

**University Image: Reality and Perception
From the Student's Perspective**

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**University Image: Reality and Perception
From the Student's Perspective**

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INTRODUCTION

In striving to be successful, every institution is concerned with portraying itself in a positive way. More specifically, within the market of higher education, university image is becoming increasingly important. And while quantifiable measures such as standardized test scores and research publications are valuable methods of assessing institutional prestige, a more student-focused approach can provide details that might otherwise be overlooked. As universities struggle to be competitive, it is necessary to evaluate them through the eyes of their main client: the student.

In an effort to understand the student's perspective on university image, I conducted a study of how the images of two universities differ, how realistic the images are, and how students' individual perceptions of institutional image are influenced by specific factors such as self-concept. I administered surveys to samples of students from two large state universities in Texas. The two schools lie in neighboring cities; one is a top tier school (hereafter referred to as Top State University or TSU) and the other strives to become one (hereafter referred to as General State University or GSU). The survey asked the students about their study habits, recreational activities, reasons for choosing to attend their university, and perceptions about the academic and party images of the two universities. In analyzing the survey data, I sought to answer the following research questions. **1** How do the perceptions of the images of GSU and TSU differ among the students from both schools? **2** How do the academic and social activities of the students at each school differ? **3** What factors influence the students' perceptions about both universities?

In addition to the surveys, I also conducted interviews with four seniors at General State University (GSU) with the goal of examining student perceptions of university image in more detail through the use of qualitative data. I sought in-depth answers to the aforementioned research questions, and used the analysis from this process to inform the quantitative findings of the surveys. Often, quantitative findings can seem impersonal and thus fail to stay connected

with the people they seek to explain. Therefore, I supplemented my quantitative research with the personal perspectives of four students in order to enliven the study and bridge the gap between the results and the respondents.

In the following section I summarize some of the previous studies that are relevant to the topic in order to provide a basis for my research. In the methods section I discuss the details of both methods. In the findings section I discuss the answers to my research questions. I begin with an analysis of my quantitative data, which addresses each research question separately. I then expand upon those findings with a discussion of the qualitative results of the four interviews. After the findings section, I reflect on how my own experiences and motivations may have influenced my approach to this topic. Finally, I conclude with a summary of my findings and their implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sociologists have produced very little research on the topic of university image from the perspective of students. Over the past twenty years, many studies have instead explored the related topic of factors that influence student satisfaction. For example, Bean and Bradley (1986) researched the relationship between student satisfaction and academic performance (GPA). Their findings indicate that the relationship is only significant among women and that “the effect of satisfaction on GPA was nearly twice the size of the effect of GPA on satisfaction” (p. 408). Later, Pike (1993) examined the relationship between self-perceived learning and student satisfaction and found that while a significant positive relationship does exist between the two, it is best explained as the product of a halo effect rather than as a true causal relationship.

Many other studies measure various factors related to student satisfaction including student congruence with faculty educational views (Morstain 1977), major choice (Santhanam and Hicks 2002; Hearn 1980), gender (Fernandez and Mateo 1997), and academic confidence (House 1993). Also, some valuable books have emerged over the last few decades that shed light

on the multitude of factors that influence student performance, and in turn satisfaction, by summarizing years of research on the topic. These books include Astin's *What Matters in College* (1993), Pascarella and Terenzini's *How College Affects Students* (1991), and Feldmen and Newcomb's *The Impact of College on Students* (1969).

In order for educators to make better use of the studies that deal with the different factors of student satisfaction, there is a need for universities to be aware of the interplay of a multitude of influences on student attitudes and how this contributes to the desirability of attending a specific institution. However, there is a deficiency of studies that specifically examine institutional image from the perspective of the student. One exception attempted to address this issue by developing a model to assess the image of a specific university (Terkla and Pagano 1993). The model used a set of over twenty-five indicators to measure the overall existing image and compared it to the desired image that had been laid out by faculty. The study acknowledged the importance of student perceptions in calculating the success of an institution by evaluating the input of faculty, accepted applicants, current students, graduating seniors, and alumni as separate constituencies. They found that the overall perceived image tended to parallel the desired image in such a way that the differences were mainly issues of magnitude. That is, "the desired image tends toward extremes" (p. 14). An evaluation of constituent differences indicated that incoming freshmen perceptions of university image were farthest from other constituents and tended to be more positive than the perceptions of other groups.

Efforts to explain the myriad of factors that shape a student's satisfaction with his or her university have led to some interesting theories, and one of the most tested debates stems from social psychology. The issue is how people respond to social feedback that either confirms or contradicts the way they define themselves, and the argument is between self-verification and self-enhancement theory. While the theories are traditionally presented in a psychological forum, many sociologists make use of them because of their similarity to the sociological theories of self-fulfilling prophecy and presentation of self.

In relation to student satisfaction, self-presentation strategies mediate how students interpret their academic experience. Self-enhancement theory predicts that students present themselves in a way they think will solicit positive feedback, and that they are more likely to perceive negative feedback as invalid. Therefore, this strategy would cause students to ignore or deemphasize bad grades or other aspects of their school experience that might reflect badly on them. Self-verification theory would claim that students present themselves in a way that verifies their current self-concept, regardless of whether they view themselves positively or negatively. So, this strategy would cause students to emphasize the aspects of their school experience that reflect the type of person they think they are: hard-working, intelligent, a party animal, etc. These theories are important to the topic of student perceptions of university image because the image of an institution reflects upon the image of its members. Students know this, and their desire to either verify or enhance their self-concept may cause them to view their university in a light that allows them to achieve that goal.

Swann (1987) tested both theories extensively and concluded that reality lies in a combination of the two theories. He referred to this combination as identity negotiation, and his findings demonstrate the importance of both self-verification and self-enhancement in explaining human reactions. So within this context, student perceptions would be influenced by aspects of their university's image that either enhance or verify their self-concept. Swann claimed, though, that when people are placed in a position that forces them to choose between verification and enhancement, they almost always choose to verify their current self-image. For example, if students view themselves negatively, then they will more likely accept negative perceptions of their school.

Conversely, in a more recent study, Woo and Frank (2000) critique the unrealistic lab methods commonly used to support self-verification theory. They argue that scientists fabricate performance tests and feedback that are irrelevant to their subjects' lives in order to evaluate people's reactions. The authors tested the opposing theories by studying how GPA and self-

esteem influence student perceptions of grade validity. They found that “regardless of their self-esteem levels, the students with higher GPAs, compared with those with lower GPAs, tended to see the overall GPA as a more valid indicator of academic ability” (p. 218). Their findings support the weak form of self-enhancement theory, which states that positive feedback will be accepted as more valid than negative feedback, no matter what level of self-esteem a person possesses.

Following suit with studies on the influence of self-concept, a few researchers have taken a deeper look at the role of some other individual character traits in determining how students will judge their university. For example, one study explores how socialization tactics and academic achievement mediate the link between students’ motives to study and their academic satisfaction (Bogler and Somech 2002). The authors use a typology to explain how a students’ motives to study (why they are attending college) and their socialization tactics (study strategies) are usually related in such a way that they are both either scholastic (academically or intellectually driven), instrumental (driven by career goals or utility), or collegiate (driven by social aspirations). In the study, socialization tactics are related to academic success, and success is related to academic satisfaction. And while they claim no proof of causal order, they found a significant relationship between motives to study and academic satisfaction in which “scholastic socialization was more significant in affecting students’ academic achievement and satisfaction” (p. 244).

Another study related to students’ motives to study examines the perceptions of students in regard to taking responsibility for their own learning and then associates those perceptions with students’ conceptions of learning (Delvin 2002). Results indicate that while students hold themselves partially or mostly responsible for their learning, the level of complexity by which students define learning is low and of a quantitative orientation. That is to say, students think of learning as a numbers game in which it’s all about how many facts you can regurgitate, rather than as a way to apply their knowledge. Delvin reveals the importance of this finding by explaining that “taking personal responsibility for learning that is understood by the learner to be

an accumulation and repetition of facts will mean something quite different from taking responsibility for learning conceptualized by the learner as deep understanding that leads to personal growth” (p. 127).

In addition to motivations and self-concept, personality itself can influence academic success and satisfaction. The field of psychology has established many models to categorize personality types, and sociologists have used those models to relate identity formation tactics to social interaction and human agency. Socialization is only successful when people accept social norms and incorporate them into their personal value systems. The extent to which people do this and the strategies they use to maintain their individual identities was defined as “identity processing styles” by a recent study that investigated how a student’s identity processing style influences his or her academic success (Boyd et al. 2003). Because these personality types are related to maintaining identity, they could impact how students perceive the images of their universities in a manner similar to the impact of self-conception strategies.

Boyd and her colleagues (2003) used the Identity Styles Inventory to categorize students into the following three identity processing styles. Information-oriented people “seek and are open to personally relevant ideas and feedback, have good problem solving skills, and test and revise aspects of their identity” (p. 156). Normative-oriented people “adopt without exploration the values, ideas, and ideologies of significant others, and hence tend to be closed to information that may threaten adopted values and belief systems” (p. 156). And diffuse-oriented people are “positively correlated with emotion-focused, avoidant coping behaviors, and negatively correlated with introspection” (p. 156). The authors found that the three identity processing styles are more or less equally distributed among students, but that women are slightly more likely to be information-oriented and men are slightly more likely to be diffuse-oriented. They also found that African Americans and Hispanics are more likely to be normative-oriented and Asian American women are more likely to be diffuse-oriented. While findings indicate that identity processing styles do not significantly impact academic success in women, they show that men

with diffuse-oriented styles are less likely to succeed academically. In addition, they found that normative-oriented men are least likely to change their majors while diffuse-oriented men are most likely to change their majors. These findings are of interest because, as with self-concept, identity processing styles might influence how students react to the public images of their universities and incorporate them into their personal views.

In summary, research related to student success and satisfaction with their educational institutions is diverse. Most research has focused on the factors that influence either academic success or academic satisfaction. There is very little research that examines students' perceptions of university image, and only recently have there been studies that give due consideration to the importance of the personal characteristics of students, such as self-concept and personality styles, in the evaluation of educational quality. Therefore, my research on student views of university image attempts to fill that gap in the literature. This study sheds new light on student perceptions of educational institutions by asking students about their experiences in relation to university image. The data answer questions about how university image differs between two schools, how those images are based in actual student activity, and how the individual traits of the students influence how they view the universities.

METHODS

The data for the quantitative portion of this study came from 364 surveys given to students at two large state universities in Texas (GSU and TSU). The samples of students that represent each school are purposive samples rather than random due to a lack of time and resources. In order to ensure the most representative selection of students from each university, I administered the survey in core classes at each school. I surveyed the students in three beginning history classes at GSU and in two beginning government classes at TSU.¹

The survey was designed to help me assess how students perceive GSU and TSU and then compare those perceptions to the actual activities of the students (see Appendix A). The

questions comprised three sections. The first section contained general information about the respondent: sex, age, classification, GPA, course load, and why they chose their respective schools. The second section asked respondents about their activities during the current semester (Spring of 2003). These activities included studying, going out, drinking, doing drugs, and frequency of different sexual partners. The third section asked the respondents to rate their level of agreement with perception statements about the academic and party images of both universities. Overall, the survey was meant to gain a large amount of information about the activities and perceptions of the students from both universities while containing it to a manageable length for the convenience of the respondents and the scope of the analysis.

After administering the surveys, I coded the responses into numerical values, determined the level of measurement of the variables, and entered the data into the computer. The program I used was SPSS 11.0, which computes statistical tests on data that are entered in a spreadsheet format. Unanswered questions or ambiguous responses were coded as missing cases and were thrown out during analysis. Once all the survey responses were entered into the program, I cleaned the data by running frequencies and looking for errors. I also decided if any of the respondents' surveys needed to be removed entirely because of errors in answering the questions according to the provided format. Ultimately, I only threw out one survey, leaving the official number of respondents for analysis at 363. After I entered and cleaned the data, I used SPSS to run my statistical tests.

The data for the qualitative portion of this study came from four in-depth interviews with seniors at GSU. The sample was obtained through a combination of purposive and convenience strategies. I asked students to participate in the study when I ran into them casually on campus (Fall semester of 2003). Before asking them to participate, I made sure that they were seniors because I wanted my results to reflect the full experience of college students. And in order to avoid biased results, I also tried to make sure that each participant represented a unique perspective according to gender, race, age, and major. The participants consisted of two males,

two females, two Caucasians, one Hispanic American, and one African American. Their ages were 21, 22, 23, and 24, and their majors were Health Administration, Anthropology, Management and Marketing, and Exercise Sport Science.

The interview questions were arranged in a semi-structured design that sought answers to specific questions while also allowing the respondents to reflect upon their experiences and communicate what they found particularly important. The interview guide (see Appendix B) consisted of introductory and concluding questions and four main sections: reasons for attending, activities, fulfillment of expectations, and quality of education. The “reasons for attending” section included questions about why the students were attending college, what schools they considered attending, and why they chose GSU. The “activities” section addressed academic pursuits such as study habits, importance of grades, and GPA. Then it addressed non-academic activities such as hobbies, social participation, and drinking habits. The “fulfillment of expectations” section asked the participants what their expectations were and whether they were fulfilled both academically and socially. And the “quality of education” section included the students’ attitudes toward academic quality, the prestige of their degree, and the impact of the recent name change of their university.²

I conducted all of the interviews in public buildings on campus and recorded them with a micro-cassette recorder. I then transcribed the interviews and immersed myself in the data by reading the transcripts numerous times. I first coded openly by highlighting anything relevant to my research questions and commenting about important issues in the margins. Once I noted the emergence of specific themes, I proceeded to focused coding, in which I used word-processing software to arrange relevant transcript quotations into thematic categories that served to answer my research questions and reveal other patterns in the data (see Appendix C). The analysis techniques described above are consistent with the most common qualitative methods used by social scientists, as described by Esterberg (2002).

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

The students I collected surveys from were quite diverse in their activities and in their perceptions of the images of GSU and TSU. Nevertheless, several patterns emerged that were statistically significant. In this section I present the general characteristics of the sample and then discuss how the data provide answers to each of the posed research questions.

General Characteristics of Sample

The breakdown of the sample population (N=363) according to general characteristics was as follows (see Table I). Of the students surveyed, 56.5 percent attended GSU, and 43.5 percent attended TSU. The gender makeup of the overall sample was 41.6 percent male and 58.4 percent female. Of the GSU students, 37.6 percent were males, and 62.4 percent were females. Of the TSU students, 46.8 percent were males, and 53.2 percent were females.³ While there were a higher percentage of females in the GSU sample than in the TSU sample, this difference is not significant ($\alpha=0.075$).

Table I: Frequencies – General Characteristics of Respondents

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>GSU Frequency</i>	<i>TSU Frequency</i>	<i>Total Frequency</i>
University attended	GSU TSU Total	205 (100%)	158 (100%)	205 (56.5%) 158 (43.5%) 363 (100%)
Class in which survey was given	HIST 1310 (MW12:30p) HIST 1310 (TTh9:30a) HIST 1320 (TTh8:00a) GOV 312L (TTh8:00a) GOV 312L (TTh11:00a) Total	72 (35.1%) 79 (38.5%) 54 (26.3%) 205 (100%)	54 (34.2%) 104 (65.8%) 158 (100%)	72 (19.8%) 79 (21.8%) 54 (14.9%) 54 (14.9%) 104 (28.7%) 363 (100%)
Gender	Male Female Total	77 (37.6%) 128 (62.4%) 205 (100%)	74 (46.8%) 84 (53.2%) 158 (100%)	151 (41.6%) 212 (58.4%) 363 (100%)
Classification	Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Total	139 (68.1%) 35 (17.2%) 21 (10.3%) 9 (4.4%) 204 (100%)	41 (26.1%) 49 (31.2%) 37 (23.6%) 30 (19.1%) 157 (100%)	180 (49.6%) 84 (23.1%) 58 (16.0%) 39 (10.7%) 361 (100%)
	<i>Range</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	
GSU ages (N=205)	18-43	20.02	3.264	
TSU ages (N=158)	17-54	20.21	3.148	
Total ages (N=363)	17-54	20.10	3.211	
GSU courseload (N=203)	3-19	13.67	2.081	
TSU courseload (N=158)	6-19	13.64	2.238	
Total courseload (N=361)	3-19	13.66	2.148	

The majority of the respondents were classified as lower division students due to the fact that the surveys were administered in entry-level classes that all students are required to take at their respective universities. Also, there were a significantly higher percentage of lower division students in the GSU sample than in the TSU sample ($\alpha=0.000^{**}$) due to the availability of participating classes. The courses I gained access to at TSU were both the second of a two course sequence (310L and 312L), while two of the three courses I gained access to at GSU were the first of a two course sequence (1310 and 1320). And since many students take the first course in a required sequence during their freshman year and save the second course for later in their college career, the sample of students at GSU contained a much larger proportion of freshmen than TSU. Of the GSU students, 68.1 percent were freshmen, 17.2 percent were sophomores, 10.3 percent were juniors, and 4.4 percent were seniors. And of the TSU students, 26.1 percent were freshmen, 31.2 percent were sophomores, 23.6 percent were juniors, and 19.1 percent were seniors.⁴ This difference could contribute to a slant in the outcome of many of the statistical tests due to the difference in focus and activities of upper division vs. lower division students.

The age of respondents ranged from 17 to 54, with a mean of 20.10 and a standard deviation of 3.211. There was no significant difference in the age composition of the samples from GSU and TSU. The semester course load of the students ranged from 3 to 19 hours, with a mean of 13.66 and a standard deviation of 2.148.⁵ There was also no significant difference in the course loads of the samples from GSU and TSU.

Image Perceptions of GSU and TSU

The survey contained eight questions asking the respondents to rate their level of agreement with statements about the images of the two universities (see Appendix A). The responses were coded in such a way that 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree. Overall, there were two statements in which the mean level of agreement was between “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” among students from both schools, and those were the personal (4.47) and public (4.46) perceptions of TSU being a strong academic institution.

Conversely, the mean level of agreement with the statement, “The general public believes [General State University] is a strong academic institution,” was between “Neutral” and “Disagree” for both schools (2.74). There was also a mild consensus regarding the statement, “I believe [Top State University] is a party school,” in the fact that the mean level of agreement for both schools was between “Neutral” and “Agree” (3.58).

GSU student responses vs. TSU student responses. I used Independent Samples T-Tests to evaluate the differences between how the students from GSU and TSU responded to the image statements (see Table II). There were a few significant differences in how the students felt about the images of the universities. First, the mean level of agreement with the statement, “I believe that [General State University] is a strong academic institution,” among GSU students was 3.77, while the responses of TSU students to this statement were significantly lower ($\alpha=0.000^{**}$), with a mean of 2.82. Second, the mean level of agreement with the statement, “I believe [General State University] is a party school was significantly higher ($\alpha=0.000^{**}$) among TSU students (3.66) than among GSU students (3.30). The results to these two questions may indicate that students are likely to view their own university in a more positive light than students from other schools view it, which could be explained as a form of self-enhancement.

Table II: T-Tests – Image Perception Differences Between Universities

<i>Variable</i> \diamond	<i>GSU Mean</i>	<i>TSU Mean</i>	<i>Significance</i>
I believe GSU is a strong academic institution.	3.77	2.82	0.000 ^{**}
I believe TSU is a strong academic institution.	4.43	4.53	0.232
I believe GSU is a party school.	3.30	3.66	0.000 ^{**}
I believe TSU is a party school.	3.52	3.66	0.125
The general public believes GSU is a strong academic institution.	2.81	2.66	0.119
The general public believes TSU is a strong academic institution.	4.49	4.42	0.332
The general public believes GSU is a party school.	4.42	3.78	0.000 ^{**}
The general public believes TSU is a party school.	3.16	3.42	0.011 [*]

\diamond All variables in this chart are based on an ordinal scale in which 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree

^{**} Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

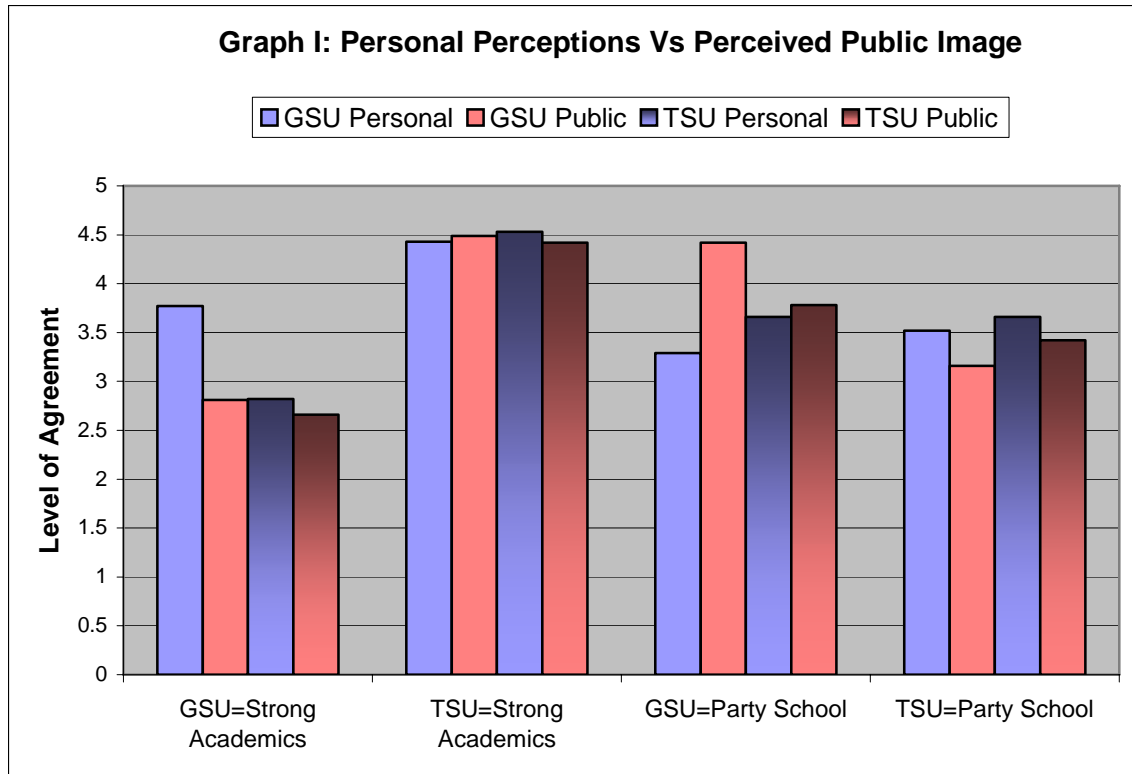
^{*} Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

The statements about how the general public views the two universities also reveal two significant differences in how students perceive the images of each school. The mean level of agreement with the statement, “The general public believes that [General State University] is a party school,” was higher among GSU students (4.49) than among TSU students (3.78) ($\alpha=0.000^{**}$). Similarly, the mean level of agreement with the statement, “The general public believes that [Top State University] is a party school,” was higher among TSU students (3.42) than among GSU students (3.16) ($\alpha=0.011^{*}$). The results for these two questions may indicate that students are more sensitive to how the public views their own university than they are to how the public views other universities, which also might be explained as a form of self-enhancement.

Personal perceptions vs. perceived public image. The statements beginning with “I believe” were meant to evaluate how the students themselves actually viewed both universities, while the statements beginning with “The general public believes” were meant to evaluate what the students thought was the public image of the two universities. The purpose of including both types of statements was to measure how accurate the students felt the public images of the two universities were. I used Paired Samples T-Tests to analyze the difference between the students’ personal perceptions and their perceptions of what the public image was for both schools (see Graph I).

Among the statements about GSU, there were two main patterns that emerged in the differences between personal perceptions and perceived public image. First, the variations between personal perception and perceived public image were such that the public image was more negative than the personal perception. That is, the students from both schools felt that GSU’s public image held more support than necessary for the ideas that GSU was a party school (among GSU students $\alpha=0.000^{**}$ and among TSU students $\alpha=0.039^{*}$) and that it was not a strong academic institution (among GSU students $\alpha=0.000^{**}$ and among TSU students $\alpha=0.009^{**}$). Second, the students typically felt that the public image of their own school was less accurate than the public image of the school they were not attending. That is, the gap between personal

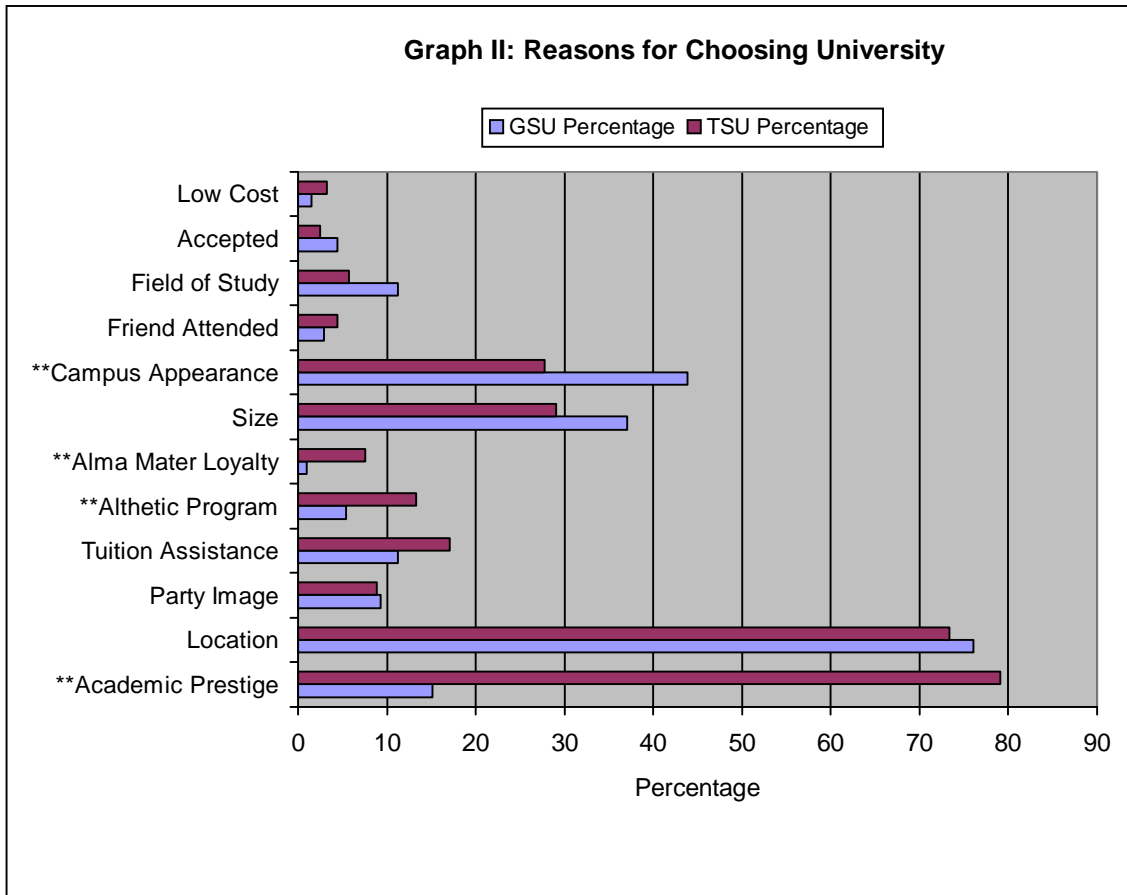
perceptions and the perceived public image of GSU was much larger according to GSU students than it was according to TSU students.



The responses to the statements about TSU were less predictable, but two patterns were apparent. First, the students from both universities felt that the public image of TSU as a strong academic institution was accurate for the most part. More specifically, the difference on that statement between personal perception and public image was not significant among GSU students (4.43 personal and 4.49 public), and the mean difference among TSU students, while significant ($\alpha=0.035^*$), was only 0.10 (4.53 personal and 4.42 public). Second, the students from both universities felt that TSU was more of a party school than its public image portrayed. On that statement, the difference was significant ($\alpha=0.000^{**}$) among students from both schools in such a way that the mean differences were very similar (0.36 among GSU students and 0.23 among TSU students), but the mean responses to both the personal and public statements were higher among TSU students. That is, TSU students (3.66 personal and 3.42 public) typically agreed more than

GSU students (3.52 personal and 3.16 public) with the statements that TSU was a party school and that the public thought it was a party school.

Implied image: reasons for choosing university. One of the questions on the survey asked students, “Why did you choose to attend the university you are enrolled in?” The instructions were to check all that apply, and there was a space for them to fill in any other reasons not included in the list (see Appendix A). The listed choices were academic prestige, location, party reputation, tuition assistance, athletic program, alma mater loyalty, size, and campus appearance. The other categories that emerged from the “other” option included low cost, the school accepted them, the school had a good program for their specific field of study, and they knew someone who attended that school. I coded each category as a separate variable in which “1” meant they indicated that category as a reason for attending and “0” meant they did not select that category.



I ran Crosstabs with a Chi-Square Test for each variable to see if certain reasons were selected more often for one university than for the other (see Graph II) because college selection factors are an indicator of the public image of a university. There were four categories that revealed significant differences in the reasons students chose to attend their respective universities. The largest difference was in the fact that 79.1 percent of TSU students indicated academic prestige as a reason for attending, while only 15.1 percent of GSU students identified academic prestige as an influencing factor ($\alpha=0.000^{**}$). Other factors that significantly favored TSU over GSU were the athletic program ($\alpha=0.008^{**}$) and alma mater loyalty ($\alpha=0.001^{**}$). The only factor that significantly favored GSU was campus appearance, in which 43.9 percent of GSU students and 27.8 percent of TSU students indicated that campus appearance influenced their decision to attend ($\alpha=0.002^{**}$).

Academic and Social Differences Between the Students at Each School

The academic and social activities of the students at each university were represented by their GPA (coded on a 1-6 ordinal scale as noted below Table III), course load, and a series of eight questions pertaining to how often they study, go out, get drunk, do drugs, etc. (see Appendix A). Those eight questions were coded ordinally, in that 0=0, 1=1, 2=2-3, 3=4-5, 4=6-7, and 5=8+. I used Independent Samples T-Tests to analyze the significance of the differences between the activities of the GSU and TSU students (see Table III).

The social activities of the students indicate some significant differences between the actions of GSU and TSU students. When asked, “On average, how many times do you go out (to parties, bars, etc.) in one week?” the mean response for GSU students was 1.64 (on the 0-5 ordinal scale), while the mean response for TSU students was 1.32 ($\alpha=0.004^{**}$). On the question, “On average, in a day or night that you go out, how many servings of alcohol do you consume in one 24-hour period?” the mean response for GSU students was 2.47, while the mean response for TSU students was 1.93 ($\alpha=0.003^{**}$). When asked, “On average how many times do you get drunk in one month?” the mean response for GSU students was 1.87, while it was 1.42 for TSU

students ($\alpha=0.014^*$). And on the question, “On average, how many servings of marijuana do you consume in one week?” the mean response from GSU students was 0.57, while from TSU students it was 0.31 ($\alpha=0.042^*$).

Table III: T-Tests – Academic & Social Differences Between Universities

<i>Variable</i> ◇	<i>GSU Mean</i>	<i>TSU Mean</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Respondent’s GPA ◇◇	4.16	4.89	0.000**
Hours taken that semester	13.67	13.64	0.876
Hours spent studying (p/week)	3.14	3.77	0.000**
Times respondent goes out (p/week)	1.64	1.32	0.004**
Servings of alcohol (p/24hours)	2.47	1.93	0.003**
Times respondent gets drunk (p/month)	1.87	1.42	0.014*
Servings of marijuana (p/week)	0.57	0.31	0.042*
Servings of other illegal drugs (p/week)	0.06	0.09	0.468
Times respondent gets high (p/month)	0.55	0.44	0.393
Number of sexual partners (p/month)	0.60	0.49	0.697

◇◇ GPA is based on an ordinal scale in which 1=0-1.5, 2=1.6-2.0, 3=2.1-2.5, 4=2.6-3.0, 5=3.1-3.5, and 6=3.6-4.0

◇ All variables in this chart (except hours taken and GPA) are based on an ordinal scale in which 0=0, 1=1, 2=2-3, 3=4-5, 4=6-7, and 5=8+

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

There were also some significant differences between the two schools in the academic activities of the students. When asked, “On average, how many hours do you spend studying, reading, or doing other homework for classes in one week?” the mean response among GSU students was 3.14, while the mean response among TSU students was 3.77 ($\alpha=0.000^{**}$). And although there was no significant difference in the semester course loads taken by the students at each university, there was a significant difference in GPA. The question about GPA was coded on the survey ordinally, in such a way that 1=0-1.5, 2=1.6-2.0, 3=2.1-2.5, 4=2.6-3.0, 5=3.1-3.5, and 6=3.6-4.0. And along this scale, the mean response for GSU students was 4.16, while the mean response for TSU students was 4.89 ($\alpha=0.000^{**}$).

Thus, many activities commonly associated with a “party school” image occurred in higher frequencies among GSU students than among TSU students, and the academic qualities associated with a strong academic image occurred in higher frequencies among TSU students than among GSU students. However, this observation must not be given undue weight,

considering the fact that there is an imbalance in the proportion of lower division students from each university. The higher percentage of freshmen in the GSU sample could be a cause of the statistical differences in the activities of the students from the two schools. Nonetheless, these findings support the idea that university image is grounded in reality to some extent. That is to say that the actual differences in the activities of the students in this study follow patterns that are similar to the public reputations of their schools.

Factors That Influence Individual Perceptions of Image

According to the “motives to study” theory of Bogler and Somech (2002), students’ motivations for pursuing a college education influence their actions and academic satisfaction. Therefore, I explored this idea further by searching for factors that may have influenced how the students from GSU and TSU view their schools. In line with the “motives to study” theory, one of the main factors influencing how the students evaluated the image of their respective universities was the reason they chose to attend that university. Other factors included personal characteristics of the student (sex, age, etc.) and many of the academic and social activities in which the students participated.

I used Independent Samples T-Tests to assess the impact of students’ reasons for choosing to attend a university on their perceptions of their respective school’s image. The results indicated that a preference for academic prestige, party reputation, athletic program, alma mater loyalty, campus appearance, or low cost could have significantly impacted how the students perceived the images of the two universities. The main pattern that emerged, though, was in the fact that the students who identified academic prestige as a reason for choosing their university were more likely to agree with the statement that their school was a strong academic institution ($\alpha=0.028^*$ among GSU students and $\alpha=0.002^{**}$ among TSU students). And the logical converse of that pattern was found in the fact that the students who identified party reputation as a reason for choosing their university were more likely to agree with the statement that their school was a party school ($\alpha=0.001^{**}$ among GSU students and $\alpha=0.001^{**}$ among TSU

students). These two patterns could be explained as a form of self-verification because preference for a school of a certain reputation indicates a certain personality or self-concept, and the students' views about their respective schools reflected those preferences regardless of the positive or negative assumptions surrounding those images.

Other characteristics of students that were found to be significant in their evaluation of their university include sex, age, classification, and GPA. Among TSU students, males (3.81) had a significantly higher level of agreement than females (3.52) with the statement that TSU was a party school ($\alpha=0.032^*$). Interestingly, there was also a significant GPA correlation (-0.157) among TSU students in which students with higher GPAs were slightly less likely to agree with the statement that GSU was a party school ($\alpha=0.049^*$). Among GSU students, there was a significant age correlation (-0.146) in which older students were slightly less likely to agree with the statement that TSU was a strong academic institution ($\alpha=0.039^*$). Similarly, there was a significant classification correlation (-0.197) among GSU students in which upper division students were slightly less likely to agree with the statement that TSU was a strong academic institution ($\alpha=0.005^{**}$). These two correlations are similar because of the positive relationship between age and classification.

Many activities of the students were also found to influence their image perceptions: time spent studying, how often they go out, the amount of alcohol they drink when they go out, how often they get drunk, the amount of marijuana they consume, the amount of other illegal drugs they consume, and how often they get high on illegal drugs. Among GSU students (0.215, $\alpha=0.003^{**}$) and among TSU students (0.209, $\alpha=0.009^{**}$) there was significant positive correlation between how often the students went out and their level of agreement with the statement that their school was a party school. Very similar patterns emerged among all the other activities listed above that are typically associated with the "party school" image, such as consumption of alcohol and illegal drugs, in which participation in these activities caused students to have less academic respect for their university. In some cases, participation in these

activities caused students to have less respect for the academic image of the other school; this might be due to the fact that many of the students from both schools often attend the same parties, or they “party” together. These patterns can also be explained as a form of self-verification.

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

The students I interviewed at GSU were diverse in personality and opinions, but there were many similarities as well. In the discussion that follows, I explore the answers to my research questions in-depth. I briefly summarize how the participants viewed the image of GSU and how their actions were linked to their perceptions, paying special attention to findings that pertain to self-enhancement or self-verification.

Image Perceptions

The GSU students I interviewed were mostly satisfied with their university experience, but they showed a lack of confidence in their school’s name and image. This feeling was rarely stated outright, but was often expressed through a self-deterministic rationalization in which they thought that their own efforts and abilities, rather than the prestige of the school they attend, should be the criteria on which they are evaluated. For example, when I asked Nell if she thought her degree would be prestigious enough to help her obtain the job of her choice, she stated, “I would hope, overall, my experience would help me more than the college. More so, my experience and me as a person, you know, would be able to help, when people see me, and they see the way I am, they’ll know that I am a qualified person for any type of job.” The participants felt that their school was just as good as other state schools in supplying a quality education, but they were not so sure that a degree from GSU would be as prestigious as a degree from one of the more nationally recognized Texas universities. These conflicting sentiments are the result of self-enhancement and self-verification. They view their school in a positive light by deemphasizing the negative aspects of its reputation in order to feel better about defining themselves as a GSU

student, but they also admit to how the image may negatively impact them when they consider how future employers may view their degree.

When I asked the students how they felt the quality of education they were receiving compared with other universities, they all revealed that they were satisfied with the educational quality of GSU. What is even more interesting, though, is the fact that despite expressing some lack of confidence in the prestige of their degrees, two of the four subjects felt that the quality of education at GSU was equivalent to the more prestigious state schools in Texas. Ann used a comparison of curriculum to explain her attitude toward academic prestige:

I think it's right up there...I mean, I've had friends of mine who have graduated from different universities, and we always compare. And it's like, maybe the course name isn't the same, but we're, like...We'd start talking about the class and what we're having to do for a project, or what the class...what we're studying, and it's pretty on target to what they're doing. And that's compared to [TSU] and, you know, [*name of yet another large state university in Texas: BSU*] and stuff like that. I mean, it might not be...I think the only difference is the fact that it's [TSU]...[Top State University]...and it's, you know, [Big State University]...it's got that name to it, but that's it...but a name is a name, you know.

A third student expressed that he felt GSU might offer a better education than the more prestigious schools because of its focus on student-faculty interaction rather than on publishing. These rationales were self-enhancing reactions to the negative aspects of GSU's image that helped them maintain a positive self-concept as GSU students.

The participants provided many different reasons for their decision to attend GSU. And while two students mentioned an academic motive, the majority of reasons given by the participants were non-academic. Some of the students mentioned family members who had influenced their decision, and some said they wanted to attend GSU because they wanted to go where their friends were. For example, when I asked him why he was pursuing a college education, Joe replied, "My parents told me, 'Go to college.' So I went. [...] I had no other, like, beliefs of any other things." Then, in explaining why he chose GSU, he said, "I really wanted to come here, so I came here... 'cause all my friends came here." Campus location or appearance was another reason students chose to attend GSU, as indicated by comments like, "[It's a] two

and a half hour drive to home...so it's close enough to go home, but it's far enough away to where...then...if my parents decided to come visit, I could get the heck out of dodge," or, "It's a pretty campus." The only academically oriented factor that the participants discussed was their desire to have a small school atmosphere that allowed for more interaction between students and faculty:

We're just a small school, and that's why I wanted to be here...I didn't want to go to [TSU] and have 400 people in my class. I wanted to have one on one, where if I went to go meet with a professor, he'd know my face and be like, "Oh, Miss. [Williams]," blah, blah, blah...you know...instead of, you know, "Oh, you're the student that sits on the 15th row, I think, maybe?...You're in my class?"

Another important pattern was the fact that most of the participants stated that the reason they were pursuing a college education was because they saw an undergraduate degree as a requirement for living comfortably in the future. Ann simply stated, "How else are you gonna make it in the world unless you have some sort of degree?... 'Cause every other kind of job you get's gonna be minimum wage or something to that effect." The participants mostly defined personal success through career attainment and financial stability, rather than through knowledge or wisdom. Nell explained, "It opens more doors, so society says. But it's supposed to open more doors, and it would ensure me more money in the future so that I could have a better life for...not only me...my family."

It is important to recognize the significance of the students' reliance on mostly non-academic factors to motivate them to attend GSU. It indicates that the students' priorities deemphasize academic quality as an important aspect of their college experience. The utilitarian view that college is just a means to a better career could be related to the fact that their school has a less prestigious academic reputation than some. The students' concerns about campus appearance and location along with their desire to go to school with their friends are social, rather than intellectual, preferences. This suggests a form of self-enhancement because the students are putting a positive spin on their school's image and dismissing the negative academic image as irrelevant to them.

Student Actions

The actions of the students I interviewed varied according to personalities and interests, but they were closely linked to their motivations for attending GSU, just as the socialization tactics of the students in Bogler and Somech's study (2002) were linked to their motives to study. For example, Tom's motives to study were mostly scholastic. Therefore, he devoted a lot of time to studying and participated in many activities that enriched his education such as volunteer organizations and a study abroad program. Joe, on the other hand, was driven by instrumental and collegiate motives. So, he studied only when it was necessary and participated in activities that enriched his personal life, such as exercising and hanging out with friends. This pattern is a form of self-verification, in the fact that the students presented themselves, through their actions, in ways that would verify their own self-concept.

The recreational and extracurricular activities of the students I interviewed were broad in scope, from volunteering for programs like Habitat for Humanity to "sleeping the day away." The students expressed a certain level of satisfaction that came from being involved in different organizations, but there was an awareness of how the social activities of partying and drinking may have hindered their academic success. Two of the four participants expressed regret over paying more attention to social activities than to their academics during the beginning of their college careers. When I asked her what she would change, if she had it to do over again, Nell put it this way:

My freshman year, I probably would've started off focused with my grades...that's the only thing I really regret...real...a lot...like, my freshman and sophomore years...my sophomore year I partied a lot...that's why it was necessary for me to get two jobs after my sophomore year of college so I could pay back credit card debt (laughs)...but, yeah...um...but my freshman and sophomore years I wish I would've done a lot better when it comes to academics.

Despite these regrets, none of the students felt they were highly involved with alcohol or other drugs. Three of the four participants admitted that they drink, but they mostly described it as social drinking, or they qualified it to be a small to average amount. For example, when I asked

her how much she drinks, Ann said, "I'd say, it's not a lot. I'd say a little...I mean, I...It's usually on Friday and Saturday nights, and usually I just have one or two drinks." One student admitted to taking drugs while partying during his early college years. And another student made a point of saying he did not drink. Overall, though, the students expressed that by the time they were upper division students, they had found an adequate balance between their academic and social activities. This was another example of the participants focusing on a positive slant in order to present themselves in a self-enhancing way.

While discussing their study habits, I asked the students how important grades were to them as individuals. The rationales produced were interesting in the fact that three of the four participants did not think that the grades they received affected their self-concept. Their motivations for achieving good grades were mostly external. They equated a high GPA with better chances of impressing a future employer or getting into a more competitive graduate school. This line of reasoning was consistent with the fact that the most common motives to study among the participants were non-academic. Joe's answer to the question of how important grades were to him summed it up rather well: "They're not...they're not intrinsically. I'm not...I'm not motivated for just doing it...just because." This pattern is very similar to the self-enhancement findings of Woo and Frank (2000), in which students with lower grades were less likely to see grades as a valid indicator of their academic ability. In the case of the four GSU students, grades may have been seen as less valid because of the lack of academic prestige they associated with a degree from their school. This is an extension of their self-enhancing idea that academic prestige is not as important as a diploma and a career.

REFLECTION

In all social science studies, it is important for the researcher to consider how his or her values and experiences influence the project. Therefore, I feel it is important for me to discuss the reasons why I chose to study this topic and what I originally expected to find. I am a student

at GSU, and I grew up in the city where TSU is located. I could have attended TSU and benefited from its well-established academic reputation, but I chose GSU because I wanted to experience more student-faculty interaction than I thought TSU had to offer. The longer I attended GSU, the more I respected the academic quality it had to offer. I, like many other GSU students and faculty, feel that the “party school” reputation that is associated with GSU is unfair in light of the many advances the institution has made in academic quality. I also feel from discussions with other students and from my own personal experiences that TSU students are just as active in the “party scene” as GSU students. Therefore, my original interest in researching this subject was due to a desire to disprove what I perceived to be unjust misconceptions about my university.

Given the above admission, I must clarify the fact that while my personal experiences influenced my choice of topics, I worked hard to prevent my values from influencing my results. Not all of my findings made me feel better about the image of my university, but by discussing the role of individual self-concept in affecting institutional image perceptions, I was able to refocus my interests in a more positive direction. Now I can approach the topic from a more holistic perspective that is not motivated by resentment or misinformation. After this study, I feel that students should make their decisions about what school to attend by considering how it meets their individual needs, rather than by focusing on its reputation. Judging whether you belong at a certain school based on its image can be just as misleading as judging the goodness of a person based on a stereotype. I also find comfort in reminding myself that image is based on many individual interpretations of reality.

CONCLUSION

Overall, my research supports two main conclusions. First, the images of higher educational institutions vary from school to school according to many different factors, but the images are based in a reality to some extent. We see this in the example of GSU and TSU, in which GSU has a weaker academic reputation than TSU and is more often classified as a “party

school.” The data confirmed these images through the fact that the students at GSU had lower GPA’s and spent less time studying than TSU students, and they had higher levels of participation in many of the social activities commonly associated with a “party school.” Second, the perceptions of students, while having some basis in reality, are influenced by individual characteristics and a need to maintain a stable self-concept. We see this in the various patterns of self-enhancing and self-verifying reactions of the students to the public reputation of their schools. This is in line with the identity negotiation findings of Swann (1987) in which people use a strategic combination of the two supposedly opposing self-conception strategies, according to what best suits their needs and current situation.

The quantitative findings in this study are strong due to the large sample size and the purposive, rather than convenience, sampling technique. The main weakness of the survey data is the fact that the GSU sample contained a significantly larger percentage of lower division students than the TSU sample, which may have produced some results that were not truly representative of the GSU population. This issue, though, was addressed in the findings section and is not consequential in the overall focus of this study.

If I had more time and resources, I would have interviewed more students and included students from other universities in the qualitative portion of the study. I might have found that students who attend the more prestigious universities are more likely to express the value of academic prestige and scholastic accomplishment because they can identify themselves as students of such a well-known institution. But despite the weaknesses of the qualitative part of this study, the strengths include a well-established method of analysis and a fairly diverse sample, considering its small size.

While the findings from the qualitative portion of the research are not generalizable because of the small sample size, they are an extension of the quantitative data and indicative of something that should be studied further. There is a definite interaction between the image of a university and the identities of its students, but the details of this relationship were not

conclusively revealed in this study. Thus, more research on this topic should explore the variables of self-concept and examine causal order.

The results of this study reconfirm the idea that individual motivations such as students' reasons for choosing a specific university and their social or academic activities are related to how they view their schools. In other words, the individual characteristics of students can impact their perceptions of their school's image. In the future, I hope that more research on the sociology of education will include a detailed exploration of not only the different ways that students impact institutional image, but also of how the image of a university impacts its students.

ENDNOTES

¹ At GSU, I collected surveys from 72 students in a MW 12:30pm HIST 1310 class, 79 students in a TTh 9:30am HIST 1310 class, and 55 students in a TTh 8:00am HIST 1320 class for a total initial sample of 206 GSU students. At TSU, I collected the survey from 54 students in a TTh 8:00am GOV 312L class and 104 students in a TTh 11:00am GOV 312L class for a total initial sample of 158 TSU students.

² The university in this study (GSU) had recently changed its name to exclude a regional reference. The importance of asking the students about this was to assess how it affected the confidence they had in their university and whether they saw it as a positive or negative change.

³ Actual enrollment at GSU in 2003 was 45.5 percent male and 55.5 percent female. Actual undergraduate enrollment at TSU in 2002 was 49.4 percent male and 50.6 percent female.

⁴ Actual undergraduate enrollment at GSU in 2003 was 19.7 percent freshman, 21.9 percent sophomore, 24.8 percent junior, and 33.7 percent senior. Actual undergraduate enrollment at TSU in 2002 was 21.2 percent freshman, 21.4 percent sophomore, 23.8 percent junior, and 33.6 percent senior.

⁵ Actual undergraduate enrollment at GSU in 2003 was 80.5 percent full-time (12 or more hours) and 19.5 percent part-time (less than 12 hours). Actual undergraduate enrollment at TSU in 2002 was 89.5 percent full-time and 10.5 percent part-time.

Appendix A

Survey

SURVEY

**The following survey is anonymous so that your answers will not be linked to you in any way. Responding to this survey is optional. Thank you for your participation.

1. Sex: Male Female
2. Age: _____
3. Classification: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior
4. GPA: 0-1.5 1.6-2.0 2.1-2.5 2.6-3.0 3.1-3.5 3.6-4.0
5. How many hours are you taking this semester? _____
6. Why did you choose to attend the university you are enrolled in? (check all that apply)
 Academic Prestige Location Party Reputation Tuition Assistance
 Athletic Program Alma Mater Loyalty Size Campus Appearance

 Other _____

For the following questions, check the box next to the amount that best represents your activities on average **during the current semester.

7. On average, how many hours do you spend studying, reading, or doing other homework for classes in one **week**?
 0 1 2-3 4-5 6-7 8+
8. On average, how many times do you go out (to parties, bars, etc.) in one **week**?
 0 1 2-3 4-5 6-7 8+
9. On average, in a day or night that you do go out, how many servings of alcohol do you consume in one **24-hour period**?
 0 1 2-3 4-5 6-7 8+
10. On average, how many times do you get drunk in one **month**?
 0 1 2-3 4-5 6-7 8+
11. On average, how many servings of *marijuana* do you consume in one **week**?
 0 1 2-3 4-5 6-7 8+
And/or *other illegal drugs*?
 0 1 2-3 4-5 6-7 8+

12. On average, how many times do you get very high off illegal drugs in one **month**?

- 0 1 2-3 4-5 6-7 8+

13. On average, how many different sexual partners do you have in one **month**?

- 0 1 2-3 4-5 6-7 8+

**Please read the following statements, and then check the box next to how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

14. **I** believe that [General State University] is a strong academic institution.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

15. **I** believe that [Top State University] is a strong academic institution.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

16. **I** believe that [General State University] is a party school.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

17. **I** believe that [Top State University] is a party school.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

18. The **general public** believes that [General State University] is a strong academic institution.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

19. The **general public** believes that [Top State University] is a strong academic institution.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

20. The **general public** believes that [General State University] is a party school.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

21. The **general public** believes that [Top State University] is a party school.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Appendix B

Interview Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE

- I. Basic Information
 - A. Age?
 - B. Major/Minor
 1. What is your major and minor?
 2. How did you decide on this major?
- II. Reason for Attending GSU
 - A. Why are you pursuing a college education?
 - B. In deciding which school to attend, what other schools were you considering?
 - C. Why did you choose GSU over those other schools?
- III. Activities (*Depth of questions in this section will depend on reactions of subject*)
 - A. How actively have you pursued academics while attending GSU?
 1. What is your GPA?
 2. How many hours do you typically spend studying in a week?
 3. Are grades important to you?
 - B. What kind of recreational activities do you participate in?
 1. What do you do to relax or have fun?
 2. About how often do you socialize? What do you usually do?
 3. Do you drink alcohol?
 - a. *If yes*, how often and how much?
 - b. *If no*, why not?
- IV. Fulfillment of Expectations
 - A. What were your expectations of GSU?
 - B. Have your academic expectations of GSU been fulfilled? (*If no*, why not?)
 - C. Have your non-academic (recreational) expectations of GSU been fulfilled? (*If no*, why not?)
- V. Quality of Education
 - A. How do you feel the quality of education you are receiving from GSU compares with other schools?
 - B. Do you think your degree from GSU will be prestigious enough to help you obtain the job of your choice?
 - C. Name Change
 1. How do you feel about the name change of your university?
 2. Do you think it will make a difference in the prestige of your degree?
- VI. Closing Questions
 - A. If you had it to do over again, what would you do differently?
 - B. If you could give advice to incoming freshmen, what would you tell them?

Appendix C

Coded Interview Data

CODED INTERVIEW DATA

General Sample Info

(Convenient and Purposive)

4 Subjects: All Seniors at General State University (GSU)

Ages: 21, 22, 23, 24

Racial distribution: 2 Caucasian, 1 Hispanic/Caucasian, 1 African-American

Sex: 2 Males, 2 Females

Major/Minor: Exercise Sport Science major/Health minor, Health Administration major/Sociology minor, Anthropology major/Sociology minor, Management and Marketing major/Photography and Business Administration minor

Research Question #1

Why did students choose to attend GSU?

*Degree is a career necessity

“College is the next step, no matter what” (Joe 2).

“It opens more doors, so society says. But it’s supposed to open more doors, and it would ensure me more money in the future so that I could have a better life for...not only me...my family” (Nell 1). [Referring to a college education]

“Of course, there is, um, the practical side of it...that in today’s world you need a college education to get an entry level position...to a position where you make about \$25,000” (Tom 1).

“How else are you gonna make it in the world unless you have some sort of degree...‘cause every other kind of job you get’s gonna be minimum wage or something to that effect...you’re not gonna get any...have promotions or anything” (Ann 1).

*Family influences

“My parents told me, ‘Go to college.’ So I went. [...] I had no other, like, beliefs of any other things” (Joe 2).

“I thought about [another state university: *U1*], but once my father found out it’s next door to a prison, he decided that was not the way his little baby angel was gonna go” (Ann 1).

*Friends

“I really wanted to come here, so I came here...‘cause all my friends came here” (Joe 2).

“I had friends here, and [a large city: *City 1*] is not that far away...I had friends there...I started dating someone who lived in [*City 1*], and I could get up there, no problem. So, I enjoyed being here in [the city GSU is located in: *City 2*]” (Tom 2).

*Campus Location or Appearance

“I was looking at the area because it was more appealing...just the area...the...[*City 1*]...the hill country...[*City 2*] Area...was more appealing than a school in [large city: *City 3*] or [large city: *City 4*]...or [*City 5*]...[another state university: *U2*]” (Tom 2).

“[It’s a] two and a half hour drive to home...so it’s close enough to go home, but it’s far enough away to where...then...if my parents decided to come visit, I could get the heck out of dodge. [...] It’s a pretty campus” (Ann 1).

*Small school atmosphere/Student-Teacher interaction

“I enjoyed...I really liked the department...I came into the Anthropology Department...I liked the professors...They were welcoming, helpful, and I liked the courses I was taking...the courses that was offered. And I also liked the small...small...well, the Anthropology Department, specifically is small here...the campus is smaller, and I came from a large state school in Pennsylvania, and I knew how that felt...And I was kinda worried that maybe I’d have the same experience at [another large state university: *U3*]...because of lectures” (Tom 2).

“We’re just a small school, and that’s why I wanted to be here...I didn’t want to go to [*U3*] and have 400 people in my class. I wanted to have one on one, where if I went to go meet

with a professor, he'd know my face and be like, 'Oh, Miss. [Williams],' blah, blah, blah...you know...instead of, you know, 'Oh, you're the student that sits on the 15th row, I think, maybe?...You're in my class?'" (Ann 4).

***Diverse experiences**

"I came to summer school there and that's how they got me. They treated me so well here, and I just decided to stay. And I also was gonna go to [another state university: *U4*] [...] but I decided last minute I didn't want to go to a historically African-American college" (Nell 2-3).

"I enjoy learning and I feel that a college education, specifically a liberal arts degree, able me to be aware of many different things occurring at the same time and how they interact" (Tom 1).

Research Question #2

How actively have students pursued academics, and what kind of extracurricular or recreational activities did they participate in while attending GSU?

ACADEMICS

***Overall efforts**

"Well, everything I heard from my dad about hiring...they only hire certain people with a certain grade point average. So, I knew I had to keep my grade point average up at the very end. So, I've always done pretty good in school...not trying, though...just...just always keeping the grades good. [...] I pay attention during class, and that's what gets me through...I don't take too many notes...don't...don't buy my books...just pay attention to the teacher" (Joe 3).

"It has been...well, my freshman year, it wasn't as important as it is now. It's always been important to me, but it didn't seem like it when I first started off...because, uh, I had, like, other problems going on, and they were first in my life, rather than my studies. But now they're very important" (Nell 2).

"Very important...I try to make A's in all my classes...I thought it was very important in the beginning, considering I was thinking about graduate school...that I would want to be...that I would make myself competitive by having a high GPA. And I just, um...also, I wanted to understand the material in the classes. With those interests, it just drove me to excel in classes. I took it very seriously. Um, as soon as I got here, I was considering the Honors Program, but I was a little reluctant to join because I thought maybe the classes would be harder...more work, and I was, I guess, kinda lazy. But after awhile, I did join the Honors Program because the classes were just more appealing...smaller classes. So, I would say that I actively sought out challenges in my classes" (Tom 2-3).

"I've been pretty, you know, good at it...I mean, I've been here for long enough...I've just...trying to figure out what I wanna do...spent the first 2 and a half years in college going, "Alright, now what?"...Then finally deciding a major and figuring out exactly what I was gonna do with that and everything, so...I mean...I'm pretty active and stuff with my schooling, and, you know...I go to my classes. I don't like to miss classes 'cause I pay, you know, tuition and all that. Why spend the money on something and skip it? It's a waste" (Ann 1-2).

***GPA**

"For major it's 3.25, and for my minor it's 3.0" (Joe 3).

"My GPA now is a 2.29, and, like, my...that's my cumulative GPA. Last semester my GPA was a 3.0" (Nell 2).

"My GSU GPA is 3...3.75. My overall is about 3.5 'cause of freshman year" (Tom 3).

"It's 2.37?...2.33?...2.3 something" (Ann 2).

***Time spent Studying**

“Depends on if I have a test that week...If I have a test that week, I’ll study, like, the night before, for, like, an hour or two, for the test...just going over stuff...I don’t really...study” (Joe 3).

“I try to study at least 5 hours a week...I try...3 hours are mandatory” (Nell 2).

“I typically took 15 hours each semester. For each class, I probably spent 2 to 3...2 to 5 hours a week...outside of class” (Tom 3).

“Probably about 10 [hours]...for schoolwork...10 plus. It all just depends” (Ann 2).

***Importance of Grades**

“They’re not...they’re not intrinsically...I’m not...I’m not motivated for just doing it...just because.” [*Then I asked, ‘Just...so that it’ll look good on your resume?’*] “Yeah...That’s the only reason” (Joe 3).

“They’re real important because if your grades aren’t well, it’s a lot harder for you to get into a graduate school. And I do plan on going to graduate school after I leave here. And I’m startin’ to realize how much more they’re important, so I need to focus a lot more on my grades” (Nell 3).

“They are important...but they’re just as important as...What...what really...like, I’m sitting in on a class this semester. I’m not enrolled in it...you know, I’m not paying for the class...I don’t need the credit, but what drives me to go to the class is, the um, understanding...learning the material and applying it...That is also...maybe, just...I don’t know...you could say is more important because I’m not enrolled in the class, so I’m not looking for the grade...but it...it’s the application of the material I’m looking for, and that’s also important. But grades are important ‘cause graduate school’s around the corner” (Tom 3).

“They’re very important...very important. I get upset when I...or not upset...but I get frustrated when I think I do better, and then I get the test results and I don’t do as well...then...get kinda puzzled when I don’t study at all and I make an A on the test” (Ann 2).

ACTIVITIES

***General**

“I go to the Rec every day...play basketball, lift weights. [...] Just that...play basketball, lift weights, go out with friends...go on vacations” (Joe 3).

“I work 2 jobs, and along with working 2 jobs, I’m also in a sorority, which takes up a lot of my time. And I try to do involvement in my church. [...To relax] I watch TV, sleep (laugh), do word puzzles, and that’s about it...and listen to music...a lot of music...that’s about it. [...] Probably, I try to make it mandatory at least once a month to [go out with friends and], like, go to Dave & Busters, or go to the movies, or do something out of the ordinary” (Nell 3). “My freshman and sophomore years...my sophomore year I partied a lot...that’s why it was necessary for me to get 2 jobs after my sophomore year of college so I could pay back credit card debt” (Nell 6).

“Well, in the beginning of my college career, I...I partied a lot...um...It started tapering off Junior year probably. [...] I still party...go out. [...To relax] I read...um...depends on what I’m in the mood for. I’ll read different things...newspaper...magazine articles...um, some fiction...uh, I play soccer occasionally...go see a movie...rent a movie...uh...maybe thinking about going to do some bowling this weekend...maybe something like that...running...kinda getting into running, too, a little bit” (Tom 4-5).

“Right now...nothing. I’m a lazy butt. All I do is sit on my butt and watch TV when I’m not doing school or anything to that nature. Um, I usually...I usually go hunting or fishing...stuff like that, if, you know...those are usually one of the 2 big things I do. Now, I’m working at home...just cleaning up and fixing up stuff...mowing and throwing things away and burning stuff and everything, since we’re cleaning up after the hurricane. [...To relax I] watch TV...hang out with my friends. [...] Usually the weekends is my big times [to

socialize]...and sometimes during the week, if my friends and I have free time. [...We] go to dinner...watch TV...go to a bar...or just, you know, do whatever we can find that's cheap and stupid, so we can laugh" (Ann 2-3).

***Volunteer or School Organizations**

"Nothing school wise" (Joe 3).

"I'm also in a sorority, which takes up a lot of my time. [...] When you join a sorority, it's not only a social thing...well, my sorority is not only a social thing...it's a religious organization also" (Nell 3-4).

"I got involved with Anthropology Society a little bit...it's more of a social organization...they don't do much, and I kinda became disenchanted with the organization because I wanted it to do more, but no one else felt the same way...so, I kinda withdrew from that...and then my senior year, I started getting involved with volunteer activities...Habitat for Humanity...here in San Marcos...I started, um, volunteering with HOST, which is Helping One Student something something...you read...to help students read...elementary students. [...] I did, uh, Race for the Cure this past weekend, and I really enjoyed it" (Tom 4-5).

"I really wasn't all that active. I mean, you know, I was involved in Bobcat Fanatics, but that really didn't do anything...it was a cheer organization, you know. I was involved in Homecoming, but every...the things I've been involved have not been really that meaningful, towards the university" (Ann 5).

***Alcohol or Drug Related**

"[I] just go out and hang out...no...no drinking or anything like that...I'm not a big drinker. [...] No drinking just because [my friends are drinking]" (Joe 4).

"Usually when I'm having a lot of issues sleeping, I might drink a wine cooler or something small like that, and, uh, that helps me go to sleep" (Nell 3).

"Sometimes...well, maybe, like, during the week, I'll, you know, just hang out with friends...have some beers...watch TV...and on the weekends, you know, maybe one...one night on the weekend I'd go out. Well, first couple of years in college, I'd go out, you know, both nights on the weekends...maybe Thursday, Friday, Saturday...going out to the bar or to a house party and livin' it up...and then, uh, of course, later years...Junior, Senior year and this semester, you know, I just maybe go out one...one night on the weekends because I...it just takes me a little longer to recover from going out...getting older...um...and just going out, you know...maybe go out for dinner...go to the bars...maybe go to an after party after the bars...and then, you know, go to bed around 4...pretty late...[inaudible mumbling]...one night a week...[inaudible mumbling]...I don't know...partying...maybe some occasional drug use as well...would be incorporated in the partying. [...] Well, I've had discussions with professors about, you know, how much students drink, you know...number of drinks you average per week...and I would imagine that I drink, probably a lot, compared to some. Um...uh, given a week...well, let's just think about this week. Wednesday I hung out with some friends...probably had like 4 beers that night. Last night I had a beer, and on the weekends, maybe 6...maybe when I go out...6 to 8 drinks. [*Then I asked if he had a high tolerance.*] Not necessarily so...um...I...a high tolerance compared to someone who doesn't drink, probably...compared to some of my friends, no... 'cause I get kinda silly...giddy...um...after, you know, 3...and...I've grown up drinking, really...from a small town, and so I...I would...well, yeah...I'd say I have a high tolerance...I can when I want to. [*Then I asked, 'Is it mostly for...just for socializing?'*] Yeah" (Tom 4-5).

[*I asked if she drinks alcohol and she nodded, so I asked how much.*] "I'd say...It's not a lot...I'd say a little...I mean, I...it's usually on Friday and Saturday nights and usually I just have 1 or 2 drinks...kinda like that. [*Then I asked 'Mostly socially?'*] Socially, yeah" (Ann 3).

Research Question #3

Have the students' experiences at GSU fulfilled both their academic and non-academic expectations?

***What the Expectations were**

"No expectations...just another college. [*Then I asked, 'You didn't think anything of, like, the reputation?'*] Well, I heard it was a party school...that's the only thing I heard...but, I'm not a big partier, so that really doesn't affect me" (Joe 4).

"I didn't really have too many...I...I knew a little bit about the campus because I was involved with the Upward Bound program. And, Upward Bound program, like, I would spend time on campus, and I know some college students already before I came here. So, I was...I was connected with the GSU chapter at that time" (Nell 3-4).

"I didn't have...well, ok...I had...I didn't have high academic expectations of the school as far as...well, the reputation of it being a party school...I visited a friend here freshman year and partied...I...my impression was that people came to GSU because they couldn't get into the larger state schools...um...for some reason or another, they couldn't get into [U3] or...mainly [U1] because of the proximity...but other state schools...maybe [U2]...they couldn't get in there, so they came here...that was my impression of that...and the party image. [...] When I visited my friend freshman year, he was living in [a dorm on the GSU campus]...they had a sign in the window...it said, um, something along the lines, if I can remember this...something along the lines of...something good...*"Don't go out and drink tonight. You're gonna die!"*...or something like that [...] and that caught...you know, that made an impression on me 'cause I still remember it 'cause if people were going out drinking that much, then it's a problem...alcohol poisoning...And so...But, um, throughout my career...academic career...I know...well, it probably applies to other parts of my life, but you make...make...given the situation, you make the most out of it, depending on what you want" (Tom 5-6).

"Get an education...to meet people...make new friends...have fun...get a...get a good job" (Ann 3).

***Academic Fulfillment**

"Yeah...No...didn't have any...expectations...no. [...] I think college is college" (Joe 4-5).

"Uh, actually, I'm doing a lot better than I thought I would, now... 'cause when I first started off, it was real hard. It's like freshman courses are basically the weed out...that's what I think...so, they're a lot harder than they really had to be. But now that I'm finished with freshman courses, and I'm on my upperclassmen level courses, it's a lot easier...it's a lot more interesting...it's a lot more involved...the teachers tell you more about the field other than little stuff that you really don't need as a lowerclassmen or underclassmen" (Nell 4).

"Yes and no...I've become disenchanted with the Anthropology Department...um...well, it lies on the...I'm a cultural anthropologist, and there's 3 or 4 cultural anthropologists in the department, and...you break that further...there's...ethno-...doing ethnographic field work, which is what I'm interested in...there's 3 professors that are doing that, and they're not actively doing research anymore, and that's what I'm interested in...and I felt that because they're not actively doing research, I...I didn't get to participate in that as much as I would like to...But I was very fortunate, and I got to have that experience outside of...outside of the department...outside of the school...to another program at a different university...But, um...I did get to experience, you know, doing library research and learning from that. So there's parts of it where, uh, my expectations were fulfilled, but other parts, no" (Tom 6).

"Yeah...pretty much... I mean, there's some things I wish I could have changed in the past, but, you know. [...] One thing we really lack is the technology" (Ann 3-4).

***Social Fulfillment**

"It's a fun school" (Joe 4).

“A lot of people here are nice and very open-minded. I mean, you run...of course, you’re gonna run across your weeds...your few weeds...your rude people...your mean people...But, uh...I found the campus very diverse, and I like most of the people here. [...] Now, like, that I’m in a sorority, yes. Yes, I feel a lot more fulfilled about my college experience. The sorority helped...helped it out a lot. [...] It’s like I have somebody I can really talk to, and they can be considered really my friends...you know, I’m sayin’...they’re my sisters, and it seems as if they’re my real sisters...they’re not just, you know, friends that come and go every now and then, you know...so...it...and it gives me a lot more things to do, like, in my spare time...‘cause I feel like I can be in an organization, but I can’t be as active as I want to be. In this organization, there’s a lot more doors, and there’s a lot more things I’m learning about the campus because I’m behind the scenes” (Nell 4-5).

“Yeah...I...There’s so many things to do around here. Uh, while I was here, you know, I’d do some mountain biking up towards [a town near GSU]...you know, the river...just...I’d play Tennis...there’s so many outlets to do many things...and, you know, there...um, as far as night life...entertainment...the town is lacking a club...a good club...so maybe that is not fulfilled...um...if you want to get drunk, you can go to the [?Bucks?] Square and get drunk, but there’s no place to go to dance, really” (Tom 7).

“Yes...yes. [...] Well, I wish I’d...maybe I’d join a sorority, just so that I could say I’ve done that” (Ann 3).

Research Question #4

How do the students feel about the quality of education they are receiving from GSU in comparison with other schools?

***Quality of Education**

“Um...It’s alright...I’ve been to two different universities, and they’re about the same...teachers are the same...tests are the same. [...] If you study, you’ll do good...If you don’t, you do bad” (Joe 5).

“So far I’m satisfied, considering I am going in debt, but yeah, I’m satisfied” (Nell 5).

“I can say that I’m very satisfied with my education...the opportunities to...the opportunities are there...professors...most of the professors have an open door policy...you just walk in, and they’re willing to talk to you about anything...you know, a topic you covered in class, or just, uh, maybe a practical application...you just wanna shoot the breeze and say, uh, you know, ‘We learned this in class...I’m seeing this out in my life’...and explore that, which is...I think is very important. And I think you...maybe you miss out at a larger school...like, I don’t know, at [U3]...professors...the requirements there...I think...I’ve heard something like they have to have 10 publications a year, and with an emphasis like that, professors probably become very busy meeting those requirements...where as here, they’re lower, but they compensate that with, you know, um, other requirements...and probably the open door policy and focusing on teaching and helping students, which I appreciate very much” (Tom 7).

“I think it’s right up there...I mean, I’ve had friends of mine who have graduated from different universities, and we always compare. And it’s like, maybe the course name isn’t the same, but we’re like...we’d start talking about the class and what we’re having to do for a project or what the class...what we’re studying, and it’s pretty on target to what they’re doing...and that’s compared to [U3] and, you know, [U2] and stuff like that” (Ann 4).

***Prestige of Degree**

“I think it’s pointless...uh...or, my degree, itself, is pointless, for that, any job...‘cause my degree is only for coaching, teaching, anything with health...and I don’t want to do anything with health, so... [Then I asked, ‘With that degree, it wouldn’t really matter what school you got it from?'] Yeah...exactly” (Joe 5).

“I would hope, overall, my experience would help me more than the college...more so...my experience and me as a person, you know, would be able to help, when people see me, and they see the way I am, they’ll know that I am a qualified person for any type of job” (Nell 5).

“Well, a degree in Anthropology is not very marketable, nor competitive...a Bachelor’s degree...anywhere... [Then I asked, ‘To get you into the graduate school you want to go to?’] The graduate school?...I feel confident...um...I won’t be able to get into the very top schools, I don’t think...maybe...because of my...my research experience this summer and the possibility of having an article published...that...that increases my chances tons over, you know, someone...a graduate...a Bachelor’s degree...who doesn’t have any publications [?endorsed?]. But if you were to put everyone on the same level, with the same GPA, coming from different schools, I don’t think it’s as competitive...an Anthropology degree here...um...it’s just a combination of factors...so, yeah” (Tom 7-8).

“Yes. I’ve already had many a job interviews from just being at school here, so [...] I mean, it might not be...I think the only difference is the fact that it’s [U3]...[full name of U3]...and it’s, you know, [U2]...it’s got that name to it, but that’s it...but a name is a name, you know” (Ann 4).

***Impact of Name Change**

“It really doesn’t affect me, ‘cause I get the choice of either/or, so... [Then I asked, ‘On your degree?’] Yeah...I don’t mind...I don’t mind...I...I’d rather have [old name of GSU], though, since I went to [old name]...I really didn’t go to [new name of GSU], so...yeah...I’d say [old name]. [Then I asked, ‘Do you think that it’ll change the prestige of the school at all?’] No” (Joe 5).

“I’m hoping the name change does not really affect the future of my degree...um, I’m hoping that that won’t really be an issue. [Then I asked, ‘Does that mean, like, uh, you think that the name change might cause it to be less prestigious?’] Yes. [...] The name change is...I didn’t think it was necessary, by far...there was a lot of excuses that were made about the name change saying that it would be good, and, you know, it’ll help our reputation. They’ve changed the name, like, 4 or 5 times, and I didn’t think it was necessary...I mean, if you were satisfied the first time, that’s cool, but they say it’s good for the future of the school...but I don’t think it should really make a difference. I don’t like the name change, personally” (Nell 5).

“I think it’s good...I think it’s a good name change...um...but what it...it puts us up there with the top state schools. We were already...now we’re more...um, we’ll be more...we’ll be easily...easier...what am I trying to say? People will recognize it...the school...easier, with this name, as a top state school in Texas. But I’m afraid that...well [...] nevermind. [Then I asked, ‘What?’] Well, I was thinking, the state just deregulated tuition, and the name change comes at a time where state schools are going to be...well, the idea is to become more competitive, and that it will regulate tuition because the schools become more competitive...and it’s a race to become more competitive...and the name change happened at the same time, and it might...tuition will go up, but I don’t think the level of education will go up related to tuition, and I’m interested to see how it will unfold in the next few years” (Tom 8).

“We were building up our own name at [old name of GSU]...before they changed it to, you know...this [new name of GSU] thing...no one knows where we’re at. [...] I hate the name change...I think it’s retarded...I think it’s stupid...and I think the person in charge of it, [...], who went and did this, needs to be taken out and pistol-whipped...but that’s my personal opinion [I asked, ‘Do you think it’ll make a difference in the prestige of your degree?’] Nope... ‘cause people still will ask, ‘Where’s that at?’ ... [city GSU is in],’ ... ‘Oh, ok.’ And a lot of people...businesses...they still call it [old name]. And, you know, they’re gonna know it as one way. It’s like, my argument is this has been a hundred-year tradition...we’ve always had the name [old name]...that it be like going to [U3] and being like, ‘Ope, let’s change your name to [a random imaginary name].’ Why would you do that?...you know, it’s ridiculous. Why waste that money? That money could be spent on different things” (Ann 4).

PATTERNS

Lack of confidence in school's prestige/image/name

*Through self-deterministic rationalization

Prestige

"I think college is college...If you study, you'll do good...If you don't, you do bad" (Joe 5).

"I would hope, overall, my experience would help me more than the college...more so...my experience and me as a person, you know, would be able to help, when people see me, and they see the way I am, they'll know that I am a qualified person for any type of job" (Nell 5).

"Throughout my career...academic career...I know...well, it probably applies to other parts of my life, but you make...make...given the situation, you make the most out of it, depending on what you want...A person can excel in any area of life...it just depends on what they want...what they want to make out of it" (Tom 5-6).

"The graduate school?...I feel confident...um...I won't be able to get into the very top schools, I don't think...maybe...because of my...my research experience this summer and the possibility of having an article published...that...that increases my chances tons over, you know, someone...a graduate...a Bachelor's degree...who doesn't have any publications [?endorsed?]....But if you were to put everyone on the same level, with the same GPA, coming from different schools, I don't think it's as competitive...an Anthropology degree here...um...it's just a combination of factors" (Tom 8).

Party image

"Well, I heard it was a party school...that's the only thing I heard...but, I'm not a big partier, so that really doesn't affect me" (Joe 4).

"I emphasize self-determination...you know, you make yourself. And I always carry that attitude with me wherever I go...whenever I talk to someone about, you know, where...where I'm talking to them about what school I'm going to. When I first start, they're like, 'Oh, you go to Southwest...party school,' blah, blah, blah...it's like...I'm like, 'Yeah, if you'...'If you wanna do that, you know, there's that option, but there's that option at every school,' is what I would tell people...and if you don't...there's several opportunities not to do that, and, you know, you don't have to fall into that...you do what you want...here...So it didn't affect my own identity...Well, I...it did, 'cause people would, you know, associate that...if I told them, they'd associate that image with me, but then, you know, I tell them not everybody's doing that" (Tom 6).

*Name change won't improve things

"The name change is...I didn't think it was necessary, by far...there was a lot of excuses that were made about the name change saying that it would be good, and, you know, it'll help our reputation. They've changed the name, like, 4 or 5 times, and I didn't think it was necessary...I mean, if you were satisfied the first time, that's cool, but they say it's good for the future of the school...but I don't think it should really make a difference" (Nell 5).

"Well, I was thinking, the state just deregulated tuition, and the name change comes at a time where state schools are going to be...well, the idea is to become more competitive, and that it will regulate tuition because the schools become more competitive...and it's a race to become more competitive...and the name change happened at the same time, and it might...tuition will go up, but I don't think the level of education will go up related to tuition, and I'm interested to see how it will unfold in the next few years...whether we'll have like a stratified educational system where you'll have, you know...the bigger schools will cost more and in the hopes to be one of those schools, we changed our name so we'd be more appealing...so we can compete with the larger state schools, which in turn is about getting more students...it's higher tuition so you can pay your professors more, and I just don't know where we're going...whether or not that was

the intention [...] The only thing that'll make a difference in prestige is when you start getting more money so you can start doing more research. And the only way to do that...well, I'm not quite sure how you do that, but you have to go out and get grants, and the way to do that's partly through prestige and to...having people respect...and to know that that money's gonna be put to good use" (Tom 8).

[*In response to the question of whether the name change will make a difference in the prestige of her degree*] "Nope... 'cause people still will ask, 'Where's that at?' ... [city GSU is in], ... 'Oh, ok.' And a lot of people...businesses...they still call it [old name of GSU]. And, you know, they're gonna know it as one way" (Ann 4).

Lower (Some would say realistic) Academic Aspirations

***Degree is a requirement (just a piece of paper)**

"Um, my parents told me... 'Go to college!' ... So I went... I had no other... I had no other, like, beliefs of any other things. [...] College is the next step, no matter what" (Joe 1-2).

"It opens more doors, so society says. But it's supposed to open more doors, and it would ensure me more money in the future so that I could have a better life for... not only me... my family" (Nell 1). [*Referring to a college education*]

"Of course, there is, um, the practical side of it... that in today's world you need a college education to get an entry level position... to a position where you make about \$25,000" (Tom 1).

"How else are you gonna make it in the world unless you have some sort of degree... 'cause every other kind of job you get's gonna be minimum wage or something to that effect... you're not gonna get any... have promotions or anything" (Ann 1).

***Average GPAs**

"For major it's 3.25, and for my minor it's 3.0" (Joe 3).

"My GPA now is a 2.29, and, like, my... that's my cumulative GPA. Last semester my GPA was a 3.0" (Nell 2).

"It's 2.37?... 2.33?... 2.3 something" (Ann 2).

Lack of High Expectations (Therefore, lack of dissatisfaction)

"No expectations... just another college" (Joe 4).

"I didn't really have too many... I... I knew a little bit about the campus because I was involved with the Upward Bound program" (Nell 3).

"I didn't have... well, ok... I had... I didn't have high academic expectations of the school as far as... well, the reputation of it being a party school... I visited a friend here freshman year and partied... I... my impression was that people came to GSU because they couldn't get into the larger state schools... um... for some reason or another, they couldn't get into [U3] or... mainly [U3] because of the proximity... but other state schools... maybe [U2]... they couldn't get in there, so they came here... that was my impression of that... and the party image" (Tom 5).

"Get an education... to meet people... make new friends... have fun... get a... get a good job" (Ann 3).

Importance of Social Participation

[*In response to being asked what advice he would give incoming freshmen*] "Have fun! Don't take college too seriously. It's not that hard" (Joe 6).

"Now, like, that I'm in a sorority, yes. Yes, I feel a lot more fulfilled about my college experience. The sorority helped... helped it out a lot. [...] It's like I have somebody I can really talk to, and they can be considered really my friends... you know, I'm sayin'... they're my sisters, and it seems as if they're my real sisters... they're not just, you know, friends that come and go

every now and then, you know...so...it...and it gives me a lot more things to do, like, in my spare time... 'cause I feel like I can be in an organization, but I can't be as active as I want to be. In this organization, there's a lot more doors, and there's a lot more things I'm learning about the campus because I'm behind the scenes" (Nell 4-5).

[*In response to being asked what advice she would give incoming freshmen*] "Get involved in the school. Don't just pay money and go here...Get involved. Join an organization...meet people...get...that...don't just join a sorority or do...join one thing...join as many as you possibly can...get to know as many different people as you can, 'cause if you stick in one clique, you'll never get to know what other people are like" (Ann 5).

Desire to study what is interesting

[*Referring to why she chose her minor*] "I retook the course...second teacher I took was very good...and I got more into it, and it made me want to learn more about the subject...so, uh, I kept going on with that" (Nell 1).

[*Referring to why he changed his major*] "I originally chose Chemical Engineering because I knew that I could make a lot of money coming out of college, and I decided that that was not necessarily going to make me happy, and that at the moment, I wanted to make myself happy by studying something that I enjoyed...and Anthropology was appealing to me because it offered an understanding of larger systems and how cultures developed and how parts of culture interact with each other...And I wanted to gain that larger, holistic perspective" (Tom 1).

"I've become disenchanted with the Anthropology Department...um...well, it lies on the...I'm a cultural anthropologist, and there's 3 or 4 cultural anthropologists in the department, and...you break that further...there's...ethno-...doing ethnographic field work, which is what I'm interested in...there's 3 professors that are doing that, and they're not actively doing research anymore, and that's what I'm interested in...and I felt that because they're not actively doing research, I...I didn't get to participate in that as much as I would like to" (Tom 6).

[*Referring to why she chose her major*] "I started taking some Business classes...started liking them...didn't really like Accounting or Financial and Economics part, but I liked the Management and Marketing part, so I decided on that" (Ann 1).

CASES/THEORY

Scholastic, Instrumental, or Collegiate Motivations (Bogler Article)

***Tom: Mostly Scholastic/Slightly Instrumental**

Motivation

"I enjoy learning and I feel that a college education, specifically a liberal arts degree, able me to be aware of many different things occurring at the same time and how they interact. And of course, there is, um, the practical side of it...that in today's world you need a college education to get an entry level position...to a position where you make about \$25,000...something like that" (Tom 1).

"I'm sitting in on a class this semester. I'm not enrolled in it...you know, I'm not paying for the class...I don't need the credit, but what drives me to go to the class is, the um, understanding...learning the material and applying it" (Tom 3).

Satisfaction

"I can say that I'm very satisfied with my education" (Tom 7).

[*Response to being asked if his social expectations were fulfilled*] "Yeah...I...There's so many things to do around here. Uh, while I was here, you know, I'd do some mountain biking up towards [town near GSU]...you know, the river...just...I'd play Tennis...there's so many outlets to do many things" (Tom 7).

"I think it's a good name change...um...but what it...it puts us up there with the top state schools. We were already...now we're more...um, we'll be more...we'll be

easily...easier...what am I trying to say? People will recognize it...the school...easier, with this name, as a top state school in Texas” (Tom 8).

***Ann: Mostly Instrumental/Slightly Scholastic**

Motivation

“How else are you gonna make it in the world unless you have some sort of degree... ‘cause every other kind of job you get’s gonna be minimum wage or something to that effect...you’re not gonna get any...have promotions or anything” (Ann 1).

“I’m pretty active and stuff with my schooling, and, you know...I go to my classes. I don’t like to miss classes ‘cause I pay, you know, tuition and all that. Why spend the money on something and skip it? It’s a waste” (Ann 2).

[*Referring to grades*] “They’re very important...very important. I get upset when I...or not upset...but I get frustrated when I think I do better, and then I get the test results and I don’t do as well” (Ann 2).

Satisfaction

[*Response to being asked if her academic expectations were fulfilled*] “Yeah...pretty much” (Ann 3).

[*Response to being asked if her social expectations were fulfilled*] “Yes...yes” (Ann 3).

[*Referring to the quality of education she receives*] “I think it’s right up there...I mean, I’ve had friends mine who have graduated different universities, and we always compare. And it’s like, maybe the course name isn’t the same, but we’re like...we’d start talking about the class and what we’re having to do for a project or what the class...what we’re studying, and it’s pretty on target to what they’re doing...and that’s compared to [U3] and, you know, [U2] and stuff like that” (Ann 4).

“I hate the name change...I think it’s retarded...I think it’s stupid. [...*And then I asked if she thought the name change would make a difference in the prestige of her degree*] “Nope... ‘cause people still will ask, “Where’s that at?”... “[city GSU is in],”... “Oh, ok.” And a lot of people...businesses...they still call it [old name of GSU]. And, you know, they’re gonna know it as one way” (Ann 4).

***Nell: Some Instrumental/Some Collegiate/Slightly Scholastic**

Motivation

“Um, sociology...uh, the reason why...the main reason why I decided that to be my minor is because at first...at first, the first teacher I took, she was real bad...and then the second teacher...I retook the course...second teacher I took was very good...and I got more into it, and it made me want to learn more about the subject...so, uh, I kept going on with that. Health administration...I’ve always wanted to be in the health field, but I had, like, issues when it comes to blood...so, instead of me being in the, you know, in the room, doing surgery or anything having to deal with, uh, patients on I head on basis, I could do the background thing, and I could be the business part of the situation” (Nell 1).

[*Referring to a college education*] “It opens more doors, so society says, but its supposed to open more doors, and it would ensure me more money in the future so that I could have a better life for m-...not only me...my family” (Nell 1).

“Now, like, that I’m in a sorority, yes. Yes, I feel a lot more fulfilled about my college experience. The sorority helped...helped it out a lot. [...] It’s like I have somebody I can really talk to, and they can be considered really my friends...you know, I’m sayin’...they’re my sisters, and it seems as if they’re my real sisters...they’re not just, you know, friends that come and go every now and then, you know...so...it...and it gives me a lot more things to do, like, in my spare time... ‘cause I feel like I can be in an organization, but I can’t be as active as I want to be. In this organization, there’s a lot more doors, and there’s a lot more things I’m learning about the campus because I’m behind the scenes” (Nell 4-5).

Satisfaction

[*Response to being asked if her academic expectations were fulfilled*] “Uh, actually, I’m doing a lot better than I thought I would, now... ‘cause when I first started off, it was real hard. It’s like freshman courses are basically the weed out... that’s what I think... so, they’re a lot harder than they really had to be. But now that I’m finished with freshman courses, and I’m on my upperclassmen level courses, it’s a lot easier... it’s a lot more interesting... it’s a lot more involved... the teachers tell you more about the field other than little stuff that you really don’t need as a lowerclassmen or underclassmen” (Nell 4).

[*Response to being asked if her social expectations were fulfilled*] “A lot of people here are nice and very open-minded. I mean, you run... of course, you’re gonna run across your weeds... your few weeds... your rude people... your mean people... But, uh... I found the campus very diverse, and I like most of the people here” (Nell 4).

“I would hope, overall, my experience would help me more than the college... more so... my experience and me as a person, you know, would be able to help, when people see me, and they see the way I am, they’ll know that I am a qualified person for any type of job” (Nell 5).

“The name change is... I didn’t think it was necessary, by far... there was a lot of excuses that were made about the name change saying that it would be good, and, you know, it’ll help our reputation. They’ve changed the name, like, 4 or 5 times, and I didn’t think it was necessary... I mean, if you were satisfied the first time, that’s cool, but they say it’s good for the future of the school... but I don’t think it should really make a difference. I don’t like the name change, personally” (Nell 5).

***Joe: Some Instrumental/Some Collegiate**

Motivation

“Um, my parents told me... ‘Go to college!’... So I went... I had no other... I had no other, like, beliefs of any other things. [...] College is the next step, no matter what” (Joe 1-2).

“Well, everything I heard from my dad about hiring... they only hire certain people with a certain grade point average. So I knew I had to keep my grade point average up at the very end” (Joe 3).

[*Referring to grades*] “They’re not... they’re not intrinsically... I’m not... I’m not motivated for just doing it... just because.” [*Then I asked, ‘Just... so that it’ll look good on your resume?’*] “Yeah... That’s the only reason” (Joe 3).

“I really wanted to come here, so I came here... ‘cause all my friends came here” (Joe 2).

[*In response to being asked what advice he would give incoming freshmen*] “Have fun! Don’t take college too seriously. It’s not that hard” (Joe 6).

Satisfaction

“Um... It’s alright... I’ve been to two different universities, and they’re about the same... teachers are the same... tests are the same” (Joe 5).

[*Response to being asked if his degree would be prestigious enough to obtain the job of his choice*] “I think it’s pointless... uh... or, my degree, itself, is pointless, for that, any job... ‘cause my degree is only for coaching, teaching, anything with health... and I don’t want to do anything with health” (Joe 5).

Informational, Normative, or Diffuse Identity Processing Styles (Boyd Article)

***Tom**

Informational

“I chose Anthropology because I just... I became happier by studying Anthropology than Chemical Engineering... I was... I originally chose Chemical Engineering because I knew that I could make a lot of money coming out of college, and I decided that that was not necessarily

going to make me happy, and that at the moment, I wanted to make myself happy by studying something that I enjoyed...and Anthropology was appealing to me because it offered an understanding of larger systems and how cultures developed and how parts of culture interact with each other...And I wanted to gain that larger, holistic perspective” (Tom 1).

Academic Success

“My GSU GPA is 3...3.75. My overall is about 3.5 ‘cause of freshman year” (Tom 3).

“Very important...I try to make A’s in all my classes...I thought it was very important in the beginning, considering I was thinking about graduate school...that I would want to be...that I would make myself competitive by having a high GPA. And I just, um...also, I wanted to understand the material in the classes. With those interests, it just drove me to excel in classes. I took it very seriously. Um, as soon as I got here, I was considering the Honors Program, but I was a little reluctant to join because I thought maybe the classes would be harder...more work, and I was, I guess, kinda lazy. But after awhile, I did join the Honors Program because the classes were just more appealing...smaller classes. So, I would say that I actively sought out challenges in my classes” (Tom 2-3).

***Joe**

Normative

“Uh, I wanted to be a coach at first, and then I decided against it. But I’m already so far into it that there’s no point in changing it. So, I’ll just stick with...graduate with that...find a regular job” (Joe 1).

“Um, my parents told me... ‘Go to college!’...So I went...I had no other...I had no other, like, beliefs of any other things. [...] College is the next step, no matter what”

(Joe 1-2).

Academic Success

[Referring to his GPA] “For major it’s 3.25, and for my minor it’s 3.0” (Joe 3).

“I’ve always done pretty good in school...not trying, though...just...just always keeping the grades good” (Joe 3).

***Ann**

Informational

“I’ve just...trying to figure out what I wanna do...spent the first 2 and a half years in college going, “Alright, now what?”...Then finally deciding a major and figuring out exactly what I was gonna do with that and everything” (Ann 1-2).

“I started taking some Business classes...started liking them...didn’t really like Accounting or Financial and Economics part, but I liked the Management and Marketing part, so I decided on that” (Ann 1).

Academic Success

[Referring to her GPA] “It’s 2.37?...2.33?...2.3 something” (Ann 2).

“I’ve been pretty, you know, good at it...I mean, I’ve been here for long enough. [...] I mean...I’m pretty active and stuff with my schooling, and, you know...I go to my classes” (Ann 1-2).

***Nell**

Diffuse/Avoidant

“Oh, when I was a freshman, I had, like...I had broke up with my first, like, first love...so I didn’t have a roommate...I didn’t know that much about the campus as I knew

I...thought I did...because I'm from [city GSU is in]...thinking I'm from [city GSU is in], I would know a lot of people. But I knew people, but I didn't hang around a lot of people like I used to. 'Cause college is totally different from regular life, and my old friends that didn't go to college probably wouldn't understand. So I, like, slept a lot, instead of really studying. Sleeping was my main issue, my main problem my freshman year" (Nell 2).

Academic Success

"My GPA now is a 2.29, and, like, my...that's my cumulative GPA. Last semester my GPA was a 3.0" (Nell 2).

"Uh, actually, I'm doing a lot better than I thought I would, now... 'cause when I first started off, it was real hard. It's like freshman courses are basically the weed out...that's what I think...so, they're a lot harder than they really had to be. But now that I'm finished with freshman courses, and I'm on my upperclassmen level courses, it's a lot easier...it's a lot more interesting...it's a lot more involved...the teachers tell you more about the field other than little stuff that you really don't need as a lowerclassmen or underclassmen" (Nell 4).

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