a poor housing score. He ended up with a single because his friends asked him to remove himself (and his score) to allow them to secure better dorm space. He found a silver lining, though, when he "realized that's going to be better, because [he has] mild to high anxiety, so that might help [him] a little bit more, focus on [him]self and not worry about others around [him] too much." He was excited about his fall classes, including Introduction to Film Studies, which meets in a theater in the evening.
Kurt Nolan	Kurt chose SJC over several other Maine institutions because it was smaller and he felt comfortable there after spending considerable time meeting with staff in the spring of 2017. He found the campus easy to manage due to its small size and convenient layout. He also felt safer because the campus is an hour's drive from his home in central Maine. However, he stated that "[t]he academics ... are kind of weird. [He has] anxiety, a couple of anxiety disorders. So seeing ... the syllabus, all the assignments, is overwhelming, but[, he thinks,] 'I can do it.'" He appreciated student life's social events and the accessibility of the counselors, the nurses, the athletic trainer, and his professors. He found it easy to secure another single in a convenient dorm for his second year because he has a high housing score (determined by grades and behavior reports).
Gary Anderson	Gary chose SJC for three reasons: 1) most importantly, he was impressed by the school's academics; 2) he was interested in playing baseball; and 3) the campus

was close enough to home that he could see his family regularly. He was attracted to the school's pre-physician's assistant program, a program that most schools do not have. In his first week, he felt homesick for the people and the routines he had established over "18 years." He "wasn't even missing home. It was just missing the people and the routine [he] was in." He began to understand his response during a campus counseling session that first week. He appreciated the small class size (less than 30 students in every class) because it helped him establish connections to his professors from the start. He also liked it that professors recorded attendance every day, which he believed would not happen at a larger school. He considered leaving SJC for a school that would allow him seamless entry into a medical school for graduate work, but only if he decided to stop playing baseball. He remained impressed and satisfied with both the baseball and the pre-physician's assistant throughout his first year. He found solace in getting back into his routine (eating, working out, studying) at SJC after winter break. Gary reported that SJC "does a good job" of advertising services and encouraging students to take advantage of them. For example, the counseling center's therapy dogs are a big draw for many students who need to relieve stress but not believe they need counseling sessions. He was able to easily secure rooms for his second year with three friends in a more desirable dorm because all four of them had high housing scores (determined by grades and behavior reports).

Michael
Brown

Michael wanted a college that was small and Catholic, like his high school; close to home; and a member of NCAA Division III. SJC met every requirement. He loved high school and wanted to continue the same small-campus feeling. He wanted to be on his own but have the option to drive home on the weekend if he felt like it. He also wanted to continue growing in his faith. He wanted to play both basketball and baseball, and he would not have been able to do so at a Division I or II school. When he visited campus, he "got a better feel" at SJC than he got at the other schools he was considering. He was surprised during first semester how different "life in Maine" was from life in Boston. He knew it would be different but not the extent he discovered after living at SJC for a few months. Halfway through the year, he put the chances of returning to SJC in the fall at 80%. The hedge came from his uncertainty about what may happen in the future, especially with his family. He felt that "something could pop up with a different offer from a different school or something like that. So ... [he didn't] want to close that door, close any doors. [He] want[ed] to leave all [his] options open." Despite his uncertainty, he enjoyed his time and saw no reason he might leave emanating from SJC itself. By the end of second semester, he put his chances of returning at 100% because of how much he loved his freshman year, mostly because of the friends he had made and his experiences on the basketball and baseball teams. One part of the experience he wished he had known more about was how to get around the surrounding area. He felt isolated coming from Boston and had trouble figuring out how to go places off campus. He figured out how to find campus spots by asking other students, which led to making new friends.

Scott Combs	<p>Scott began his relationship with SJC by taking self-directed tours during the summer of 2017. He found the campus beautiful and liked the small size (it was about the size of his high school). He appreciated the campus's proximity to water and to a city, although he grossly underestimated the distance from Standish to Portland. His positive attitude toward SJC came in part because of his respect for the athletic department, especially Coach DuBois from the soccer team. Scott tried out with Coach DuBois but was not selected for the team. He expected SJC (and college in general) to provide him with a number of benefits, including life-long friends and professional networks when he graduated. Near the end of first semester, Scott still found his dorm room to be "small" and was tired of his roommate's different sleep schedule and lower expectations regarding the room's neatness. After first semester ended, he reported that the word that most matched his impression of SJC was "expensive." He also reported that he was "100%" certain he would not return to SJC because he did not have a positive experience. There wasn't much to do on campus during the winter and he was disappointed with his professors. He was not happy living on campus and wished he could live in Portland. He entered second semester with a better feeling. He became frustrated with SJC in February when he lost his job in the cafeteria. He believed that he lost it because he had called out sick for a day. He lost his job back home as a bouncer in March, "when the regulations changed" and employees had to be 21 to work at the club. He was anxious to find a job on campus to pay for SJC. By April, he had submitted his transfer application to the University of New Hampshire (with its main campus in his hometown). He expressed interest in continuing history courses (not courses in his major) piecemeal at SJC when he could afford it because he appreciated the department. He left SJC, even though it was a "beautiful" school, because it didn't fit his "lifestyle" at the time.</p>
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Table 11

Participants' FYE Summarized by Theme: Family Communication (Theme 3 of 14)

Chad Brunswick	<p>Chad grew up as an only child with both his parents. When they talked about college, they spent most of the conversation on making good choices about substances, partying, and getting into someone else's car if people have been drinking or smoking. Chad reported that "their biggest thing [was] not [to] get into a car with a drunk driver or someone who was driving high." He was concerned that they did not talk more about grades and classes. When he started at SJC, he cut down his communication with his parents to a text "here and there" about something general like how his or their day had gone. He went home for the first weekend in October to see his parents, then called them when he got back to campus to talk about how much he loved SJC and the people he had met. When the power went out on campus over Halloween weekend, Chad went home to watch the World Series with his father. First semester, his communication with home held steady with roughly a text a day to his mother</p>
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and several texts a week with his father. Chad learned to appreciate his parents more in their absence. He found himself having more adult conversations with them as the year progressed. He noticed that “there's some stuff where [he]’ll just talk to them just to talk to them, and it will come up because [he hasn’t] seen them in ... it's been a month and a half at this point probably, and being a single child that's pretty long ... you don't have your parents with you.” Early in second semester, he spent six weeks away from home and considered the distance to be a hindrance. By May, he felt like the distance was no longer significant, suggesting he was feeling more at home at SJC. His parents regularly came to campus in the spring to see him play baseball.

Kurt Nolan Kurt’s conversations with his parents before enrolling at SJC focused on finances. He had also considered attending a local community college, primarily because of its low tuition. He felt the need to justify to his parents the added expense of a private liberal arts college. Kurt’s parents were uncomfortable with the conversation and put it off until after his graduation. This upset him. He continued to worry about money until he arrived on campus, then deliberately stopped thinking about it and began worrying about his academics instead. His communication home with his mother, his father, and his brothers centered on his health, his school work, and what was going on at home. He went home for a few hours on some weekends and his parents came to see him sometimes to help with picking up medications or to bring him food.

Gary Anderson Gary’s conversation with his parents before he enrolled at SJC was primarily about academics, in particular what his expectations were and what he wanted out of college. He wanted an education that would prepare him to make more money than he needed to pay off his anticipated student loans. According to his parents, “...if [he] was going in undecided, they were totally fine with that, just wanted to make sure [his] money was going to good use.” They also discussed issues like proximity to home and the surrounding community. They made a checklist together and used it for every college he toured. When he felt homesick his first week, he visited with his family and that helped him feel more comfortable. At the start of the year, he texted both his mother and father every morning and every night, a habit he developed at home because of his split residency. He was aware that “[s]ome people try not to do that because they don’t want to stay attached,” but the frequent communication did not stop him from finding a place socially at SJC. When Gary went home, he often talked with his family about school, grades, and his baseball friends. When he spoke to family from school, he asked what they were doing and how things were at home. Over Thanksgiving, he and his family talked about his classes, baseball, and his plans for a summer job. They discussed his work with FedEx over winter break and his plans to take health care coursework during the summer to log some Health Experience Hours (a requirement in the pre-physician’s assistant program). Starting in November, Gary reduced his time communicating with his parents to roughly once a week. He also communicated with his sister and/or

	brother every week or so. This pattern continued through the rest of the school year.
Michael Brown	<p>When Michael spoke with his parents about attending SJC, they discussed the importance of maintaining his grades in light of the high cost of tuition. He did not want to “waste money” by shirking his academics. He and his parents connected his education directly to his success as an adult, including what profession he might enter and where he might “go in life” generally. For the first few weeks after he arrived on campus, Michael FaceTimed his mother every day and called his father after every fall baseball game. He also talked with his siblings, but not as frequently. Since there was “always someone at home,” he never found it difficult to talk with a family member when he called. His family came up to visit him three times in the first three weeks of classes. Michael went to see them the first weekend in October and they talked about his classes, his grades, and his first month of school. He made the effort to communicate with his family at least five times a week, either by phone, FaceTime, or text. He spoke primarily with his mother or father but sometimes his sister. Over Thanksgiving, he went home for just two days because of basketball obligations. They talked about his experiences at college and in Maine. He missed seeing his family because of all of his time away from home and his family’s inability to visit him as often as he had hoped. The first time he saw his family second semester was after he returned from Florida with the baseball team. While he reported that “it was very positive and nice seeing my family,” he expressed no sense of regret at the lack of contact since baseball started. He went home for a little over a day and then had to come back to school to start classes again.</p>
Scott Combs	<p>Scott’s conversation with his grandparents about SJC before he enrolled focused on finances. He was solely responsible for paying for college despite his grandparents’ annual income of \$60,000-\$80,000. When he was accepted, they talked about “everything on the front page” of the website and early conversations from Standish centered on the food. Over the course of the year, Scott spoke with his grandmother and his mother daily or every other day. He frequently spoke with his wife’s fiancé, a man who was also Scott’s tattoo artist. Their conversations often centered on his family’s activities and not as much on his. He rarely spoke with his father, whom he considers an acquaintance rather than a relative. He asked many questions about life at home. The frequency of his conversations (texting, phone, and social media) did not change over the course of the year. When he decided to transfer to the University of New Hampshire, he did not consult with his family. He submitted the application and then told them. He kept them informed of the application’s progress and let them know when he was accepted. He told them he made the decision because being at home would be cheaper and make him happier.</p>

Table 12

Participants' FYE Summarized by Theme: High School Academic Preparation for College (Theme 4 of 14)

Chad Brunswick	Chad was “a pretty steady student” in college and believed that his performance would translate to good grades at SJC. He also noted that many of his courses first year featured material he had already learned in high school. He considered the similarity beneficial and “odd.”
Kurt Nolan	Kurt took two online courses through the University of Maine, Introduction to Psychology and Models of Addiction, in preparation for his social work major. His goals were to earn credit and to accustom himself to college-level work before enrolling at SJC. By the end of his first year at SJC, however, he believed that he might have performed better academically if he had taken even more college classes in high school.
Gary Anderson	Gary completed dual college/high school courses in public speaking, statistics, literature, and college writing as a way of preparing for college-level academic work. He also completed several Advanced Placement courses. His primary goal in taking these more difficult courses was to train himself to meet deadlines and to perform well the first time. Gary recognized that “some people who may not have taken those college courses may think that they can do it last minute, which may work for some.” Procrastination did not work for him, however. He believed that actually “doing the reading” in high school led to him performing better at SJC, where reading is required as part of the regular academic routine. He wished he had learned how to take notes better in high school, something he worked very hard on learning in his first year at SJC. Gary discovered a big difference between high school studying and college studying for exams: in high school, he just read through his homework, but in college, he had to go beyond the assignments and do extra reading and thinking to perform well. Gary carried over from high school his serious work ethic and his strong organizational skills.
Michael Brown	Michael believed that he prepared well in high school for college work, but only reported this after he began to earn high grades at SJC. He did not provide specific details about how he prepared. One difference he saw between high school and college is that high school teachers put more effort in to helping students with academic tasks such as note taking.
Scott Combs	Scott did not prepare in any specific ways for college academic work. He attempted to remain focused up to graduation, unlike many of his friends who were not attending college in the fall. His strategy was to “kind of keep my work ethic up.” After first semester at SJC, Scott felt like the first year of college was “basically a faster repeat of all of high school” academics. By the end of the year, he wished he had learned how to study better for tests in high school and that he had focused more on his school work. He believed that a higher level of “preparedness” would have transferred to college and improved his performance.

Table 13

Participants' FYE Summarized by Theme: Academic Performance at SJC (Theme 5 of 14)

Chad Brunswick	<p>Throughout the year, Chad referred back to courses he had taken in high school and how much similar many of his courses were at SJC. His familiarity did not result in strong academic performances, however. He measured the worth of courses at SJC based on how interesting they were or how familiar he was with the subject. Chad routinely blamed professors' poor instruction whenever he performed below his expectations on assessments. In October, he "failed an open note quiz because [he] couldn't understand the teacher when note taking. [The experience left him] kind [of] peeved." He considered many of classes boring and was most concerned about what classes he would take second semester and how much he would appreciate them. He preferred to study at night but found it difficult, even during finals week when he told himself that he had to "hunker down" and just do it. He "was not very happy about [his] first semester grades. [He] definitely started studying more and working harder in classes than before. It was much harder for [him] to wake up and go to classes in the first semester than now and [he started] staying in [his] room more than before because [he was able to]." He made a goal of studying better for second semester by making flashcards, using Quizlet, and focusing better. While he thought he had performed well on his first semester courses, he was not happy about his grades when he got them. He attributed his poor performance to difficulty waking up on time and getting to class first semester. He believed he would perform better second semester because he had a more favorable schedule and would work harder. In April, he "aced" a math quiz and was proud of himself because "math has always been [his] worst subject." He felt much more confident about his second semester finals than the first set. He found them easier because they were scheduled more conveniently. Even so, he asked his Spanish professor to allow him to delay the test for him so he could play in a playoff game scheduled for the same time. Overall, Chad found the workload at SJC to be less onerous than the load his senior year of high school.</p>
Kurt Nolan	<p>Kurt is proud of his academic ability and accomplishments in high school. Course syllabi distributed on the first day of classes make him anxious because he can't help but look ahead and see all the work that's coming. He is most concerned about big papers and projects that he can't start yet but knows are looming. His confidence in his work first semester wavered, especially in Spanish, where he routinely assumed he performed poorly on exams and was then surprised by his high grade (he has always struggled with Spanish going back to his high school experience). Over all, though, he felt that "the workload is about what I expected. I took several college courses during my senior year of high school so it's nothing new doing it full-time." He reported numerical grades at every opportunity and reflected on whether he was expecting the grade or not. As the year progressed, he shifted criticism for his less-than-expected</p>

	<p>performances from himself to his professors. He reported in May that if he had known how Spanish classes worked, he would not have enrolled in them. Kurt structured his studying around specific goals: e.g., reading “x” number of pages in “y” amount of time. At semester’s end, his grades were high enough that even failing final exams would still leave him with passing grades in every course. He remarked that this “took all the pressure off” him and allowed him to “wing it,” an approach he vowed to change for second semester finals. He did not learn any new academic skills at SJC but instead carried over from high school his skills in organization, time management, quality note taking, learning quickly, and paying attention to details. Even so, he determined that he suffered by not setting a regular study schedule or managing his time effectively first semester. By March, he reported that he although he had made it a goal to regularize his studying second semester, he had instead become even more scattered. He blamed his romantic involvement with a student and his struggles with his long-term girlfriend for destabilizing his studying routine.</p>
Gary Anderson	<p>Gary described as the high point in the third week of September as his strong performance on all three quizzes delivered in a single Friday, then his surprisingly high grade on a religion essay the following week. He said these two events provided him with the academic confidence he had lacked in the first three weeks of his time at SJC. He also found “figuring out time management and getting on a plan” to be important steps toward academic success at SJC. By the end of his second month, Gary reported that classes were harder than they had been in high school, and that he was totally independent, but that it was easy to find help simply by asking for it. He found great personal and academic value in working on the campus farm for four hours as part of his ecology class in October. He felt he prepared himself effectively for first semester final exams and performed well on them. Even so, he thought that he “could have taken more notes” first semester in all of his courses and earned even higher grades.</p>
Michael Brown	<p>Michael handled homework without much difficulty in the first week but was challenged by the quizzes in week two. He was “excited” to see how he did on them. Throughout the first month, he continued to be unsure of how well he was performing. In early October, he was shocked and happy that he had earned a perfect score on a test. It proved to him that he was ready for college work and would be successful. The next week, he struggled with studying for midterm exams and began thinking about how difficult final exams would be and how he should study for them. He earned a 92% on one midterm and reported that as the highlight of his week. The following week, he earned a B+ on a midterm and was proud of his performance. Michael believed he prepared well for finals, but they were difficult and he wished he had slept more during finals week. He determined that his note taking skills were lacking when he arrived at SJC, and that he had to improve on his own because professors did not spend much time focusing on them and “college stresses notes.” Michael was very happy with his first semester grades (3.84 GPA) but continued to worry about his performance and look for ways to improve. He recognized that he had to “keep working hard”</p>

	<p>for his grades while he was playing for two different sports teams. He was anxious because his other activities (playing video games, spending time with friends, and engaging in sports) negatively impacted the time he had to study. More often than not, when asked what event had the biggest impact on him in a given week, Michael cited an academic task (studying, taking a test, getting a grade back) rather than a social, family, or co-curricular event. Final exams were “hard” for Michael. He continued to find it difficult how to gauge his performance before he got the exam back. He struggled most with his economics class’s assessments because there were only two: a midterm and a final. He found courses that featured a number of assignments throughout the semester easier to handle. However, second semester finals were easier than first because he learned “what it took to get...an A” and what a final exam would “look like” first semester.</p>
Scott Combs	<p>Scott struggled to make morning classes throughout the year because of the consistently early start time (8:00 am). He found classes difficult from the start for a variety of environmental reasons, none of which related directly to his ability to understand the work itself. He struggled to complete homework even when he had the time to do so. He was thankful for test weeks because they brought his attention back to his course work. He preferred studying in his bed or at his desk in his dorm room, starting at 10:00 pm. He did not “focus too well or hard but [he believed] the skimming over notes always seems to work.” However, he discovered after first semester final exams that he had not studied as effectively as he had thought and made plans to change his habits second semester. By the end of January, he had received his grades and was disappointed in his performance. However, paradoxically, he said he would continue his habits from first semester because he thought they were effective. Scott found second semester exams more difficult because they were cumulative, unlike first semester exams, which were more project-based. Despite his low GPA, Scott believed that his academic performance exceeded his expectations coming out of high school.</p>

Table 14

Participants’ FYE Summarized by Theme: Academic Major or Department at SJC (Theme 6 of 14)

Chad Brunswick	Chad was in the English department. He appreciated the communication he received from both his advisor and the department. He felt like he was welcome to ask questions and talk to staff.
Kurt Nolan	Kurt was in the social work department and thoroughly appreciated the professors, the office staff, and the coursework throughout his first year. He was 100% certain he would return to the department his sophomore year and eventually graduate with a degree in social work. He communicated with the

	department primarily through email and considered the communication adequate.
Gary Anderson	Gary was in the pre-physician's assistant program. He felt strongly that it was a good program for him and that the professors were talented and effective.
Michael Brown	Michael was in the business and sports management program. He liked the professors and found it easy to communicate with them and with the department in general. Emails were limited to official communication about program requirements and professional opportunities.
Scott Combs	Scott was in the exercise science program with a concentration in athletic training. He was also interested in kinesiology and nursing. He found the first semester survey courses tedious and essentially a repeat of high school. He anticipated at the start of second semester that his new courses, which were more focused on athletic training, would be more difficult and he would need to spend more time both with his professors and in the library. He appreciated the "very, very strong" communication between the department and its students. He wishes that he had heard more from the department at new student orientation about the difficulty of the coursework and the importance of "staying on top" of the work and studying regularly. When he began at SJC, he expected that courses would feature more independent work and less lecturing.

Table 15

Participants' FYE Summarized by Theme: Connection to Professors (Theme 7 of 14)

Chad Brunswick	After his first month at SJC, Chad expressed respect for the way his professors "run class" and use "very tactical teaching." He felt close to his academic advisor who also taught two of his courses.
Kurt Nolan	Kurt's professors encouraged him, complimented him on his performance and his intelligence, and recommended he pursue honors-level courses. He respected nearly all of his professors (the exception was his Spanish instructor, who was "a nightmare" and whose class he dropped early in second semester) and enjoyed working with them in class.
Gary Anderson	Gary intentionally sat in the front row of every class so he could get to know his professors more quickly. It worked--he reported that every professor knew his name early in the semester. He attended office hours with his professors a few times first semester but more second semester when the courses became more difficult. He found talking to professors more second semester especially helpful since he lost time he used to use for studying to baseball practices, conditioning, games, and travel. If he did not have as much time to study as he thought he needed, he would "get up and go talk to them, try understand the concept a little better." He felt close to all of his professors because of the steps he had taken to

	get to know them early in each semester. He had a “great academic advisor” who, along with the predictable course schedule in his major, convinced him that he would stay at SJC to complete the program.
Michael Brown	Michael noted after his first semester that professors in college did not spend much time focusing on individual students. He saw this as a difference between high school and college. Michael found it easy to talk to professors, to volunteer in class, and to establish a connection. He tried to be funny in class every so often to get the professors to laugh. He saw communicating easily with professors as a “big part of getting a grade.” He saw many of his professors as encouraging students to open up and be part of the class.
Scott Combs	Scott struggled with several of his professors first semester and considered them unorganized. He did not make much of an effort to meet with them outside of class. He set a goal of meeting more often at the start of second semester, “[s]etting up conferences with peers and professors to get aid in academia or personal life,” but was ultimately unsuccessful. He found the professors to be good people but very private. He did not seek to establish a connection with any professor outside of the classroom. He first began thinking of transferring when he was struggling with his Biology class early second semester. He was trying without success to contact his professor for help.

Table 16

Participants' FYE Summarized by Theme: High School Social Preparation for College (Theme 8 of 14)

Chad Brunswick	Chad prepared for college socially by trying to get to know everyone in his senior class in high school, so that he could “go into college almost the same as senior year and try to meet as many people as [he could] in the first amount of time that [he] had to create a bond.” He also thought frequently and deeply about what moving away from home meant to him and how he would create a new lifestyle away from everyone he had known for so long. He recognized that “not only was it time to transition to college but it was also time to, ... basically, figure out a way to cope with a brand-new lifestyle almost. Being so far away from home and, ... just trying to manage how [he] was going to react to leaving. A lot of it was [internal], [he] did a little bit of meditation by [him]self where [he] listened to music, to figure out what [his] lifestyle was going to be here. Try to figure how it was going to be different and try to figure out how it was going to be the same.” He smoked and drank for the first time during his senior year.
Kurt Nolan	Through his school, Kurt visited a minimum of seven colleges, including SJC, before deciding where to apply. His high school was “really big on pushing kids to ... get them into colleges,” which helped him transition into a frame of mind that allowed him to see himself in college. He visited SJC before deciding to enroll. He brought his high school social worker with him for the tour and to talk

	<p>with the social work department. On his visit, he observed a class, toured with the admissions office, spoke to the social work department chair, met with the counseling office, and spent eight hours talking with people before making up his mind. He considers his time playing lacrosse with a local high school team (his own school did not offer a program) preparation for college by forcing him to form quick friendships and trust people he was not familiar with.</p>
Gary Anderson	<p>Gary's data lacks any specific references to his attitude in high school toward college, his efforts to expand his knowledge of college through visits or research, or conversations with his parents about life at college outside academics and sports. His surprise at the feeling of being "dropped into a place where you're all by yourself" after doing the "same thing" for eighteen years suggests that he had not considered the transition from a social perspective.</p>
Michael Brown	<p>Michael took advantage of his high school's college information programming for both students and families. He visited a number of college campuses both through school and on his own. He has three older siblings who have attended college, and their experience and advice helped him feel more comfortable with the transition. His siblings would help him figure "what to bring and how to ... be ready and prepared for classes and stuff like that." Michael prepared himself physically to play varsity basketball and baseball by training over the summer of 2017. He saw himself as a social person in high school and transferred that social nature to college, where he was able to make a lot of friends relatively quickly. One big difference he noticed was that SJC was larger than his high school, where he was one of only 200 students. Michael learned in high school how to go into new experiences "with kind of like an open attitude and trying [his] best not to be scared, and kind of being [his] own man out here [was] the mentality that [he] got from high school." As he put it, "I think that's what got me where I am today, my first year."</p>
Scott Combs	<p>Scott visited SJC on his own several times during the summer of 2017 to get accustomed to the campus. He walked the campus himself rather than sign up for guided tours. In his mind, his preparation for the social element of college was "prepping to say goodbye to everybody at home. [K]ind of doing things that [he] did daily there for like the last time just kind of experiencing everything at home." Rather than imagine how he would live on campus, he focused on how he had lived in high school.</p>

Table 17

Participants' FYE Summarized by Theme: High School Social Engagement (Theme 9 of 14)

Chad Brunswick	Chad saw himself as withdrawn in high school, but oddly forming more and deeper friendships with students in high school after he went to college. He appreciated being a mentor to younger high school baseball players.
Kurt Nolan	Kurt started seeing a girl in his high school in the summer of 2016. He maintained the relationship through his first year of college. He made friends with teammates on a local high school's lacrosse team his senior year. He became close to staff at his high school and depended upon their support as he transitioned to SJC.
Gary Anderson	Gary started seeing someone in high school and continued seeing her his first year at SJC.
Michael Brown	Michael did not engage in a romantic relationship in high school. He worked as a teacher's aide over the summers and considered returning to that job after his first year.
Scott Combs	Scott started seeing someone at home early in the summer of 2017. He continued the relationship until Thanksgiving break, when she ended it. He reported at the start of second semester that the breakup was for the best because she worked rather than attend school and did not understand his decision to earn a college degree.

Table 18

Participants' FYE Summarized by Theme: High School Communication (Theme 10 of 14)

Chad Brunswick	Chad scaled back his communication with his high school friends when he arrived on campus. He kept in touch with just a few people, one of whom was a cousin. He attended the Topsfield Fair with friends when he went back home the first weekend in October and talked with them about his time at SJC. After first semester, Chad became "closer to a lot more people [from home]," especially younger baseball players. He was proud to learn from them that he had "made an impact on their lives" and was happy that "[they kept] communicating while [he was] in college and they [were] in high school."
Kurt Nolan	Kurt began the year communicating through text and social media with some members of the lacrosse team, a few staff members from his high school, and his girlfriend, a senior at his high school. He continued to see his girlfriend on weekends throughout the year, but his contact with high school friends and staff declined as he developed more connections at SJC.

Gary Anderson	Gary started seeing someone in high school and continued seeing her his first year at SJC. He communicated with her almost daily through FaceTime, social media, or texting. He checked in with high school friends through texting and social media just to see how things were going with people, but those check ins gradually decreased over the course of the year. By April, he was in touch with just two friends on a regular basis. His report that “the rest of [them he heard] from here and there” suggested that he had found new friends at SJC, not that he missed speaking with his friends from high school.
Michael Brown	Michael started the year in a number of group chats with his high school friends. For the most part, they shared jokes. The only social media he used was SnapChat. In September, he and his high school friends made plans to meet up in Boston at some point. This did not happen his first year. He went home the first week of October and saw many of his friends. They talked about his “time at college and they talked about what they've been doing and catching [him] up with anything [he] missed.” Their conversation suggests that they had not communicated much of substance over the first month. For Thanksgiving, he went home for just two days because he had basketball games and practices. Consequently, he did not see or talk with his friends as much as he had wanted to. Throughout second semester, his communication with his high school friends steadily decreased. He hoped that they would “pick things back up” in the summer when he returned home.
Scott Combs	Scott maintained social media contact with his high school friends throughout his first semester with a focus on relationships: which were continuing, new ones, and which were ending. They frequently made plans to meet places on weekends and during breaks. He went home on the weekends and saw friends. When he went home, he lived with a girlfriend for the first six months of the school year, then moved in with a different girlfriend through the end of the school year. With the end of first semester, his communication with his high school friends dropped off and he was “not a fan” of losing contact with them. By the end of April, most communication had dropped off entirely and he reported that he and his high school friends just kept “tabs” on each other. He transferred, however, in order to be closer to the people he left behind when he moved to Standish. He believed that he would have transferred back home at the end of his first year even if he had made good friends at SJC because his “ties” from high school remained strong.

Table 19

Participants' FYE Summarized by Theme: Social Engagement at SJC (Theme 11 of 14)

Chad Brunswick	<p>Chad made a solid group of friends his first month at SJC through the baseball team. Many of the other players were housed in his dorm. He started the year by swearing off parties, then by going to a few and leaving after a beer. As the year progressed, he began spending more time with friends drinking, then smoking marijuana. By the end of September, his high point of the week was getting drunk with friends and “cutting loose a bit.” By March, he was using substances to some degree every weekend and realized that his social life revolved to a large extent around substances. He made a goal of taking himself off both alcohol and marijuana. The most significant part of Chad’s social engagement at SJC, however, was his romantic relationship with someone he met at Accepted Students’ Day in the spring of 2017. She was also an athlete and they started dating in the summer. They continued dating until July 4th, and then she decided they should stop. He saw her on campus and, while he reported that he was “completely over her,” he struggled throughout the first year with the fallout from their relationship. He was anxious about seeing her, nervous when he saw her, and jealous when he saw her with someone else. He avoided some school events out of fear that he would see her. She dated another baseball player during the school year and that made him anxious. In May, a day away from leaving campus, he still brought up the failed relationship as the primary stressor for his year. Apart from his anxiety regarding his ex-girlfriend, Chad spent most nights with his baseball friends and together they went off campus many times a week, usually to a music store or out to eat. He made several trips to Portland to hang out at stores. The biggest positive change he made second semester was moving to a different dorm room to be with a new roommate. He had struggled with his first semester roommate and requested a change. He believed that his new roommate, who shared his sleep schedule, made it easier for him to stay in the room and study. He reflected on his growth by noting that he had become “more social than before and [had] learned when to act crazy and foolish and when ... is a good time to use that emotion and not.” By April, Chad had moved away from the parties and the substance use and spent time instead playing (sober) video games with some “good guys.” He decided he would use the money he earned from his summer job to buy a car so he could move around more easily in his second year at SJC. He regretted not going to more social events first semester in order to meet more people and establish more connections. He felt like he’d made a mistake by sticking to the baseball team for friends, because they did not share his quirky tastes in music, posters, and humor.</p>
Kurt Nolan	<p>Socially, Kurt started the year shifting from isolating himself in his room and spending all night with new people in common areas or in their rooms. He found that if he went “into the common room in [his] dorm building and just [hung] out there and either [did] work or whatever,” then people would show up and he would get to know them. When he enrolled at SJC, he requested and received a</p>

single, and then requested and received a single for his sophomore year as well. He looked for a middle ground in September, which he defined as spending significant time with people every other day. He frequently mentioned making milk shakes with his dorm mates in the first week of school as a comforting and useful social event. As the year progressed, Kurt found a study group comprised of students in his social work major and others whom he met in classes. He considered himself the academic “go-to” member of the group for everyone else and was satisfied with playing that role. He also went to parties on the weekends with SJC friends and drank alcohol but did not try other substances. Early in the school year, during the first party, he and several new friends left the party and hung out in someone’s room. When one friend became sick, he elected to stay back and take care of her while the others returned to the party. However, when she vomited, he texted their friends and asked them to come back and clean up the mess. As the year progressed, he and his friend group slowed their partying from every weekend to a few times a month due to increased school work, jobs, and a general lack of interest in drinking. The people he met making milk shakes and a few from classes became his social group. He spent time with them regularly, and even saw them during spring break in March. Kurt left campus several times a week with friends to go to Walmart, eat out, or spend time at some other local business. In January, he fell in love with a student in the group but felt conflicted because he was still seeing his girlfriend from home. Because of this new relationship, he started the semester feeling “[c]ircumstantially volatile, due to romantic life problems.” He decided in February to end the relationship with the student and continue to see his long-term girlfriend, who planned to enroll at SJC in the fall of 2018. In April, he cited his “a solid network of friends and relationships” as one of the main reasons he planned to return to SJC in the fall. He was confident that he would be able to form relationships with new students in a new dorm because he had already done that once.

Gary
Anderson

Gary was impressed from the start of his time at SJC because its small size seemed to engender kindness. He reported that when he walked around campus, there was always someone asking him how his day had gone. He found new friends within a few weeks of starting classes. He found the transition hard because, as he said several times during the first interview, students go from “eighteen years of doing the same thing to being dropped into a place where you’re all by yourself.” He believed that if he were open with people, he would make friends quickly, and he did. Most of his friends at the start were baseball players, but he also got to know people from other floors in the dorm and his classes. By the end of his first month on campus, Gary considered a restful weekend staying in the dorm with friends and watching the New England Patriots play professional football on television. Over a long weekend in October, Gary had planned to stay on campus with friends rather than go home, but ended up going home because “everyone else” was leaving. In October, Gary spent one weekend hanging out with friends, studying, and engaging in volunteer work through the baseball program. The following weekend, he joined

	<p>the SJC outdoors club hike up a local mountain. He stated that there were “plenty of ways to make new friends” as long as students took advantage of them. He drank alcohol a few times a month first semester and then stopped when baseball started in earnest. He did not engage in any other substance use. Gary spent most of his time in Standish at school, although he gradually developed the habit of going off campus for a meal a week. Looking back over first semester, Gary said that the social event he enjoyed the most was a ping pong tournament in his dorm. It helped him relax and hang out with new friends. By the end of the year, Gary had formed “two different groups of friends. [He had his] friends that [he hung] out socializing with and then [he had a] group of friends that [were his] academic friends.” The social group started with his roommate and the academic group formed quickly after the first exam period in October. He found himself a resource for other students who were experiencing homesickness because he was open about his own struggles in September.</p>
Michael Brown	<p>Michael considered himself to be in his “shell” the first few weeks of school, but he made the effort to meet people and make friends from the start. He found that the more people he met, the more comfortable he felt being on campus. He considered the parties to be the biggest difference between being in high school and being in college, although he never partook of any substances (no alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, or any drugs). He was able to push back confidently when he felt pressured. During a busy week when he was taking midterms and preparing for basketball tryouts, Michael planned also to spend time with SJC friends to relax and take some of the pressure off. At the end of first semester, he had three different defining memories of his time at SJC: 1) all the friends he had made and the time he had spent with them; 2) his exhaustion from basketball and baseball practice; and 3) how close he had become with his teammates because of shared experiences. He struggled with managing his time (practice, games, studying, class, trying to find time with friends). He made the decision early in the year not to start a romantic relationship and instead to “see how things went” socially. By the end of March, he had developed a group of 8-10 friends who spent considerable time together. He played video games with “the guys” at night until midnight and had cut his parties down to “occasionally.” By the end of the year, he remembered he had trouble “coming out of [his] shell” at the start of the year and was able to reflect on how he made friends relatively quickly and “opened up” in the dorm. He and three other dorm mates made plans to room together in a quad sophomore year. He thought about the summer as time to stay in touch with his college friends just as much as reconnecting with his high school friends.</p>
Scott Combs	<p>Scott entered college believing that it would be easy to meet new people and form new friendships during scheduled social events, at the gym, or in the cafe. The year started well for him: “Socially, there’s always something going on every night, whether it be in Baggott Street [Café] where tonight there’s a pool night and pool tournament and [he] definitely [planned to] participat[e] in that. For week two in a row. Love pool. Socially, meet with anybody at the gym or in</p>

the café and just strike up a conversation about life, their majors, academics even just running into people in the hall like everybody on third floor Standish ... [all of whom knew who he was]. The soccer team [knew him] just because [he] look[ed] like one of their players.” Despite this belief, he reported making no true friends due to a steady romantic relationship back home and the need to work a series of jobs both on campus and at home. He purposely avoided parties because he was “here to learn” and not to make friends. Scott initially appreciated the roommate experience, stating in October that “having a roommate when [he had] never shared a room in [his] entire life...[was] a good change. [He] realized [he was] more of a people person now.” It was not long before he struggled with his roommate due to their differing sleep schedules and level of tidiness. He had more luck with his second semester roommate. He sometimes found himself using his last gallon of gas to drive someone from SJC to town to run errands rather than refusing when asked. He made little to no effort to socialize with other students, choosing to spend his time during the week working, exercising, studying, or just staying in his room. He left campus every weekend and had guests from home nearly every week. He was dating a woman from home when he arrived at SJC and he noted, after their breakup in November, that “from the first semester ... till now, [he] kind of set aside [his] exercise and health goals in the gym, per se, and focused more on taking care of [his girlfriend].” After the breakup, he began dating a student at SJC. By the end of February, he had stopped seeing her and started a relationship with someone he met through his job at the cafeteria. He spent significant time in his room watching Netflix and playing video games, usually without his roommate, who often did not return to the room until midnight. He considered this use of his time positive because he could not see how it would be negative. He admitted to making no effort to make friends at SJC, instead purposefully isolating himself and staying in his room all year. He remembered staying on campus for one weekend. He avoided the “party scene” that he considered to be prevalent on campus. He regretted not attending more trivia nights and special events and believed that if he had, he may have had a more successful year. He never found or valued a study group. When he first considered transferring, he realized that he had not found anyone at SJC he liked to hang out with or would consider a friend. Scott stated that “[even if he had made the connections...] [he] think[s] [he] still would've transferred, just because of the connections and ties back home still being strong.”

Table 20

Participants' FYE Summarized by Theme: High School Co-Curricular Experience (Theme 12 of 14)

Chad Brunswick	Chad was a highly skilled baseball player in high school and played with a number of selective teams outside school as well.
Kurt Nolan	Kurt played lacrosse at a local high school (his own school did not offer a program).
Gary Anderson	Gary played baseball in high school.
Michael Brown	Michael played both basketball and baseball in high school. He was the captain of both teams his senior year and started every game for all four years.
Scott Combs	Scott played soccer throughout high school.

Table 21

Participants' FYE Summarized by Theme: Co-curricular Involvement at SJC (Theme 13 of 14)

Chad Brunswick	Chad was recruited to play baseball at SJC and became one of the starting pitchers as a first year. The coach told him in October that he had already earned a spot on the varsity team as a pitcher. He spent considerable time all year preparing to play baseball or playing it. He remarked that one of the highlights of his time at SJC “was getting personal bests in the baseball workouts” in October. At times he thought baseball may have had a negative effect on his FYE. At the start of second semester, he acknowledged that he “definitely seem[ed] to focus a lot more time on baseball than academics.” In May, he admitted that he may have “made a mistake with the baseball team. They're great guys and all, but they're not like [him]. They're not like [his] high school friends were, who were almost exactly like [him]. [He thought] probably getting out more and experiencing new people, experiencing new things [would be helpful]. [He thought] that would be the best option to take.” Despite his misgivings, he repeated many times throughout the year that baseball held his attention more than any other aspect of his FYE. He joined an elite baseball team in the summer of 2018 in part due to his success in SJC's program. He even went so far as to ask his Spanish professor to delay his second semester final so he could play in a playoff game.
Kurt Nolan	Kurt played club-level hockey at SJC, a step below varsity but more competitive than intramural. SJC does not have a varsity hockey program. He was hurt for most of the season but still tried to make practices.
Gary Anderson	Gary played baseball, intramural soccer, and intramural basketball his first year at SJC. He believes that if he had participated in more intramural sports he

	<p>would have had a better year, because he considers intramural games “down time.” He also joined the Outdoors Club and engaged in volunteer service through the baseball team. He seriously considered whether playing baseball would interfere with his transition to college, but decided that he’d rather try it for a year and see how it worked than potentially miss an important experience. The baseball team’s February trip to Florida thrilled him because it was the first time the team got to play together in a game setting, but worried him because he fell behind in his coursework. He spent social time with five players, an added benefit to qualifying for the varsity team.</p>
Michael Brown	<p>Michael was the captain of both basketball and baseball teams in high school, but was not recruited by SJC. He had to walk on to both teams. Michael had basketball tryouts in mid-October. He was worried about how well he would perform and whether he would make the team and planned to “work [his] butt off.” He made the team and began daily practices the next day. He stayed on campus for all but two days of Thanksgiving break because of basketball, and then spent most of semester break at SJC for the same reason. In January, he began practicing for basketball and baseball contemporaneously. He was exhausted and reflected that “it’s pretty daunting, but it takes a toll on you and ... half of it’s mental too. Knowing [how] to push through and stuff like that.” He found his time with his teammates to be the best part of college because they had been through so much together and developed strong friendships. He enjoyed his time going to Florida with the baseball team over spring break. One of the hardest parts of his first year was not playing much on either team. He was accustomed to being the star and it was difficult making room for the older student athletes. He looked forward to junior year when he thought he might start for varsity on both teams.</p>
Scott Combs	<p>Scott tried out for the soccer team but was not selected. He found the indoor tryouts unfair, largely because “being a defensive player, you know really kicking and showing more powers, can’t really do that much indoors. So ... [he] was kind of left to fend for [him]self.” He played in SJC’s intramural soccer league in the fall. He considered trying out for the baseball team but decided to prioritize working for money over sports just to see how things went his first year. He reflected in May that he had not participated as much as he believes he should have in co-curriculars at SJC. He made a goal to participate more at University of New Hampshire in the fall.</p>

Table 22

Participants' FYE Summarized by Theme: Services Accessed at SJC (Theme 14 of 14)

Chad Brunswick	Chad ate in the cafeteria unless he left campus for food with friends, which he did several times a week. As the first semester progressed, Chad made more use of campus services. He started using the gym to lift for baseball in mid-October. He used the career center to secure a job on campus. For most of the year, however, he used just the cafeteria and the gym. When he was training for baseball in the winter, he “was in there sometimes twice a day[,] between like October and February [he] was in there busting [his] ass.”
Kurt Nolan	Kurt interviewed the staff in the SJC counseling department when he spent a day on campus in the spring of 2017. This reassured him: it “helped [him] feel more secure that [he] would have mental health care easily available.” Once he began classes in the fall, he accessed counseling at least once a week and usually twice. He found the counselors professional, responsive, and comforting. He liked “having a reliable place to go and talk to someone who isn't a student or professor but knows what college life is like better than [his] family does.” He also accessed the health center regularly for cough/cold medicine, pain relievers, and other medical supplies. He was frequently ill throughout the year and supplemented his primary care doctor's treatments with visits to the nursing staff at SJC's health center. Kurt played intramural hockey in the winter and visited the trainer frequently for conditions that resulted from his time on the ice. He ate most of his meals in the cafeteria on campus. He did not make much use of the library, the tutoring center, the job center, or student life. He participated in intramural hockey and enjoyed it, but he wished that he would have known more about the commitment it required and the way the team worked before he arrived on campus.
Gary Anderson	When he felt homesick his first week on campus, Gary met with a psychologist at the counseling center. He reported that the session helped him and he found new friends shortly after talking through his adjustment problems. By Halloween, Gary had “used the counseling center 4 times for counseling; ...tutoring about 5 times; ...and the health center 1 time.” He found he studied most effectively independently at the library. The service he used the most first semester, outside of studying at the library, was the Academic Success Center (tutoring services). However, by May, he determined that he had used the counseling center the most effectively, retelling the story about his homesickness the first week of school. He ended up going for four or five sessions. He visited the career center a few times and spent significant time at the cafeteria and the gym. When he was having doubts about his future plans, he turned to the career center: “they talked to [him[, [he] took a couple quizzes, [and it] turned out [his] number one thing was right what [he] was doing.” Gary's decision to question his current path demonstrated a willingness to reconsider his priorities and the strength to accept change. He “craves healthy

	food” and found more than enough to satisfy him at the cafeteria. His gym use declined second semester once baseball started.
Michael Brown	By the end of October, Michael had accessed at least once or twice the counseling center, the tutoring center, the job center, and the health center. He believed that he did not need their support any longer. Because he did not have much extra money, he left campus no more than once a week, usually to pick something up at WalMart or to grab fast food. He ate most of his meals (usually three a day) at the campus cafeteria. The one aspect of his experience at SJC that he wanted to change was the way his dorm room was set up, and his dorm experience in general. The service he used the most, after the cafeteria, was the library. He wished he had used the health center more often when he was sick. He remembers going once at the start of second semester, “to talk to the nurse because I wasn't feeling good.” The other times he went, especially when he had a rash he could not figure out, he was very grateful. He also wished he had used the tutoring center more often. He believes he is generally a good student, and he developed a study group he relied upon, but found the tutoring center to be very helpful the few times he went. He wished he had gone even more.
Scott Combs	Scott used the campus job center in September to secure a job on campus. Otherwise, he used the gym almost daily to work out. He used the tutoring center before major exams. He found his dorm room to be “a bit small.” He ate 1-2 meals per day at school as opposed to 5 at home on the weekends or on breaks. He set a goal of using the library more often second semester to help him with the new, more difficult coursework. His courses were easier first semester so he didn't use the library much at all. By the end of March, he had stopped using SJC services outside the gym and the cafeteria. He reflected in May that he may have had more academic success if he used work out time as a reward for earning good grades. Scott reported that the most significant relationship he established on campus was with the “dean of student life.” The dean would talk with him for an hour, allow him to vent, and help him explore different ways to think about what was going on for him in his daily life. Scott would see the dean twice a month.

Saint Joseph's College: National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Summary

Saint Joseph's College conducts the NSSE every two years. The college conducted the survey for first-year undergraduate students during the 2018 Spring Semester. The following summary reflects the survey's aggregated data and was prepared for Saint Joseph's College on May 18, 2018, and delivered on August 24, 2018. The table below is based on a summary included in the administrator's report delivered to the Registrar at Saint Joseph's College. Forty-

seven percent of SJC FY students at least partially completed the survey. Of those FY students who participated, less than one in four were male. For the sake of context, nearly 40% of the students in the 2017 FY class were male. The following tables (23-27) summarize student responses to individual questions on the NSSE.

Table 23

NSSE Question 1: During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?

Studied when there were other interesting things to do.	46% responded “never or sometimes” 54% responded “often or very often”
Found additional information for course assignments when you didn’t understand the material.	46% responded “never or sometimes” 54% responded “often or very often”
Participated in course discussions, even when you didn’t feel like it.	52% responded “never or sometimes” 48% responded “often or very often”
Asked instructors for help when you struggled with course assignments.	45% responded “never or sometimes” 55% responded “often or very often”
Finished something you have started when you encountered challenges.	31% responded “sometimes” 69% responded “often or very often”
Stayed positive, even when you did poorly on a test or assignment.	34% responded “never or sometimes” 66% responded “often or very often”

Table 24

NSSE Question 2: During the current school year, how difficult have the following been for you?¹

Learning course material.	43% responded 1-3 57% responded 4-6
Managing your time.	54% responded 1-3 46% responded 4-6
Getting help with school work.	73% responded 1-3 27% responded 4-6
Interacting with faculty.	72% responded 1-3 28% responded 4-6

¹(Scaled 1-6, 1=Not at all difficult and 6=Very difficult)

Table 25

NSSE Question 3: During the current school year, about how often have you sought help with coursework from the following sources?

Faculty members	69% responded “never or sometimes” 31% responded “often or very often”
Academic advisors	83% responded “never or sometimes” 17% responded “often or very often”
Learning support services (tutoring, writing center, success coaching, etc.)	83% responded “never or sometimes” 17% responded “often or very often”
Friends or other students	38% responded “never or sometimes” 62% responded “often or very often”
Family members	75% responded “never or sometimes” 25% responded “often or very often”
Other persons or offices	91% responded “never or sometimes” 9% responded “often or very often”

Table 26

NSSE Question 4a: During the current school year, have you seriously considered leaving this institution?

59% responded “yes”

41% responded “no”

Question 4b: [If answered “yes”] Why did you consider leaving? (Select all that apply.)

Financial concerns: 46%
Personal reasons (family issues, physical or mental health, homesickness, stress, etc.): 37%
Campus climate, location, or culture: 34%
Relations with other students: 20%
Academics are too difficult: 11%
Academics are too easy: 9%
Difficulty managing demands of school and work: 9%
Relations with faculty and staff: 9%
Not enough opportunities to socialize and have fun: 7%
Other academic issues (major not offered, course availability, advising, credit transfer, etc.): 4%
To change your career options (transfer to another school or program, military service, etc.): 2%
Too much emphasis on partying: 2%
Unsafe or hostile environment: 2%
A reason not listed above: 22%

Table 27

NSSE Question 5: How important is it to you that you graduate from this institution?

(Scale 1-6, 1=Not important and 6=Very important)

19% responded 1-3

81% responded 4-6

Snapshot of Saint Joseph's College Based on NSSE 2018 Results

When compared with other New England private institutions that participated in the Spring 2018 survey, Saint Joseph's College FY students' average was significantly LOWER in the areas of *Academic Challenge* (e.g. Higher-Order Learning and Reflective & Integrative Learning) and *Learning with Peers* (e.g. Discussions with Diverse Others). There was no statistical difference in any other area of academic engagement.

For tables 28-32, data compare Saint Joseph's College FY students (SJC) to students at other New England private institutions that also participated in the Spring 2018 survey (NE).

Table 28

NSSE: Institution's Level of Academic Challenge

Time Spent Preparing for Class	14.2 hours/week SJC 15.7 hours/week NE
Reading for Courses	6.4 hours/week SJC 7.4 hours/week NE
Writing for Courses	42.8 pages/year SJC 60.6 pages/year NE
Challenging Students to Do Their Best Work	
Highly Challenged	42% SJC 47% NE
Moderately Challenged	57% SJC 51% NE 1% said the challenge was low (vs. 2%).

Table 29

NSSE: Institution's Academic Emphasis

The college puts a great deal of emphasis on studying and academic work.	82% SJC 79% NE
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Table 30

Prevalence on Campus of High-Impact Practices (HIP) as Defined by NSSE

Defined by NSSE as service learning, learning community, and research with faculty.	
FY students participated in one HIP	69% SJC 46% NE
FY students participated in at least two HIP	4% SJC 9% NE

Table 31

Comparison of SJC Students' Experience to the Experience of Students at Similar Institutions Surveyed by NSSE

Relative to other New England private institutions that participated in the Spring 2018 survey, Saint Joseph's College FY students scored higher on the following items:
HIP (number of courses that include service learning)
Quality of interactions with academic advisors
Institution emphasis on providing support for your overall well-being
Institution emphasis on providing opportunities to be involved socially
Talked about career plans with a faculty member
Saint Joseph's College students scored lower on the following items:
Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue
Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information
Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments
Discussion with people of a race or ethnicity other than your own
Included diverse perspectives in course discussions or assignments

Table 32

NSSE: Student Satisfaction with Saint Joseph's College after the First Year

Rating the FYE as "excellent" or "good"	86% SJC 84% NE
"Definitely" or "probably" attend the institution again	83% SJC 81% NE

Summary of Findings**Participant Data**

The participants engaged in the study at a regular, consistent rate throughout their first year of college. The data's specificity and timeliness create thick description that provides a complex and nuanced image of each participant's FYE. Reading the data reveals clear

differences, and many similarities, in the participants' FYEs. There are moments in each participant's profile that enact the transition from high school to college, from home to a new setting, and from one self-perception to another.

Chad realized near the end of his FYE that he had chosen friends because they played baseball with him, and recognized that he was ready for a different group of friends based on deep self-reflection. Kurt learned that he was more socially adept than he had ever thought possible—he surprised himself by forming social bonds soon after arriving at college, assisted by his dorm's milkshake making activity. Gary discovered through a religion course that even though he did not have a close connection to faith, he believed it was necessary as an adult to learn about and respect the faiths of others. Michael admitted mid-year that his academic skills from high school were not sufficient for success in college, and then addressed the problem by seeking help in the tutoring center. Finally, Scott did not recenter to any significant degree, but instead continued to imagine himself at home with his family and his friends. However, Scott determined that he had "a different lifestyle than anyone else" at Saint Joseph's, a lifestyle that prioritized work and home over college success. His realization demonstrates a significant change in his attitude toward college as he expressed it at the start of the year.

The data also present the skills and traits that each participant brought with them to Saint Joseph's College and the ways in which those skills and traits supported their transition, challenged their transition, or developed in response to the transition. Finally, the data present a clear picture of which services at Saint Joseph's College each participant found useful and comforting as they transitioned through the FYE.

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

The 2018 NSSE results indicate that, in the perception of first year students, Saint Joseph's College is not academically rigorous despite the institution's emphasis on studying and performing well on coursework. Students struggle in their first year to succeed academically but persist and seek help. The college has created a social safety net to which students respond positively, although a significant majority consider stopping out or transferring at some point during the FYE. The most common drivers behind the consideration to leave are financial concerns, issues with the campus culture or location, and problems with peers. Despite the doubt many students feel during the first year, by the end of the year, a strong majority of students feel like they would apply to Saint Joseph's again given their experience. A similar majority plan to graduate from Saint Joseph's. Based on the NSSE results, part of the reason for students' optimism may be the strong connection to faculty that many students establish, as well as their confidence that if they ask for assistance, they will receive it. Another reason is the vast opportunities for learning outside the classroom, including service learning and close engagement with professors and their research. There is a significant lack of diversity in terms of race, religion, and ethnicity.

Together, the data present a context for considering the FYE of the study's five male participants. Males comprised less than 40% of the entering class of 2017, which indicates that men begin college at Saint Joseph's as part of a minority. Three of the participants (Chad Brunswick, Kurt Nolan, and Scott Combs) were financially insecure enough to need a job on campus to pay for tuition and fees, placing them in a separate minority. Chapter 6 examines how each participant fits or does not fit into the institutional context, which will lead to a 1) deeper understanding of the FYE for traditional-aged males at a small liberal college in New England;

2) a theory about how the participants recentered; and 3) how their access of services offered at Saint Joseph's College led to their relative success or disappointment.

Chapter 6: Analysis and Theory

Overview

The study so far has established the research problem concerning the troubling attrition rates in American undergraduate programs; reviewed the literature appurtenant to the problem but not quite on point; explained the study design with its emphasis on qualitative interviews and frequent text exchanges; justified the use of grounded theory and case study to analyze the narrative data that emerged; and presented the data in several forms intended to provide both an institutional context and the participants' personal FYEs.

The study's purpose was to use the data as a means of answering the following three research questions:

1. How do college-ready, traditional-aged male students experience the first year of postsecondary education at a small liberal arts college in Maine?
2. How can we understand the first-year experience of college-ready, traditional-aged male students at a small liberal arts college in Maine through the lens of Tanner's theory of recentering?
3. What is the impact of campus support services on the experience of college-ready, traditional-aged male students in their first year at a small liberal arts college in Maine?

This final chapter elucidates a theory grounded in the data and backed by a rigorous, persistent analysis of the data. The study's validity and trustworthiness, established in Chapter 3, support the theory's reasoning and invite conversation about how to move forward in the effort to increase first-year college student retention.

Methodology: Case Study, Narrative Method, and Grounded Theory*Case Study*

Case study functions in two capacities in my research: 1) I treat each of the participants in my study as a discrete case and have compared data to arrive at an understanding of the FYE (RQ 1), and 2) I consider Saint Joseph's College a single case and used data from all five participants to understand the impact of services on the participants' FYE (RQ3).

Narrative Method

By restorying my participants' FYE through the narrative method, I have provided readers with the opportunity to "imagine their own uses and applications" of the theory that emerges from my data (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 42).

Grounded Theory

I decided to use grounded theory for this particular research project because my question, "How do college-ready, traditional-aged, male students experience the first year of postsecondary education at a four-year college or university?", addresses a social process (persisting through the first year of postsecondary education) subjectively experienced by each participant. The theory I have developed will become part of a larger discussion concerning the first-year experience.

Analysis

The displacement of moving from secondary school to post-secondary school is akin to a loss of self. The individual's life is ruptured, and the FYE reveals whether they have the tools necessary to repair the harm and redefine the self in new terms that support the development demanded by life on campus. My analysis of the data collected from all five participants found

that those tools include social resilience; a capacity for self-reflection; a willingness to reset priorities; and a persistent goal that extends beyond the FYE.

Analysis of Data Collected from Scott Combs

I have chosen to analyze most closely data collected from Scott. Of all the participants, he is the outlier based on his decision to withdraw from college and his distinctly different FYE. Scott lacked social resilience; the capacity for self-reflection; a willingness to reset his priorities; and a persistent goal that extended beyond the FYE. He maintained a stable value system, but that was not enough to facilitate the transition from secondary to post-secondary education. I have organized my analysis of his data through responses to the three research questions.

FYE for Scott Combs Colored by a Lack of Social Resilience

Scott, by his own admission, did not prepare for college in any tangible or directed ways. He visited campus a few times because Standish is not far from Exeter, NH. He spent much of his time before enrolling at SJC talking with his grandparents about the financial aspect of attending school. He did not discuss any other parts of attending college in any depth, talking in general terms about the campus's beauty, the small class sizes, and other topics mentioned on the first page of the college's website.

Scott entered college with a complex set of goals and expectations. The combination of disparate and somewhat contradictory goals demonstrates a cognitive dissonance I did not see in the other participants. He chose law as his field but abandoned it when he was waitlisted for a year. He wanted Standish to feel like home, but he left campus every weekend to maintain relationships at home. He wanted to establish a network of peers to access after graduation, but he did not attend parties or other social events after the first few weeks because he was afraid his academics would suffer. He valued the academics at SJC but did not seek assistance from either

faculty or the tutoring center when he did not perform up to his pre-enrollment expectations.

Scott experienced two major losses before starting coursework (e.g. being waitlisted by Suffolk and left off the soccer team after trying out), which set a negative tone for the start of his FYE.

As the year continued, Scott often found reasons for his lack of academic success outside of his control. He blamed his roommate for turning off Scott's alarm, which frequently made Scott late for class. A scheduling conflict forced him to miss thirty minutes of his college writing class because of an overlap with his biology lab. Even so, he enjoyed his college writing class more than any other class first semester. His history professor was from Italy and he had an accent that made it difficult for Scott to focus during lectures. In health, he thought the course would focus on diet and nutrition and was disappointed that instead the curriculum seemed to be centered on stress and anxiety. Also, he was annoyed by the professor's method of getting the students' attention in class by using cymbals whenever she wanted to speak again. However, when it came to homework, he cited his lack of motivation to study and found it difficult to keep up with the work. He found the workload manageable and blamed himself for avoiding work until the last minute and the stress that caused him. He assumed every student at SJC was having the same experience and would feel the pressure when finals came around.

Socially, Scott struggled throughout his FYE. He engaged in three successive romantic relationships, none of which continued when he left SJC in May. He noted the value of social events staged by his dorm and the college, but he attended only a few and then spent the bulk of his time out of class either working out alone or watching screens in his dorm room. He refused to go to parties in favor of maintaining his academic focus, but then admitted to finding it hard to focus on academics and to spending his time "studying" by skimming notes rather than preparing seriously for exams.

Recentering Impacted by Scott's Unwillingness to Reset Priorities and Engage in Self-Reflection

Scott looked for a college that was roughly the same size as his high school, Exeter High School, because he wanted a familiar feel. He applied to only two colleges and the one he chose, SJC, more closely resembles Exeter HS. He applied to Suffolk in hopes of enrolling in the pre-law program that included acceptance to the law school. When he was waitlisted for the pre-law program but not the university, he dropped his interest in law and instead enrolled at SJC to pursue playing soccer with Coach DuBois. He had played soccer all his life and wanted to continue after he left home. He tried out for the team but was not invited to join the roster. He blames the rejection on the fact that the tryouts were moved indoors, and he was not able to show his skills as a defensive player. He also reported that Coach DuBois was looking for offense, not defense, so he was unlikely to have earned a spot regardless of how well he played during tryouts. The rejection caused Scott to hire a personal trainer and work hard on losing weight (Coach had called him “big man” throughout the March tryout session).

Once he arrived at SJC, Scott found comfort in the campus itself. He has always loved the water, so he was happy to be on Sebago Lake. He enjoyed the small bit of nature every time he walked from one class to the next. He likes city life and imagined he would take advantage of Portland (which he underestimates as 10-15 minutes away, when in fact it is at least 30-40 from Standish) regularly as an SJC student. The smaller class size matched the smaller class size at his high school and provided him with a sense of familiarity.

He spent most of his energy maintaining his high school relationships and routines until the last minute before he left for SJC, even though he felt himself drifting from some high school friends midway through the year. Despite spending the summer “saying goodbye to people back home,” he and his friends kept up their SnapChat streaks and planned to spend time together on

weekends and Christmas break even as he tried to settle himself on campus. Through Thanksgiving, his girlfriend from Exeter came to SJC to see him at least once a week, even as he was going home to spend every weekend with her.

Scott texted or spoke by phone with his grandmother and his mother daily when he started at SJC in September 2017. He texted with his mother's boyfriend, who was also Scott's tattoo artist, several times a week. He made no effort to distance himself from any of them. However, he saw his enrollment and his move from home as a way of separating himself from his father, whom he called "negative" and a poor influence on his life. His opinion of his father—that he was unreliable, unable to assist him, and unavailable—did not change during his first year in college. Scott made daily efforts to maintain the feeling of home ("it adds that home aspect to something that's not really home yet") but looked for the opportunity to push his father, who did not help create that feeling of "home" back in Exeter, further away.

Routines changed drastically for Scott and he did not find ways to adjust. At home in Exeter, he would eat five meals a day because he was able to "meal prep." At SJC, he ate only once or twice a day because he did not appreciate the food options in the cafeteria. In high school, he would spend a great deal of time with friends and family after school. His inability or unwillingness to make friends at SJC left him with significant "down time" that he struggled to fill with meaningful activity. Even so, his primary wish for his second semester schedule was Fridays off or at least not night classes so he had more time available to him. He viewed college academically as a "faster repeat" of high school, despite his complaints about scheduling, studying issues, test difficulty, and his inability to focus, only one of which (studying issues) was a significant feature of his academic experience in high school. While he worked steadily in high

school, his work experience at SJC and during his FYE was unstable at best, which left him concerned about spending money and having enough to continue attending college.

Scott's conclusion that SJC did not fit his "life style" indicates that he placed more value on maintaining relationships and activities he associated with Exeter and his time before college than he placed on recentering. The behaviors that led to his decision to continue the college transition process beyond SJC, and beyond traditional college itself, emerged from his inability to stabilize his life socially, academically, and emotionally. His frequent self-contradictory statements and goals suggest he did not define success in college before enrolling. The lack of a clear vision of his own success, either before he arrived on campus or during his FYE, made recentering unlikely.

Recentering is not simply continuing the same skills, routines, or expectations developed in adolescence into emerging adulthood. Scott attempted to do this and failed. He thought if he attended a school close to nature (as he experienced in high school) that was about the size of his high school (Exeter HS with a beautiful campus), with small class sizes (like EHS), and where he could play soccer (as he had done for the majority of his life), he would find comfort and feel at home from the start. Losing soccer and choosing friends from home over making new friends at school left him with little comfort and no sense of a new home. His narrow concept of success (e.g. playing soccer and/or baseball, continuing his academic performance from high school, and some amorphous sense of having new friends) left him little room to re-center.

Scott's Refusal to Strategically Access Services Hurt His Ability to Reset Goals Beyond the FYE

While Scott believed that "[making connections with people] would've helped [him] academically as well as socially, and feel[] more confident and comfortable at the campus," he made little effort after the first few weeks of his FYE to connect with his peers. He never found a

group of students he felt comfortable studying with or relying on for academic support. Even if he had made more friends, he was convinced (after making the decision to transfer) that he would have transferred because the “ties back home” are “so strong,” “too strong to leave and push behind.” Scott’s biggest resource on campus was the Dean of Student Life, who would meet with him every other week or so, share some tea, and talk about life. However, Scott did not feel close to the professors in the Exercise Science department and would not have considered spending time with any of them outside of class.

When he first considered transferring, Scott was frustrated with the lack of communication from a particular professor, and he noticed that he was spending a lot of time in his room, he had not found a group of friends, and he wasn’t “academically involved”; he had stayed on campus for exactly one weekend first semester, in part because he didn’t like to party and he felt like that was what most students were doing on the weekends. He did not discuss his decision to leave SJC with anyone on campus or at home, not even his grandparents. Scott did not seek support from the counseling department, the tutoring center, or his dorm Resident Assistant, despite the obvious signs of his withdrawal and the potential for depression or anxiety. He spent the majority of his time at the gym and the few meals he accessed at the cafeteria alone. His choice to keep his experience and his plan to transfer secret indicates an unwillingness to expose his decision to questioning and possible diversion. In Scott’s case, it is difficult to assess the impact of the services at SJC on his FYE because he did not access the services that may have had the greatest positive impact on his transition.

Comparison to the Other Four Cases

Scott’s approach to his first two weeks at SJC differed from the approaches of the other four participants. While three of the other four (Michael, Kurt, and Gary) liberally availed

themselves of services offered by SJC to help them manage the transition (e.g. the counseling office and the medical center), Scott made plans with friends from high school to see each other on weekends and breaks. Scott did not use any services at SJC beyond the cafeteria, the gym, and one visit to the job center. He spent most of his time outside of the classroom engaged in activities that he had enjoyed in high school. He reported that he “spen[t] more time in [his] room playing video games or watching Netflix due to the amount of free time [he had].” He considered this use of his time “positive because [he couldn’t] think of how it's negative.” By his own admission, he “didn't go out to a bunch of the game nights and trivia nights, and I didn't really participate in a lot of extracurriculars.” His goal at his new school was to “try and be more involved. [He] would definitely like to focus more on getting to know people rather than just staying in [his] room alone.” Unlike the other four participants, Scott did not make an effort to adjust his self-perception or his connections to home to accommodate the social and academic demands of the FYE.

Michael and Gary recentered in more productive ways. They adjusted and made allowances for the change in conditions (e.g. new people, new academic expectations, new routines, reduced ability to communicate with family and friends, more financial obligations, more free time and the independence to choose how to spend it) rather than looking for a close match to their high school experiences. Halfway through his FYE, Michael said, “I have learned to be somewhat independent. I have learned that I am a grown man and this is the real world. I think I’ve become a stronger person physically, mentally, and emotionally. My social skills have definitely transferred from high school to college as I am a people person and like to be social.” Gary had a similar self-realization by May: “With the set plan of the courses I need to take along with a great academic advisor who is helping every step of the way, I feel returning to SJC for

classes in the fall makes the most sense for me. In addition, I have made great friends being here along with having a good time playing baseball here. I have noticed that the amount of friends from high school I talk to has decreased.” Both of them brought with them to college an openness to other people, an honest understanding of and confidence in their academic ability, and an extended set of family connections that bent with the wind rather than broke when Michael and Gary left the nest.

Likewise, Kurt recognized the need for adjustment when he enrolled and surprised himself with his ability to build on social skills he had developed in high school. After the first two weeks of his FYE, Kurt admitted that “adjusting to a new environment geographically and new social expectations [was very difficult]. [He] had a lot of emotional peaks and valleys...[and] alternated between depression and excitement quickly and often.” By the middle of the year, however, he noted that he had used the social skills he learned in high school (e.g. blending into social situations, maintaining eye contact, and paying attention to a speaker) to adapt to college more smoothly. First semester, he “[got better at] [i]nitiating conversations, keeping them going, [and] establishing social connections.” He also transferred academic skills such as organization, time management, and taking good notes to SJC from high school. By May, he had surprised himself: “I went from having no social life to knowing everybody and knowing all their names, how I know them, what they're doing, what their major is. [I was] forced into it, kind of. There's no real way to be a hermit here. You can't ... [because] [t]he student body size is so small. It's like a small town. You can't help but know people.” Kurt was able to successfully recenter despite the fact that he “expected [adapting to college] to be a much greater challenge, especially given [his] autism and struggles with anxiety.”

While Chad and Michael changed their orientation to their families while maintaining a strong connection, Scott persisted with the same sort of conversations and communications with his grandmother and mother that he had experienced in high school. He simultaneously took the opportunity to justify pushing his father farther away from him. By the end of the FYE, the conversations between Chad, Kurt, Gary, and Michael and their parents had shifted in tone and topic. Scott's conversations with his grandmother and mother had not changed. In addition, Scott did not discuss his decision to transfer with his family before applying to the University of New Hampshire. His decision is curious given how often he spoke with his grandparents and his mother and made a concerted effort to maintain his relationships with them.

Scott's experience with loss and instability throughout his life predicted his decision to transfer from SJC at an early point in his first year. His stated goal of maintaining connections, often daily, to friends and family from back home reflected his determination not to suffer additional loss, which interrupted any attempts to find new friends or establish a new presence in a different place. In May, he observed that he had "just isolated [him]self and focused on heading back home to work every weekend, and that was about it. [T]here was only one weekend [he] stayed on campus throughout the entire semester." He returned home to continue his college career as a matter of course. In some ways, he never left home, or, at least, could not break free of the emotional and intellectual "feeling" of home that he had created for himself to combat the sense of loss, betrayal, and difference he felt stemming from his atypical home environment. He characterized his decision to return home as almost inevitable: "I feel like, as much as the campus facilities are nice, and everyone on campus is really quite amazing, I feel like the area and location that I'm in back in New Hampshire has just too many vast opportunities still alive to pass up on. [For example, campus is a] [t]en minute drive from home. Very close."

Theory Derived from Analysis of the Case Studies

Data analysis presented a number of questions, including:

1. Was Scott unable or unwilling to shift his perception of his “self,” while the other four participants acknowledged the need to change and grow?
2. Were the other participants able to locate themselves within the SJC community because they reshaped their opinion of themselves to fit the spaces provided by their new environment?
3. Was Scott always a square peg looking for a square hole, and did he find that hole by starting work for a local company and taking classes online?

Thinking through these questions after multiple reviews, revisions, and restatements of the data led to a theory of the FYE grounded in the lived experiences of my five participants. However, before enunciating the theory that has emerged from the current study, I want to make clear some of the assumptions about theory that I have made and maintained over the last several years of research. Social theory, the umbrella under which I am thinking and writing, “provides thick description of social experiences, often elucidating the mechanisms to be included subsequently in sociological theories as they document social life in particular, ultimately leading to the refinement of sociological theory” (Davis, 2017, p. 2). The contribution to sociological thought more generally is positive and does not require striking or questioning existing theory. I agree with Risman (2004) that “[t]heory building that depends on theory slaying presumes parsimony is always desirable, as if this complicated world of ours were best described with simplistic monocausal explanations. While parsimony and theory testing were the model for the twentieth-century science, a more postmodern science should attempt to find

complicated and integrative theories” (p. 434). I perceive the development of theory as adding a voice to the conversation in the field rather than calling for the podium on a stage.

Based on my perception of theory-making and -sharing, I believe that “[a] theory states relationships between abstract concepts and may aim for either explanation or understanding” (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2012 p. 41). At its root, “theory is the articulated vision of experience” (Laing, 1967, p. 8) rather than an abstracted or generalized restatement of experience. Even so, the most productive role of theory is not to “inform us about what exactly to do, but [instead to] provide us with ways to make decisions and to think about how to interpret individuals, environments, and organizations” (Jones & Abes, 2011, p. 161). Taking the practical nature of theory a step further, “[i]n the world of action, what matters are not our theories per se, but how they help institutions address pressing practical issues of persistence” (Tinto, 2006, p. 6). In the tradition of Tinto (1975), “this paper attempts to formulate a theoretical model that explains the processes of interaction between the individual and the institution that lead differing individuals to drop out from institutions of higher education” (p. 90).

Analysis

In keeping with the rigor of grounded theory, data analysis consisted of multiple reviews over time of each participant’s responses to questions in the interviews, the survey, and the texts. Once the themes emerged through my use of NVivo, I re-evaluated the data by creating narrative profiles to provide the depth and breadth necessary to see patterns in each participant’s FYE and across the five cases. Several topics emerged from the last level of data analysis, including shifts in participant’s self-perception; identity formation and development; the degree to which each participant associated his performance with his masculine identity; the shift from assimilation to accommodation, at different levels of accomplishment for each participant; and the role of socio-

emotional skills or growth in transitioning to college. Each of these topics contributed to the formulation of a theory of the FYE.

My analysis of a year's worth of data collected from five very different first-year male students at Saint Joseph's College of Maine led me to conclude that the lack of a clear vision of what constitutes "success" in the FYE had the greatest impact on Scott and his decision to withdraw completely from the residential college experience. The vision of success is linked to identity formation, characterized by the ability to assimilate and then accommodate new experiences and perceptions into a personal value system and a set of vocational goals (cf Chapter 2, p. 11), and the sense of security necessary to work through challenges.

It was clear by semester break that not all five participants were experiencing their first year in the same way. Scott was on the edge of stopping out or transferring while the others reported a string of positive experiences both socially and academically that created a scaffold to their second year. Each of them, with the exception of Scott, was attempting to fit the mold of what they perceive as a successful student. Scott's academic performance ebbed and flowed rather than progressing, sometimes for reasons he admitted were under his control (e.g. studying effectively) and other times for reasons he saw as outside of his control (e.g. not understanding the material because of a professor's accent).

Three of the participants defined their experience in part by their success in areas they associated closely with their masculine identity. Chad viewed his first year through the lens of baseball and his athletic prowess, his ability to exceed expectations in the coach's eyes and to surpass the performance of older students. The most significant event in his first semester "was getting personal bests in the baseball workouts." In contrast, Michael was frustrated by his lack of playing time in both basketball and baseball. Unlike Chad, who saw success as a first-year

player as validation for his time at SJC, Michael projected his participation into his third year, when he imagined that he would contribute more significantly because he had grown more skillful and older players had graduated. While his first year was fun, he predicted that “it will be so much more fun next year and especially the year after that when [he became] a junior. So [he] want[ed] to step up [his] game as much as [he could].” Michael was engaged in the process of identity consolidation by envisioning himself at a future time in the life span (cf Chapter 2, p. 11). His capacity for persistence and setting a long-term goal distinguishes Michael from Scott, who identified himself closely with other elements of masculinity (e.g. providing for a girlfriend and protecting his mother and grandmother) but did not set clear goals to guide his behavior with specific goals in mind. Scott was not ready to engage in identity consolidation, unlike Michael, because his vision of his future remained radically unstable. Scott was unable to devise a plan for his future that persisted more than a few months.

This line of thought led me back to Kegan (1982). His review of Piaget’s notion of object relations in infancy struck me as similar to the first-year experience for college students. In both cases, individuals differentiate themselves from other entities and are forced to move from assimilation (making room for other objects in their own organization of the world, i.e. high school and home) to accommodation (changing their organization of the world to account for other objects, such as a new college environment, people, routines, etc.) (Kegan, 1982, pp. 43-44). Kegan’s extension beyond infancy of Piaget’s theory of equilibration, shifting subject to object once the individual recognizes itself as separate from a stage of development (Kegan, 1982, p. 40), supports the conclusion that clearly envisioning “success” in the FYE (subject, or structure) and bending one’s behavior and perception toward that vision (object, or content) leads to a more positive FYE overall.

Based on my review of the literature and analysis of the study's data, I concluded that emerging adult identity forms as the individual encounters new experiences. Growth results from these encounters, although for some individuals, past experiences and associations provide a bulwark against true change. The ability to assimilate new experiences and react in positive ways to a change in conditions (whether physical, mental, intellectual, socioemotional, or spiritual) depends for its strength on the level of security the individual feels. Security can be defined short of self-actualization but includes the sense that the self (as perceived at the moment) will survive new encounters.

Putting the concepts together led me to conclude that development is characterized by individuals taking a new experience and fitting it to their current perception of the self. This process is connected to the level of an individual's socio-emotional skills. If the experience allows the individual to retain security, then the individual assimilates the experience and alters (usually slightly, sometimes significantly) self-perception. Shutting down avenues to particular kinds of experiences reflects a fear that the self will be altered in irreversible and negative ways. By the end of his FYE, Scott did not achieve the level of self-management (c.f. Chapter 2, p. 12) necessary to feel secure away from home and at SJC. He did not reflect deeply enough on his experience to reach the level of self-awareness (c.f. Chapter 2, p. 12) that would have enabled him to define for himself what success meant, and therefore did not greet new experiences as opportunities to achieve success. Chad's FYE was also characterized by instability and a lack of focus, but he entered SJC with the clear definition of success as performing well on the baseball team and, by extension, working hard enough in his classes so he could earn high enough grades to proceed to his second year.

As an aside, while the literature concerning the college transition emphasizes the impact of mentoring on the FYE, mentoring did not have a discernible impact on the FYE of these five students. Scott visited with the Dean of Campus Life regularly and considered him someone Scott could talk to about himself, but the relationship did not change Scott's view of SJC or his experience. Kurt respected and admired his advisor, who was also the chair of the social work department, but Kurt's success is connected to his self-image as a scholar and mentor to other students. Chad was grateful to his baseball coach and the opportunities his coach provided for him as a young player, but Chad also believed that his athletic skill entering college was the foundation for his success. Chad considered baseball, not specifically the coach, as a reason to remain at SJC. The other two participants, Gary and Michael, did not identify an individual at SJC who would qualify as a mentor. However, both Gary and Michael made significant growth throughout the year despite the absence.

Implications and Recommendations

The five traditional-aged, college-ready, male students who shared their first-year experience with me in such detail and with such openness helped me see patterns in the kaleidoscope. The transition to college was eased for the young men who demonstrated social resilience, reflected thoughtfully on who they were becoming, reconsidered their priorities as they encountered new demands on their time and energy, and set goals that extended beyond the FYE and defined future success. The theory has implications for campus organizations seeking to provide interventions during the FY in order to increase retention.

Four campus organizations at Saint Joseph's College were explored in the study to provide an institutional context for data analysis: Campus Life, the counseling center, the library, and the registrar's office. A fifth organization, the Student Success Center, was implicated

through my association with its director, who sponsored my research. Campus Life and the counseling center staff may benefit from my conclusions in their effort to program events and educate the student body about transitioning successfully. In particular, I recommend the counseling center create literature and presentations that help all students (but with a focus on first-years) recognize the significance of self-reflection and social resilience in forming new connections and recentering on campus. Campus Life is ideally suited to supporting students in setting goals that extend beyond final exams and passing classes. I recommend the library reach out to first-year students to support their efforts to connect fields of study to fulfilling lives outside the classroom. Sessions can be held in classrooms with the professor's assistance or in the library for interested students. The library's work will help students set goals, reflect on their priorities, and make connections to peers and staff.

First-year students who struggle with identifying who they are and who they can become through the college experience are the true beneficiaries of this theory. Students who receive support in the four areas covered by the theory may find the transition more manageable and therefore persist to a second year and hopefully graduation.

Further Research Prompted by the Theory

A long series of questions arose from the data collected through my study. Many of them are abstract and looking for definition in order to begin the conversation. Some of the questions that emerged from the data and analysis concerning identity and self-perception include:

1. Do emerging adults look for their own niches in society or the community as a way of extending their knowledge of the self?
2. Do adults anticipate an endpoint to development that will help them finally know "who they really are"?

3. Do traditional-aged college students attempt to find their role in their new “home” vis-à-vis the other individuals around them?
4. Do traditional-aged college students purposely hold back physically, emotionally, intellectually, politically as a way of defining new relationships at a level that preserves what they have determined to be their “best selves”?
5. Are there experiences in childhood that open emerging adults to clearer visions of themselves succeeding in college, and are there experiences that make it less likely they will clarify that vision?

Answering these questions will contribute to the conversation concerning the FYE for traditional-aged college students, regardless of gender identification, socio-economic status, family structure, or other descriptive characteristic. Further research responding to these questions will also help fill the gap in FYE and transition literature identified in Chapter 1 (p.). There is a need for research that measures the adaptation of traditional 18-19-year-old first-year college students who come from a successful career in secondary school but fail to maintain a similar performance at the college level.

The stop out rate for college students who leave without completing a degree has risen steadily in the last twenty years. In 2002, more than half of two-year college students and one-fourth of four-year students left without earning a degree (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2006). That rate has increased to 40% of undergraduates who do not earn a degree in six years (Velez, 2014). The descriptive data show that most college stop-outs have considerably lower high school achievement than college completers. There is a gap, however, in the study of students who show high academic performance in secondary school and stop out or otherwise leave their institution in the first year. Research concerning the particularized FYE will reveal the needs of this

population, assist both school districts and postsecondary institutions in their transition planning and programs, and provide foundations and other nonprofits with data and direction as they set funding priorities in their efforts to increase college retention and graduation rate.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Materials

Research Study Flier (August 2017)

Research Study! Call for Participants

For First-Year St. Joe's Students ONLY

Saint Joseph's has invited a researcher from Lesley University to work with up to 15 students like you as part of a study of the first-year collegiate experience.

Goal: learn how male students feel about the transition to higher education.

Plan: find ways to help both high schools and colleges provide the support these students need to succeed, especially in the first year.

Researcher: Patrick Flynn, Lesley University PhD candidate, Gorham resident

Your Job: meet for a few short interviews, text with Patrick 3-4 times a week.

Your Reward: monthly drawing for a gift card and the chance to do some good in the world!

Questions? Interested? Email Patrick at pflynn@lesley.edu or call him at 847-361-3564 by **October 24, 2017**.

Research Study Recruitment Email (August 2017)

Dear Students—Welcome to St. Joseph's College! St. Joe's has invited a researcher from Lesley University to work with up to 25 students like you as part of a study of the first-year experience.

The study's goal is to learn how male students feel about the transition to higher education. Eventually, the plan is to find ways to help both high schools and colleges provide the support these students need to succeed, especially in the first year.

Students who participate in the study will meet the researcher, Patrick Flynn, and sit for one interview in September and another in May. In between, the researcher will ask each participant to respond quickly to a short prompt each day (something like "How has your day gone?" or "What was the best part of the day?") through text or social media. Names and identities will be confidential for the entire study—no one but the researcher will know who is participating.

As an incentive to continue participating, each student who remains in the study will be entered into a drawing for a gift card every month. Even if you've won once, you'll still be eligible for every drawing. The overall benefit, however, will be your contribution to programs designed to help students succeed in college.

Once selected for the study, participants will meet with Patrick on Wednesday, Aug. 30, at 6:30 pm. (Location TBD), and learn more about this unusual opportunity.

If you are interested in being part of this study, please reply directly to the researcher, Patrick Flynn, at pflynn@lesley.edu. You can also reach him by phone or text at 847-361-3564. If you have questions, please contact Patrick or Dr. Lynn Brown, Senior Director for Student Success Initiatives, at lbrown@sjcme.edu.

Participant Consent Letter

August 30, 2017

To:

Re: Consent to Interview and Participate in Patrick Flynn's Research Study

Dear _____ :

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. As we discussed, I am interviewing traditional-aged male students at St. Joseph's College. My goal is to understand the factors that contribute to both positive and negative experiences in these students' first year of college. I will use data collected through the interviews in an attempt to find common themes and identify similar experiences. You will also be communicating with me through social media several times a week throughout the academic year.

At all times during the process, your identity will remain confidential. I will not share information about you that can be traced to you directly. I will use your responses as part of my data analysis and to inform the conclusions I reach, but I will not use your name in any document prepared for review by other people. Data will be stored on a password-protected laptop and/or in a locked file cabinet. I will be the only person who has access to the laptop and the file cabinet.

Your participation is voluntary and you may stop participating at any time during the study. There will be no consequences should you decide to stop participating before the study ends in May, 2018. At no point, during or after your participation in the study, will I share any raw data with anyone else.

If you have questions or concerns about the research at any time during the study, you have the right to contact my supervisors:

Dr. Marion Young, Chair
Institutional Review Board
St. Joseph's College
278 Whites Bridge Rd,
Standish, ME 04084
207-893-7566
myoung@sjcme.edu

Dr. Amy Rutstein-Riley, Associate Professor
Lead Researcher/Dissertation Committee Chair
Lesley University
29 Everett Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
617-868-9600

There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning this research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Lesley Committee Co-Chairs Drs. Terry Keeney or Robyn Cruz (irb@lesley.edu) at Lesley University, 29 Everett Street, Cambridge Massachusetts, 02138.

You may also contact me at any point to discuss the study, your participation, or concerns you have as a result of your participation:

Patrick Flynn
Poland Regional High School
1457 Maine Street
Poland, ME 04274
847-361-3564

Please sign below if you agree to these terms and consent to my collection, recording, analysis of, and use of the data you provide through the interviews and social media communication.

Regards,

Patrick Flynn
Lesley University
PhD Program, Adult Learning and Development

I, (participant's name), consent to Patrick Flynn's interviews and social media data collection according to the terms listed above.

Date of Birth: _____

Appendix B

Participant Interview Materials

Initial Semi-Structured Interview Questions (September 2017)

1. What kinds of things did you do as a high school senior to get ready for college?
2. What were the reasons you decided to come to St. Joseph's College?
3. When you and your parents talked about coming to St. Joseph's, what did you talk about the most?
4. How would you describe your communication with family and high school friends?
5. Describe your experience here at college so far, both socially and academically.

Second Semester Interview Questions (January 2018)

Clarifying questions asked after participants responded in writing to the survey (see Appendix C, below).

Final Semi-Structured Interview Questions (May 2018)

1. How are exams going? How are they different from first semester?
2. Think about your first year of college. What has gone the way you thought it would?
What has been different than you imagined?
3. Are there steps you wish you had taken in high school that you think might have made the transition to college easier?
4. When you think about the summer and next school year, what do you think about?
5. What will your living arrangements be next fall? How did you make the decision where to live and with whom?
6. What are two or three parts of the first-year college experience you would like to change?
How would you change them? [For transfer only: If they were more the way you'd like them, would that have been enough to convince you to stay at St. Joe's?]

7. Think back to the steps you took to get ready for college. Think also about the transition services St. Joe's provided. Which do you think helped you make it to May? What kinds of services or experiences would you like to have seen more of?
8. Do you feel like you developed a group of peers who supported you academically this year? If so, how did you find those peers? At what point in the year did you begin to feel you could rely on them?
9. How would you describe your substance use this year? Tobacco? Alcohol? Pot? Any other substances?
10. What academic department are you in? Did you feel welcomed by your major/minor department? How well do you know professors in the department? How would you describe the communication between your department and its students?
11. What are some questions (about being a student at St. Joe's?) that you've had over the course of the year that you believe incoming first-year students may also have? What answers (if any) can you provide?
12. Any questions you think I should have asked that I didn't?

For student transferring:

13. What was happening here at college when you first began to think about transferring?
14. Did you talk with your family before deciding to transfer? What did you talk about?
15. What convinced you to transfer?
16. What attracted you to the University of New Hampshire?
17. How will you approach your first year at UNH? How does this differ from the way you approached your first year at St. Joe's?

Appendix C

Participant Survey Instrument (January 2018). Short answer, written responses followed by clarifying interview questions.

1. What have you learned about yourself in your first semester?
2. What social or academic skills did you have in high school that you used in college?
3. What new social or academic skills did you develop first semester?
4. Compare your connection to your friends and family before you started at St. Joe's to now. What's the same?

What's different?

5. What college routines have you established so far?

Are these routines healthy or harmful for you?

6. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being unlikely and 5 being absolutely, how confident are you that you will return to St. Joe's in the fall?

Graduate from St. Joe's?

7. Do you plan to continue the program you have started at St. Joe's?

If not, what other program(s) would you consider?

8. What resources have you found most helpful this semester?

Are there resources you have not used that you expect to use second semester?

9. How would you describe your emotional state as you enter second semester?

What events or conditions have had the greatest impact on your emotional state?

Appendix D**Saint Joseph's College Administrators and Staff Interview Materials***Dean of Campus Life (April 10, 2018)*

1. Describe a first-year student's interactions with Campus Life.
2. What role do you see your office playing in supporting the successful transition from high school to college?
3. How does the Campus Life office impact the culture of St. Joseph's College?
4. How has Campus Life changed over the last ten years? Are there changes planned for the near future?

Librarians (April 6, 2018)

1. Describe a first-year student's interactions with the library.
2. What role do you see the library playing in supporting the successful transition from high school to college?
3. How does the library impact the culture of St. Joseph's College?
4. How has the library's operation changed over the last ten years? Are there changes planned for the near future?

Director of Counseling Services (April 12, 2018)

1. Describe a first-year student's interactions with the counseling center.
2. What role do you see your office playing in supporting the successful transition from high school to college?
3. How does the counseling center impact the culture of St. Joseph's College?
4. How has the operation of the counseling center changed over the last ten years? Are there changes planned for the near future?

Registrar (April 4, 2018)

1. Describe a first-year student's interactions with the registrar's office.
2. What role do you see your office playing in supporting the successful transition from high school to college?

3. How does the registrar's office impact the culture of St. Joseph's College?
4. How has the registrar's office changed over the last ten years? Are there changes planned for the near future?