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So It's Not Like the Movies? An Analysis of the Links Between Popular Culture, Motivation and Expectations in First-Year College Students

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SO IT'S NOT LIKE THE MOVIES?
AN ANALYSIS OF THE LINKS BETWEEN POPULAR CULTURE, MOTIVATION AND
EXPECTATIONS IN FIRST-YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Bachelor of Arts - English
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the

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is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

The rising concern regarding the graduation rates of university students in the United States has led to research being conducted in order to establish possible relationships between environmental factors and the high attrition rates for first-generation college students pursuing a Bachelor's degree at a four-year university. One factor to be examined is the portrayal of higher education in popular culture and the impact this has on students' perceptions, and therefore motivation and expectations, when entering into a four-year program at a university. This study sought to empirically identify if any such connection exists between the portrayal of higher education in popular culture and student expectations and motivation during their first year of college at a four-year, public university.

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So It's Not Like the Movies?

An Analysis of the Links Between Popular Culture, Motivation and Expectations in First-Year College Students

Chapter 1 - Introduction

College is an experience. For many, attending a university is a once in a lifetime opportunity, so it is important to seize that opportunity, making the most out of the experience while young. Because college students are not yet preparing to be professionals in the community and workplace, they should party, stay out late, make new friends (some friendships that could even last forever), and attend class when they can – or want to. And of course, no college experience is complete without at least one party at the fraternity house – and it *must* include a keg stand. Because college is all about the experience... Right?

Regardless of whether it sounds right or wrong, this narrative should at least sound familiar. This is the story that we, as a culture and as a community, tell young people. One study found that, “Films that had at least one teenager (i.e., 12–19 years old) as a main character depicted him or her smoking 17% of the time” and that, “40% of the major teen characters were shown drinking alcohol” (Wasyliw & Currie, 2011, p. 27). With movies like *National Lampoon's Animal House*, a story about a fraternity house who gets its charter revoked, and even children's movies like *Monsters U*, an animated film that features fraternity parties, bringing in tens of millions of dollars in revenue, it is no surprise that children and young adults spend years with this image in their head. The college experience. This story is the one that parents tell their teenagers, or secretly dread as they are driving to the university with their child's belongings in the back seat. However, this narrative should not be seen as lacking consequence. It is important

to find an empirical link to justify what educators already know about media discourse and its influence on higher education in order to change the script.

The primary objective of any four-year institution is to graduate its students with a Bachelor's degree within four years of admittance. With 2013 graduation rates as low as 59% (US Dept. of Education, 2015), and even less so for low-income, first-generation students, this raises serious concerns as what can be done to increase the graduation rate of first-time, first-generation, university students seeking a Bachelor's degree. This troubling issue is compounded by the United States consistently scoring below average in all three measured areas of Mathematics, Science and Reading when compared with 64 other nations in the perennially administered Program for Student Assessment (PISA) tests (US Dept. of Education, 2015).

The rising concern regarding the graduation rates of university students in the United States has led to research being conducted in order to establish possible relationships between environmental factors and the high attrition rates for first-generation college students pursuing a Bachelor's degree at a four-year university. One factor to be examined is the portrayal of higher education in popular culture and the impact this has on students' perceptions, and therefore motivation and expectations, when entering into a four-year program at a university. One cannot dismiss the impact popular culture and culture in general has on student perceptions and on any major institution, including higher education. This study sought to empirically identify if any such connection exists between the portrayal of higher education in popular culture and student expectations and motivation during their first year of college at a four-year, public university.

Relevant Scholarship

A contributing factor to why research such as this is so necessary stems from the general shortage of directly related research in this area. A thorough review of the literature found no

studies that have been conducted before. Despite this, delving into broader research areas on the media portrayal of higher education, the first-year experience, and student motivation and goal-setting provides a strong theoretical framework for this study.

Popular Culture and the Media. Lev Vygotsky (1968) provides the seminal theory for including popular culture and the media in this study. As Sociocultural Theory delineates, culture plays an essential role in development (Vygotsky, 1968). When ideas are socially transmitted, they become part of an internalized process (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996) and contribute to the construction of a figured world, which students use to form expectations for their experiences (Gee, 1999). Movies portray college students engaging in alcohol consumption, substance use, and class avoidance at an alarming rate (Tobolowsky, 2006; Reynolds, 2014; Wasylikiw & Currie, 2011) while reserving representations of academic life as comedy (Tobolowsky, 2006). Due to the social nature of the construction of knowledge, these (mis)representations may be negatively impacting students' motivation, self-regulation, and success during their first year of college.

First-Year Experience. Tinto (1993, 2012) began to lay the foundation for the keys to success for college students, which was followed-up by Astin (1993). Both stressed the importance of social integration and student connectedness to their institution in terms of positive outcomes for students. However, literature on the first-year experience also points to potential drawbacks of this integration with the college community. Various studies have found that college freshman overestimate the amount and approval of alcohol consumption on campus and, as a result, are influenced to drink at a higher rate (Hummer, LaBrie, & Pederson, 2012; Toomey, Lenk, Wagenaar, 2007). This is a strong indication in the literature that drinking is a critical piece of students' perceptions of the college experience.

Motivation. Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1961) lays the groundwork for student motivation and the potential role that popular culture plays in developing students' motivation during their first year of college. Motivation plays a critical role in the exploration outlined in this study because students with academically-oriented motivation have been shown to engage in more self-regulation and perform better in school as a result (Morrow & Ackermann, 2012; Valle, Núñez, Cabanach, González-Pienda, & Rodríguez, 2009; Guiffrida, Lynch, Wall & Abel, 2013). This creates a trichotomous system where students' perceptions are influencing their motivation, which as a result, influences their cognition and success as a college student.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to explore the link between the portrayal of higher education in the media and the motivation and expectations of university students. This study examined students' intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and task-value beliefs using the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1991). It also examined student sense of belonging along with perceptions and expectations of the college experience using scenarios developed from top-grossing and top-ranking films through a series of open-ended questions.

The guiding questions of the current research were:

- What are the levels of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, task-value beliefs, and sense of belonging in first-year college students?
- How are motivational factors and first-year students' expectations of college related?
- What links exist between various demographic groups (e.g. gender, age, etc.) and the motivational factors, sense of belonging, and expectations described above?

This study hypothesized that students who are exposed to central themes of partying, social life, Greek life, and the construct of the “college experience” would be more likely to pursue higher education for social means more so than educational means and have lower levels of motivation.

Research Design

This study was conducted following a mixed-methods design. Because motivation is such a highly-developed construct within the field of Educational Psychology, whereas popular culture and media influence is a social construct, mixed methods was a logical choice for data collection so that the data could provide appropriate insight into both phenomena. More specifically, an explanatory sequential design was used to validate and/or expand the quantitative results with qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The current design allowed for a robust gathering of data to analyze and determine how the qualitative data explained the quantitative results.

The participants for this study were chosen from the population of currently enrolled first-year students at a major, urban university in the southwest United States. This institution has a richly diverse student population and only a 12.9% four-year graduation rate for the incoming freshman class of 2009 (university’s website, 2015). This study employed a three-part survey for data collection: a modified MSLQ survey with additional questions for demographic information, a scenario-based open-ended survey for deeper discussion about students’ expectations for college, and a Sense of Belonging Questionnaire.

Procedure

At the beginning of the Spring 2017 school semester, participants enrolled in the research pool as a requirement for one of several courses in the College of Education. These courses were undergraduate courses designed to introduce students to research methodology in the social

sciences. The students were provided electronic access to the modified MSLQ, the scenario-based open-ended survey, and the Sense of Belonging Questionnaire, which they completed entirely online. Descriptive statistics and correlations were used to analyze the MSLQ, Sense of Belonging Questionnaire and structured items of the survey. The study analyzed variance between the mean scores for each of the four value belief subsections of the MSLQ, the four subscales of the Sense of Belonging Questionnaire and the mean score provided for each scenario (Pintrich & De Groot, 1991). The open-ended responses were read and inductively coded by the researcher to identify themes. Upon completion of all the data collection and coding, the quantitative and qualitative strands were integrated to get a final picture.

Expected Results and Implications

The expected result of this study was to demonstrate links between the portrayal of higher education in popular culture and actual college students' expectations and motivation. It was anticipated that university students develop expectations for college from popular, American college movies such as *Animal House* and as a result form low intrinsic motivation and task-value beliefs, and this has been shown to impact cognition and academic performance. When faced with the culture shock of "actual college," students may be less motivated and less likely to persist. Rationale for these expectations has its roots in the social sciences, all of which inform the idea that one's culture and surroundings shape one's views, goals, and values. More specifically, Educational Psychology supports this idea within the framework of Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1968) and Behavior Modeling (Bandura, 1961).

The implications that stem from this research include a better understanding of social factors that may be contributing to the United States' below-average performance on international academic assessment examinations. Additionally, this study identified possible and

important links between the portrayal of higher education in the United States and the low graduation rates of first-year students. In time, this information could be a catalyst for changing the discourse on higher education in popular movies, television, literature, and even social media.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

This literature review analyzes three major bodies of literature pertinent to the first-year college experience. The largest collection of literature exploration will deal with the media and how popular culture portrays higher education, how meaning is derived from such discourse, and potential outcomes of the above. The notion of the first-year experience from a developmental perspective will also be explored and will be considered from the lens of how it relates to student retention and persistence issues from year one to year two at a four-year institution. Lastly, a body of work dealing with student motivation will also be reviewed, both in terms of how to measure motivation and the impact of motivation in a college setting.

Media Influence

Undoubtedly the most important body of literature to evaluate for this study is the media influence on first-year college students. The media and popular culture provides a wealth of information for first-year and incoming students about college life. When watching top-grossing box office flicks like *Animal House* students are exposed to the notion of “the college experience.” According to the movies, college is about partying. College is about drinking. College is about girls. From toga parties, to chugging contests, to the glorified seventh-year senior, popular culture is full of insights about what to expect in college. *Animal House* in particular sends a clear message to watchers about college life. A fraternity group has its charter revoked by a dean determined to get them off of campus. The rebellious group throws toga parties, hosts beer chugging contests, and wreaks havoc on the other students, including starting a food-fight on campus – and they still stick around! These themes are not limited to adult movies either; even the G-rated children’s film *Monsters U* feature main characters Mike and Sully attending a fraternity party when they decide to go to college. Reading the past decade or

more of psychological research shows that expecting first-year college students to *not* learn from this portrayal of higher education is an impossible feat.

Sociocultural Theory. In *Thought and Language* (1968), Vygotsky developed Sociocultural Theory, a theory which emphasizes the role of culture on learning and development. Sociocultural Theory is characterized as the transmission of socially shared activities, through language and other symbolism, into internalized processes (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Vygotsky, 1968). In today's society, the connectivity of individuals is powered largely through the media – social media and mass media like multi-million dollar movies distributed around the world. As such, much of the socially-shared activities of this century occur via the media. Thus, it is a small leap to posit that as a consequence of this, most thought and internalized processes that occur as a result of socially-shared activities can also be linked to the media.

Figured worlds and background. Sociocultural Theory and Vygotsky's larger collection of work heavily emphasizes the role of language and discourse in the transmission of ideas. Using these theories, discourse analysts and James Gee, in particular, coined the term "figured worlds" to refer to the assumed theories about how the world works, which individuals use to form pictures in their heads (Gee, 1999). Figured worlds are a means by which people create simplifications to eliminate the necessity for providing extensive background for every discourse; figured worlds are a pervasive part of all interactions, and college students and the first-year college experience is no exception.

When a college student watches movies that focus on higher education, he or she creates a figured world about higher education – that is, an assumed idea about how college works. As Gee explains, "The simplifications in figured worlds can do harm by implanting in thought and

action unfair, dismissive, or derogatory assumptions” (p. 96). Movies about higher education often leave out or even portray as comical the academic components of higher education, leaving students with a very harmful, oversimplified idea of what to expect when they go to college (Sorkhabi & Strage, 2016; Reynolds, 2014).

A perspective that fills in some of the blanks left in an over-simplified figured world is the concept of background. Johnson (1987) posits that background is necessary for meaning-making. He continues to explain that every time an agreement on background meaning is made, a degree of associated assumptions comes with it. The critical role that background plays in meaning-making is that, “Without [image schemata] we cannot explain the connections... that obtain in our semantic networks” (p. 190). An example of the truth conditions (assumptions) associated with background is if I were to say “sweep the spilled coffee up off the floor”, you assume I am talking about coffee beans, rather than liquid coffee poured from a mug.

Similarly, when a student watches a film that portrays higher education, in order for the film to have meaning that student must accept background assumptions (Johnson, 1987). To name a few – if a student views a film that depicts partying in college, the background assumptions the student makes necessarily includes: 1) that he or she is able to go to college, 2) that partying is something that exists at college, 3) that the behavior modeled in the movie is behavior that is not punishable at college (unless punishment is shown in the film), 4) that if he or she goes to college, there will be parties there, 5) that he or she will be able to attend those parties, and finally, 6) that he or she will be able to partake in the behaviors modeled while at the parties at college. These assumptions are representative of the background schema that media discourse in the United States provides students with. Due to the role that perceptions play in

decision making (Barsalou, 1999) and motivation (Bandura, 1968), these background assumptions are harmful to college students' persistence through graduation.

Empirical Studies on Media Discourse. Despite being limited, some empirical studies have been conducted that begin the conversation of analyzing the effects of media influence on college students. While focus in the last few years has begun to turn to the media and the negative impact it has on college students, a gap in the literature still remains connecting popular culture media discourse with academic standards and outcomes in the United States. This study sought to address this gap.

Sorkhabi and Strage (2016) conducted a qualitative study which found that students who matriculate “for the college experience” were outperformed by their peers who matriculated for different reasons. The authors of the study did not define “the college experience”, but rather measured students who listed that as their reason for matriculation. As such, an assumption is being made here that “the college experience” is the socially-constructed view of college perpetuated by the media which emphasizes social activities and experimentation above academics. One-fifth of the respondents in the study responded as having matriculated for the “college experience”, N = 37 of 182 (Sorkhabi & Strage, 2016). At the most general level, it was reported that, “Students in [the] sample who report coming to college ‘for the college experience’ would appear to be at risk for academic difficulties” (p. 331).

To explicate some of the challenges facing students who matriculate “for the college experience,” the study found that this group tended to study less, miss class more often, and exhibit more naïve epistemic beliefs (Sorkhabi & Strage, 2016). When compared to their peers who reported other reasons for matriculating, such as earning excellent grades, these students more often felt like poor performance in their classes was outside of their control, a feeling

which likely led to a decreased amount of engagement and effort with their studies. It is realistic to point the finger at popular culture for portraying “the college experience” in such a way that has profound negative impacts on students. Of the students surveyed, 20% are facing these challenges (Sorkhabi & Strage, 2016) and surely many more are influenced by this same notion even if they did not cite that as the reason for matriculation.

In popular culture, we are not showing the college experience as educators would want it to be shown, or in a way that will most benefit first-year students who lack hands-on experience about what college is really like and rely on other sources (i.e.: movies) to inform their expectations. In order to explore the nature of the college experience and the portrayal of higher education in the media, Tobolowsky (2006) analyzed seven prime-time TV shows to form themes among them regarding portrayals of college. Tobolowsky (2006) explains, “Intellectual pursuits are often depicted in a comedic manner. Professors are frequently presented as tough task-masters, insensitive to their students’ fragile egos” (p. 25). In essence, the academic part of academia is comedic, according to the media.

Students’ perceptions about higher education, especially when they are misinformed, may cause a series of reciprocal issues with engagement in coursework and academic performance. Gee cites Barsalou’s work in his textbook *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis* explaining, “Meanings arise from embodied experiences connected to goals and actions” (2014, p. 115). Perceptions can and do manifest in decision making and are an integral part of the learning process. To elaborate, “Because perception and cognition share common neural systems, they function simultaneously in the same mechanisms and cannot be divorced” (Barsalou, 1999, p. 603). Thus, it is important not to ignore the impact popular culture discourse is having on higher education.

Representing Higher Education. According to Reynolds (2014), higher education in popular culture is almost always seen through a students' lens, and as such puts social life above intellectual development and educational goals. Reynolds' research discusses the prominent themes that exist in discourse about higher education in popular culture. Portrayals of college life focus on ideas of social life, personal growth and life experiences, and the idea of college being a learning institution gets lost in the background (Reynolds, 2014). When the academic facets of higher education do surface in popular culture, it is in a negative framework. Exposure to such themes serves as the lens for first-generation students entering college, and supports the idea that this discourse, like motivational goal setting, may have an impact on persistence and achievement.

Reynolds' (2014) monograph *Representing 'U': Popular Higher Education* scans the literature and provides a synthesis of how higher education is represented in popular culture. Reynolds's analysis is a seminal piece in this literature review and the subsequent research questions. Reynolds (2014) takes an in-depth look at the way higher education is represented in the media and popular culture from various perspectives, including at the institution level, the faculty level, and of course, the student level. Across the board, the findings are clear – popular culture discourse minimizes and vilifies the academic aspects of higher education, focusing on social aspects instead.

Popular culture's portrayal of higher education impacts discourse and action in and toward higher education in myriad ways. These portrayals misinform students about gender and race populations on college campuses, expectations of them academically, the nature of relationships with academic faculty, and the goals of college attendance during their first year. Of key interest for this study is the “academic-lite” representation of academia. As Reynolds

explains, “Social life takes precedence over higher education’s academic mission except when exams loom or professors obstruct their students in some way” (2014, p. 30). The fact that professors are seen and portrayed as “obstructions” is cause enough for testing the hypothesis that popular culture discourse is negatively impacting higher education.

“*The Animal House Effect*”. One study that has made strides toward empirically connecting movie exposure to negative attitudes toward the academic aspects of higher education is “The *Animal House* Effect: How University-Themed Comedy Films Affect Students’ Attitudes” (Wasylikiw & Currie, 2011). Wasylikiw and Currie (2011) conducted a two-part experimental study in order to determine the impact that exposure to the movie *Animal House* had on college students. Part one of this study examined the portrayal of higher education in popular culture across 34 different films. Part two of the study experimentally demonstrated the impact these films had (Wasylikiw & Currie, 2011).

The content analysis portion of the Wasylikiw & Currie (2011) study discovered major trends in college-themed comedy films. The first major trend identified was an overrepresentation of white males on a college campus. A second, related trend was the stereotypical representation of females and minority members. Caucasian males were most often portrayed in positions of power and females as mothers and housekeepers. Persons of minority status were seen in menial service positions more often than their Caucasian counterparts (Wasylikiw & Currie, 2011).

Another trend uncovered in the film analysis involved the risk-taking behaviors of college students. Risk-taking was portrayed as a common occurrence in the college setting, including consuming alcohol and smoking cigarettes. Wasylikiw and Currie found that, “Films that had at least one teenager (i.e., 12–19 years old) as a main character depicted him or her

smoking 17% of the time and 40% of the major teen characters were shown drinking alcohol” (2011, p. 27). In coding the films, it was found that representation of alcohol and tobacco had the highest frequency, whereas representation of academic life and studying had the lowest. Teenagers and young adults are known to be influenced by what they watch on television or see in the movies, making these statistics harmful for higher education.

The experimental portion of the Wasyliw & Currie (2011) study was conducted by having students indicate which of 74 college-themed comedies they had seen. After collecting that information, the researchers split the participants into two groups – one viewed a clip of *Animal House* and another that viewed a clip of *Planet Earth*. After viewing the movie clips, participants were asked to reflect on their substance use, their attitudes about substance use, and their attitudes about academics. The results of the study were:

The number of different movies participants watched significantly related to substance use and attitudes toward substance use such that the more movies a participant viewed, the more likely they consumed alcohol/drugs and the more positive their attitudes toward substance abuse were. (Wasyliw & Currie, 2011, p.33)

Moreover, movie viewing increased negative attitudes toward the academic aspects of higher education. Despite the predicative validity of movie viewing and attitudes toward substance use, “Participants’ own substance use failed to significantly predict their attitudes toward academics” (p. 34). Perhaps this is an indication of students not associating substance use with poor academic performance. This missing association is very reflective of the same missing link in popular culture which fails to portray the academic pitfalls associated with substance use.

Summary. As this section demonstrates, the consistent themes in popular culture’s portrayal of higher education promote alcohol consumption, substance abuse, and negative

attitudes toward academics. This media discourse may be damaging to college freshman, increasing their risk-taking behaviors while simultaneously decreasing their self-regulation. As Covington (2000) laid out, motivation, cognition, and achievement are all interconnected for student success. In order to foster this success, it is critical to create an empirical link between media discourse and student motivation (and thus persistence) in order to change the script on how higher education is portrayed.

First-Year Student Experience

The first year of attendance at a university is often seen as a pivotal year of transition and change. Students are not only adjusting to the academic rigor of college-level coursework, but for many, this year also possibly marks a departure from home, moving to a new city, living in campus residence halls, understanding the difference in relationships between college professors and high school teachers, and making new friends. During this same period, and likely for their entire lives, students are inundated with movies and television shows depicting college life as a big party (Strage & Sorkhabi, 2016; Reynolds, 2014), potentially shaping their expectations of the first year.

Student Integration. Tinto (1993) lays a foundation for student retention in his seminal work *Leaving College*. His Integration Theory looks at student retention through the completion of an undergraduate degree as an outcome of the extent to which a student integrates into his or her college community. In this, Tinto (1993) lays a foundation for why students leave college. It is upon this foundation that many theories and empirical studies exploring first-year students, who are at an increased risk of leaving college, are built.

Further development of Tinto's Integration Theory (1993) has shown that student motivation as well as student involvement are major predictors and influencing factors in first

year students' persistence from year one to year two. Tinto's Integration Theory is among the most cited theories in student persistence research, reaching well over 400 citations just years after it was first published (Braxton, Sullivan & Johnson, 1997). However, Tinto's theory has not been without criticism, having been described as lacking empirical evidence and statistical testing (Braxton, Sullivan & Johnson, 1997; Neuville et al., 2007). Statistical testing which compared the integration model with a task-value model following work such as Bandura (1968) and Pintrich (1990) found that the integration model was the worst for predicting persistence (Neuville et al., 2007).

Peer-to-peer involvement. Astin's (1993) Theory of Involvement similarly posits that students who are more involved and integrated into campus life, including participation in sororities and fraternities, are less likely to drop out of college. By adding additional emphasis on the peer-to-peer interaction, Astin (1993) highlights the social interaction portion of Tinto's Integration Model, which simultaneously diminishes the faculty interaction component.

Critique of Social Integration. With both Integration Theory (Tinto, 1993) and Theory of Involvement (Astin, 1993) the role of student involvement is called into question when other factors of this integration are considered. For example, involvement in Greek life is shown to increase the risk for first-year college students to develop alcohol dependency (Gerkin & Sher, 2006). Grekin and Sher (2006) found that among first-year college students, "Dependence rates were significantly higher than average rates found for adults in nationally representative surveys" (p. 334). They also found that participants dropped out of the study before completion reported higher level of alcohol consumption than those included in the final results ($M = 1.4$ times, $SD = 1.7$ compared to $M = .95$ times, $SD = 1.4$, $p < .0001$). The media also provides insight into an over-emphasis on social integration in college. The film *Legally Blonde* is all about the main

character Elle Woods making friends in college. While she does form presumably life-long connections, the end of the film presents the final, victorious piece of her story as her getting a new boyfriend – not her successful making progress in her academic field with her new law degree. These findings represent a potential shortcoming of such theories that heavily rely on the positive benefits of increased levels of involvement on a college campus.

Despite this, one important consideration is whether or not social integration would be a more successful predictor of persistence (Neuville et al., 2007) if students had a different expectation of what social integration looked like in a college setting. Tinto and Astin's theories highlight the value of social integration as if it were in a silo; however, because popular culture highlights social integration as centered around partying, substance use, and experimentation, the shortcomings of encouraging this are evident. However, if social integration in college was portrayed differently, perhaps it would be the indicator of success these theories predict it will be.

Sense of Belonging. In an effort to assess the aspects of social integration discussed above, the use of a Sense of Belonging Questionnaire was included in the survey. By assessing how integrated students feel with the college community, this may shed light on if integration is in fact a predictor of persistence in the sample population. In his work, Strayhorn discusses sense of belonging as a motive behind human behavior (2012). Sense of belonging is defined in terms of college as “Students’ perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers)” (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 3). As such, a twenty-six-item Sense of Belonging Questionnaire was included developed from the original measure of sense of belonging created by Hagerty and

Patusky (1995) (Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow, & Salomone, 2003). The questionnaire addresses five different subscales of belongingness: perceived peer support academically, perceived peer support, perceived faculty support, perceived classroom comfort, perceived isolation, and empathetic faculty understanding. These subscales will ask questions such as, “I discuss events which happen outside of class with my classmates,” and “I feel comfortable volunteering ideas or opinions in class” (Hagerty & Patusky, 1995).

Use of the Sense of Belonging Questionnaire. Hagerty and Patusky’s Sense of Belonging questionnaire has been adapted and used in a wide array of research studies with focuses ranging from childhood adversity (Corrales, Waterford, Goodwin-Smith, Wood, Yourell, & Ho, 2016) to depression and suicide risk (Fisher, Overholser, Ridley, Braden, & Rosoff, 2015). Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow, and Salomone (2003) developed the twenty-six-item scale in their study on first-year college students.

Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow and Salomone (2003) administered the Sense of Belonging Questionnaire to 448 students enrolled in 17 different general psychology courses. After collecting the responses from the participants, exploratory factor analyses were performed to identify the main conceptual dimensions of sense of belonging in first year students. This analysis lead to the development of five major scales: perceived peer support (both academically and socially) ($\alpha = .87$), perceived faculty support ($\alpha = .87$), perceived classroom comfort ($\alpha = .90$), perceived isolation ($\alpha = .82$), and empathetic faculty understanding ($\alpha = .75$).

The major finding of this study is that students who were involved in learning communities scored higher on all five subscales than students who were not involved in learning communities. Quoted from Tinto (1998), learning communities were defined as “a kind of co-registration or block scheduling that enables students to take courses together” (Hoffman,

Richmond, Morrow, & Salomone, 2003). The use of learning communities in a university setting was found to increase students' attachment and to college and reassured them to continue persisting in school.

Similarly to Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow and Salomone (2003), this study sought to identify the role of sense of belonging in the first year student experience. No literature was found that explores the role of sense of belonging in relation to student motivation as derived from popular culture influence. As such, this study sought to address that relationship as well, with the goal to identify if students' increased sense of belonging in their college communities is linked with notions of partying and "the college experience" derived from the media.

Alcohol Consumption Among Freshmen. One possible link to the higher-than-average rates of alcohol consumption among first-year college students is the representation of drinking college life in popular culture and the media. Movies such as *Animal House* and *Van Wilder* almost exclusively focus on the social aspects of college life. Tobolowsky (2001) finds in her study that first-year students' limited experience makes them especially susceptible to deriving perceptions from the media. First-generation students, in particular, "Were more likely to have medium or weak commitments to college attendance" (p. 150). This may, at least in part, be evidence of an even greater risk facing first-year students of being influenced by the media.

Along this same line of inquiry, Hummer, LaBrie and Pederson (2012) conducted a quantitative study that found that first-year students were the most likely to consume alcohol on college campuses. Not only were they the most likely to consume alcohol, but first-year students were also found to overestimate the consumption of alcohol as well as the general opinion and level of acceptance of alcohol usage among their peers living in their residence hall. This overestimation also led to greater amounts of consumption. As Hummer, LaBrie and Pederson

(2012) explained, “Greater connectedness to residence hall and higher perceived norms combined to accentuate alcohol-related risk for higher use and more permissive attitudes, over and above the unique effect of perceived norms” (p. 157).

Similarly, first-year college students have heightened perceptions of alcohol use on college campuses; over-estimating the usage and acceptance of alcohol consumption (Hummer, LaBrie, & Pederson, 2012; Toomey, Lenk &, Wagenaar, 2007). Popular culture portrayal of college life and the first-year college experience is an easy choice for considering where this over-estimation may stem. As just one of many examples – *Animal House* features main character Bluto chugging whiskey straight from the bottle while wearing a sweatshirt that reads “College”. Incoming college freshman and high school students are flooded with examples in movies and television that depict college life as revolving around partying, Greek life, alcohol consumption, sexual promiscuity, and experimentation. It is likely that this portrayal of higher education is at the root of first-year students’ beliefs, and as Hummer, LaBrie and Pederson (2012) found, these misconceptions are causing increased alcohol consumption among college freshmen.

Addressing the prevalence of drinking among first-year students demands policy change, but also a critical look at the de-facto acceptance of alcohol consumption on a college campus. A meta-analysis by Toomey, Lenk and Wagenaar (2007) reviewing over 100 peer-reviewed articles emphasized the prevalence of drinking on college campuses and the potential policy changes that would reduce consumption. One critical observation made in this analysis was the presence of college events that were sponsored by alcohol vendors (Toomey, Lenk & Wagenaar, 2007). This speaks to the normative nature of drinking among first-year college students. Moreover, this is a very likely contributor to the issue of first-year students over-estimating the consumption and

approval of alcohol on campus (Toomey, Lenk & Wagenaar, 2007; Hummer, LaBrie & Pederson, 2012).

Mindfulness of discourse on higher education and interventions such as media literacy (Sharrar, 2015) may serve as mediating influences of the environment of alcohol consumption for college freshman. However, Toomey, Lenk and Wagenaar (2007) suggest that, “Whereas some policies may create enough of an environmental change by themselves to affect a significant reduction in alcohol use among college students, some policies and strategies may need to be implemented in combination with others to be effective” (p. 216). Shifting the discourse on alcohol consumption on a college campus is one such strategy that may cause an environmental change by altering students’ perceptions of college life.

Self-Determination Theory. An important consideration when evaluating how students’ perceptions impact their behavior is intrinsic motivation. Ryan and Deci (1995, 2000) developed the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as a framework for analyzing intrinsic motivation and the three fundamental requirements necessary for self-regulation: autonomy, competence and relatedness. Intrinsic motivation is described as being a more “authentic” motivation and is characterized as seeking new experiences to expand and improve one’s own capacities. The alternative, extrinsic motivation, is characterized as seeking experiences for reasons outside oneself, such as relationships, money, pressure, etc. As Ryan and Deci state regarding its importance, “Perhaps no single phenomenon reflects the positive potential of human nature as much as intrinsic motivation” (2000, p.70). In an expansion of Self-Determination Theory, Deci and Ryan (2000) further discuss the potential factors that serve to inhibit or increase intrinsic motivation in individuals, such as autonomy and tangible rewards.

As Astin (1993) notes in his Theory of Involvement, action and involvement are necessary components for motivation. Moreover, Ryan and Deci (2000) speak to the need to stimulate intrinsic motivation to fight off passivity. Intrinsic motivation is directly linked to activity and creativity, making passivity the enemy to creating. Involvement and self-regulation also serve as mechanisms with which to prevent passivity. Deci and Ryan (2000) explain, “Humans have an inclination toward activity and integration, but also have a vulnerability to passivity” (p. 76). Institutions of higher education must maintain high levels of intrinsic motivation in students to facilitate students’ academic achievement at higher levels (Allen, 1999; Covington, 2000; Friedman & Mandel, 2009; Robbins, Lauver, Le, Davis & Langley, 2004; Valle et al., 2009).

A study by Morrow & Ackermann (2012) found a link between motivation and first-year persistence in college students. Using multiple regression analysis, the study found that, “The overall logistic regression [for motivational attitudes and 2nd year retention] was significant ($p < .001$), accounting for 10% of the variance in retention” (Morrow & Ackermann, 2012, p. 487). This study supports that appropriate goal-setting and intrinsic motivation in first-year students is a critical component to potentially increase the likelihood of students persisting from year one to year two in their academics.

Summary. Analyzing the impact that popular culture’s portrayal of higher education may shed light on the over-estimation of alcohol consumption and acceptance among first-year college students. Establishing a link between students’ motivation and first year students’ expectations of college is a critical piece of the current study. With the use of a mixed-methods approach to collect motivation and sense of belonging information, as well as facilitating

discussion about college life and expectations for college, this inquiry may provide insight into the levels of motivation students have while attending college.

Motivation

As was discussed previously, motivation is the linchpin behind most of what we as people do and seek. For students, motivation to attend college surely stems from a variety of sources both intrinsic and extrinsic. Personal experience tells us that the more motivated someone is to do something, the harder they will work at it and the better they will do as a result. This holds true for students; the more a student is motivated to achieve academically, the more effort he or she will put into his or her studies and the better the outcome will be. In the following section, motivation will be discussed in terms of its theoretical roots and how it will be measured in the current study.

Social Cognitive Theory. Social Cognitive Theory posits that a portion of an individual's knowledge is derived from observing others (Bandura, 1961). This theory of social learning suggests that by observing a model performing a behavior, an individual is capable of learning the steps and then repeating the behavior. It is important to consider the implications of this style of "monkey see; monkey do" learning when analyzing the impact of popular culture's portrayal of higher education. When watching top-grossing college-themed movies such as *Animal House* or *Monsters U* (Box Office Mojo, 2009), college students and incoming college students observe models drinking, partying, socializing and experimenting as a cornerstone of their "college experience." As Bandura's work would suggest, it is only reasonable to expect first-year college students to model such behavior (1961). If students adopt this passivity in their self-regulatory behaviors, their success in college will suffer as a consequence (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Thus, it is vital to assess the impact that this portrayal is having on students.

Measuring Student Motivation. One way to attempt to derive the impact of observed behaviors is to measure and assess a person's motivation for completing a task. The Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) is a tool derived from Social Cognitive Theory (Duncan & McKeachie, 2005; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). The MSLQ is comprised of 15 scales, which can largely be grouped into motivation scales and learning strategies scales (Duncan & McKeachie, 2005). Within the motivation scale, the three subscales employed in this study are: 1) intrinsic goal orientation, 2) extrinsic goal orientation, and 3) task-value beliefs (Duncan & McKeachie, 2005; Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, McKeachie, 1993). These subscales asked questions such as, "In my college classes, I prefer course material that arouses my curiosity, even if it is difficult to learn." and, "It is my own fault if I don't learn the material in this course." (Duncan & McKeachie, 2005).

Use of the MSLQ. A wide array of studies have employed the MSLQ, providing evidence that it is a reliable and effective tool (Allen, 1999; Duncan & McKeachie, 2005; Hancock, 2002; Jacobson, 2000; Pintrich, Smith, Garcia & McKeachie, 1993). In the context of this study, the motivation scales of the MSLQ were used to evaluate students' motivation related to their learning in college. Assessing motivation is an essential piece of this study because, "The value component of student motivation involves students' goals for the task and their beliefs about the importance and interest of the task" (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990, p. 34). It could be argued that if students believe that academics are a "necessary evil" in order to continue to engage in partying and "the college experience" then they will have low levels of motivation to achieve academically.

As Pintrich and De Groot (1990) explain, "Students high in intrinsic values were more likely to use cognitive strategies and to be self-regulated than students low in intrinsic value" (p.

36). While there is a gap in the literature related to this specific use of the MSQ, many other studies have been conducted using the MSQ and the motivation subscales to evaluate college students' motivations and effort regulation.

Jacobson (2000) administered the MSQ to over 300 undergraduate students to determine if the MSQ was an effective tool for non-traditional students in addition to traditional students. The study determined that the MSQ was in fact effective for non-traditional students (Cronbach's Alpha = .94). Additionally, the study found that non-traditional students had higher means for: elaboration, organization, metacognitive self-regulation, time and study regulation, and effort regulation, when compared to traditional students (Jacobson, 2000).

The Jacobson (2000) study further concluded that, "When the alpha level, the effect size, and the power are considered together, there is stronger evidence that the differences between traditional and non-traditional students do exist regarding motivation and strategies for learning" (p. 55). While this study strengthens the MSQ's reliability and shows that traditional students do score differently on the MSQ, it does not directly address first-year students. However, it was estimated that similar differences between first-year students and second through fourth-year students would be seen.

Allen (1999), on the other hand, did focus his study on college freshmen. Much as this study sought to do, Allen cited choosing freshman year for his study because it is "the most critical in shaping persistence decisions" (Allen, 1999; Astin, 1993). Combining document data and a Likert scale, this study, "Empirically verifies the conventional wisdom that motivation may affect the behavior of some sub-groups of students and is responsible at least in part for influencing academic achievement" (Allen, 1999, p. 481). Just as Pintrich (1990) suggests, motivation and school interest are variables which impact persistence. By evaluating first year

students' expectations of college as a gauge for school interest, a connection can be made with student motivation.

Another pertinent study that employed the MSQ evaluated graduate students and the effects of verbal praise on their academic performance (Hancock, 2002). The results of the study concluded that students who received verbal praise submitted more of their assignments and performed better in the class. While Hancock's study focuses on graduate rather than undergraduate students, it employed the same subscales of the MSQ that this research study intends to use.

No literature was found that indicated the use of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990) to evaluate the effects of popular culture and/or the media on influencing students' perceptions and motivation. However, the abundance of use of the MSQ and the appropriate subscales speaks to its applicability in this research study. The MSLQ is an effective and reliable tool that will help fill in the gaps in the literature by measuring the motivational beliefs that first-year students hold about college.

Linking Goals, Cognition and Achievement. Beyond just measuring beliefs, it is important to consider how goals (derived from intrinsic motivation) are linked to cognition, and as a result, achievement. Covington explains how Goal Theory, motivation and student achievement develop a trichotomous model. By examining two individual, empirical links, 1) Goals → Cognition, and 2) Cognition → Achievement, a third link can be made which supports to hypothesis that goal setting is linked to achievement in an academic context (Covington, 2000). This trichotomous link is critical to the research questions of the study as a basis of establishing the importance for measuring the intrinsic motivation of first-year college students. Covington's review of motives-as-goals takes into account an extensive body of research in

order to provide as complete a picture as possible of the “motivational dynamics of school achievement” (p. 172). This review assumes motivation as a goal, not as a drive, consistent with achievement goal theory (Covington, 2000).

The goals that a student sets, specifically those that are achievement-oriented, has been shown to have an impact on the level of academic attainment (Covington, 2000; Valle et al., 2009). As Covington explains, “One’s achievement goals are thought to influence the quality, timing, and appropriateness of cognitive strategies that, in turn, control the quality of one’s accomplishments” (p. 174). Because motivation is statistically linked to performance (supported in both correlational and lab studies), it is important to acknowledge the potential impact of popular culture on academic performance, which can be assessed by measuring student motivation, according to the trichotomous framework in Covington’s research.

Motivation’s role in goal-setting. Reviewing the impact of achievement goal theory on learning quality, Valle et al. (2009) proposed that motivation played a role in the nature of the goals that students set for themselves. Goals that focused on learning outcomes (intrinsic), unlike goals focused on performance (i.e. grades) and performance-avoidance (extrinsic), had a significant relationship with the quality of education for university students. Goals that were characterized as being motivated by learning outcomes were positively correlated with persistence and effort regulation. Valle et al. concluded that, “Only the motivational orientation in which the desire and concern to learn and increase knowledge... is related to the learning quality levels characterized by the high value assigned to academic tasks, high persistence and self-efficacy” (2009, p. 103).

These findings support the premise that students' intentions and goal setting when entering a university have an impact on persistence and achievement. When students set goals based on achievement and motivation, they will succeed at a higher level. Moreover:

Students with higher levels of [learning-type] motivational orientation will show more persistence (effort regulation), will place more value on academic tasks and activities, be more capable of self-regulating their learning, manage their time better, and will present higher self-efficacy and beliefs of control over their own learning. (p. 102)

It is this foundation provided by Covington and Valle, et al. that enables this study to gather meaningful data on student motivation without actually measuring student performance or persistence. A focus on social rather than academic aspects of college life is not a foundation on which incoming and first-year college students can build learning-based motivational goals.

The findings from Valle et al.'s study are not met without criticism. In a meta-analysis conducted by Robbins, Lauver, Le, Davis & Langley (2004), achievement motivation was shown to have a weak relationship with retention (.066). Consistent with Astin's Theory of Involvement (1984), social involvement was found to be correlated with retention ($p = .216$). A potential limitation identified in the meta-analysis was the small sample size for achievement motivation ($k = 6 - 8$ compared to $k = 1,627 - 11,482$). The inconsistencies in the data suggest a need for further research into the impact of achievement motivation, influenced by the media, on academic performance and persistence.

Another study that was conducted to explore the impact of motivation on college students found that motivation changed from year one of college to year two (Friedman & Mandel, 2009). This study employed the Student Motivation Questionnaire (SMQ), which uses a 7-point Likert scale for 72 questions, developed by Friedman and Lechner (2005). After one year of college,

students had higher academic ($\beta = .13$) than social ($\beta = -.09$) motivation. Students also found getting good grades attractive ($\beta = .02$) more so than making friends ($\beta = -.02$). Friedman and Mandel's findings conflict with a large body of research that shows academic motivation as a factor for retention. Moreover, this study does not look at first-year college students who may come into school with different motivation and perceptions of making friends, as evidenced by other misconceptions about college life that first year students harbor, particularly in terms of alcohol consumption (Toomey, Lenk & Wagenaar, 2007; Hummer, LaBrie & Pederson, 2012).

Consistent with the hypothesis of this study, Guiffrida, Lynch, Wall and Abel (2013) determined in their quantitative analysis that reasons for attending college impacts academic outcomes. Written from the lens of Self-Determination Theory, Guiffrida, Lynch, Wall and Abel's study found that, "Students who attend college motivated by intrinsic needs for autonomy and competence were more likely to have higher GPA's and greater intentions to persist than students who were not motivated to attend college to fulfill these intrinsic needs" (p. 133). Additionally, students who are influenced by motivators other than SDT's intrinsic needs were more at risk for poor academic performance (Guiffrida et al., 2013).

Summary. The collection of research compiled in this section lends itself to questions regarding what factors might be motivating students to attend college. The fact that so many studies exist delineating the increased engagement and persistence for *intrinsically* motivated students also reveals that many students are being motivated for *extrinsic* reasons. A likely source of this extrinsic motivation and associated low task-value beliefs is the portrayal of higher education in popular culture. This establishes the importance of examining what link exists between first-year students who are influenced by the media/popular culture and their motivation while attending college.

Conclusion

The effects of media on perception, motivation and behavior have been studied in areas of body image, violence and the criminal justice system, race, ethnicity, sexual identity and more (Sharrar & Ramasubramanian, 2015). Despite this wealth of information, a gap still remains in identifying an empirical link between the discourse on higher education in popular culture and student persistence, as a result of motivation, in the United States. However, by combining the literary body on the impact of the media, intrinsic motivation and self-regulation, and first-year student experience, this study can begin to fill in that gap.

Chapter 3 - Method

Participants

Students enrolled in one of several courses with either a mandatory or incentivized research requirement of a major southwestern university's College of Education make up the participation pool for this study. These courses were all undergraduate courses designed to give students a broad introduction to research methodologies used in the social sciences, particularly in education research. The university from which the research pool is drawn was chosen for two reasons. First, as my home institution, I was able to obtain access to research pools of students as well as student demographic information. Second, as a major, southwestern public university, this institution is rich in diversity, with 65% of students identifying as non-white (university's website, 2015). This institution was also chosen for this study because of all the students who entered in Fall 2009, only 12.9% of them finished their Bachelor's degree within 4 years, and 40.5% within 6 years (university's website, 2015), both lower than the national averages according to the U.S. Department of Education (2015).

A total of 82 participants were administered a three-part survey completely online. Of the 82 survey responses collected, three were removed due to incomplete responses submitted, leaving a total of 79 responses for the study. The average age of participant was between 18 and 24 years old (83.5%). The remaining 16.5% of participants were non-traditional students above age 24. Of the 79 students surveyed, 83.5% were female, consistent with the population of the College of Education. The participants also represented the diverse population of the university with 58.2% white participants, 25.3% Latino/a, 10.1% Asian, 3.8% Black of African American, 1.3% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 1.3% who indicated "Other". Most of the participants were second or third year students, 29.1% and 35.4%, respectively, and 49.4% of the participant were first-generation students.

The participants in this study were a part of a subject pool for educational research. Participation in the study was required and used to award course credit or incentivized with extra credit toward the course grade. Due to the nature of incentivization, only 5.1% of participants were in their first year of college. This is most likely because participation was extra credit in first-year experience courses. As such, 94.9% of the participants were in their second or subsequent year of school. The research methodology courses with required research participation are intended for education majors, and as a result see very few first-year students enrolled.

The participants were surveyed for a variety of demographic information, with an emphasis on identifying first-year students and comparing them to students who have completed their first year of college. The choice for identifying first-year students was based on the limited experience of this student group with college life and academic rigor. First-year students are also a critical population for the exploration in this study as there is only an average of a 74.8% retention rate for first-year students at the university, over a four-year period of population cohorts (university's website, 2014). Moreover, the first-year experience is a unique time for college students, during which they are most likely to overestimate the prevalence of social behaviors of college attendance (Hummer, LaBrie, & Pederson, 2012; Toomey, Lenk, Wagenaar, 2007).

Sample Size

The study population consisted of students enrolled in research-based courses within the College of Education at a large, urban southwest university. The entire population of approximately 800 students were offered participation. Students enrolled as a study participant voluntarily. No monetary compensation was provided to the participants. All interactions with

the participants, from selecting the sample through the distribution and completion of the survey, were completed in a strictly online format.

All subjects in the research pool were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire. This survey solicited information about age, race, year in school, generation in school and more. The various independent variables were all analyzed for the amount of variance they explained in the dependent variables (MSLQ and Sense of Belonging subscales).

Measures

Students were provided with a three-part survey containing structured items and unstructured items to provide both quantitative and qualitative data. Students were provided both parts of the survey online. Completion of the survey took students anywhere from roughly ten minutes to one hour to complete (Duncan & McKeachie, 2005).

Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire. The first part of the online survey was an adapted Motivated Strategies for Learning (MSLQ) questionnaire (Pintrich, Smith, García, & McKeachie, 1991, 1993). This study focused primarily on the four subscales of the MSLQ designed to measure value beliefs. The subscales designed to meet this object are the subscales of intrinsic goal orientation ($\alpha = .74$, $r = -.15$), extrinsic goal orientation ($\alpha = .62$, $r = .23$), and task-value beliefs ($\alpha = .90$, $r = -.14$) (Duncan & McKeachie, 2005; Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, McKeachie, 1993). The intrinsic goal orientation was designed to focus on learning and mastery and asked questions such as, “In my college classes, I prefer course material that that arouses my curiosity, even if it is difficult to learn”. The extrinsic goal orientation subscale was designed to assess a student’s focus on grades and approval from others by asking questions like, “Getting a good grade in my classes is the most satisfying thing for me right now”. The task-

value belief subscale asked questions such as, “It is my own fault if I don’t learn the material in this course,” to judge how interesting, useful, and important course content is to a student (Duncan & KcKeachie, 2005). Students were asked to answer a series of questions using a 7-point *Likert Scale* (1 = *not true of me at all* to 7 = *very true of me*) for the MSLQ (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). It is important to note that some questions differ in wording in order to be adapted to a more general use. For example, the question “In a class like this, I prefer course material that really challenges me so I can learn new things” was reworded to, “In my college classes, I prefer course material that really challenges me so I can learn new things”.

The MSLQ was chosen as the most effective tool for determining students’ interest value in their college courses due to the extensive use and reliability of the survey (Duncan & McKeachie; Pintrich, Smith, Garcia & McKeachie, 1993) as well as the focus on interest value. As Pintrich and De Groot (1991) explain, “The value component of student motivation involves students’ goals for the task and their beliefs about the importance and interest of the task.” When analyzing the effects of media discourse on higher education, it was important to understand if students are viewing their academics as a “necessary evil” in order to continue engaging in non-academic behaviors as epitomized in popular culture. As such, it was expected that they would lack the intrinsic motivation to achieve at a higher level academically. Low levels of intrinsic value on learning has successfully been correlated with lower levels of achievement across all types of academic tasks (Pintrich & De Groot, 1991).

Open-Ended Questionnaire. The second part of the online survey presented students with several different scenarios describing college life. Students were provided the same 7-point *Likert Scale* from part one and asked to rate each scenario (1 = *not true of me at all* to 7 = *very true of me*). Students were then asked to discuss the provided scenarios and decide which one

most relates to their own expectations for college life. The scenarios were developed based on the films *Animal House*, the top-grossing college comedy in the United States, *Legally Blonde*, the second highest grossing college comedy in the United States (Box Office Mojo). These films are seminal college-themed films in the United States, *Legally Blonde* being described as a movie, “That captured college ever so perfectly,” so that, “You would think they strapped a camera onto your head and filmed your actual, everyday life” (Miller, 2014). Both of these films were also referenced as “must see” college movies on *Fastweb.com*, a website designed to connect students with scholarship opportunities and assist them in identifying colleges and universities that best fit their interests (Hoyt, 2016).

Follow-up questions were provided for each scenario to elicit more detailed information about the selection from the respondents. Participants were asked to elaborate on why they identified either most or least with each scenario. Participants were also prompted to reflect on their attitudes toward each scenario. Additionally, the open-ended portion of the survey asked students to share their knowledge of the construct of the first year “college experience” as supported by the literature. Discussion questions prompted participants to determine which scenario most epitomizes what they believe is the typical first year experience.

Sense of Belonging Questionnaire. The third and final part of the survey was a Sense of Belonging Questionnaire adapted by Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow and Salomone (2002) from Hagerty and Patusky (1995). The Sense of Belonging Questionnaire contained five separate subscales that address students’ perceived sense of belonging in relation to perceived peer support (both academically and socially) ($\alpha = .87$), perceived faculty support ($\alpha = .87$), perceived classroom comfort ($\alpha = .90$), perceived isolation ($\alpha = .82$), and empathetic faculty understanding ($\alpha = .75$) (Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow & Salomone, 2002). The perceived peer support

subscale was meant to address how connected students feel to their classmates academically and socially and asks questions such as, “I have met with classmates outside of class to study for an exam.” The perceived faculty support was meant to address how comfortable students feel approaching faculty for academic support and asks questions such as, “I feel comfortable seeking help from a teacher before or after class.” The perceived classroom comfort subscale sought to identify how comfortable students feel contributing to the class and asks questions like, “I feel comfortable volunteering ideas or opinions in class.” The perceived isolation subscale asked questions like, “No one in my classes knows anything personal about me” to identify how isolated students feel while in school. Lastly, the empathetic faculty understanding subscale asked about how much concern students perceive their faculty as having with questions such as, “I feel that a faculty member would be sympathetic if I was upset.” Students were asked to answer a series of questions using a 5-point *Likert Scale* (1 = *Completely untrue* to 5 = *Completely true*).

The Sense of Belonging Questionnaire was chosen as an additional measure in this study in order to expand upon the ideas of Social Integration Theory and the degree of student connectedness. According to Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow and Salomone (2002), “Research suggests that student involvement and interaction are most affected by the collegiate environment” so this questionnaire was adopted to measure sense of belonging (p. 229). This is also an important link to evaluate student motivation and what factors are contributing to their achievement throughout their degree programs. A mismatch between expectations for college derived from the media and actual experiences in college may cause a student to disassociate with their institution and as a result have a negative impact on their motivation and achievement.

Procedure

At the beginning of the school semester, participants enrolled in the research pool as a requirement for their course. Once a member of this pool, students could voluntarily enroll as a participant in this study in order to receive extra credit or fulfill the research requirement for their course. Upon enrollment, students were provided with an overview of the study, the goal of the survey, and what was expected of them as a participant via e-mail.

Students accessed a copy of the survey via the research management system and a link to Qualtrics. The students completed and submitted the MSLQ questionnaire, the open-ended questionnaire discussing the provided scenarios about college life, and the Sense of Belonging Questionnaire. The complete survey was submitted to the researcher electronically via Qualtrics online survey software.

Analysis. Descriptive statistics and correlations were used to analyze the MSLQ, Sense of Belonging Questionnaire and structured items of the survey. The study analyzed the pattern of correlation between different groups for each of the eight total subscales in the MSLQ and Sense of Belonging Questionnaires (Pintrich & De Groot, 1991). Factor analyses were completed to determine the eight subscales based on significant loadings using SPSS Statistics (Version 23). A statistical comparison was also completed to analyze the difference in mean score between the various demographic groups including gender, age, year in school, etc. All comparisons of means and variance were completed using Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) analyses and follow-up univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) analyses.

Scoring of the Open-Ended Questions. Each of the open-ended responses were read and inductively coded as an idea unit by the researcher. An inductive coding approach was chosen because, “The development of inductive categories allows researchers to link or ground

these categories to the data from which they derive” (Berg, 2001, p. 247). In order to do this, the responses were independently reviewed and coded by a second individual for consistency and credibility. Any discrepancies in coding were then evaluated, discussed and agreement was reached. The coding process followed five general steps consistent with the Spradley Analysis method for qualitative coding and culminated in the development of themes (Spradley, 1980).

The steps taken for the qualitative data analysis were as follows:

1. Each qualitative response was reviewed by the research and assigned a code for each individual and disparate meaning unit.
2. All of the codes were then reviewed in order to garner general ideas about the responses and begin to summarize the major findings of the data.
3. A coding scheme was created to sort the meaning units of each response into six general categories. Using these categories, the data was revisited and associated terms were classified under each.
4. A review was conducted for all of the terms under each category to determine how they might be organized, grouped, combined, and split. For example, “too many essays” and “so many assignments” were combined into “heavy workload”.
5. After a taxonomy was established, the codes were revisited in order to expand upon and/or verify the organization and begin developing the major themes.

These major themes were then graphically organized to link the associated terms and relationships under each.

This five-step process allowed the researcher to most accurately capture the open-ended responses of the participants.

After the establishment of themes was completed, the qualitative data was then quantified in order to determine the frequency of each theme both in the total cumulation of qualitative responses and within each of the five open-ended questions of the survey. The raw qualitative data was reviewed and the researcher counted each mention of one of the six themes. The instances were then further divided into positive and negative mentions. For example, “I related the least to [the academic] scenario because I do not always turn down my friends or parties. If you are constantly just worried about grades you will forget to live in the moment,” was counted as a negative mention for academics, whereas, “College is about getting a degree, not going to parties or making friends” is a positive instance for academics.

Integration of Data. After the collection and analyses of the data was completed, the quantitative and qualitative results were integrated to create a more complete representation of the overall survey results. An Interview Questions Display approach was chosen to match the explanatory sequential design of the study (McCrudden, Schraw & Buckendahl, 2015). Quantitative results were linked to the associated qualitative questions, as described in the following chapter.

Chapter 4 - Results

Descriptive Statistics

Demographic Information. A variety of descriptive statistical analyses were conducted to provide an overview of the survey results gathered in the study. Each independent variable was analyzed for its frequency distribution. Frequency tables are provided below for each demographic category surveyed.

Table 1

Demographic Information of Participants

Demographic Information of Participants			
	IV's	%	Frequency
Gender	Male	16.5%	13
	Female	83.5%	66
Age	18 – 24	83.5%	66
	25 – 34	7.6%	6
	35 – 44	3.8%	3
	45 – 54	5.1%	4
Race	Asian	10.1%	8
	Black or African American	3.8%	3
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1.3%	1
	White	58.2%	46
	Hispanic or Latino/Latina	25.3%	20
	Other	1.3%	1
School Yr.	1 st	5.1%	4
	2 nd	29.1%	23
	3 rd	35.4%	28
	4 th	22.8%	18
	5 th	5.1%	4
	6 th	2.5%	2
Generation in College	1 st	49.4%	39
	2 nd	40.5%	32
	3 rd	7.6%	6
	4 th	2.5%	2

Descriptive statistics are also provided below for each of the scales used in the study.

MSLQ. Reliability analyses were conducted to confirm the consistency of measurement for all of the subscales of the MSLQ survey. In order to be considered reliable, the Cronbach's Alpha value should be, at minimum, .60 (Allen & Yen, 1979). The overall reliability of the MSLQ survey was .862. Each of the four subscales were also analyzed to confirm individual reliabilities. The subscales were developed by combining and adding each question (see table 4 for breakdown) in the respective scales. Table 2 below lists the individual subscale reliabilities and descriptive statistics. The extrinsic motivation subscale had the lowest Cronbach's Alpha but the second highest mean ($M = 22.65$), compared to Task-Value Beliefs, which had the highest of both. That being said, all of the subscales performed with a moderate-to-high alpha.

Table 2

MSLQ Descriptive Statistics

Scale	N	Mean	SD	Alpha (α)
Intrinsic Motivation	79	14.85	3.45	.749
Extrinsic Motivation	79	22.65	3.78	.702
Task Value Beliefs	79	28.03	5.50	.904
Control of Learning Beliefs	79	9.43	2.61	.727

Sense of Belonging Questionnaire. As with the MSLQ survey, reliability analyses were conducted to confirm the consistency of measurement for all of the subscales of the Sense of Belonging survey. The overall reliability of the Sense of Belonging Questionnaire was .878. Each of the four subscales were also analyzed to confirm individual reliabilities. The subscales were developed by combining and adding each question (see table 5 for breakdown) in the respective scales. Table 3 below lists the individual subscale reliabilities and descriptive statistics. The Peer Academic Belonging subscale had the lowest Cronbach's Alpha value, but it

still performed very reliably. Peer Social Belonging had the lowest mean ($M = 7.63$), considerably lower than the other subscales.

Table 3

Sense of Belonging Descriptive Statistics

Scale	N	Mean	SD	Alpha (α)
Faculty Belonging	79	28.54	7.38	.891
Peer Social Belonging	79	7.63	3.74	.901
Peer Academic Belonging	79	16.15	3.27	.824
Classroom Comfort	79	13.29	4.35	.945

Correlation Matrix. A correlation matrix was also compiled to assess the relationships that exist between all of the variables measures in the study (see Appendix A). Eight different correlations were identified, indicating moderate ($r = .4 - .6$) to high ($r = .8 - 1$) relationships between variables:

- MSLQ Intrinsic and Task Value ($r = .60$)
- Intrinsic and Peer Academic Belonging ($r = .70$)
- Extrinsic and Task Value ($r = .47$)
- Extrinsic and Peer Academic ($r = .45$)
- Task Value and Faculty Belonging ($r = .40$)
- Task Value and Peer Academic ($r = .86$)
- Faculty Belonging and Peer Academic ($r = .44$)
- Faculty Belonging and Class Comfort ($r = .47$)

All of the above correlations were found to be significant at the .01 level. Social belonging was not found to have any significant relationships, despite several relationships existing between academic belonging and other variables. Moreover, task value belief was found to have relationships with both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as well as faculty belonging.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory factor analyses were conducted on both the MSLQ and Sense of Belonging scales to identify conceptual dimensions of the variables being measured. Exploratory factor analysis was completed using a principal axis factoring method in IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 23) with a varimax rotation. Generally speaking, the higher a factor loaded, the more meaningful. Factors were only considered if they loaded above .45, and if there was no evidence of cross-loading between factors. The exploratory factor analysis indicated reasonable factor validity and sound structure for both surveys. However, several items were removed from the surveys due to cross-loading or the absence of any components loading at .45 or above.

MSLQ. The total variance explained by the four components of the MSLQ is 68.90%. Questions 2, 10, 11, and 12 were removed because they cross-loaded on two components. All of the other items were determined to have a sufficient alpha value with no cross-loaded items, so they were configured into four subscales: Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, Task-Value Beliefs, and Control of Learning Beliefs. With the exception of the cross-loaded variables, this factor structure is consistent with the structure outlined in previous research (Duncan & McKeachie, 2005). Table 4 below displays the specific factor structure used and the alpha for each item.

Table 4

Specific Factor Structure – MSLQ Subscales

Specific Factor Structure – MSLQ Subscales	
Subscale and Questions	Variance Explained
Intrinsic: 1 ($\alpha = .744$), 9 ($\alpha = .793$), 14 ($\alpha = .519$)	9.21%
Extrinsic: 4 ($\alpha = .678$), 7 ($\alpha = .793$), 8 ($\alpha = .614$)	11.00%
Task-Value Beliefs: 3 ($\alpha = .800$), 6 ($\alpha = .699$), 13 ($\alpha = .812$), 16 ($\alpha = .813$), 17 ($\alpha = .759$)	43.04%
Control of Learning Beliefs: 5 ($\alpha = .768$), 15 ($\alpha = .922$)	5.64%

Sense of Belonging Questionnaire. The total variance explained by the four components of the Sense of Belonging Questionnaire is 70.72%. Questions 4, 5, and 13 were removed because they cross-loaded on two components. Questions 19, 20, 21, and 22 were also removed because they did not sufficiently load on any of the four components. The factor structure deviates from the original structure in two ways: “Perceived Peer Support” was split into two distinct factors (academic and social) whereas “Perceived Faculty Support” and “Empathetic Faculty Understanding” were combined into one factor – “Faculty Sense of Belonging”. Additionally, a fifth factor of “Perceived Isolation” was a part of the original design comprised of questions 19 – 22, all four of which did not sufficiently load. As a result, Perceived Isolation was not used in this study (Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow & Salomone, 2002). These changes were made to better represent the sample used in this study, as determined both by the Rotated Factor Analysis table and the associated Scree Plot. Table 5 below displays the specific factor structure used and the alpha for each item.

Table 5

Specific Factor Structure – Sense of Belonging Subscales

Specific Factor Structure – Sense of Belonging Subscales	
Subscale and Questions	Variance Explained
Faculty Belonging: 9 ($\alpha = .658$), 10 ($\alpha = .701$), 11 ($\alpha = .753$), 12 ($\alpha = .599$)	37.21%
Peer Social Belonging: 6 ($\alpha = .659$), 7 ($\alpha = .817$), 8 ($\alpha = .703$)	18.48%
Peer Academic Belonging: 1 ($\alpha = .747$), 2 ($\alpha = .761$), 3 ($\alpha = .798$)	5.29%
Classroom Comfort: 15 ($\alpha = .890$), 16 ($\alpha = .879$), 17 ($\alpha = .910$), 18 ($\alpha = .821$)	9.75%

Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)

Multivariate Analyses of Variance (MANOVA) tests were also performed to identify if there was a difference in scores on the dependent variables of the survey based on various

demographic, or independent, variables (see Table 1 for independent variables). Several factors were shown to have a significant main effect. Follow-up univariate ANOVA analyses were also conducted to further explain the differences identified. Lastly, Tukey's post-hoc analyses were conducted on each of the five significant findings for further investigation.

MSLQ. Two significant effects were identified from completing the MANOVA analysis on the MSLQ survey. Those differences were:

- Gender and Task Value ($F=7.83$, $p=.007$)
- School Year and Extrinsic Motivation ($F=3.88$, $p=.004$)

Females were found to have a higher mean task value belief score than males with averages of 30.43 and 24.85, respectively. Additionally, fifth year students had a lower mean than any other group, with a significant difference at $p > .05$.

Sense of Belonging Questionnaire. Three key differences were identified. Those differences were:

- Age and Peer Social Sense of Belonging ($F=3.23$, $p=.028$)
- Age and Peer Academic Sense of Belonging ($F=4.46$, $p=.007$)
- Family Generation to go to College and Faculty Sense of Belonging ($F=3.14$, $p=.031$)

Younger students were found to generally felt *less* academically connected than older students. In contrast, younger students generally felt *more* socially connected than older students. Lastly, the data indicated that the more generations of family members that have gone to college, the less connected the student felt to their faculty; with each increase in generation from first to fifth, the degree of reported faculty connectedness decreased.

Qualitative Analyses

Establishment of Themes. A five-stage coding process was used to identify and explore themes present in the qualitative data obtained from the open-ended survey questions, as described in Chapter 3. The careful review of all of the qualitative responses led to the establishment of six different themes in the data (see Appendix B for the complete list of codes). The table below highlights the six identified themes, general categories within each, and supporting quotation. The themes identified very closely mirror the themes discovered in a previous study where students discussed on Facebook groups about future social relationships, their future role as students, and future occupations and careers (Nehls & Livengood, 2016). This study also examined the role of the media in development of expectations of college students by conducting content analysis on students' conversations in Facebook groups prior to starting school. The qualitative results of this study both mirror the themes and expand upon them with the addition of self-growth and balance. The overall findings of the current study also build upon Nehls' and Livengood's (2016) ideas for the use of media as a positive influencer of students' expectations for college.

Table 6

Qualitative Themes Established

Qualitative Themes Established	
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Supporting Quotations</i>
“My priority is doing well in my classes.”	“I relate to the [academic] scenario the most because I put a high level of priority towards my schoolwork and studying. I believe that I am here for a reason and I am not going to waste my time and money and get bad grades.”
	“I relate to the most about spending long hours studying and in the library. I always choose to do my homework first and hang out with my friends later” (sic).
“I thought college was all about the party.”	“I imagine the [partying] scenario is what college should be like and a part of me wants for it to be that way so I can have crazy fun stories but I’m too responsible for that lifestyle.”
	“[Partying] is what I expected college to be like for the first time around based on media and social representation.”
“I’m here to make friends.”	“I relate to the [social] scenario the most because I am in a sorority. I know that it can be time consuming and you might go hang out with your sisters instead of study. I have done it before, but my sisters are also the people that push me to be better and focus on school as well.”
	“I relate to the [social] scenario best because I believe college is where I get to meet people from different places around the world and create connections. To me, friendship is very important to me and as other would say friends you make in college will be your lifetime friends.”
“College is about making yourself more successful and competitive on the job market”	“The college experiences means to me another chance out the low socioeconomic status” (sic).
	“College is all about learning the skills necessary for the job market. When I think about college, I think about long hours spent improving my skill sets in my chosen field of study. It’s important that my college experience maximizes my employment potential.”
“I expected to find myself in college.”	“College is about figuring out who I am and what I want in life. I have to see what major works for me and if I change it in the process it is okay.”
	“I am on my own so this is where I found out if I am actually ready to live by myself or if I need more time to grow and eventually prosper.”
“I want it all – good grades, good friends, and a good time.”	“To me, the term “the college experience” means not only the friendships and fun of being in college, but also the dedication to put many hours a week into study and working to better myself.”
	“I expected college to be hard. A place where you had to make the decisions between work, studying, friends, parties, etc. I thought you would be able to have it all. That definitely isn’t the case.”

Quantifying Qualitative Results. After establishing themes present in the open-ended survey responses, each theme was quantified in order to paint a more complete picture of the balance of each in the cumulative responses. The six themes were quantified to determine the frequencies of positive and negative mentions of each in the data. The table below displays the relative frequencies.

Table 7

Frequencies of Each Theme in the Data

Frequencies of Each Theme in the Data						
Theme	<i>Positive Instances</i>		<i>Negative Instances</i>		<i>Total Instances</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Academic	168	87%	26	13%	194	29.75%
Partying	95	58%	70	42%	165	25.31%
Friends	103	82%	22	18%	125	19.17%
Future/Career	34	60%	23	40%	57	8.74%
Self-Growth	38	93%	3	7%	41	6.29%
Balance	56	80%	14	20%	70	10.74

Academics was the most talked about topic in the open-ended responses. However, if social aspects of college were viewed at a more macro level, combining partying and friends, this would be the most common response. Moreover, depending on the context of the question, the discussion could be either positive or negative. Table 7 explains how often students’ mentions of a topic were positive, as in “I’m in college to get a degree”, and how often mentions were negative, like “I don’t care enough about school to make it my life.” Positive instances were more common for each of the six themes, with the smallest margin for “Future/Career”.

In addition to quantifying the total positive and negative instances for each response, subtotals were also calculated to understand which theme was present most in each of the five

qualitative questions. The table below displays the relative breakdown of combined positive and negative mentions by theme and by question.

Table 8

% Frequencies of Each Theme in the Data by Questions

% Frequencies of Each Theme in the Data by Question						
Question	Academic	Partying	Social Life	Future/Career	Self-Growth	Balance
Highest Rated Scenario	53.8%	6.6%	25.5%	7.5%	1.0%	5.7%
Lowest Rated Scenario	14.8%	64.8%	12.0%	6.5%	0.0%	1.9%
Expectations for College	27.8%	27.8%	24.3%	1.7%	6.1%	12.2%
“College Experience”	29.2%	12.3%	19.9%	14.6%	4.7%	19.3%
Ideal Scenario	33.3%	29.1%	19.7%	12.8%	21.4%	12.8%

Five key relationships were identified in the open-ended responses by evaluating the prevalence of each topic, by question.

1. Students talked about partying much more often in the “Ideal Scenario” question than they did in the “Highest Rated Scenario” question
2. Students talked about partying much more often in the “Expectations for College” question and the “Highest Rated Scenario” question
3. Students talked about partying and friends almost equally as often in the “Expectations for College” question
4. Students talked about self-growth and discovery fairly often, despite there being no prompts on this topic provided in the survey
5. Students talked about balance fairly often in the “Ideal Scenario” question and the “Expectations for College” question, despite there being no prompts on this topic provided in the survey

These five findings were integrated with the quantitative data in order to help explain the statistical findings.

Integration of the Quantitative and Qualitative Data

The results of the quantitative and qualitative results were analyzed according to best practices for each, and then integrated to further explain the results of the survey. The qualitative follow-up questions were “mapped” onto the quantitative results to explain the connection between the two pieces of data. The table below displays the relationships between the quantitative results and the qualitative results.

Table 9

Integration of the Quantitative and Qualitative

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative	
<i>Quantitative Result</i>	<i>Associated Qualitative Results</i>
Gender and Task-Value	<p>“The truest scenario of college I imagined is being at the library day and night working on my studies. Meeting incredible individuals who would challenge my intelligence everyday.” (Male)</p> <p>“College is a huge learning experience, and challenging myself academically is what I relate to the most.” (Male)</p>
School Year and Extrinsic Motivation	<p>“I related to the scenario about studying and doing well in my college classes the most because my main goal is to be successful and get good grades in all my classes.” (2nd Year)</p> <p>“What I relate most to is college being about challenging myself and learn to the best capacity that I can.” (4th Year)</p>
Age and Peer Social Belonging	<p>“The [partying] is the scenario I currently relate to the least because I am no longer a crazy 20-something who relies on other people to support them.” (45-54 years old)</p> <p>“I am not here to make friends and I don't care to party with younger students.” (18-24 years old)</p>
Age and Peer Academic Belonging	<p>“I expected college to be like big classroom sizes, lots of people studying and making study groups” (18 – 24 years old)</p> <p>“[College is] a challenging experience that broadens horizons both academically and socially, because the students would be bunch of likeminded individuals coming together from diverse backgrounds to study for similar goals.” (45-54 years old)</p>
Generation and Faculty Belonging	<p>“College is full of classrooms with a professor who is extremely educated. The professor puts 100% into making sure that his or her students understand what has been taught to them.” (1st Generation)</p> <p>“You go to college and take classes that are irrelevant and a waste of money. You have to take classes that do not benefit you at all in order to take classes that are geared towards your career.” (2nd Generation)</p>

The quantitative findings indicated that females reported higher task-value beliefs than males.

This finding appears to be divergent from the qualitative results as the male respondents spoke generally positive about their courses and school in general in the open-ended responses, as

indicated in the table above. School year was also tied to extrinsic motivation, as highlighted by the extrinsic verses intrinsic responses on the second and fourth year students. Moreover, age was linked to peer belonging both academically and socially, which is also mirrored in the qualitative examples. Finally, the quantitative analyses found that first generation students felt most connected to their faculty members; with every generation of a students' family that went to college, that student was less likely to feel connected with their faculty. This trend, too, exists in the open-ended responses. Each of the major findings of the quantitative results are further explained by the qualitative responses gathered, as will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

This chapter discusses the research findings in the context of the original research questions and hypotheses as well as the related literature. Moreover, the findings are discussed in terms of the implications for future research and their contributions to the field, including the limitations of the current study.

Summary and Interpretation of the Findings

The goal of this study was to identify what links exist between the portrayal of higher education in the media and the motivation and expectations of undergraduate, university students. More specifically, it aimed to measure the levels of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and task-value beliefs in students. Further, this study sought to determine how these motivational factors and students' expectations of college are related. Lastly, demographic variables were considered as a means of further explaining these relationships. In order to meet these goals, participants were provided a three-part survey that asked about motivational factors using the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), relation to various scenarios and expectations for college using open-ended response questions, and degree of relatedness to faculty and peers at the university using the Sense of Belonging Questionnaire.

After a review of the previous research, it was hypothesized that students who are exposed to central themes of partying, social life, and the construct of the "college experience" would be more likely to pursue higher education for social means more so than educational means, and therefore are less likely to persist and complete their degrees. This primary hypothesis was derived from the idea that university students develop expectations for college from popular, American college movies such as *Animal House* and as a result form low intrinsic motivation and task-value beliefs, which has been shown to impact cognition and academic

performance (Covington, 2000; Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990; Valle et al., 2009; Vygotsky, 1968). When faced with the culture shock of “actual college,” students are less likely to persist.

Research Question 1. The first research question asked what levels of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, task-value beliefs, and control of learning beliefs are held by university students, particularly those that are the first generation in their family to go to college. It was predicted that students would have low levels of task-value beliefs and higher extrinsic rather than intrinsic motivation. Moreover, first-generation students were expected to have lower task-value beliefs than students whose parents or grandparents also attended college. This hypothesis was partially confirmed by the data. While no significant effects were identified, students had a considerably lower average degree of intrinsic motivation ($M = 14.85$) than extrinsic motivation ($M = 22.65$) and task-value beliefs ($M = 28.03$). Intrinsic motivation was found to have a moderate relationship with task value beliefs ($r = .60$) and academic peer belonging ($r = .70$), but similar links were also identified with extrinsic motivation ($r = .47$ and $r = .45$, respectively).

The quantitative findings were largely convergent with the qualitative results. A focus on academics was the most common theme among the open-ended responses with 87% of the instances being positive. The open-ended responses may provide a better look into the relationship between extrinsic motivation and task-value beliefs, as well. One student said, “I related to the [academic] scenario about studying and doing well in my college classes the most because my main goal is to be successful and get good grades in all my classes.” While this does indicate extrinsic motivation for prioritizing school work over friends and parties, it simultaneously indicates that this student believes her schoolwork is important and that the academic realm of college is her priority. Despite the majority of responses indicating extrinsic

motivation, some students did reflect on intrinsic motivations for attending college as well. One third generation student that, “College is about the learning experience and how to apply it to real world scenarios”. This student also reported a 3.76 GPA, higher than the average reported GPA of 3.13, which may speak to the literature on achievement being linked to intrinsic motivation (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990; Valle et al, 2009).

Focusing on first-generation students also produced mixed results. While first generation students did indeed have the highest level of extrinsic motivation ($M = 23.15$), they also had the highest level of intrinsic motivation ($M = 15.28$). First-generation students had the second-highest task-value belief average ($M = 28.44$), second only to fourth generation students ($M = 28.50$). These findings are relatively inconsistent with the literature, which suggests that students with high levels of extrinsic motivation are more prone to experiencing low task-value beliefs (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990; Valle et al., 2009). Moderate correlations were identified between extrinsic motivation and both task value beliefs ($r = .47$) and academic peer sense of belonging ($r = .45$). With that said, the findings of this study suggest that task-value beliefs, social integration, and extrinsic motivation are actually not so incompatible. However, these findings do support the hypothesis that students have relatively low levels of intrinsic motivation, particularly when compared to extrinsic and task-value beliefs, which may be attributed to the media influence.

Analysis of the Sense of Belonging Questionnaire also provides an interesting exploration into the related literature and the relationship between social connectedness and achievement. A significant main effect was identified between sense of belonging with faculty members and how many generations of a student’s family have gone to college. While potential explanations for this finding are numerous, one possible explanation is the influence of connections outside the college community. Tinto’s Integration Theory (1993) and Astin’s

Integration Theory (1993) both posit that the more connected and integrated a student is, the higher the rate of achievement. This study found that first-generation students feel the most connected with their faculty members. This finding may support the previous literature, indicating a potential link between faculty connectedness, specifically, and intrinsic motivation and task-value beliefs. Exploring this finding in more detail could provide important insight into increasing the achievement level of first-generation students, who were found to have weaker commitments to college attendance (Tobolowsky, 2001).

Research Question 2. The second research question asked about how motivational factors and students' expectations of college are related, particularly for first-generation students. It was predicted that a link exists between these two factors. The hypothesis was that students who had expectations of college being like the media with a lot of parties and experimentation would have lower levels of motivation than students who did not hold these same expectations for college. This hypothesis was also only partially confirmed due to the divergent nature of the quantitative and qualitative findings. While the statistical analyses of the MSLQ did not find any significant relationship between the students' expectations for college and their motivation levels, the students spoke extensively in the open-ended responses about their expectations and the impact those expectations had on their college years, particularly as freshman.

When asked about their expectations for college, most students indicated that they expected the scenario all about partying. One student explained, "I honestly think that [the partying] scenario is what I thought college would be like because of the movies and everything," and another, "I expected college to be more partying than it is. It may be the friends that I surround myself with though. We all make sure our studies are done, and party sometimes, but not as often as I expected. College parties are not like the movies." Despite the MSLQ not

identifying a link between these expectations and motivation, the students' open-ended responses diverge. One example of this divergence is a third-year student's explanation: "I always imaged college to be full of parties and going out. Never factored in that school is not easy and that you do have to go to class." Other students expressed their experiences with partying impacting their achievement, too, with statements like, "When I got to college I realized how important to me getting my degree was and partying does not really fit in with my courses".

These findings agree with the research suggesting that the media plays a role in forming students' expectations for what college is going to be like (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Johnson, 1987). While there were no major statistical links between motivation and expectations found in this study, the students themselves have identified a need to let go of these perceptions in order to be successful and focus on their classes. The fact that almost 50% of the study participants are first-generation students also supports the qualitative link between expectations and college success because first-generation students are more susceptible to media influence than their peers (Tobolowsky, 2001). Moreover, despite the missing significant link between motivation and expectation, a MANOVA analysis of the Sense of Belonging Questionnaire did return a significant main effect between age and peer connectivity both socially and academically. Younger students are more likely to feel connected with their peers socially, but less likely to feel connected with their peers academically. This finding is convergent with the qualitative results above because the participants spoke about a shift in their expectations and priorities as they progressed through their degree programs. Another student also reflected on this idea saying, "I am not here to make friends and I don't care to party with younger students."

Beyond indicating that students expected more partying, the data suggests that students wish partying was more prevalent in their college experience than it actually is. This is evidenced

by the 29.1% frequency of statements about partying in the “Ideal Scenario” question as compared to the 6.6% in the “Highest Rated Scenario” question. This is supportive of the quantitative findings as well. Of the four subscales for the MSLQ survey, the highest mean was for Task Value Beliefs. This may suggest that students are not participating in parties as often as they thought they would because they believe focusing on their academics and the content they are learning is highly relevant to their lives.

Similarly, the qualitative findings suggest that students expected to party more often than they actually do, which may be an indicator of the media’s influence. This is evidenced by the 27.8% frequency of statements about partying in the “Expectations for College” question compared to the 6.6% in the “Highest Rated Scenario” question, which asked which scenario was most relatable. Moreover, all but one mention of partying in the “Expectations for College” question was positive, compared to less than half for the “Highest Rated Scenario” question. This may also suggest a relationship with high task value beliefs.

Research Question 3. The third and final research question asked what links exist between various demographic variables and the motivation and expectations described above. The significant findings in relation to this research question have been addressed above with the exception of the significant main effect between gender and task value beliefs. Females had higher task value beliefs ($M = 30.43$) than males ($M = 24.85$). While there is no concrete explanation for this in the data, and a large majority of the respondents were all female, it is worth noting that the question that has the biggest discrepancy between males and females is, “It is important for me to learn the material in my college courses,” followed by “I think I will be able to use what I learn in my college courses.” Less of a difference was seen for questions about how much they like the course material and how important it is for them to understand it. This

may suggest that male students are more prone to feeling like classes are a necessity for a degree, but not really something that adds value to their education goals. One male participant expressed this viewpoint when he said, “I think College should provide more freedom to the student make them learn what they want to learn and make them find what they really wanna do.” No significant main effects were noted for Sense of Belonging and gender.

Overall, the research hypotheses were partially confirmed. University students experience relatively low levels of intrinsic motivation, but very similar levels of extrinsic motivation and task-value beliefs. Students feel like they have very little control over their own learning ($M = 9.43$) which may be influencing intrinsic motivation. Sense of belonging does appear to be interacting with different motivational factors as well. The fact that there is both convergent and divergent results for the quantitative and qualitative findings suggest that students responded to the different measurements in different ways. Particularly in the case of expectation’s influence on motivation, perhaps students overestimated (or idealized, even) their resistance to the media’s message about higher education while completing the *Likert* scale questions. However, when given the opportunity to discuss in a more unstructured format, students associated more with the media and the influence wanting to party in college has on their education.

The findings of the study fit within the body of literature that was investigated. It is worthwhile to note that a key theme that emerged in the open-ended responses was the idea of balance – both in the context of not being able to balance the desire for good grades, good friends, and good times, and being able to manage multiple priorities and a heavy workload. This may help explain the areas of divergence both between the quantitative and qualitative as well as from the literature. Many students spoke of college as a time for self-discovery and self-growth, so the answers to questions about what motivates them, how they see themselves fit within the

university community, and what college life is to them very well could be up in the air. The emergence of this theme may suggest an un-met need for the study population of first-generation students. One student explained, “College is all about figuring out who I am and what I want in life,” and another said, “I’m going on my 4th year of college and I thought that I would know myself and know where I stand on who I want to be in life.” The idea of college being a period of self-discovery and exploration is consistent with the ideas of the emerging adulthood period of life, described as a transitional and explorative period (Sigelman & Rider, 2015). This research study sought out answers to questions about students’ identities that are still being formed, which in the end serves as a reminder of the importance to communicate about higher education differently than the movies do now, particularly to first-generation students with limited outside references about college and college life (Toboloswky, 2001).

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be considered when reviewing the findings of this study. This research study involved the use of a convenience sample that was derived from an existing research candidate pool as a requirement for the College of Education Research Methods courses at the university. The sample was not randomly selected from the target population of all undergraduate students. Furthermore, while many respondents (49.4%) were first-generation students, only 5.1% of them were in their first year of college. This provided a unique look into how priorities have changed for students as they progressed in their coursework, but makes the study less generalizable about the first-year experience.

Furthermore, all of the data gathered was self-reported by the students. This may have introduced self-reporting bias to the data. Participants may have overestimated their levels of motivation and sense of belonging, as well as their focus on the pure academic side of college.

Despite the anonymity of responses, students may have wished to avoid looking unfocused or wanted to avoid providing information that they felt would be perceived negatively by the researcher.

Lastly, 83.5% of the respondents were female. While this is representative of the College of Education, this is not representative of the target population. The uneven distribution of respondents by gender should be considered when reviewing the results of this study.

Implications for Theory and Research

The study findings suggest that there is a mismatch between what students expect to get out of college and what they find when they get there. There are many layers to student motivation for attending college, including low intrinsic motivation, equally high extrinsic motivation and task-value beliefs, and low levels of connectedness with peers. Another potential layer to student motivation is the media; the college experience of drinking, partying, smoking, and focusing on friends that is learned from movies like *Animal House*, *Monsters U* and *Legally Blonde*. The results of this study begin a conversation about what can be done to address student motivation before students even start college, including increasing dialogue and collaboration between high schools and university systems. The discussion provided by the students in the open-ended responses indicate a need for earlier intervention so that students are not having to learn in year three that their expectations are not compatible with college success. Moreover, this study identifies a need to address balance and workload when students begin their education in order to alleviate stress and frustration for students.

The study findings also contribute important insights related to Social Integration Theory (Tinto, 1993) and the importance of sense of belonging for student success. Despite the average GPA of all participants being above 3.0 and many students having persisted to their third

(35.4%) or fourth (22.8%) year of school, their levels of intrinsic motivation and peer connectedness is quite low. Faculty connectedness would appear to be a bigger piece of student success than peer connectedness, particularly for first generation students. This is evidenced in particular by the relationships between faculty sense of belonging and task value beliefs ($r = .40$), academic peer belonging ($r = .44$), and classroom comfort ($r = .47$). These findings highlight the important of re-evaluating Social Integration Theory as discussed previously.

Lastly, the unintended findings of this study suggest other factors that may be influencing the motivation levels of first-generation college students. The emergence of themes about balance and self-discovery, even though they were not part of the survey, suggests these factors are weighing on students' minds. College appears to be an exploratory period for the study population of mostly first-generation students, and this need does not appear to be being met based on the qualitative responses collected. Perhaps more so than any of the other findings, this serves as a reminder of the importance of using popular culture to communicate to incoming students what to look for when they get to college; if students come to college to find themselves, it is important that they do not find themselves in Bluto, in his college sweatshirt, drinking Jack Daniels from the bottle (*Animal House*).

Implications for Instruction

The Sense of Belonging Questionnaire findings present significant implications for instruction. First-generation university students feel much more connected with faculty than do students whose parents and/or grandparents also went to college. This suggests a need to reach more diverse demographics in the classroom so that all students feel that their faculty members are approachable for both academic and personal support. The reason for this trend is beyond the scope of this research study, but certainly is worth investigating.

Moreover, the low levels of intrinsic motivation of college students suggests that more time should be spent in the classroom helping students establish goals for their education that are centered on understanding and critical thinking instead of grades. Eliminating practices that drive competition, such as curved exam scores and announcing class averages, may help facilitate this (Bruning, Schraw & Norby, 2011). Teachers should also discuss with their students the value of scientific reasoning, critical thinking, and deep-level processing of information for when they enter their respective fields and/or move on to graduate work. The high level of task-value beliefs students reported indicate that they value understanding of course content. Instructors should take care to motivate students to want to achieve understanding, not just an “A”.

Implications for Future Research and Concluding Remarks

The existing body of research speaks to the need for understanding student motivation (Bandura, 1961; Covington, 2000; Jacobson, 2000; Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Valle et al., 2009) and the influence that the media has on students’ beliefs and expectations (Barsalou, 1999; Gee, 1999; Reynolds, 2014; Sorkhabi & Strage, 2016; Tobolowsky, 2006; Vygotsky, 1968). The current study further suggests a need to look closer into the relationship between the media and students’ motivation and achievement in college.

One area for further investigation is evaluating the differential impact peer integration and faculty integration has on students. Based on the dichotomy between sense of belonging for peer and faculty, further investigation should be conducted to evaluate if both pieces of sense of belonging need to be met in order to achieve the results that social integration theory promises, or if they play a role independently of one another.

An additional area for further investigation is a follow-up study to gain more understanding of the role the media plays in forming students’ expectations for college. Likely a

qualitative study, students of varying ages should be interviewed to discuss what they believe college will be like and where those ideas come from. These in-depth personal interviews will allow researchers to gain more understanding of how big of an impact the media has. Furthermore, a longitudinal study of this nature would allow researchers to follow-up on these expectations after participants have actually begun college and as a result also investigate further the impact students perceive these expectations have on their achievement levels.

While the previous study is best suited for a qualitative exploration, a follow-up quantitative analysis reproducing the experimentation in this study will further the literature. Such a follow-up study should include a larger sample size and a random sampling from the target population in order to increase the power of the statistical analyses and also increase the generalizability of the results.

In sum, this study lends credence to the idea that a link between the media and students' expectations for college exists and is causing a perspective shift to happen among university students. This is an important line of research that begins a conversation about interventions that should be introduced to the classroom not only related to motivation but also to media literacy and what to expect from an institution of higher education. Along with the pioneering work of Reynolds (2014) and Sorkhabi and Strage (2016), this study offers insight into the issue of media portrayal of higher education and lends a unique student perspective to the existing research.

Correlation Matrix												
Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Gender												
2. Age												.120
3. Race											.298**	.444**
4. School Year										.114	-.043	.248*
5. Generation									.206	.401**	.045	.855**
6. MSLQ Intrinsic								.467**	.156	.264*	-.017	.451**
7. MSLQ Extrinsic							.213	.600**	.311**	.255*	.082	.698**
8. MSLQ Task Value						-.169	-.171	-.105	-.050	-.239*	.099	-.141
9. MSLQ					-.139	-.013	-.206	-.181	-.138	-.179	-.104	-.207
10. Belonging Faculty				.082	-.152	.018	.126	.113	-.130	.007	-.147	.078
11. Belonging Peer Social			-.032	.164	.297**	.219	-.046	.110	.112	.016	.333**	.118
12. Belonging Peer Academic		.313**	-.190	.217	-.104	-.060	.051	.296**	.045	-.159	-.048	-.199
13. Belonging Class Comfort	.375*	.148	.472*	-.140	.352*	.067	.307*	-.162	-.036	.067	.209	-.046
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).												

Appendix B

Qualitative Coding Structure		
Major Theme	<i>Subthemes</i>	<i>Initial Codes</i>
Academic	Intrinsic Motivation	Challenging yourself academically, real-world applications, actual learning, focus on academics
	Extrinsic Motivation	Getting good grades
	Studying / Working	Spending time in the library, time management, cramming, classes would be/are easy, classes would be/are hard, unmanageable workload,
	Managing Priorities	Prioritizing school over friends and partying, in college for academics, not in college for friends
Partying	Wants to Party	Focus on partying, party with fraternity/sorority, partying = “fun”
	Expected to Party	Thought college would be like the movies, like social media, thought there would be more time to party
	Not Here to Party	Partying is for young students, not here to party
Friends	All About Friends	Focus on social life, prioritize friends over academics, still value friendship, spend time with friends
	Making Connections	Making new connections, networking, meeting diverse people
	Fitting In	Fitting in with younger students, judgmental sororities/fraternities
Future/Career	Finances	Focus on money/work, work to pay for school, focus on money/success, move to a new S.E.S.
	Marketability	Focus on career goals, improve job prospects, develop career skills, increase hire-ability
Self-Growth	Health	“Freshman 15”, “freshman 20”, healthier food choices
	Finding Your Passion	Self-exploration, self-discovery, finding your career passion, finding your academic (major) passion, professors developing students
	Independence	Making it on your own, it is what you make it, challenging yourself, without parents, proving to parents you can do it, more opportunity
Balance	Want it All	Both academic and social, both social and partying, both academics and partying, balance all 3, some of everything, all types of people (academic people, friends people, party people)
	Struggle to Balance	Working long hours, work and school, cannot party and pass, have to choose (academic, party, social)

Appendix C

Demographic Questionnaire

1. Please indicate your gender

Male

Female

2. Please select the category that indicates your age

Under 18

18 – 24

25 – 34

35 – 44

45 – 54

55 – 64

65 or above

3. Please select the category/categories that indicate(s) your race

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Black or African American

Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

White

Hispanic or Latino/a

Other

4. What is your current year in school?

- a. 1st
- b. 2nd
- c. 3rd
- d. 4th
- e. 5th
- f. 6th or more

5. Please indicate how many generations in your family have gone to college.

- a. I am the first one in my family to go to college
- b. At least one of my parents went to college
- c. At least one of my parents *and* one of my grandparents went to college
- d. I am (at least) the fourth generation in my family to go to college

6. What is your current grade point average (GPA)?

Motivation and Task-Value Beliefs Questionnaire

Please complete each question according to the 7-point Likert scale provided. All answers will be recorded anonymously, so thank you for providing your honest response.

1 - Not true of me at all 2 3 4 5 6 7 - Very true of me

1. In a college class, I prefer course material that really challenges me so I can learn new things.

1 - Not true of me at all 2 3 4 5 6 7 - Very true of me

2. If I study in appropriate ways, then I will be able to learn the material in my college courses.

1 - Not true of me at all 2 3 4 5 6 7 - Very true of me

3. I think I will be able to use what I learn in my college courses.

1 - Not true of me at all 2 3 4 5 6 7 - Very true of me

4. Getting good grades in my college courses is the most satisfying thing for me right now.

1 - Not true of me at all 2 3 4 5 6 7 - Very true of me

5. It is my own fault if I don't learn the material in my college courses.

1 - Not true of me at all 2 3 4 5 6 7 - Very true of me

6. It is important for me to learn the course material in my college courses.

1 - Not true of me at all 2 3 4 5 6 7 - Very true of me

7. The most important thing for me right now is improving my overall grade point average, so my main concern is getting good grades in my college courses.

<i>1 - Not true of me at all</i>	2	3	4	5	6	<i>7 - Very true of me</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. If I can, I want to get better grades in my college courses than most of the other students.

<i>1 - Not true of me at all</i>	2	3	4	5	6	<i>7 - Very true of me</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. In my college courses, I prefer course material that arouses my curiosity, even if it is difficult to learn.

<i>1 - Not true of me at all</i>	2	3	4	5	6	<i>7 - Very true of me</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. I am very interested in the content area of my college courses.

<i>1 - Not true of me at all</i>	2	3	4	5	6	<i>7 - Very true of me</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. If I try hard enough, then I will understand my course material.

<i>1 - Not true of me at all</i>	2	3	4	5	6	<i>7 - Very true of me</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. The most satisfying thing for me in my college courses is being able to understand the content as thoroughly as possible.

<i>1 - Not true of me at all</i>	2	3	4	5	6	<i>7 - Very true of me</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. I think that the course material in my college courses is useful for me to learn.

<i>1 - Not true of me at all</i>	2	3	4	5	6	<i>7 - Very true of me</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. When I have the opportunity in my college courses, I choose course assignments that I can learn from even if they don't guarantee a good grade.

<i>1 - Not true of me at all</i>	2	3	4	5	6	<i>7 - Very true of me</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. If I don't understand course material, it is because I didn't try hard enough.

<i>1 - Not true of me at all</i>	2	3	4	5	6	<i>7 - Very true of me</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. I like the subject matter of my college courses.

<i>1 - Not true of me at all</i>	2	3	4	5	6	<i>7 - Very true of me</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. Understanding the subject matter of my college courses is very important to me.

<i>1 - Not true of me at all</i>	2	3	4	5	6	<i>7 - Very true of me</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. I want to do well in my college courses because it is important to show my ability to my family, friends, employer, or others.

<i>1 - Not true of me at all</i>	2	3	4	5	6	<i>7 - Very true of me</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Expectations for College Discussion

The following section asks you to consider three scenarios about college. Please respond to how closely each scenario matches your own expectations of what college would be like. All answers will be recorded anonymously, so thank you for providing your thoughtful, honest responses.

Scenario #1

College is all about the experience. When I think about college, I think about going to parties, trying new things, and experimenting while I'm here. It's important that my college experience is fun and adventurous - one I will never forget!

For example, Greg is all about the next party and when it comes to studying for an exam versus going to a party, he always goes with going to the party. He says, "I can be serious and do the 'right thing' when I finish school. Right now, I want to have fun in college."

1 - Not true of me at all 2 3 4 5 6 7 - Very true of me

Scenario #2

College is all about making friends. When I think about college, I think about the connections I will make with other students, my professors, and different organizations on campus. It's important that I make friendships that last a lifetime!

For example, Kayla is all about staying involved in campus organizations like her sorority, and when it comes to studying versus going out to grab some food with her friends, she always goes out with friends. She says, "I can squeeze some studying in tomorrow morning. Right now, I just want to go hang out."

1 - Not true of me at all 2 3 4 5 6 7 - Very true of me

Scenario #3

College is all about challenging myself. When I think about college, I think about long hours studying, spending time in the library, and critically thinking about my academics. It's important that my college experience maximizes my potential to learn!

For example, Jordan is all about focusing on his coursework, and when it comes to studying versus going to hang out with friends, he always stays home to study. He says, "I'll have plenty of time to hang out after I finish school. Right now I just need to focus on my academics."

1 - Not true of me at all 2 3 4 5 6 7 - Very true of me

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

1. Consider for a moment the scenario that you gave the highest rating. What about that scenario do you relate to the *most*?
2. Consider for a moment the scenario that you gave the lowest rating. What about that scenario do you relate to the *least*?
3. Consider for a moment which scenario most closely relates to what you *expected* college to be like. This does not have to be the scenario that you chose as relating to the most.
4. Pretend you were creating a fourth scenario to include in this survey. Please write the scenario that you would score a 7 – the truest example of what you expected college to be like.
5. Consider the idea of “the college experience”. Provide a description of what this term, “the college experience”, means to you.
6. Please indicate any other influences on your expectations for college. Check all that apply.
 - a. Parents
 - b. Siblings
 - c. School Counselors
 - d. Teachers
 - e. Peers
 - f. College-Prep Courses
 - g. Other

Sense of Belonging Questionnaire

Please complete each question according to the 5-point Likert scale provided. All answers will be recorded anonymously, so thank you for providing your honest response.

1. I could call another student from class if I had a question about an assignment.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Other students are helpful in reminding me when assignments are due or when tests are approaching.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. If I miss class, I know students who I could get the notes from.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. I have met with classmates outside of class to study for an exam.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. I discuss events which happen outside of class with my classmates.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. I invite people I know from class to do things socially.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. I have developed personal relationships with other students in class.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. I have discussed personal matters with students who I met in class.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. I feel comfortable seeking help from a teacher before or after class.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. I feel comfortable asking a teacher for help if I do not understand course-related material.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. If I had a reason, I would feel comfortable seeking help from a faculty member outside of class time (i.e., during office hours, etc.).

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. I feel comfortable talking about a problem with faculty.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. I feel comfortable socializing with a faculty member outside of class.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. I feel comfortable asking a teacher for help with a personal problem.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. Speaking in class is easy because I feel comfortable.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. I feel comfortable volunteering ideas or opinions in class.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. I feel comfortable contributing to class discussions.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. I feel comfortable asking a question in class.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. It is difficult to meet other students in class.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. No one in my classes knows anything personal about me.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. I rarely talk to other students in my classes.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22. I know very few people in my classes.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

23. I feel that a faculty member would take the time to talk to me if I needed help.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

24. I feel that a faculty member would be sympathetic if I was upset.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25. I feel that a faculty member would be sensitive to my difficulties if I shared them.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

26. I feel that a faculty member really tried to understand my problem when I talked about it.

<i>1 – Completely Untrue</i>	<i>2 – Mostly Untrue</i>	<i>3 – Equally True and Untrue</i>	<i>4 – Mostly True</i>	<i>5 – Completely True</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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