

THE JOURNEY TO SELF-REGULATION AND IDENTITY:
STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES OF THE TRANSITION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

by

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(Under the Direction of Paul Schutz)

ABSTRACT

The transition from high school to college is a highly anticipated and celebrated rite of passage in a young person's life. In contemporary society this multidimensional transition represents one of the first major steps into adulthood and manifold opportunities for personal growth. New social networks, new environments, and new identities as well as lives of increased autonomy, independence, and responsibility await these students. However, many students do not possess adequate coping skills, academic strategies, or resilience to easily negotiate the changes with which they are faced. Furthermore, success in this transition necessitates leaving behind the familiar environment and structure of home and family and integrating into a new culture, the college campus, with its inherent lack of structure or oversight. Therefore, the transition to college constitutes a multifaceted change requiring coping and self-regulatory strategies on academic, social, and emotional levels. An understanding of students' experiences and meaning making while *moving through* this phase of their lives will allow the education community to better inform, support, and enhance a more seamless journey from secondary to post-secondary education. This longitudinal study examined the adequacy of an integrated model of transition, based on Schlossberg's theory of transition and constructs from general models of self-regulation, in describing the transition from high school to college. Seventeen entering freshmen (12 females and 5 males) who were enrolled at the University of Georgia engaged in the research program for 18 months, beginning prior to enrollment through the first semester of their second year of college. Findings revealed a great degree of overlap and interaction between adaptation, coping, and self-regulation constructs related to transitions. A new integrated model of self-regulation and transition was proposed where the processes of self-regulation and adaptation to transition take place within a person-behavior-environment system. Conceptualizing transitions from both a macro level, defined as the life event itself, and the micro level, construed as the situations and smaller events that comprise the transition, is supported as a more useful approach in describing and intervening in the transition process.

INDEX WORDS: Transition, self-regulation, identity development, college students

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Every year thousands of adolescents leave home and move to college campuses to further their education. As a former director of college and career counseling in a high school, I experienced the inception of this contemporary rite of passage vicariously through my students year after year. As I began to contemplate a topic for my dissertation, the choice of exploring that rite of passage seemed a natural one. I found what I believed to be a large gap in the literature; very few studies had been conducted on this normative life event. My vision was to follow a group of students through the process of their transition to college, commencing the study before the students moved to campus and following them through their first year of college.

What follows is the result of an 18 month collaboration between my participants and me. In Chapter 2, I give the background of the study and offer a developmental autobiography of my own transition to college. Chapter 3 is what I term an “interlude,” one of two such pieces in the dissertation that allowed me to experiment with brief alternative representations of my data. Chapter 3 is a long narrative poem that expressed one participant’s thoughts and emotions as she anticipated her transition to college. Chapter 4 is a thorough review of the literature in the area of life transitions. Schlossberg’s theory of transition (1995) and the literature that informed the theory is the focus of the chapter. The review covers life-span development and adaptation and coping literature. My belief that self-regulation plays an integral role in the transition process is also reflected in the review.

Chapter 5 is the second interlude. Photographs and thematic quotes from participants are interwoven to create a visual and verbal representation of the freshman year. The photographs were either taken by me or provided by the participants as representing special or memorable moments in their freshman year. Chapter 6 reveals the findings of this longitudinal study. To present my findings, I chose to highlight the contrasting stories of two participants, Tina and Heather. The uniqueness of psychological, physiological, and other personal characteristics as well as exposure to different life conditions naturally led to different paths in the transition for these two students. The stories are represented in a manner to foreground the students' voices as they tell of their perspective of the transition from high school to college. Quotes from other participants serve as a backdrop to support or reveal dissimilarities in transition experiences.

Finally, I present an epilogue, based on contact with the participants during the first semester of their second year of college, to apprise the reader of the current status of many of the participants. I end with participants' advice to future high school graduates as they embark on the same journey to self-regulation and identity that my participants have traversed.

CHAPTER 2

THE JOURNEY TO SELF-REGULATION AND IDENTITY

I really don't know what the transition is going to be like. I've got a lot of friends who were a grade above me, so I've kept in touch with them, and a lot of them ended up going to Georgia as well. So, I kind of got somewhat of an idea what to expect, but I think it's going to be different. I'm excited. I'm kind of ready...Ready to move on. Ready to meet some new people...I'm just ready for a new beginning.

—Sam, summer prior to college enrollment

I'm very excited about meeting new people, and just being surrounded by totally different people. I enjoy that. I enjoy going somewhere and being like the only one. It's because you can do what you want to do, you can meet who you want to meet, and you can be with who you want to be with. I'm looking forward to it. I'm definitely not going to be used to not having a relationship with the teacher as much, because I'm used to the teacher being right there and I can ask them whatever I want all the time. Access to them all the time. So I'm kind of concerned that it's going to be more on my own.

—Suzanne, summer prior to college enrollment

The transition from high school to college is one of a series of life changes through which many individuals pass. As adolescents approach this event, they have already encountered and moved through many other transitions in schooling. The transition from high school to college, however, is arguably the most challenging and life-changing educational shift. For many individuals it not only brings with it a change from one school to another, but it also means a move away from an established support network of home, family, and friends to a new and unfamiliar environment.

Compounding the scope of the adjustment are increased academic demands, challenges to long-held beliefs, and changes in interpersonal relationships that students must confront.

Therefore, the transition to college is a psychosocial transition that, by definition, creates “major changes in life space which are lasting in their effects, which take place over a relatively short period of time and which affect large areas of the assumptive world” (Parkes, 1971, p. 103).

Terenzini and his colleagues (1994) describe the transition to college as “a highly interrelated web-like series of family, interpersonal, academic, and organizational pulls and pushes that shape student learning (broadly conceived) and persistence” (p. 61). Students must negotiate this journey while also dealing with the accompanying identity transformation from “high school student” to “college student” and the various tasks and responsibilities that transformation entails.

Despite studies that indicate this transition to be a normative and anticipated event, rather than a transition of unanticipated crisis (Birnie-Lefcovitch, 2000), an estimated 600,000 students per year leave four-year colleges without graduating. Tinto (1993) comments:

More students leave their college or university prior to degree completion than stay. Of the nearly 2.4 million students who in 1993 entered higher education for the first time, over 1.5 million will leave their first institution without receiving a degree. Of those, approximately 1.1 million will leave higher education altogether, without ever completing either a two- or a four-year degree program. (p.1)

National studies of college attrition have reported a relatively constant 50% attrition rate for the twentieth century (Maisto & Tammi, 1991). Of the students who attend four-year institutions, only 51% finish their degree within 6 years (U. S. Department of Education, 2002). Half of this attrition occurs before the sophomore year, marking the freshman year as a critical juncture in

students' decisions to withdraw or persist in their academic endeavors. Often this decision is made during the first few weeks of their transition to college (Hermanowicz, 2003; Maisto & Tammi, 1991; Tinto, 1993). The more integrated a student becomes to college academically and socially, especially during the first weeks, the more likely the student will persist (Tinto, 1993). Moreover, research on the freshman year supports the notion that the first weeks, or even days, of school often determine the course and quality of students' experiences for the rest of their time on campus (Crissman, 2001; Logan, Salisbury-Glennon, & Spence, 2000; Maisto & Tammi, 1991).

Purpose and Rationale

Clearly, multiple research studies point to the transition from high school to college as a stressful change that bears further exploration along many dimensions. The purpose of this study is to examine students' perspectives of their transition from high school to college. A holistic picture of this transition involves multidimensional adaptations academically, emotionally, and socially. Many students proceed through this time of adjustment with apparent success in these adaptations, others with great difficulty. For some, the adjustment introduces too many obstacles to overcome (Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000; Crissman, 2001; Tinto, 1993). Characteristics of students most at-risk of withdrawing are first-generation college status, issues of family background such as socioeconomic status, and minority status (Choy, Horn, Nunez, & Chen, 2000). "Since underrepresented students, as a group, are more likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds and to have experienced inferior schooling prior to college, they are also more likely to enter college with serious academic deficiencies" (Tinto, 1993, p. 73).

Students labeled at-risk may not be alone in their struggles to adjust to the increased academic demands of higher education or college life in general (Hanley & Olson, 1996; Wintre

& Yaffe, 2000; Wratcher, 1991). Lynn Olson (2001) reported that high school assessments adopted by several states were merely testing minimum competency for graduation, not setting benchmarks with college success in mind. Consequently, studies on the first year of college indicate that students considered academically capable often have appropriate credentials for admission when entering college, but do not have an adequate repertoire of academic strategies to face the challenges of the college classroom (Fielstein & Bush, 1998; Olson, 2001; Roueche, Baker, & Roueche, 1984). Furthermore, success in this transition also necessitates leaving behind the familiar environment and structure of home and family and integrating into a new culture, the college campus, with its inherent lack of structure or oversight. Therefore, the transition to college constitutes a multifaceted change requiring coping skills on academic, social, and emotional levels.

Institutions of higher education have become increasingly cognizant of the complexity of this life change. College students encounter new challenges and life tasks that require major cognitive and behavioral adaptations (Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989; West, 1996). “An understanding of this transitional experience, for both the students and the higher education system, is pivotal to a sound mission of teaching and learning” (Chen, 1999). All stakeholders, from higher education administration and student affairs professionals, to divisions of academic enhancement and faculty—along with students and their parents—will benefit from successful and more seamless transitions to college. For institutional stakeholders, gaining an understanding of students’ perspectives is crucial to designing programs and services that meet students’ needs (Bradley, Kish, Krudwig, Williams, & Wooden, 2002).

Studies on the first year of college abound, but few studies have sought to explore student experiences during the actual transition to college—that is, from the time of high school

graduation through the adjustment and integration into the academic and social communities of the college campus. High school students often begin the process of separation from friends and family during their senior year (Liebmann-Smith, 2001; Molnar, 1999). Students continue to loosen, and even sever, ties with significant others in the summer between graduation and entrance to college. Additionally, students become preoccupied with expectations about college as well as the challenges and changes ahead, making that period of time critical in their transition (Wolf-Wendel, Tuttle, & Keller-Wolff, 1999).

As a former secondary counselor I witnessed this rite of passage at its inception, observing the divide between secondary and postsecondary life and learning. My previous role allowed me the privilege of being an insider, hearing the students' stories—the excitement and the angst juxtaposed in their voices. Students' voices are one of the distinctive features missing from the research on transition. McInnis (2001) asserts,

We researchers have not...asked students enough questions about the relative importance of what we have assumed is important in the process of transition from school to university. It might be asked if we are in danger of becoming overly concerned...about aspects of the first year experience that are of little consequence to the students themselves. (p.112)

An understanding of students' experiences and meaning making while *moving through* this phase of their lives will allow the education community to better inform, support, and enhance a more seamless journey from secondary to postsecondary education. Therefore, my research focused on students' perspectives and highlights their voices as they speak of their own transition to higher education.

Research Questions

My research questions focused on how students viewed the academic, emotional, and social transition to higher education. The questions also focused on self-regulation and its role in the transition. Self-regulation is a combination of cognitive and affective processes in which individuals may engage when in pursuit of goals (Carver & Scheier, 2000). Monitoring and evaluation of progress toward the goal are also aspects of effective self-regulation. Schunk (2004) defines self-regulation as knowledge of the task at hand, one's own abilities, and strategies for task completion. My research questions for this dissertation study were 1) What are participants' beliefs about the academic, emotional, and social transition before and after they enter college? 2) How do participants see themselves as students and learners before and after they begin college courses? 3) How do participants' identities develop during the transition? 4) How is a student's self-regulation connected to their experience of the transition from high school to college? 5) Do the findings of this study support the integrated model of transition proposed in Chapter 4?

My Personal Journey

The roots of this study lie in my own experience of the transition from high school to college and in my work with thousands of high school seniors as they embarked on the same transition. My research is also an extension of my interests, curiosity, values, and passions. Before I delve into descriptions of my research design and methods, I take this opportunity to reexamine and reflect on my background and personal journey. It would be difficult for me to explicate my beliefs, my theoretical frameworks, and the road to my dissertation research without this personal scrutiny. My subjectivity, my view of reality, and my ways of knowing have influenced my research from its inception to the present. My epistemological beliefs—the

way I view knowledge and the nature of knowing—are inextricably linked with these other dimensions of my identity as an adult as well as a learner, educator, and researcher. It is the combination of the many aspects of me and my life experiences that suggests, even exhorts, a continuing introspection and self-awareness as I engage in writing and research.

My personal, cultural, and practitioner frameworks have evoked my research questions. I have chosen to present my frameworks in the form of the subjective I's that shaped this dissertation study (Peshkin, 1988). There is the Cultural-Demographic I, the Student I, the Spiritual I, the Woman I, the Counselor I, the Lifelong Learner I, and the Researcher I. Further, the section regarding the Student I represents the first step in approaching this study through a phenomenological lens, exploring my own experience of the phenomenon of transition from high school to college.

Cultural-Demographic I

The Cultural-Demographic I is the one who defines me as a southerner, raised in a small town in rural South Georgia where the local economy was driven by the operation of the world's largest paper mill. I am the product of a working-class family with a mother of northern descent and a father of southern descent. Both my parents are high school graduates, though neither pursued higher education. Therefore, the Cultural-Demographic I also defines me as a first generation college graduate.

My father worked at the paper mill for 30 years. My mother never worked outside the home. I have one brother, two and a half years younger than I. Music and religion were two significant themes in my family. Most of my relatives have either instrumental or vocal talent, or both. I have continued that tradition in my own family, and all three of my children play instruments. At age six I started attending a Baptist church with my parents and brother. I never

came to terms, however, with the fundamental views of this particular denomination that tended to exacerbate an intolerant and rigid attitude already prevalent in the community.

I have always thought of my identity as “geographically divided” because of the influences of both parents, though I identify more with my southern heritage. As a young child, I recognized myself as an anomaly in Jesup, Georgia. I did not have a true southern accent and was the target of friendly teasing by my peers. This was especially noteworthy because my brother speaks with the thick southern twang that identifies him as a product of Wayne County.

A love of books and reading, instilled in me by my mother, opened up the rest of the world to me. I knew at an early age I did not want to stay in Jesup the rest of my life. Despite advances in the civil rights movement, racism was pervasive in the culture, and I was constantly confronted with racial epithets. I had a difficult time dealing with this perspective growing up.

I cannot say with any degree of confidence *why* racism was so distasteful when, in essence, that was all I had ever known. What I *can* express is that there was an inner knowing that I was different and believed differently. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule (1986/1997) characterize this inner voice as *subjective knowledge* in their model of epistemological development, yet there was also something of the *connected knower* in my attempts to understand others’ viewpoints. The connected knower is one who empathically puts herself in another’s place to gain an understanding of the other’s perspective. In retrospect, I see myself at that time as consciously creating my own meaning; looking for my own “truth” in the situation.

Student I—My Own Transition to College

My transition to college occurred in the late 1970s. I had lived through the era of school desegregation, the Vietnam conflict, Watergate, and the ensuing political disaffection in the

United States. Jimmy Carter was President. Leon Spinks beat Muhammad Ali for the world heavyweight boxing title, the first test-tube baby was born, an evening soap called “Dallas” made it to TV, and the movie “Animal House” was released in theaters. Racially segregated bathrooms and water fountains in public buildings were a vague memory. Disco music ruled the dances after football games on Friday nights, and the Women’s Liberation Movement was making headway, even in the deep South of my roots.

I remember my high school years as a time of thinly veiled impatience to get out of Jesup and get on with my life. I attended the only county public school, Wayne County High School. There were a total of 1500 students with about 300 in my graduating class. I was not challenged academically in this context. Honors and advanced placement courses did not exist in the high school curriculum at that time. A gifted education program was in its infancy when I was in the eighth grade, so I accepted the opportunity to move up to Algebra I at mid-year. The move just meant I finished the school’s entire math curriculum in my junior year.

I enjoyed school and was determined not to “dumb down” for anyone, including boys, to be accepted. My stance was that male and female peers could either take me or leave me the way I was. I was a self-proclaimed egghead band-geek and proud of it. I hung out on the fringes of the smart popular crowd in my class, but also had interpersonal relationships with students a few years older.

There was no “moment of decision” to go to college. College attendance had always been a given in my family because I achieved a high level of educational success throughout school. However, as a first generation college student, I knew nothing about negotiating the college and financial aid search and application process and neither did my parents. With a heavy workload of 1500 students, two school counselors were able to disseminate little

information to juniors and seniors about the college process. Moreover, I did not know the questions to ask even if I wanted to seek out the information. The high school advertised only local scholarships, so I came to the conclusion I needed to choose a state school for financial reasons. For someone who graduated at the top of her class with high Scholastic Assessment Test scores, the lack of information and guidance makes me angry thinking back on this feeling of settling for an institution of higher education rather than making my own choice.

My vocational aspirations vacillated between medicine and education during high school. I knew I wanted to prepare for a career involving interaction with adolescents, and I was interested in a helping profession. A summer shadowing experience in a physician's office as well as the experience of taking four years of science and math led me to choose education over medicine. I enjoyed taking courses in the behavioral sciences, especially anthropology, so I began college as an anthropology major at Georgia Southern College. My goal was to teach high school behavioral science courses.

I made many mistakes with my perceived limited college options. For example, there were no visits to Georgia Southern before this decision was made, so I had many surprises ahead of me. All I knew was that I had been chosen as one of ten President's Scholars in the incoming freshman class, so that external validation of my academic ability made the decision seem right at the time.

In September 1978 I drove off in my 1966 Dodge Charger headed for Statesboro, Georgia, all of 80 miles from Jesup. The car was overflowing with possessions without which I thought I could not live. These possessions were the objects that would bring the familiar into my new and strange environment: an afghan my grandmother made, pictures of high school friends and family, and the ever-present staple of girls' dormitory rooms, stuffed animals. I was

bound for Johnson Hall, a freshman dormitory, where I would be rooming with one of my good friends from high school. This decision was yet another mistake—rooming with someone who had a steady boyfriend and who had no desire to get involved with the social life on campus.

My first few days on campus were spent settling in the dorm and taking College Level Examination Program (CLEP) tests. I went through an advising process with one of the freshman academic advisors. I do not remember anything about my advisor, but he or she said my schedule was tentative based on the outcome of the tests. I remember being highly anxious because the start of classes was a few short days away. The CLEP results came in the nick of time, and I found out I had accrued 45 quarter hours. I was reclassified as a sophomore and changed my schedule to reflect my new status. Because of my status, I was required to register for the Rising Junior test, which sent me into a mental and emotional tailspin. I had just arrived on campus, and already I had to think about my junior year and declaring a major. I was comforted by at least having begun to contemplate a vocational direction for my future.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) proposed seven *vectors* of college student development, each vector having both “direction and magnitude” (p. xv). Developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity are the vectors students address during their college years. *Developing competence* was a theme of my freshman year of college. I have chosen to elaborate on four aspects of competence as they relate to my development: intellectual competence, interpersonal competence, intrapersonal competence, and manual competence.

Intellectual competence. My academic transition was seamless. I felt confident and competent about being successful from my first quarter as a college student. I was a self-

regulated learner—metacognitively aware, attuned to situational and contextual demands, goal-directed, intrinsically motivated, and self-monitoring (Lindner & Harris, 1998; Pressley & Ghatala, 1990; Schutz, 1994; Simpson & Nist, 2000; Winne, 1995; Zimmerman, 1998a, 1998b, 2002). Although I saw college as more difficult than high school, most of the increased academic demands involved reading voluminous amounts of material. Reading had always been a pleasure for me, so the adjustment to a heavier reading load was relatively easy. The love of learning in general has been a lifelong theme as well, so I took to college coursework like the proverbial duck takes to water.

In my classes, faculty-student interaction existed on a continuum. On one end was a professor for an introductory biology course of 150 students scheduled for 8:00 a.m. The instructor could barely speak English and stood behind the lectern every morning, reading verbatim out of the book. With the exception of completing examinations, I stopped attending the class two weeks into the quarter. On the other end of the continuum was a geography course. Feeling an increasing sense of intellectual competence and willingness to challenge myself in my third quarter of college, I was able to obtain permission to take a senior level independent study in geography that turned out to be one of my most successful experiences. My professor challenged me to think critically through readings and one-on-one discussions with him. He challenged and supported me at the same time, confirming my thoughts and opinions as equally valid as his, as long as I could support my position with evidence. This was a significant cognitive shift for me. His confirmation influenced the way I approached my academic readings and interactions with every other professor I had thereafter, undergraduate and graduate.

I did not have the goal of obtaining a 4.0 grade point average during my undergraduate years. My grades usually reflected my interest in courses, and I felt quite comfortable with

mostly A's and a few B's. Studying had been an independent venture for me during high school and continued to be a solo activity during my undergraduate experience. I would not have even contemplated looking for a study group, but then collaborative learning was not emphasized in or out of the classroom. Cocurricular and service learning experiences were nonexistent.

I explored the education major at Georgia Southern in more depth during the first quarter and was disappointed in the structure of the curriculum. I did not want to wade through courses, such as bulletin board creation, that I did not believe were appropriate for secondary teachers. I began to question my plan to teach high school. I still wanted to stay in the field of education, so toward the end of that year, I chose to move in the direction of psychology, another of the behavioral sciences. After doing some research on school counseling, I determined obtaining an undergraduate degree in psychology and a master's degree in school counseling would be congruent with my interests in behavioral sciences, adolescents, and the field of education. The goal of becoming a school counselor represented a chance to give my students information and opportunities I did not have.

Interpersonal competence. I met people from other areas of Georgia and made good friends in my freshman year. I had road trips to Savannah, excursions to the beach, clubbing in Statesboro, and campus dances. Savannah is especially representative of good times that year. The city represents the first time I heard of "chicken fingers," the first time I ate escargot, and the first date with a person of another faith. It was a time of gaining more autonomy as I chose to date outside the Christian faith. I would describe my relationships with most of my peers as loose acquaintanceships, though a small circle of friends remained constant throughout the year. Because I was a sophomore, I was able to move to an upperclassman dormitory second quarter.

I moved in with another high school friend whose life revolved around her boyfriend. I guess I did not learn the lesson the first time around.

The person who had the most impact on me was a friend from Atlanta. I recognized a selflessness in Sheri that reflected what I envisioned as a quality of my ideal self. She and I had many conversations about what we wanted out of our college experience and life in general. I appreciated Sheri's caring attitude and unconditional positive regard in her interactions with others and with me. Chickering and Reisser (1993) spoke of college students "struggling to define their best selves" (p. 144). Her selflessness threw my self-centeredness into stark relief. Our relationship pushed me beyond my comfort zone into an unsettling place of self-critique.

Intrapersonal competence: Finding "me". By far the most dramatic aspect of growth and development during that first year was intrapersonal. I was experiencing "work of considerable psychic energy" in moving from my former identity as a dependent high school student who followed parental rules, to an independent college student and young adult (Perry, 1970/1999). It was overwhelming at times with so many dimensions of "Lori" changing simultaneously. I finally felt able to act on beliefs I had for many years, so that aspect of the transition was liberating, but it was also overwhelming. It was a year of inner turmoil and by the end, a tentative peace. I had so many questions to resolve. If I was not my parents, then who was I? If I did not possess the same beliefs, then what did I believe? If I was not satisfied with the person I was, then who would I be?

Questioning my parents' religious beliefs was a salient dimension of my Christian faith during my junior year of high school. However, the questioning escalated when I physically moved away from my family of origin. I spent a lot of time in introspection, trying to come to

grips with my beliefs, values, and goals and begin to establish my adult identity. I was taking the physical move a step further to a mental separation from my interactions with my parents.

I spent hours at a time sitting and playing the piano in the lobby of the dormitory, an activity that Chickering and Reisser (1993) would characterize as developing *manual competence*. I became a decent musician, but more importantly, I was effectively managing my emotions as I found a release from some of the pressure I felt. Disappointment, dissatisfaction, and even mild depression all played a role in my disequilibrium that year. I experienced disappointment at not finding a niche on campus with some activity or group, dissatisfaction at my choice of college, and depression that I was not having my “ideal” college experience. My college reality was not congruent with the expectations I had of college life. Georgia Southern was a suitcase college—one where most of the student body packed up and went home on weekends—and that was not the collegiate experience I sought. During the third quarter I weighed options that might increase my satisfaction: join a sorority, move off campus with some friends and get a job, or transfer to another institution. By the end of the year, I chose to transfer to a smaller, private liberal arts college 500 miles from home for my junior year.

Reflections on my undergraduate years. Though I made it through my undergraduate years and developed as a person because of the experiences, regrets still occupy my thoughts when I look back at that time in my life. “Typical” does not describe my experience, and that is exactly what I wanted—the typical, traditional college student experience with friendships for life made and kept. However, finding myself and my career became more important.

Spiritual I

The issue of racism with which I had lived all my life seemed to be context specific in my epistemological development. In other domains, I was still very dualistic in my views. Enter the

Spiritual I, who used to be known as the Baptist I. The Baptist I was steeped in the “We-Right-Good vs. They-Wrong-Bad” dualistic dichotomy (Moore, 2002; Perry, 1970/1999). This blind belief, which is characteristic of so many southern fundamentalists, was a strong force in my worldview for many years. It was not until adolescence, with its inherent identity confusion, that I actively sought to learn more about other religions and ways of viewing the world.

Later events in my young adult life, which culminated in a divorce from my first husband, served as mechanisms of change in my epistemological development. Some might call it disequilibrium or equilibration—a change based on incongruence or strain between my beliefs at the time and what was happening in my environment (Bruning, Schraw, & Ronning, 1999; James, 1904). I further questioned my religious beliefs and the role they played in my worldview. I examined myself and others in my church with fresh eyes and was not comfortable with what I found. I could not continue to condone the intolerance and narrow-mindedness. No longer bound by rigid fundamentalist rules, I now view myself as spiritual, rather than religious. I have opened myself up to what resonates with me, including teachings of both Eastern and Western religions, giving birth to the Spiritual I.

Woman I

Fundamentalists believe women should be silent. Women should be submissive. Herein the Baptist I and the Woman I parted ways. I cannot be silent. I must be heard. I must lead. I must do what is best for me. Even in my role as a mother, I was never the “bake the cookies and drive the carpool” type. My role was raising my children as self-sufficient young people who could think for themselves. My daughters were not to see themselves as passive “receivers of knowledge” as they became adults. They were to have careers if they so chose. That is what their mother chose in her quest for self. This choice led to the Counselor I.

Counselor I

My master's degree was completed at an historically black institution, the irony in which I reveled. This was another situation in which experience influenced my beliefs. My professors were predominantly African American, and my peers were from countries and cultures all over the world. I encountered new perspectives and new ideas on a daily basis. Intellectual dialogue was on a different level than my undergraduate experience. I recognized and embraced reality, knowledge, and truth as uncertain and changing.

After completion of the degree, my choice to accept a counseling position at a Catholic high school was one that drew criticism from close friends in my conservative church. I viewed this choice as just another way for me to say, "I'm different than you. I have a different perspective, and that's O.K." Once again, it was a way for me to learn more about other perspectives and beliefs.

My counseling training and subsequent work in the profession have led me to a greater appreciation of the value of each individual as a being of unique personality, talent, and purpose. I believe part of my own life's work is to live an intentional, self-aware life. One aspect of my mission in this world is to encourage others to engage in this same kind of self-examination. Through a heightened awareness of personal gifts and potential, greater contributions to humankind are possible.

Because of the emphasis on self-reflection in my training, I am also aware of many life experiences that have the capability of creating bias. My personality, upbringing, and the society in which I live are all laden with bias. Ideally, I actively strive to be attuned to my motives as I encounter others on a daily basis. Realistically, I am a continual work in progress as I learn about myself and others.

Lifelong Learner I

Learning has always been an intrinsically motivating activity. The enduring “voice” of Lori Aultman is that of learner. That is something for which I will always be grateful to my parents, especially my mother, who taught me to read by age four. She instilled a sense of self-efficacy and competence in me through those early experiences of success, and even more importantly, a love of learning which is still a driving force in my life. The books I read opened new horizons outside of south Georgia. Today, I do not go anywhere without a book.

This love of learning finally motivated me to make the difficult decision to leave two college-age daughters in another state and move back home to Georgia to pursue my doctorate. The years I have spent at the University of Georgia have given rise to a paradigm shift in my thinking as I have negotiated a new identity, the Researcher I.

Researcher I

Where once I saw myself as a progressive practitioner in school counseling, I now see myself as a scholar, researcher, and educational psychologist. I have been exposed to philosophical and epistemological teaching that has finally allowed me to put names to my personal beliefs about knowledge, truth, reality, and inquiry. I have been introduced to multiple definitions, distinctions, and continuums of epistemology.

Heylighen (2002, ¶ 1) defines epistemology as “the branch of philosophy that studies knowledge. It attempts to answer the basic question: What distinguishes true (adequate) knowledge from false (inadequate) knowledge?” Other scholars define epistemology as dealing with the origin, nature, structure, scope, acquisition, and sources of knowledge (Crotty, 1998; DeRose, 2003; Hofer & Pintrich, 2002; Patton, 2002). Their questions are: How do we come to know what we know? What is knowledge? What is truth? Under what conditions do we know?

Looking across epistemological frames, multiple sources of knowledge are possible: perception, memory, testimony or authority, reason or logic, consciousness, intuition, and innate structures (Audi, 2003; Kitchener, 1986).

Wrestling with uncertain knowledge. Epistemological theories have exhibited an apparent trend from absolute and certain knowledge, with the knower in a passive, receptive role looking for knowledge outside the self, to more relative and uncertain stances of knowledge, with the knower in an active, constructive role creating knowledge in interactions with her world (Heylighen, 2002). I have found my epistemological home with the latter.

I find my own beliefs about truth and knowledge mirrored in both social constructionism and constructivism. Despite the distinction which Crotty (1998) so elegantly makes, both these ideologies have a place in my epistemology because I believe knowledge to be both individually and socially situated. Individual differences play a great role in individual meaning making. These differences go beyond the uniqueness of experience that Crotty (1998) suggests. Humans are born with traits and personalities that make them unique from the beginning of their existence and color the way they view their world. Without consideration of personality and an individual's innate uniqueness in addition to personal experience, I have difficulty accounting for individual differences. The shaping of individuals by different life experiences is insufficient to explain these variances in meaning making. It is a combination of the individual traits and experiences encountered that influence future meaning making and interpretation of events.

Individuals also make sense of the world in the context of cultural frameworks. Cultural and social worlds impact individuals from the moment of birth. We view the world "through lenses bestowed on us by our culture" (Crotty, 1998). Culture is a gestalt of "behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought, especially as

expressed in a particular community or period” (Evenson & Patwell, 1994). Sociocultural epistemology has constructionist underpinnings, yet its focus is on knowledge as a product of the “social and material history of the culture” (Case, 1996). Though this view has substantial merit, it takes the “community of learners” to a level that eclipses the contribution that the individual makes to her own construction of knowledge.

A simple graphic depiction of the interaction of individual and cultural meaning making is shown in Figure 1. Individuals in this figure are represented by small solid circles. The larger dashed circles represent cultures in which the individuals are situated. Some people are closer to the center of their cultural circle and are more enmeshed in a particular culture, while others are farther away and less enmeshed. Individuals shaped by more than one culture are depicted in multiple circles.

For individuals with multicultural heritage, the significant persons impacting their development and thought represent an amalgam of cultural experiences. Initially, the significant persons tend to be parents and immediate family. Through socialization and formal schooling, other influences are introduced that affect individuals. Therefore, those who possess a more monocultural heritage may still be impacted by other cultures and viewpoints through teachers, friends, clergy, and even the media. Individuals affect cultural and social reality, culture affects individuals, and individuals affect individuals. All the while we are engaged in interactions and the coconstruction of meaningful reality and knowledge. However, it is a reality that is complex and ever changing.

Because the constructionist view does not recognize an absolute, objective truth, von Glasersfeld (1995) proffers the idea of *viability* rather than *reality*. “To the constructionist, concepts, models, theories, and so on are *viable* if they prove adequate in the contexts in which

they were created” (p. 7). This perspective reflects pragmatic language and an approach to research that I also include in my framework.

The pragmatic influence. Speaking of pragmatism, James (1904, ¶ 20) said,

It means...nothing but this, that ideas (which themselves are but parts of our experience) become true just in so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relation with other parts of our experience...Any idea upon which we can ride, so to speak; any idea that will carry us prosperously from any one part of our experience to any other part, linking things satisfactorily, working securely, simplifying, saving labor; is true for just so much, true in so far forth, true *instrumentally*. This is the ‘instrumental’ view of truth.

It is this aspect of pragmatism I find appealing and, at the same time, complementary to my constructionist views of research and education. Pragmatism encourages a focus on the end result and allows for the selection of the best means of obtaining that end. Pragmatists “talk about truths in the plural, about their utility and satisfactoriness, about the success with which they ‘work’” (James, 1904). This is the beauty of the pragmatic orientation.

Finally, to pull together my reflections on the nature of knowledge and truth, I turn to Patton (2002). In response to the question “What is truth?,” Patton offers responses from five different frames: traditional social science, constructivist, artistic, critical, and pragmatic. Again, I find two of these responses mirror my own thoughts—the constructivist, who says, “I can show you multiple truths,” and the pragmatist who says, “I can show you what is useful. What is useful is true” (p. 578). The critical response also has its own appeal because it is represented in constructivist language and because of my own predilection towards improving or enhancing the state of education—“truth depends on one’s consciousness” (p. 578).

Inquiry. An overarching philosophy of my view of inquiry is embodied in three categories of research. The three categories are: “research of interest, research of obligation, and research of opportunity” (Flesher, 1997, ¶ 4). Research of interest is typically basic research conducted at a research university—that which creates new knowledge and is published in scholarly journals. Research of obligation is that which comes from a critical frame, addressing needs and problems in society. Examples of research of opportunity would be those that provide the occasion to work with interesting colleagues or try a new methodology that seems appealing. Of course, some research embodies all these categories as they are not mutually exclusive.

Epistemology and inquiry. Different views of inquiry reflect the various goals of research. Inquiry may have a theoretical focus, a conceptual focus, or a problem-oriented focus. These categories and forms of inquiry are “neither mutually exclusive nor discrete” (Wolcott, 1992). It may also focus on variables, process and meaning, or social-historical context (Schutz & DeCuir, 2002). Furthermore, regardless of this diversity of focus, inquiry is informed by the researcher’s epistemological beliefs, capabilities, knowledge and theoretical frameworks as well as the research questions, the research purpose, and the audience for whom the findings are intended.

Scholarly inquiry is a process. Bentz and Shapiro (1998) offer four outcomes of scholarly inquiry: “personal transformation, improvement of professional practice, the generation of knowledge, and appreciation of the complexity, intricacy, structure and—some would say—beauty of reality” (p.68). I would add the “changing nature” of reality to that description as well. Finally, scholarly inquiry should be systematic, diligent, rigorous, and ethical whether the researcher is conducting quantitative, qualitative, or multimethod research—a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.

My views, my research. My personality and prior training in counseling psychology create a natural disposition toward research in which I have the opportunity to interact with individuals and seek understanding of how they see themselves and how they see their world. I also lean toward research that will benefit my participants, even if it is only in the act of using me as a sounding board. My goal in this regard is that they will become more self-aware individuals. “Knowing thyself” is a value in my life, and it is something that I encourage in others.

Final reflections on subjectivity. Writing this autobiographical piece has been an exercise in making meaning and sense of dimensions of my life through the telling of my stories. In a discussion of the role of narrative in qualitative research, Reissman (2002) offers this perspective, “The truths of narrative accounts lie not in their faithful representation of a past world, but in the shifting connections they forge among past, present, and future” (p.705). Granted, when revealing my “Student I” for example, my memory has faded over the 25 years since I embarked on the original journey through the undergraduate years, and I am sure events have been forgotten that could have substantively added to this personal journey. However, what is written here clearly left a mark on my identity that is still with me and continues to make its presence known.

I also acknowledge that what is presented in my subjective I’s is my interpretation of the past rather than a reproduction of events. This interpretation, and the meanings attached to it, have evolved with time and the influence of subsequent experiences (Mishler, 1986). My interpretation creates my subjectivities as well as my sense of self. These entities influence what I think, what I believe, what I choose to research, and the lenses through which I view this research on transition. Beverly Tatum’s words echo my thoughts on the ongoing nature of

identity development and sense making in life, “Integrating one’s past, present, and future into a cohesive, unified sense of self is a complex task that begins in adolescence and continues for a lifetime” (1999, p. 20). I am still on that journey.

Theoretical Frameworks

The concepts of identity development and sense making are especially salient for the 18-year-old participants in this study. Negotiating and “trying on” different identities is normative behavior as adolescents begin disengaging from family and social networks that have played an integral part in defining who they are. In this research on the transition from high school to college, I was particularly interested in students’ perspectives of this phase in their lives. I view the meaning they attach to this process as individually and socially constructed and therefore used constructivism and constructionism as part of my frame (Crotty, 1998). I also believe my participants constructed their own perceptions, or “reality” of the experience. In other words, there were multiple realities when examining the transition to college in this study. My participants were 19 individuals who come from 19 different “Gestalts” of life events. An integral assumption of Gestalt psychology is that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Schultz, 1975). This assumption appropriately describes the relationship of our life events to its perceived whole. Each of the participants in my study had over a decade and a half to accumulate thoughts, judgments, emotions, and experiences that made them the individuals they were at the time of our interviews, possessing unique perspectives, yet having common threads woven throughout their experiences.

These perceptions of their lives were what I hoped they would share with me—what their meaning making looked like and sounded like as they elucidated their experiences at four different points in time during their transition process. These were 19 different views of

“reality.” Further, the interview itself was a coconstruction of reality in the interaction of my participants and myself (Mishler, 1986). I saw my contribution to this coconstruction as a mere skeletal structure within which the participants responded and constructed their realities. From the inception of the study I intended to focus on the students’ voices, foregrounding their meaning making.

I chose a phenomenological approach to explore students’ thoughts and feelings about their transition process. Phenomenology is an appropriate lens as it focuses on essences of lived experience. Husserl (1950/1999), an early philosopher in this tradition, defined phenomenology as the “theory of the essence of the pure phenomenon of knowing” (p. 36). He went on to explain,

Every intellectual experience, indeed every experience whatsoever, can be made into an object of pure seeing and apprehension while it is occurring...It is given as an existing entity, as a “this-here”...This holds for all specific forms of thought, no matter how they are given. (pp. 24-25)

The different forms of thought to which Husserl referred are imagination, actually occurring perceptions, and judgment.

They [the forms of thought] stand before us as objects of intuition. We speak of them not in vague and sketchy terms, or by way of empty opinion. Rather we see them, and, as we are seeing them, we can examine their essence, their constitution, their immanent character and conform our talk by a pure measure to what is seen in the fullness of its clarity. (p. 25)

Hence, he reveals the emphasis on the *essence* of lived experience in the phenomenological

framework. Husserl “recognized the crucial value of returning to the self to discover the nature and meaning of things as they appear and in their essence” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26).

Therefore, I turned to the self, the student as the holder of meaning and essence, to explore this experience. I also sought to view the transition from a broader perspective as I looked for commonalities and differences in their stories. Finally and ultimately, I sought to establish a foundation for future research that will enhance this life transition for others.

Design of the Study

Based on my research questions and interests in students’ perspectives and meaning making of their transition experience, I chose a research design using interviews, focus groups, observation, and examination of artifacts. This research was a phenomenological sequence of studies with a longitudinal panel design, with the panel made up of individual interview participants (Menard, 2002). A longitudinal design was chosen because the transition process is best studied over time and would be beneficial in capturing the full essence of the transition. Focus groups incorporated another component into the study. These students provided further qualitative information as the participants constructed meaning in interaction with each other. All interviews and focus groups were audio taped.

I divided the longitudinal study into four data collection phases (See Tables 1 and 2). My participants initially agreed to participate in two semistructured interviews and observations during the summer program. The first data collection was completed in July 2003. I conducted the first interviews in the participants’ cities of residence and at a time and place of each participant’s choosing. Most of the interviews took place in their homes. This process was both time consuming and exhausting as I traveled from the Florida to the North Carolina borders to meet with my participants, but my choice to interview the students before they came to the

campus gave me the opportunity to see them in a precollege context and obtain data about their expectations of the transition experience. Several interview questions in phase one were prospective, asking participants to share expectations about their transition process.

I observed and took field notes during several Freshman College Summer Experience (FCSE) classes in the summer of 2003. FCSE students take six hours of coursework during the summer, including a learning-to-learn required course and another course of the students' choosing in the social sciences. I observed a political science, a psychology, and a sociology course in addition to four different sections of learning-to-learn. After the first round of interviews, I realized a longitudinal study that encompassed the entire freshman year would be beneficial to capturing the full essence of the transition experience. The seventeen participants who remained in the study until its conclusion agreed to a third interview.

Two female participants did not respond to my e-mails requesting a second interview, so I conducted both the second round of interviews with 17 of the original 19 participants and a focus group of three participants after mid-term of the fall semester of the 2003-2004 school year. In the spring semester of 2004, I completed a second focus group of three participants and third round of interviews with the 17 remaining students (See Appendix A for interview protocols). The second and third phases of data collection took place in the participants' residence hall. Phases two through four focused retrospectively on the transition process to date. The third phase was conducted in March and April 2004 with interviews conducted and observation of a chemistry help session completed. The fourth phase was an e-mail contact in the fall of 2004 to ascertain if the student had returned and obtain any final thoughts from them on their first year of college. I collected samples of work that my participants had completed in their courses each semester as one group of artifacts. I took photographs of each participant and

collected photographs from each of them during the third round of interviews as another group of artifacts. I viewed participants' photographs as a pictorial representation of personal memories that stood out for them during their transition process.

Research Context

The lenses used in this study, both phenomenology and constructionism, require explication of the context in which participants create and assign meaning to the transition. Both a description of the research site and pen portraits of my impressions of my participants are provided in the following sections.

The institution. The University of Georgia, the state's flagship institution, is located in Athens, Georgia, 60 miles northeast of the state capital of Atlanta. The university holds the oldest charter of any public university in the United States, dating back to January of 1785. The main campus encompasses 605 acres with 313 buildings, and UGA is the most comprehensive institution of higher learning in the state.

Though the university draws students both nationally and internationally, its undergraduate population is predominantly Georgian. Enrollment for fall semester 2003 was 33,875. In my participants' cohort, the 5,175 freshmen had an average Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) score of 1212 and a high school grade point average of 3.6. Of this group, 4,415 were from Georgia, with 98% receiving the state lottery supported HOPE scholarship. Criteria for the scholarship are based on a minimum of a 3.0 high school grade point average, a certain number of college preparatory courses, and residency in the state of Georgia. Female students outnumbered males 57.8% to 42.2%.

A wide range of activities are available to students at this large university, with over 450 clubs registered with the Department of Student Activities. These clubs and organizations span a

spectrum from intramural sports to religious and service clubs to Greek life and culturally oriented groups. Athletics at the university cannot be overlooked as they are an integral component of the campus atmosphere and another prominent aspect of the school that draws students to its doors. In recent years, UGA has consistently ranked in the top ten of all NCAA Division I athletic programs, with the football program its most visible and well-attended sport.

The University of Georgia offers a summer bridge program, the Freshman College Summer Experience (FCSE), designed to enhance the transition to college by providing students with a more comprehensive learning experience than a traditional summer school session. Each year, the group of 275 students has the opportunity to take six hours of academic coursework—a social science course and a learning-to-learn course—as well as participate in group activities and information sessions beyond the regular classroom.

The original conceptualization of this study was to examine how a bridge program mediated the transition experience, but I found myself more interested in the student rather than the program. After reflection and consultation with my committee, I decided to change the focus to the individual student. Despite this change, I retained the site selection because the summer program would allow me to access a complete list of 275 enrollees and their addresses. Most of these students live in the state in which the university is located. Going through the FCSE program director and her immediate staff to obtain the information I needed meant dealing with just a few individuals, which was appealing.

Gaining access was accomplished easily through contacting the director and obtaining IRB approval. The primary advantage of using this particular program from which to solicit participants was that it would allow me to look at issues of self-regulation and transfer because self-regulation and study strategies are explicitly taught in the program.

Participant Selection

Participants came from enrollees of the summer bridge program (See Figure 2). I chose to send letters (See Appendix B) to students in this state. I had hoped to have as much variation as possible in sampling across gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and type of high school, but the program director did not have that information. However, I initially expected to have a relatively homogenous group from which to sample because of the demographics of the university enrollment.

I was aiming for a total of 12 participants to make it through the entire study, so I accepted 19 volunteers initially (See Table 3). These students represent most of the regions of the state. I wanted to make the IRB process less complicated, so I accepted only those who would reach age 18 by the time of their first interview. I expected some attrition before the first interview and more after the first interview. There was no attrition prior to the first interview, and two females did not respond to my e-mails about the second interview.

The participants. In contrast to my own era of the 1970s, the participants in this study were born in the mid-1980s in a time when

Ricky Nelson, Richard Burton, Samantha Smith, Laura Ashley, Orson Welles, Karen Ann Quinlin, Benigno Aquino, and the U.S. Football League have always been dead. "Ctrl + Alt + Del" is as basic as "ABC." Bert and Ernie are old enough to be their parents. There has always been a screening test for AIDS. Test tube babies are now having their own babies. Directory assistance has never been free. Rock and Roll has always been a force for social good. Russian leaders have always looked like leaders everywhere else. (Beloit College, 2003)

As a whole, participants considered their families to be middle to upper class with self-reported yearly incomes ranging from \$25,000 to over \$100,000. The vast majority of the parents of these students had training or college beyond high school. All had at least one parent with a college degree, so none of them will be first generation college graduates.

Heather, the daughter of military parents, had moved several times during her life. She had most recently lived in a small town in Georgia and attended a private high school where she served in various leadership positions. Despite plans of many of her classmates to go to local two-year and less selective four-year colleges, Heather aspired to attend a more rigorous four-year university. Her high school courses included college preparatory and advanced placement. When first interviewed, Heather saw herself as an atypical high school student.

I have that discipline. I know when it's time to study, and I know when it's time...what I need to do to get that done...what it is I need to get done. I really don't consider myself a typical student. I actually enjoy class. I like learning new things that I don't already know, and so whereas some kids are just there to be there because they *have* to be, and that was an 8-3:00 type thing, I try to make the most of each class, and learn what I could out of each. And I would do some things outside of class as well. I'd ask a teacher, you know, what's a book I could read?

David was a quiet young man who was one of three children. His two older siblings were already well into their college years. His academic coursework in high school was a combination of college preparatory and advanced courses. David's desire in his college choice was to have "lots of opportunities to do different things."

Becky, an only child, was the sole participant who was home schooled. This schooling consisted of independent study in conjunction with structured group work with other home

schooled students. Becky seemed to be an “old soul”—a 30-year-old mind trapped in an 18-year-old body—who had had much of her developmental interactions with older adults. She shared her experience of trying to convince her peers she has a lighter side:

I've had that problem all the time even in high school. Not a problem, it's just because I'm a very good student people seem to think I'm only serious and wouldn't want to do anything fun. Or else would lessen their fun by acting so serious. But as long as I don't feel there's any personal danger in them, I'm glad to have fun and act silly and dance and be...just keeping in mind that I'm willing to have fun so far as...I'm not going to kill myself though.

Alison, an only child, was born to parents later in life. She had a natural enthusiasm evident in her expressive face as she talked about her experiences. A dedicated dancer, she possessed a discipline that easily transferred to her academic work. Her view of herself was that of a hard working and persevering student.

Amanda was the product of a large suburban public high school. A high school athlete, she juggled sports and academics well, achieving a 3.9 grade point average. Initially, Amanda didn't consider going to the University of Georgia.

For a long time I was really set on going to [out-of-state public university]. I didn't want to go close to home at all. I wanted to go somewhere else. Somewhere where half of my high school didn't go, because about 150 kids from my high school are going to Georgia. But the more I thought about it...the [other university] was fine, but a six hour drive kind of turned me away from it.

Michael came from a home that included extended family. Raised by his grandmother, he had an older brother who had already completed both undergraduate and graduate degrees. He frequently referenced advice and knowledge learned from his brother's experiences.

I learned like, what to do and what not to do...Like have fun, you know, but at the same time, don't have too much fun. I know lots of people dropped out their first year, and get into lots of trouble...

Suzanne, Kali, and Michelle all had mothers who were teachers. Suzanne was active in various sports and clubs at her private high school. She participated in cheerleading, basketball, softball, tennis, and track. When asked how she would describe herself as a student, she replied, "I like to have my work done. I'm not one to put off until midnight the day before something's due. I like to have it done, and I like to know that it's going to be a good job."

Kali was decisive and career-minded, having focused already on an undergraduate degree in psychology with the intent to pursue a terminal degree in counseling psychology. Kali was also politically minded and enjoyed sharing in debates about current issues. Kali shared,

I always kind of thought of myself as an average student, but my friends are always above average students. I think that I'm more like intellectual than a lot of them are, but they just work harder. I've kind of developed a higher work ethic because, I mean, if I have this potential and I'm not using it, that's pretty stupid.

Leadership has played a large role in Michelle's high school experience. As a state officer in one of the clubs in which she participated, she traveled throughout the state fulfilling her responsibilities about once a month.

I missed a lot of school this year, and I took advanced classes...I'm one to stay up late and study. I usually try to take good notes, but I don't. I'm usually good about finding the high points, but it's just actually sitting down and studying it.

Sam was a gregarious participant who had already started making connections at the university and was looking forward to being involved on campus.

I know a couple fraternities already rushing me right now. I'm not sure if that's the way I want to go. I don't know if it's worth it...The reason I deal with fraternities [is] mainly to make some best friends for the rest of my life.

Lisa graduated from a large public high school. She was expressive as she talked about her interest in a double major in math and music, but she had doubts about being able to accomplish the goal while participating in all the musical activities to which she would be obligated as a music major. Like Amanda, Lisa had also considered out-of-state schools, but the music program at UGA influenced her final decision.

Justin was raised in a suburban neighborhood by his grandmother. Planning on a future in law, Justin was instrumental in organizing a political action club at his high school.

I've always been really politically oriented. I was with a friend, and she's very liberal and I'm very conservative, so we needed a place to argue about it. [Laughter] The club was to get students interested in local politics, state politics.

Sara went to a large public high school and took courses in an International Baccalaureate program. She learned from an early age to value cultural differences and, like Justin, turned that interest into a new club at her school. "I was in another club, World Cultures club. That was a great club where we just had different cultures come in. We had different foods and celebrated

holidays and stuff.” A second legacy of her family was a concern for those less fortunate than herself. She volunteered in her community through National Honor Society and the Red Cross.

Tina, a quiet young woman, was reflective as she talked about her high school years. She also took advantage of an International Baccalaureate program at her school. She expressed her love of academics and the work ethic she believed was necessary to maintain her 4.0 grade point average.

I’ve very focused. People have told me that I’m “the perpetual student”. [Laughter] I love studying. I really do. Biology especially. I just sit down in my room, and I go at it.

Jennifer attended a small boarding and day school in a small town. When we met for our first interview, she had mementos of her high school years laid out on the breakfast table for me to examine. Many of her friends were boarding students and had already left the area, so Jennifer was ready to move on to college as well. After so many years in the same school, she was looking forward to the anonymity of a large university. “I’m scared, but I’m excited...Yeah, I’m going to miss my friends and stuff, but I just need to go.”

Jonathan took a more laid-back approach to academics than most of the other participants in this study.

[My study habits were] probably not the greatest. I mean, I always studied for tests like the day before...I really didn’t study that much. I mean, I pulled off pretty good grades for not studying. So I just figured, you know, if I can do that, why not? [Laughter]

It was apparent from her comments that Anna came from a close-knit family. She told me,

My mom wants me to have it [a car]. She’s being very emotional about this. It’s really cute. She goes like, “Oh, I’m going to miss you.” “I’ll be home, Mom, it’s O.K.” My

brother is like, “Man, I’m going to miss you. You’re always on my side,” like if he gets in trouble or something. [Laughter] ...The smell of home and just, I don’t know. I’m going to be homesick. But I’ll be O.K.

Researcher’s Role

As a researcher, I am engaged in the coconstruction of data with these 17 participants. The role of the researcher must be explored throughout the research process to examine the impact of the researcher’s presence, beliefs, and values on the participants and data. I see the role of the researcher as multifaceted and changing. It must be defined and redefined with each new study and, at times, within each new context within a single study. Roles may be defined by research design, research methods, and by relationships.

Glesne (1999) suggests two roles in qualitative research—that of researcher and learner. The *researcher* identity brings with it a heightened awareness of my own emotions, attitudes, and behaviors. There is also the awareness of my impact on participants and the research situation. This impact makes the importance of self-awareness in subjectivity and reflexivity preeminent throughout the research process.

The *learner* identity allows the researcher to approach data collection as one who is there to listen and learn from the participant. The participant is viewed as the expert, the teacher. The researcher is there to ask questions, probe, take in, and process the information through the participants’ storytelling.

Negotiating the researcher’s role. Research roles are also defined by the dichotomies of acquaintance, friend, or colleague versus stranger and insider versus outsider. My role certainly began as stranger and outsider, but with the design of a longitudinal study I saw my roles and relationships evolving over time. I was an outsider in that I was certainly not a college freshman

at the university, but my professional background and previous relationships with high school seniors allowed me to go into the research with more of a contextual understanding than another researcher may possess.

I began the study as a complete stranger to all 17 students. Over time, I established a relationship where I e-mailed participants periodically between rounds of interviews to wish them well in their classes and tell them my plans for scheduling the next interview. Many of these students were interested in my perspective on the study as well as my personal views of higher education and my experiences as a doctoral student. I remained open and answered their questions.

I even became my former “counselor self” on occasion and gave them information that I hope enhanced their experiences as new college students. I wrote a subjectivity statement and participated in a bracketing interview during a research interviewing class to examine my biases, prejudgments, and preconceived notions related to this research. To the best of my ability, attention to bracketing or suspending these biases was made as I conducted my research. Monitoring subjectivities and intersubjectivities among my participants was continued throughout this study.

In examining my subjectivity at the outset, I made the decision to share information with my participants when they requested it or when I believed they were open to receiving it. An excerpt from my research journal (May 15, 2003) revealed my thoughts as I contemplated my future role as interviewer and researcher:

I can't be interviewer and counselor at the same time, but I do have concerns about my own feelings in the interviews. If a student is obviously having difficulty or struggling with an area of transition, I feel ethically bound as a counselor to refer them to services

available on campus. Will this affect their transition process, and therefore my data?

Probably, if they take advantage of the services, but my first responsibility is to them as a human being, not as my research subject. I have to live with myself, first and foremost.

This dilemma leads me to my final point. Conducting research reflexively and ethically are characteristics of a good researcher—characteristics that must be embedded in everyday practice (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Punch, 1998; Shank, 2002). This meant making time to reflect critically on my thoughts and my behaviors as I conducted my dissertation study as well as future research. Critically reflecting on myself as researcher and instrument must begin with my choice of research problem through the final analysis and representation as I write up my findings. I certainly aspired to make them a natural, mindful part of what I did in my dissertation study as well as my professional research career.

Data Analysis

In accordance with Kvale's (1996) view of the ubiquitousness of analysis throughout the research process, I view analysis as pervasive throughout the study, beginning with my choice of questions and probes used in the first round of interviews. Kvale's description of the ad hoc approach—using various techniques to organize and analyze data—most closely characterized my approach to analysis in this research. The analytic techniques chosen were an integration of phenomenological and general inductive analysis as well as poetic representation. For each of these techniques I present information about my adaptation of the technique and personal reflections on my use of the technique.

Phenomenological Analysis

I used an adaptation of Moustakas's (1994) method of analysis of phenomenological data based on Husserl's original work with intentionality. *Intentionality*, the directedness of

consciousness toward an object or entity, is an intrinsic concept in phenomenology. To perceive an object or entity, an individual must direct attention *to* something. “Thus the act of consciousness and the object of consciousness are intentionally related” (Moustakas, 1994, p.28). Consciousness is conceived of as both cognition and affect related to the object. All of our perceptions of an object or entity, when approached from different angles, produce new knowledge about the phenomenon. Husserl called each perception of a phenomenon a *horizon*.

Intentionality is comprised of two interrelated dimensions—the *noema* and the *noesis*. Noema is the appearance of the object in an individual’s consciousness. The noema differs depending on the timing of the appearance, the background experience and knowledge of the perceiver, and the viewpoint or angle from which the object is perceived (Moustakas, 1994). The noetic dimension of intentionality is the underlying meaning or structure of the phenomenon. The combination of noema as a textural description of the phenomenon and noesis as a structural description provides a composite of the meanings and essences of the phenomenon for the individual.

Deductive Analysis

Through my review of the literature, I was introduced to a theory of transition (Schlossberg, 1981, 1984; Schlossberg et al., 1995) that provided the framework for deductive coding. Codes were derived specifically from components of the Schlossberg’s transition model. These codes comprised aspects of the self—the individual experiencing the transition, the situation—the type of transition, the support available to the individual, and the strategies individuals use to cope with transition.

Poetic Analysis

I see poetry not only as a method of representing qualitative data, but also as a method of analysis and a lens that enabled me to look at my data with fresh eyes. As I interviewed participants and later did close readings of interview transcripts, I found naturally occurring instances of rhythm, repetition, alliteration, and use of metaphor in words and phrases. This poetic speech exposed a visceral and vivid facet of the transition experience, a facet that “helped me capture the essence of what was said—the feelings, contradictions, dualities, and paradoxes” (Cahnmann, 2003, p. 33). This analysis, with its focus on essences, shared the focus with phenomenology and enhanced the phenomenological analysis.

Analytic procedures

The interviews were grouped for analysis—first by the round of the interview and then by individual participant. This allowed for comparisons among individuals in each round and then across time for each participant.

This analysis was a multi-step process that began with exploration of my own experience of the phenomenon I studied, the transition from high school to college. The second step was examination of the transcribed interviews. Horizontalizing, or regarding each statement deemed relevant to the topic as having equal value, was the first step in working phenomenologically with the transcripts. I coded the meaning units from participants’ statements, using a general inductive approach, and clustered them into common themes or categories.

My next step was to designate names for these categories. For example, categories included “academic goals,” “epistemological beliefs,” “self-awareness,” “faculty-student communication,” and “coping skills.” After the creation of categories, I placed these lower level

categories into upper level categories that included aspects of the transition from high school to college in my research questions, such as the academic, social, personal, or emotional dimensions. These categories began as my common-sense way of looking at various aspects of the transition (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

Interview transcripts comprised the bulk of the data I collected and are the focus of my dissertation. A second round of deductive coding was completed with concepts from Schlossberg's (1995) theory of transition. Finally, poetic representation was used to illustrate the themes and the structure of the transition from high school to college. Regardless of the types of analysis completed with this rich data set, it remained important to foreground student voices because they were the silent stakeholders in the transition, development, and self-regulation literature. All analysis and write up of data was approached with that goal in mind.

CHAPTER 3

INTERLUDE 1: EXPECTATIONS

The words came to me in a dream. “Figure it out. Figure it out.” The words had the rhythm of a freight train. I awoke with urgency and excitement, thinking, “I have to write those words as poetry.” Thus began my desire to represent Jennifer’s words in poetic form.

The dream came in the fall of 2003. Not yet conceived of as a part of my dissertation, I just knew I had to get the words down on paper. The data spoke to me—in my dreams, no less. As I discussed my analysis in my dissertation prospectus, I declared my wish to “play with my data.” I did not want to be tied down to one way of analysis or representation. This wish was made explicit in the prospectus because of that dream.

“Expectations” came from Jennifer’s first interview. As I sat in her home listening to her speak, I knew I was obtaining good data. I was hearing a personal story, with all the angst and excitement that comes with the expectation of something new and life changing ahead. The story was raw, honest, and revealing.

I decided my first step in analysis would be to go back and read Jennifer’s interview, highlighting phrases that I thought were particularly telling, poignant, metaphoric, or poetic. I saved her transcription into a new file and started whittling away everything but those sections I believed might be used in the final piece. I separated the sections with white space, forming stanzas.

As in many stories shared between people, Jennifer moved back and forth from topic to topic. I cut the stanzas apart, glued them onto post-it notes, and placed them on a piece of art board. I began moving them around in an order that told a coherent story. The story was both retrospective and prospective. Jennifer talked about how she saw her identity, emotions, and behaviors in high school. She talked about who she would be, what she would do, and how she felt about moving on to college. I kept those stanzas that told the story in a fluid, natural way. Many of the stanzas are still in the order in which she told them to me. Others were moved to create transitions from one topic to the next.

I did not add a single word to the piece. I deleted what I thought would take away from the poetic form, but not from the meaning of what Jennifer said. This was a beneficial way to get at the phenomenological essence of her experience, which is the theoretical framework that informed my approach. It gave me “fresh eyes” as I looked over the transcript again. I did not change any of her words, only added the punctuation and chose how to separate the phrases in the stanzas. The emphasis, however, was hers in the form of italicized words.

Jennifer’s repetition of the phrases, “I don’t know” and “figure it out” stood out to me as part of the rhythm of the piece. Her use of metaphor of “just dive right in” was meaningful for her in dealing with the transition to college. Finally, her contrasts were apparent with anecdotes about her small high school as compared with the size of the university. Heightened emotion and uncertainty were also apparent. These were themes that came to the fore in the poetry. Jennifer’s words tell it all.

Reflection

The experience of writing the poetic representation was an example of Csikszentmihalyi’s “flow” (1975). Flow is the experience of being so completely engaged in an

activity, everything else is shut out. Time flies without one realizing it. Completing the task reflects an effortlessness where one action or thought naturally follows the previous one. In this case the poem and the summary flowed onto the paper. While reflecting on the process for the summary paper, I realized how much work I had done. It did not “compute” until I went back through and looked at the ultimate result. The findings of this piece went to the “gut” of the transition experience. Comparisons were evident, but even more evident were the emotions fighting for preeminence in Jennifer’s being and thoughts. I think this final technique took me to a different place with the results. It was much more powerful than representing the findings in a matrix with a list of emotions. Amazing! If the dissertation would just “flow” in that manner, I would be ecstatic. Overall, I found that a combination of analysis was useful in looking at the data as different facets of the crystal. Poetic representation can, indeed, “actually better represent the speaker than the practice of quoting in prose snippets” (Richardson, 2000).

Expectations

Small school.
 My biggest class had 11 people.
 My smallest had five.
 Whole senior class is 40 people.
 Got really close relationships with my teachers...
 They really wanted you to do well.
 They would help you.

Class of five people...
 Good friends.
 I could go up to my teacher at any time
 and just raise my hand and go like,
 “Wait a minute!
STOP!
 Go back!”

I’m so used to
 knowing every person in my class,

feeling fine
 with asking a question,
 even if it’s stupid, or
 just saying what’s on my mind.

And I would go into that class sometimes
 just tell my teacher how it was, you know?

I would cry.
 I would tell him,

“I can’t take this anymore!”
 No problem doing that because
 everyone in that class knew me,
 kind of felt the same way.

I’m kind of excited about it.
 I’m really excited about it.
 If you had asked me in February about
 College...

Like if you had mentioned the word
 “College,”
 I would have started crying.
 I was *sooo* scared.
 This is not going to fly in college.
 I would start *CRYING* in class,
 and run out of the room.
 Boo hoo.
 I’m a *mess*.

In high school
 I was really kind of shy.
 Like, people knew me.
 Faculty knew me.
 Administration knew me.
 In a small school...
 have to watch every move you make.
Everybody knows what you’re doing.
Everybody knows who you’re dating.
Everybody knows *everything*.
 “UGH!”

It was a real good experience.
 I’m ready to move on from it.

I didn’t feel like I could ever grow there...
 always somebody pulling me back down.
 People who are angry at a lot of different
 things.
 A lot of people didn’t like it there...
 just be cruel to *everyone*.
 We’d all been together for SO long.
 Still...
 people brought you down.

And I’d been on this high,
 Felt like, “Oh, I can conquer the world!”
 Had a lot of body image problems...
 Still trying to work on that.

“This is me, and I don’t really care.
 If you don’t like me,
 you don’t like me,
 I’m not going to change that.”
 But these are my friends...
 always have to kind of please them,

be something you’re not to please them.
 If I go to a bigger place
 I don’t have to...
 I’m kind of sick of being everyone’s
 doormat.
 I’m sticking up for myself.
 Self-confidence—I definitely need that.

I wanted to go somewhere *big*
 because high school was
 way too small.
 It just never let me grow.
 I *know* I can be
 so much more than I am.
 Like, I just *know* it.
 University of Georgia.
 Just do it.
 I’ll just look at it.
 Heard some of the facts
 and figures and stuff.
 It seemed right.
 Looked right.

Bigger place.
 This is you.
 I know this is you.
 You could be YOU here.
 Don’t have to pretend
 and be somebody you’re not
 anymore.

Nice to not have *every single* person
 know who you are...
 know everything about you.
 Georgia.

I think it’s just going to be different.
 To be able to find people...
 I really hope I can find some friends
 that I really can trust
 and really *like me*.
 They’re not just my friend
 because they go to my school,
 you know?

Going into a class that could be
a hundred people...
I'm scared.
I'm really scared to go to such a bigger...a
much bigger place.
Going into a room full of
a hundred strangers...
kind of nerve-wracking for *anybody*.
And it's not like
you can just raise your hand
in class full of one hundred people,
and be like,
"Stop!
Wait!
Go back!"
Kind of nerve-wracking.

I go to their class.
The teacher's not going to know
who I am.
That makes me nervous.

Like...I don't know.
I don't know.
I don't know.
Just...sitting in a room with a hundred
people.

I don't know.
I think I can do it.
Just going to be a little nerve-wracking.
Building that self-confidence.
I'll be fine.

It's two weeks away.
I'm fine.
I'm scared, but I'm excited.

Anxiety disorder.
I get *really* nervous.
I get panic attacks.
I just freaked out,
and I couldn't breathe.
I'm gonna *DIE*!
Sometimes I can control it,
sometimes I can't.

"You're *not* going to freak out.
You're going to be *fine*.
Nobody's judging me.
Everybody's watching me.
Everybody's going,
"Oh, God, you know, she's ugly."
Or "She's so fat.
She's such a jerk."
I have it in my head,
I hear it in my head,
I just start to freak out.

I'm strong.
I'm fine.
I'm not fat.
I'm not ugly.
I'm not a jerk.
I'm a nice person.
I'm good, you know.
I'm fine.
And I walk in there,
and I'm fine.
Sometimes, like I hear those voices
in the back of my head start...
I'm just afraid that I'm not going to
be able to control that sometimes.

It's kind of nerve wracking.
I think that's one of my
other biggest fears,
like the big classes and
having a panic attack in a big class.

Bigger classes
The bigger class thing again.
That's what I'm really worried about.
I'm prepared to work hard.
I'm not nearly a straight A student,
but I work really hard,
so I make up for it.
I'm not worried about it.

How I plan to deal with it is...
you gotta dive right in.
I mean, that's pretty much all you can do.
Big classes.

I'm scared. I'm really scared.
 Haven't really figured out in my head
 how I can deal with that.
 How I can make my brain work
 in a big classroom environment.
 I'll figure it out...
 then I'll be prepared for the next one.
 Does that make sense?
 I have to figure it out
while I'm in it.
 I might bomb.
 Then I'll be like,
 "Oh, this is what I need to do.
 This is what I'm doing wrong."
 Just kind of dive right in.
 I don't know.
 I just don't know.

I'm completely blind
 going into this.
 I really,
 truly can say I'm blind.

Research paper in tenth grade
OH MY GOSH!
 I was lost for a long time.
 Just *had* to do it.
 Just *dove* right in.
 It was difficult.
 But, just dive right in.
 Play around with it.
 See what fits.
 I don't know.
 Just dive right in.

Like, when something's hard, and
 you just prepare a lot for it, and
 study really hard.
 And you *know* it's going to be hard,
 so you study,
 and study,
 and study,
 and study.
 And then you go into it,
 and if you know it, you know it,
 and if you don't, you don't.

And...if you're doing something wrong
 and you see it or notice it,
 you change it.
 I mean, it's just kind of trial and error,
 I guess.

Open it up,
 start going through it,
 and just figure it out.

I think once I *get* there...
 once I get into the
 swing of things,
 I'll be fine.
 Once I get to
 know my way around...

It's scary, but I'm excited.
 Excited to move on.
 And to be, like,
 more of who *I* want to be
 is more exciting
 than I'm ever scared about.

I just need to *go*.
 I mean it.
 I just feel like it's time.
 Like *right now*.

I wish it *was* now.
 I'm excited because
 I'm *sick* of here.
 I need to move.
 I just need to get out.
 I need to escape.

I just think it's time.
 I gotta go.

CHAPTER 4

THE INTERSECTION OF SELF-REGULATION AND COPING: DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATED MODEL OF ADAPTATION DURING TRANSITION

*In one sense all life is transition, with rhythmic periods of quiescence
and heightened activity.*
—Kimball, in *Rites of Passage*

The transition from high school to college is one of a series of life changes through which many individuals pass. As adolescents approach this event they have already encountered and moved through many other transitions in schooling. The transition from high school to college, however, is arguably the most challenging and life changing educational shift. For many individuals it not only brings with it a change from one school to another, but it also means a move away from an established support network of home, family, and friends to a new and unfamiliar environment.

Compounding the scope of the adjustment are increased academic demands, challenges to students' long-held beliefs, and changes in interpersonal relationships that students must confront. Therefore, the transition to college is a psychosocial transition that, by definition, creates "major changes in life space which are lasting in their effects, which take place over a relatively short period of time and which affect large areas of the assumptive world" (Parkes, 1971, p. 103). Terenzini and his colleagues (1994) describe the transition to college as "a highly interrelated web-like series of family, interpersonal, academic, and organizational pulls and pushes that shape student learning (broadly conceived) and persistence" (p. 61). Students must negotiate this journey while also dealing with the accompanying identity transformation from

“high school student” to “college student” and the various tasks and responsibilities that transformation entails.

Despite studies that indicate this transition to be a normative and anticipated event, rather than a transition of unanticipated crisis (Birnie-Lefcovitch, 2000), an estimated 600,000 students per year leave four-year colleges without graduating. Of the students who attend four-year institutions, only 51% finish their degree within 6 years (U. S. Department of Education, 2002). Clearly, multiple research studies point to the transition from high school to college as a stressful change that bears further exploration along many dimensions. A holistic picture of this transition involves multidimensional adaptations academically, emotionally, and socially. Many students proceed through this time of adjustment with apparent success in these adaptations, others with great difficulty. For some, the adjustment introduces too many obstacles to overcome (Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000; Crissman, 2001; Tinto, 1993).

The difficulties that students encounter leave us with many questions about the process of transition and individuals' unique capabilities to cope with this life change. The purpose of this review of the literature was to examine transitions through a theoretical lens. To accomplish this, I examined the literature in which theories of transitions are most often situated, life-span development. I then explored a related strand of literature dealing with human adaptation and coping in response to life stressors. At the center of this literature review is Nancy Schlossberg's research and transition theory—compiled and integrated by blending components and ideas from various scholars studying the life-span as well as human adaptation and coping (1981, 1984, 1995). Therefore, the review was focused on ideas, theories, and orientations to life change that shaped Schlossberg's theory. Finally, I sought my own integration with Schlossberg's transition theory as I pursued another area of research that has been infrequently tied to the life-span

development and adaptation (Diamond & Aspinwall, 2003), but not exploited to its fullest potential within transition literature; that is, research on general models of self-regulation, which I believed to be essential to a more complete and comprehensive understanding of transitions in life.

Several questions about transitions guided my review of the literature across disciplinary boundaries. First, how are transitions conceptualized in the literature? Second, what components are included in extant models and theories of the transition process? Third, how are adaptation and coping described and conceptualized? Fourth, how do models of self-regulation intersect with models of transition? Finally, how do these models and theories relate to specific transitions, such as the transition from high school to college?

Procedure

I used several review procedures as I explored literature related to this topic. The procedures included a directed search for articles written over the past 30 years dealing with the topic of the transition from high school to college as well as adjustment to college in the ERIC, PsychLIT, Psychological and Behavioral Sciences, and Sociological Collection databases. I conducted more focused searches for articles published in journals relevant to the fields of education and psychology. Search terms and phrases included words such as “transition,” “college,” “adjustment to college.” As relevant sources were found, I examined citations and references of these articles.

Information gained from relevant sources broadened the scope of the review to include literature from the field of anthropology and sociology. Further, after being introduced to Nancy Schlossberg’s transition theory (1981, 1984; Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995), I conducted a focused search for all manuscripts written by Schlossberg. Schlossberg’s theory,

having been adopted by student affairs professionals as their leading, if not sole, framework of transition, seemed most pertinent to my dissertation topic of the high school to college transition. Finally, I sought literature on general models of self-regulation, relying on the *Handbook of Self-Regulation* (Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2000). The literature review encompassed peer reviewed journal articles, books and book sections, conference papers, and educational reports.

The nature of this type of review process enabled me to build an interdisciplinary picture of life transitions and adaptation to them. Relatively little research had been conducted on the transition from high school to college, so using a wider lens revealed theory that can be applied to this particular transition.

Life-Span Development

Historical Background

Life-span development, an orientation toward the study of behavior and development, came to the attention of the academic community in the 1930s with the work of Charlotte Buhler and others in their attempt to “chart the course of a life-span revolution” in developmental psychology (Baltes & Schaie, 1973; Siegler, 1985). However, it was not until the decades of the 1960s and 1970s that this orientation gained favor, and numerous articles and books began to appear in the literature. In August of 1976, authorities in the fields of anthropology, biology, education, medicine, psychiatry, and psychology convened in Aspen, Colorado. This meeting, the Conference on the Significance of the Biomedical and the Social Sciences in Understanding the Aging Process, was orchestrated at the time when research on development and aging was burgeoning and moving in new directions. Spierer (1977) noted the interest in life-span development, and the multidisciplinary nature of this research was reflected in the publication of

three handbooks on aging in a 2-year period, representing biology (Finch & Hayflick, 1977), psychology (Birren & Schaie, 1977), and the social sciences (Binstock & Shanas, 1976).

The experts at the conference met for the express purpose of dealing with a number of questions:

What can the biomedical and the social sciences contribute to an understanding of the human life cycle? What are the critical transition periods in the aging process? When do transitional periods and events occur and with what social and biological consequences? How do the different disciplines approach the study of the human life span? (Spierer, 1977, p. 1)

Several lofty goals had been established for this group of scholars as part of a long-range project on the subject of life-span development. The goals with which this group was charged necessitated an interactive approach to gain a better understanding of the aging process, identification of the major transitions in the life cycle, and the means by which individuals cope with these transitions. This undertaking was to be conceptualized within an interdisciplinary framework that would integrate various influences on the unfolding of the life course, mirroring the premise that the more that is known and understood about the way the influences interact, the better individuals can cope with modern society (Spierer, 1977).

Though a final model was not agreed on at this conference, issues were raised as to what could or should be included in an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the life span. The issues tendered were biological and physical human systems, cognitive development, personality development, social development, and ekistics (the study of human settlements as well as city and community planning). Other suggestions were specific problems such as stress and depression, individual roles, and life events (Spierer, 1977).

The results of this collaboration of leading scholars were reflective of much of the work being accomplished at that time. Empirical and theoretical pieces written in the late 1960s through the 1980s still constitute the foundation of life-span development theory today as evidenced by the ongoing citation of much of that literature.

Defining Life-Span Development

The belief that humans have the opportunity and potential for change *throughout their lives* is at the core of life-span development (For example, see Baltes & Schaie, 1973; Brammer, 1992; Chiriboga & Gigy, 1975; Labouvie-Vief, Hakim-Larson, & Hobart, 1987; Marcia, 2002; Sell, 1985). Further, no one age period dominates the others in controlling the nature of development (Baltes & Reese, 1984). This view is at odds with traditional psychoanalytic views that early experiences in life constrain adolescent and adult cognition and behavior, and with Piagetian views that cognitive development ends in early adolescence (Brim & Kagan, 1980). Life-span psychologists argue that development is not confined to sequential stages, is not hierarchical, and is not completely irreversible (Neugarten, 1979). “Psychological change is continuous throughout the life cycle and, further, that the psychological realities of adulthood and aging are not to be understood merely by projecting forward the issues that are salient in childhood” (p. 887). Thus, an individual’s development is just as susceptible to events that happen later in life as they are to those in childhood.

Several common beliefs underlie a life-span developmental view beyond the idea of a lifelong time frame of change. For example, different domains of behavior develop at variable rates, and characteristics of the individual and historical-sociocultural conditions influence how the individual develops over time (For example, see Brim & Kagan, 1980; McCrae et al., 2000; Spierer, 1977). Moreover, our history, along with our current circumstances, affects the course

of development. The interaction of our past, present, and anticipated future—our experiences across age periods—supports the possibility for multiple courses of aging within cohorts (Pearlin, 1982). Possession of different psychological and physiological characteristics and exposure to different life conditions naturally leads to multiple paths of development. Regarding the multiple paths, Pearlin commented, “The variety is as rich as the historic conditions people have faced and the current circumstances they experience” (p. 63).

When discussing catalysts to human development, life-span researchers refer to *milestones*, *life events*, *life tasks*, and *transitions*. Extremes of these descriptors are *life crises*, *stressful life events*, and *proximal* and *distal stressors* (Felner, Rowlison, & Terre, 1986). Though these appear to have different core meanings, they are all interrelated in that they describe an occurrence that has a significant impact on the individual’s assumptive world (Parkes, 1971). However, when considering the magnitude of the impact and the adaptation or coping strategies required, the differences among these terms become more salient (Felner et al., 1986). Spierer (1977) and his colleagues contend the life cycle is a series of transitions, and the transitions can be characterized three different ways: as time periods in the life span, the various roles occupied during the life span, and the events that occur in the life span. Thus, we have *transitional periods* potentially divided by age (infancy, adolescence, young adulthood, and so forth), *transitional roles* (mother, teacher, or brother), and *transitional events* (entering school, puberty, leaving home, or marriage). Spierer’s group defined transitional events as any significant happening in a life.

Danish, Smyer, and Nowak (1980) expanded the idea of life events, defining them as both markers and processes. When defined as markers, they are considered particular milestones at singular points in life, such as the graduation from high school. If considered only as markers,

however, an appreciation of the import of the event, the context in which it occurred, and its outcome are lost. Therefore, life events are further considered to be processes. For example, the graduation from high school, a marker in the life of an adolescent, is the culmination of many years of schooling. Yet, it is also an event anticipated within the student's family, the student's cohort, the educational institution and, at times, even the local community. The transition is a process that begins before the night of commencement and continues on after the ceremony.

Hultsch (1981), also a proponent of a dual view of events, as well as Parkes (1971) and Havighurst (1973) suggest that the events (or *life tasks* according to Havighurst) occur in all dimensions of existence—school, work, intimate relationships, family, home, finances, social network and activities, and health. The events are further categorized as age-graded, history-graded, and nonnormative (Hultsch, 1981; Neugarten, 1977). *Age-graded* events are considered normative and are correlated with age, such as entering school and menopause. *History-graded* are normative cultural events experienced by many individuals, often within a cohort; for example, wars and economic depression. *Nonnormative* are idiosyncratic events like divorce or illness.

Another classification scheme of life events is represented by an external versus internal dichotomy (Brim & Ryff, 1980). *External events* are biological, social, and physical. *Internal events* are psychological changes such as personal decisions about spiritual beliefs, marital status, or career directions. Similarly, Connell and Furman (1984) posit the distinction of *exogenous* (external to the self) and *endogenous* (internal—physiological and psychological) transitional events. Other dichotomies in describing life events are subjective or objective, gains or losses (Pearlin & Lieberman, 1979), controllable or uncontrollable, and anticipated or unanticipated (Lowenthal, Thurnher, & Chiriboga, 1975; Pearlin, 1982, 1985). The categories of

events do not act in isolation, but have the likely potential to interact because individuals do not live in a vacuum. Individuals live in complex systems where person and environment interact along many dimensions. For example, the loss of a job could lead to a return to college—two concurrent life events—one triggering the other.

In contrast to conceptualizations of roles, life events, or life tasks, Whitbourne (1985) proposed the idea of the *life-span construct*. Rather than focusing on age norms or expectations existing “out there” in the society at large, the life-span construct encompasses the individual’s personal conception of his or her own life course. “The life-span construct is viewed as a unified sense of past, present, and future events linked by their common occurrence to the individual” (Whitbourne, 1985, p. 595). Linked to a person’s identity and sense of self, this construct is a mechanism for organizing life experiences, referred to as the “life story,” plus the person’s expectations of the future, referred to as the “scenario.” The combination of these two manifestations of the life-span construct represents the totality of life experiences.

Whitbourne (1985) also asserted that as new situations are experienced and added to the life story, the life-span construct itself may undergo transformations in the “retelling” of the life story. In this vein, individuals tend to cope by seeking congruence between experiences and identity, creating biases in how they transform or distort what is occurring and has occurred so that it remains compatible with their beliefs about self and societal norms, hence maintaining a unified sense of self.

Different Approaches to the Structure of the Life-Span

While this review is theoretical in nature, a selective snapshot of life-span research and its methodologies are informative to the big picture of literature in life-span development. Scholars across disciplines in the social sciences and biomedical fields use various approaches to

the study of the life span. They may explore constancy and change in categories of behavior, such as memory (Qin, 2004), acuity of the senses (Cain, 1995; De Wijk, 1994), exercise (Ruler, 1996), learning (Friedman & Shore, 2000; Thornton, 2003), or epistemological development (Bendixen & Rule, 2004; King & Kitchener, 2004; Kuhn, 1991; Perry, 1970/1999), just to name a few.

Others choose to pinpoint cross-cultural or ethnic differences in development (Cross, Strauss, & Fhagen-Smith, 1999; Gardiner, Mutter, & Kosmitzki, 1998; Wheeler, Ampadu, & Wangari, 2002) or examine constancy and change in various facets of personality over the life span (Alwin, 1994; Franz & White, 1985; McCrae et al., 2000). Scholars may also investigate age stereotypes (Brewer, Dull, & Lui, 1981; Levy, 1996; Palmore, 1990), analyze the relationships between different age periods (Pearlin, 1982), or explore specific life tasks or events that confront individuals (Havighurst, 1973; Nurmi & Salmelo-Aro, 2002; Pearlin, 1982; Seltzer & Ryff, 1994).

Though Connell and Furman (1984) suggest various quantitative analytic techniques such as correlation of repeated measures, factor analysis, and structural equation modeling in measuring the impact of change in transitional times of life, many studies have been qualitative in nature. Interviews as well as systematic scrutiny of biographies and autobiographies have been used as methods for examining change over the life span. Siegler (1985) echoed Connell and Furman's views, asserting, "Experimental paradigms are of limited usefulness. Most studies report careful observations and descriptions of behavior assessed by interviewers according to a particular rating system, or by so-called 'objective' measures of personality which are primarily self-report indices" (p. 174-175).

Empirical findings have generally been equivocal, even within the same topical area of research. Traditional results in the areas of human physiology and cognition yielding the inverted U-shaped curve—indicating increase and growth in the early years of life, often peaking in early adulthood, and declining in old age—are sometimes called into question. For example, when investigating sense of control associated with behavioral, physiological, and cognitive functioning, Fung, Abeles, and Carstensen (1999) found evidence to support growth, decline, *and* stability over the life span. Trick and Enns (1996) suggested their own mixed findings on visual enumeration have clear implications for life span development theories:

There is diversity in the pattern of change seen across life, even for the cognitive components of tasks that are as simple as discriminating between visual displays differing by only a single item. This is consistent with a life span orientation of open-ended change caused by a plurality of mechanisms, including both biological and environmental ones, and it is inconsistent with bio-decrement models that view change narrowly as growth, followed by maturity and eventual decline. (p. 931)

Regardless of the direction of change in development, change is occurring. One of my central theses in this review reiterates the basic premise of life-span development. Transitions, whether perceived as positive or negative events, resulting in growth or decline, happen throughout life and elicit the individual's coping resources to deal with them. Even in transitions that are "on time," age appropriate, and anticipated with excitement, situational and idiosyncratic factors may not support a seamless move from one status in life to the next. Brim and Ryff (1980), acknowledging the possible difficulties associated with transitions, addressed this concern as they proffered one of the foundational purposes of life-span developmental psychologists: "Life-span development seeks to predict, explain and it is hoped, *to optimize*

[italics added], changes in behavioral responses as a consequence of life events as they occur over a long period of time” (p. 370).

Adaptation and Coping

Successful coping during transitional times is integral to effective functioning (Spierer, 1977). To optimize individuals’ behavioral, and for that matter, cognitive and affective responses, we must first understand what stressors evoke coping behavior, the types of possible responses to stressors, how coping is defined, and the particular coping mechanisms that lead to favorable and progressive adaptation.

The Nature of Stress

Stress is defined as a mediator between an event and adaptation to the event (Holmes & Masuda, 1974) as well as “the outcome of the event, the stimulator of subsequent reactions, and the result of these reactions (Whitbourne, 1985, p.601). Fiske and Chiriboga (1990) identified three different levels of stress: the micro level, meso level, and macro level. The *micro level* focuses on the minutiae of everyday life—the traffic jam when you are on your way to work, realizing at the last minute you lack the sufficient ingredients to prepare dinner, or missing the bus to class and having to wait another 10 minutes for the next one. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) found that day-to-day hassles were even more deleterious on a middle aged person’s sense of well-being than more significant life events.

The *meso level* mirrors the life events and transitions that have been discussed thus far in this review. These stress-producing events are less chronic than day-to-day hassles, but constitute the events that characterize our life story (Fiske & Chiriboga, 1990; Whitbourne, 1985); in other words, they are the marker events of our lives—such as entering college or getting married. Finally, Fiske and Chiriboga designated conditions and situations affecting

society primarily and the individual secondarily as residing at the *macro level* of stressors. This level includes wars, economic downturns, and other newsworthy events, for example (p. 144).

The Role of Stress in Development

Stress is often a reaction to disequilibrium or instability in an individual's life (Pearlin, 1982). Additionally, Pearlin asserts that stress is a signal the individual is "struggling to reestablish stability and equilibrium" (p. 65). It is a natural human inclination for individuals to seek homeostasis and equilibrium when faced with change, and it is through the process of coping and adapting that homeostasis is once again achieved and development occurs. Hence, "strategies of adaptation lead not just to equilibrium, but to development" (White, 1974, p. 64).

The presence of stress in life disrupts daily routines and functioning and may even lead to somatic and psychological illness. The level of impact stress exerts on the person depends on dispositional and situational characteristics involved in the event (Kampfe, 1997; Lazarus, Averill, & Opton, 1974; Vernberg & Field, 1990). Thus, the interaction of the person's psychological resources, demographic characteristics, and factors in the situation—such as timing, individual's control over the event, and whether it is considered a gain or loss—all contribute to the sum of the stress. The management of stress and eventual movement toward adaptation begins with the person's reaction to the situation and subsequent coping strategies.

Definitions of Coping

Coping has been defined as one type of self-initiated problem solving (Brammer, 1992), attempts to master a new situation—whether it is threatening or challenging (Murphy, 1962), or "problem-solving efforts made by an individual when the demands he faces are highly relevant to his welfare (that is, a situation of considerable jeopardy or promise), and when these demands tax his adaptive resources" (Lazarus et al., 1974, p. 250-251). The resources and strategies

individuals use can be the difference between more effective functioning and feelings of well-being, or debilitating illness.

Adaptive Tasks

Theorists have identified several sets of tasks that must be managed to negotiate life transitions. First, is an awareness that the individual is in a time of change (Brammer, 1992; Moos & Schaefer, 1986). The act of taking stock of the manifold dimensions of life affected by the change and the potential consequences of the transition for those dimensions is also considered (Felner et al., 1986). Second, is a time of questioning and initial acceptance. The individual begins to respond to the immediate needs of the situation (Moos & Schaefer, 1986). Third, close relationships with family, friends, and colleagues are maintained so that support is available and works to act as a buffer during the time of stress and uncertainty (Felner et al., 1986; Moos & Schaefer, 1986; Nicholson, 1990). The fourth set of tasks centers on managing emotions, emphasizing a positive outlook if possible, so the individual may function as effectively as possible while dealing with other aspects of life (Moos & Schaefer, 1986; Nicholson, 1990). Cultivating some sense of hope is part of this process. Finally, sustaining a sense of control and feelings of self-efficacy is essential to continued progress in accomplishing tasks (Moos & Schaefer, 1986; Nicholson, 1990), while finding a balance between personal responsibility and seeking or accepting aid from support networks. Progress in adaptation allows individuals to negotiate their new roles and identities, while preserving personal characteristics that are useful in the transition.

Coping Skills

A wide repertoire of coping skills has been delineated that benefit those experiencing different types of change. *Appraisal-focused skills* allow the individual to assess the situation,

logically analyze the different facets of the situation, and prioritize action (Brammer & Abrego, 1981; Moos & Schaefer, 1986). Three types of appraisal are *primary appraisal*, describing the judgment of whether the situation will be “harmful, beneficial, or irrelevant”; *secondary appraisal*, the assessment of which coping responses are appropriate; and *reappraisal*, a change in the primary appraisal after evidence presents an alternative view of the situation (Lazarus et al., 1974, p. 260).

Appraisal also takes place when individuals relate what is occurring to cognitive schema from past experiences and then mentally rehearse possible courses of action (Brammer, 1992; Moos & Schaefer, 1986). Another component of appraisal-focused skills is mentally reframing negative aspects to more positive perspectives (Brammer & Abrego, 1981). The attitude that change is a normal part of living, for example, often contributes to an effective coping response (Brammer, 1992). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) characterize those who are accurate in their appraisal and response choice as *skillful copers*. On the other hand, denial of the situation may also occur. Defense mechanisms such as denial, suppression, isolation, and flat affect may serve to protect individuals during the initial stage of change, particularly when the event is unanticipated (Lazarus et al., 1974; Moos & Schaefer, 1986).

Problem-focused skills are behaviors such as information seeking, support seeking, and other forms of direct action (Hamburg, Coelho, & Adams, 1974; Moos & Schaefer, 1986). This set of skills encourages a sense of control during the transition or event. Individuals who see themselves as having control as well as commitment to values and goals in the situation are *hardy copers* (Kobassa, 1979). Balance between the acceptance of external help and use of the individual’s own resources is important when using problem-focused skills. Knowledge of resources through outside channels (community or institutional resources) is vital to taking full

advantage of available help. Moos and Schaefer (1986) further suggest that in situations where loss is experienced, individuals may establish new goals and rewards in other areas of their lives to fill the void left by the loss.

Emotion-focused skills deal with the affective realm of coping with change. Regulation of emotion occurs throughout the process and allows the person to work calmly toward solutions or adaptation. “Emotional discharge” includes venting or acting out as a means of reducing tension created from the disequilibrium (Moos & Schaefer, 1986, p. 18). Last, a philosophical acceptance of the situation as it is may occur at some point during transition. This is a passive stance in contrast to more active stances of direct action (Vernberg & Field, 1990). There are events over which individuals may have little physical control. Through acceptance, individuals decrease the angst that may be experienced by stymied or useless efforts of direct action. Lazarus and Launier (1978) distinguished between two coping modes: *instrumental coping* and *palliative coping*, where instrumental functions serve to change or modify the situation and palliative functions center around improvement of the individual’s emotional response.

Overall, appraisal-focused, problem-focused, and emotion-focused coping skills may be used singularly or in combination in an iterative fashion. The skill or skills chosen at a particular time depend on the person’s current level of coping and the demands of the situation. There are no “good” or “bad” coping skills; the fit of skill or response to a certain aspect of the situation determines its effectiveness (Hamburg, Coelho, & Adams, 1974; Moos & Schaefer, 1986). The balance of the individual’s assets (existing coping skills) and deficits (areas of coping that are lacking) should be taken into account when assessing progress (Fiske & Chiriboga, 1990). It is important to note that those who are struggling with change may be taught these skills. Nicholson (1990) suggested a series of questions individuals may ask themselves during a

transition to assess prior knowledge from past experiences, the current status of the transition, and future steps that need to be pursued. The principle goal for those in the helping professions is to promote self-management of the coping process (Brammer, 1992) and to lessen the vulnerability to stressful situations (Pearlin, 1985).

Factors Affecting Outcomes

The same transition may be experienced differently by different people, and the same person may have different reactions to the same transition depending on the time of life at which it transpires (Hultsch, 1981; Pearlin, 1985). What factors influence unique reactions to the event? What factors determine disparate outcomes from similar circumstances? Scholars have proposed three interacting dimensions of transitions that affect different levels of adaptation during change: factors related to the individual, factors related to the event, and factors related to the physical and social environment—the context—in which the event occurs (Hamburg et al., 1974; Moos & Schaefer, 1986; Pearlin, 1985).

Demographic and personal or dispositional factors. This category includes age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, developmental maturity, self-confidence, commitments and values, marital status, educational level, and prior experiences (Kampfe, 1997; Moos & Schaefer, 1986). The factors that make a person unique affect that person's responses to change. For example, in spite of increasing numbers of nontraditional students attending postsecondary institutions, the reaction of society to a student entering college for the first time at age 18 is different than that of a student entering college for the first time at age 55. The "age appropriateness" influences the ease with which the change is incorporated into the person's daily life. Additionally, an individual's current repertoire of coping strategies is determined to a great extent by coping strategies used in previous experiences and the outcomes of those

experiences. Successful mastery of transitions, especially those similar to the current transition, instill greater confidence and self-efficacy that individuals will be able to deal with this event, too (Hultsch, 1981). Further, socioeconomic status may aid with access to resources (Pearlin, 1985).

Biological variables come into play in many transitions that require a certain level of stamina and energy to master. Intellectual capabilities, including information processing, may enhance or constrain the ease with which an individual may take in information and make appropriate decisions (Hultsch, 1981). The individual's personality, including outlook and temperament, is a crucial mediator of more effective adaptation (Costa & McCrae, 1978; Fiske & Chiriboga, 1990; Hultsch, 1981; Moos & Schaefer, 1986; Seligman, 1990).

Situational factors. Other factors influencing the outcome of transitions are those related to the event itself. Beyond the categories of life events explicated in the life-span section of this review are typologies of life events that constitute the structural characteristics of the events. These include the event trigger (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980; Danish et al., 1980), suddenness of onset (Moos & Schaefer, 1986), timing in life (Danish et al., 1980; Neugarten, 1977, 1979), perceived controllability (Moos & Schaefer, 1986), duration (Danish et al., 1980; White, 1974), sequencing (Danish et al., 1980), relativity (George & Siegler, 1981), cohort specificity (Danish et al., 1980), contextual purity (Danish et al., 1980; George & Siegler, 1981; Moos & Schaefer, 1986), and probability of occurrence (Brim & Ryff, 1980; Moos & Schaefer, 1986; Qin, 2004).

Social, physical environmental, and historical factors. The human environment includes the various support networks individuals have nurtured and of which they are a part. Family, friends, and colleagues may volunteer or be called on in times of need. Kahn (1980) proposed the idea of a "convoy" of social support. As individuals move through their lives, they are

surrounded by others who are engaged in a mutual, reciprocal relationship, characterized by the giving and receiving of support. The convoy is represented by concentric circles with the individual at the center and significant others in circles that represent the stability of their relationship to the individual over time (p. 273).

Physical environmental factors relate to facets of the community and institutions involved in the transition. For a student moving to college, the high school as well as the college or university would constitute the environment with which the individual interacts as he or she moves through the transition. Caplan (1989) distinguished between formal (professional caregivers and community agencies), informal (friends, family, or neighbors), and religious support systems.

Sociocultural and historical factors cannot be ignored when exploring the contextual factors of a transition. Transitions have different levels of importance and occur at different ages depending on the culture and historical time. The age at which it is considered “appropriate” or “on time” for women to give birth varies greatly, hinging on the culture or time frame. Sociohistoric factors may be conceived as influencing demographic trends in nontraditional students returning to higher education. Nearly half of the current college population are nontraditional students, a percentage that has been on the rise for the last several decades (Christie, 2003).

Transactions among characteristics of life events or transitions, the individual’s background, factors in the physical and social environment, and the sociocultural and historical context create multiple possibilities for adaptation. The number of variables in the mix at any given time creates a complex intermingling of thoughts, emotions, and behavior that determine the final outcome of any given life transition.

Schlossberg's Theory of Transition

In general, transitions such as marriage, loss of a job, death of a spouse, or leaving home require the implementation of coping and adaptation skills on the part of those experiencing the life changes. Approaching this phenomenon from an intervention perspective, Schlossberg (1981, 1984, 1995) formulated an interdisciplinary model of adaptation to transition, drawn from literature in anthropology, sociology, biology, psychiatry, and life-span developmental psychology (See Figures 3, 4, and Table 4). As stated previously, Schlossberg's theory of transition and constructs of general models of self-regulation, which serve as the basis for an integrated model of transition, are the central focus of this review of the literature.

Nancy Schlossberg's theory of transition was introduced in a theme issue on adult development in *The Counseling Psychologist* (Schlossberg, 1981). Originally described as a model for analyzing human adaptation to transition, Schlossberg's theory has undergone two revisions since its nascent form. In this section, I trace Schlossberg's theory from its roots in life-span development and adaptation and discuss the subsequent revisions, incorporating Schlossberg's relevant research. The discussion of the revisions focuses only on changes Schlossberg made to the original conceptualizations.

Inspired by Bernice Neugarten's work in adult development, Schlossberg undertook a study of 420 male, 35-year-old nontraditional students at Wayne State University (1967, 1970). Her findings showed that many of these men persevered in their goals, even when faced with other stressors during the transition to college. In this study, support was found to be essential to sustaining participants' goals. Spurred by this study, her research on career transitions and career development (Leibowitz & Schlossberg, 1982; Schlossberg & Leibowitz, 1980), and her interest in adult development (Schlossberg, 1978), Schlossberg embarked on a journey to answer

questions she had formulated from hers and others' work in the burgeoning field of adult or life-span development.

In Schlossberg's (1981) initial paper, she offered her model as an "attempt to elaborate a theory which describes the extraordinarily complex reality that accompanies and defines the capacity of human beings to cope with change in their lives" (p. 3) (See Figure 5). Her ultimate purpose was to develop a framework, drawing heavily on life-span development, which aided in delineating factors that explained interpersonal and intrapersonal (at varying points in time) differences in adaptation to transition.

Schlossberg situated her theory on a continuum of views of adult development, ranging from theories that focus on *age-related stages* (such as Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1977), *life stages* (such as Erikson, 1963), and those that focus on the variability of the *individual*, where development is seen as too idiosyncratic to fit into particular stages (Neugarten, 1977; Neugarten & Datan, 1973). Between stage views and idiosyncratic views lie two closely related families of theories: *life-span* (Brim & Kagan, 1980) and *transitional* (Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1975; Lowenthal et al., 1975) views of development.

Lowenthal and Chiriboga (1975) claimed it was not as much the age of the person as the particular transitional event with which they were confronted, such as entering college freshmen at 18 and 55, that determined the tasks to be accomplished. Brim and Kagan's view was explicated in the life-span development section of this paper; that is, individuals have the capacity for change across the entire life span and are not constrained by experiences in childhood. Schlossberg's integration focused on the life-span view, but was also influenced by the work of Lipman-Blumen (1977), Parkes (1971), and the transitional concepts of Lowenthal, Thurner, and Chiriboga (1975).

Schlossberg grappled with many of the same conceptual and definitional decisions as theorists before her, but chose to adapt Parkes's (1971) definition of psychosocial transitions and Beeson and Lowenthal's (1975) notion of nonevents—events that are expected, but do not materialize—for her model. “A transition is said to occur if an event or nonevent results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behavior and relationships” (1981, p. 5). Further, Schlossberg suggested that the event or nonevent is not a transition unless the person experiencing it believes it is a transition.

Schlossberg's Description of Adaptation

Lipman-Blumen (1977) contributed the conception of “pervasiveness to boundedness” to this model. In the initial stages of a transition, the individual is totally preoccupied with thoughts and feelings about the transition. Over time, the ever-present attitudes and behaviors slowly integrate into what becomes everyday routine. Additionally, the balance of resources and deficits, as well as congruence between pretransition and posttransition environments add to the impact of the transition on the ease of adaptation. Schlossberg used three categories of factors that affect adaptation: characteristics of the transition, characteristics of the environment, and characteristics of the individual.

Characteristics of the Transition

This category entails the individual's perception and knowledge of the transition (Schlossberg, 1981). First, if the transition involves a *role change*, whether or not the person sees the change as a gain or loss will influence adaptation. Second, though transitions may evoke *positive and/or negative affect*, the degree of one type of affect over the other influences choices of coping strategies and ease of adjustment. Regardless of gain or loss, positive or negative affect, it is important to note that a certain degree of stress will accompany a transition

(Schlossberg, 1981). Third, change initiated by the individual, an *internal source*, is more easily accepted than change imposed by an *external source*. A fourth characteristic is the *timing* of the transition. If the transition corresponds with the timing of societal norms, the individual may be able to access higher levels of support. Fifth, Schlossberg identified the *onset* of the transition as particularly influential in our initial reactions and coping strategies. A gradual transition is much easier to prepare for than one whose onset is sudden and unexpected. The *duration* of the transition is another factor related to adaptation. A transition that is temporary is looked on differently than one known to be permanent. A transition of uncertain duration may cause the greatest degree of stress, because the choice of coping strategies becomes more nebulous. The final characteristic is the *degree of stress* related to the adaptation. Stress is connected to negative perceptions of all the other factors listed thus far.

Characteristics of Pretransition and Posttransition Environments

Within this category are three factors: interpersonal support systems, institutional supports, and physical setting. *Interpersonal support systems* include the individual's support networks of family, friends, and intimate relationships. Various types of assistance may be necessary to help an individual manage different aspects of the transition, and the "adequacy and stability" of these supports determine to a great extent how well the individual copes (Schlossberg, 1981, p. 10). *Institutional support* is comprised of any formal or informal agency offering resources appropriate for the transition in question. The *physical setting*, from the weather of a particular region or the difference between an urban or rural location, to the workplace or life on a college campus (p. 11) contributes to the person-environment fit or misfit.

Factors Affecting Adaptation: Characteristics of the Individual

The third and final set of factors is related to individuals themselves. *Psychosocial competence*, as defined by Tyler (1978), is the first characteristic Schlossberg (1981) included in this category. Competence involves self-attitudes, world attitudes, and behavioral attitudes. A person's self-image and an internal locus of control are examples of *self-attitudes*. Optimism and an appropriate level of trust in others are two aspects of *world attitudes*. Finally, concepts such as self-initiative, goal setting, and planning comprised *behavioral attitudes*.

Sex (and sex-role identification) is a factor that Schlossberg addresses only briefly. Cultural norms for men and women often differ, though many of the boundaries in the examples Schlossberg (1981) mentions (men's preoccupation with work versus women's preoccupation with family) have become blurred in our current sociocultural context. *Age (and life stage)* is the third major factor in this category. Even with the differentiation of many concepts of age: chronological age, biological age, psychological age ("the capacity to respond to society pressures and the tasks required of an individual"), social age ("the extent to which an individual participates in roles assigned by society"), and functional age ("the ability to function or perform as expected of people in one's age brackets") (Spierer, 1977, p. 10), Schlossberg asserted that life stage may be more useful in examining adaptation to transition. The "density" of major life events in earlier stages of life contributed to a greater degree of reported stress by younger people than older (Chiriboga & Gigy, 1975), suggesting that examining life stage may be important in intervention during stress.

Related to age is *state of health*, another factor in this category. Schlossberg (1981) also considered *race and ethnicity*, which may be "mediated through factors such as value orientation and other cultural norms" (p. 11), and *socioeconomic status* to be individual characteristics that

affect adaptation. *Value orientation* is a multifaceted construct that includes concepts such as the individual's philosophical and religious beliefs, interest in self-actualization and personal growth, commitment to community service, and sociability. The last factor considered in this category is *previous experience with a transition of a similar nature*. The self-efficacy gained through having successfully negotiated a similar transition aids in moving through the current transition.

Schlossberg (1981) cites multiple studies supporting her integrated model, including her own work with men previously employed by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration whose positions had been eliminated (Schlossberg & Leibowitz, 1980). Using the model as a framework for collecting data as well as intervening on behalf of the participants, Schlossberg claimed, "Through this intervention, all of the men were able not only to find new jobs but also to regain a sense of control over their own lives" (Schlossberg, 1981, p. 16). The study also confirmed that a transition may result in either growth or deterioration. Schlossberg's study as well as those of Merikangas (1980) and Lyon (1980) revealed the necessity of a complex, multifactor model of transition and adaptation.

At the time of the first publication in 1981, Schlossberg expressed her openness to and encouragement of further studies to test the theory, allowing for future refinement of her ideas. Critiques of Schlossberg's model in the same issue of *The Counseling Psychologist* pinpointed several areas of her framework left open to question. Hopson (1981) found the use of "adaptation" problematic because it insinuates a positive outcome for all transitions when that is not always the case. He preferred the phrase "response to transition," that more accurately depicts the variability in responses and results of transition. He also suggested the addition of "personality style" as one of the factors that influence transitions. Last, Danish (1981) was

concerned with Schlossberg's equating transitions with adult development when he asserted transitions were just one influence in adult development.

First Revision of Schlossberg's Theory

Counseling Adults in Transition: Linking Practice with Theory, the first revision of Schlossberg's theory, appeared in 1984. This work reflected her efforts to address the critiques of other scholars as well as expand her theory (Schlossberg, 1984). This piece included a more critical look at the research in adult development completed to date, including theorists from whom she had drawn ideas in her original rendition of the theory. Schlossberg said that results of previous studies depended a great deal on the samples and methods used by different researchers. For example, she addressed the limited samples used by Levinson (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, & Levinson, 1978), composed of mainly men, in a narrow age range (relatively few studies beyond the age of the late forties), all working in high status jobs (p. 19). This was contrasted with Lowenthal's work that included both men and women, a wide range of ages, and a longitudinal design (Lowenthal et al., 1975).

Schlossberg (1984) elaborated some of the definitions integral to her theory of transition and added several new concepts (See Table 5). She began by addressing Hopson's (1981) substitution of "responses to transition" for adaptation, acknowledging that adaptation "often connotes a static, normative concept" (1984, p. 55). In addition to the anticipated, unanticipated, and nonevent types of transitions, she added *chronic hassles*. Chronic hassles are defined as perpetual and pervasive and may affect different domains of life. At the same time, hassles take their toll on the individual's perceived competence and initiative to make good decisions.

The framework of the theory also underwent a reconfiguration. First, the topic of race and ethnicity was removed from the characteristics of the individual, and the concept of *trigger*

was added. Triggers, such as an illness or the birth of a baby, could instigate a career change. The desire for a better job could trigger a decision to attend college. The amount of control individuals believe they possess in a transition is related to the trigger (Schlossberg, 1984). The characteristic *prior experiences with similar transitions* was reclassified as a characteristic of the transition rather than a characteristic of the individual.

Psychosocial competence, a characteristic of the individual, was renamed *psychological resources* (Schlossberg, 1984). This category encompasses ego development or maturity, a person's outlook on life, commitments and values, and personality. The addition of *personality* came in response to a critique by Hopson (1981). Moreover, Beeson and Lowenthal (1975) identified four personality types based on response to varying levels of stress. Those experiencing high stress were either *overwhelmed* or *challenged*; those encountering low stress were termed *self-defeating* or *lucky*. Despite the addition of the construct of personality to the second model, Schlossberg agreed with Troll's (1981) claim that personality was a complex construct, used in different ways by different researchers. Nevertheless, Schlossberg did not specify her definition of personality or use of the construct.

Behavioral competence was transformed into *functions* and *strategies* of coping responses. The functions of coping responses are control of the situation itself, the meaning of the situation, or the stress caused by the situation (Schlossberg, 1984). Strategies include information seeking, direct action, inhibition of action, and intrapsychic behavior (thoughts that result in possible solutions).

Schlossberg revised the final category, the characteristics of pretransition and posttransition environments, as well. The *physical setting* of the first version of the theory became the *ecological perspective* in the revision (Schlossberg, 1984). The switch to ecology, a

biological term, refers to the dynamic interaction of person and environment in the transition process. Interpersonal and institutional supports were subsumed into one category, *types of support*, with the further descriptors of *functions* of the support and *measurement* of support. The function could be in the form of emotional support—love or respect (*affect*), validation of the appropriateness of the individual's choices or behaviors (*affirmation*), contributions of money or time (*aid*), or honest feedback by members of the support networks. The use or nonuse of resources became an *options* category, which denoted the number of available resources a person possessed. Though the additions Schlossberg made to this revision seem logical, there is no mention—other than those items changed because of the critics of her first model—of the reason for many of the specific reconfigurations introduced in this revision. For example, why was race and ethnicity dropped from the personal demographic characteristics? Other modifications may have mirrored the language of current theories, such as the ecological literature related to physical settings, but there is no explanation offered as to why various alterations were necessary.

Second Revision of Schlossberg's Theory

By far the most comprehensive and interdisciplinary conceptualization, the final revision was also Schlossberg's first collaboration with other researchers (Schlossberg et al., 1995) on her transition theory. Once again, Schlossberg began the discussion of her framework by presenting a continuum of adult development theories. This updated continuum (Fassinger & Schlossberg, 1992) was more holistic and multidisciplinary than her previous theory comparisons. *Contextual* theories focused on historical, cultural, and organizational presses on development as well as the "reciprocal interaction of the physical and social environment with the aging process" (p. 220). *Developmental* theories encompassed the age and stage theories discussed in prior sections plus

domain specific theories such as Kohlberg's (1969) theory of moral development, Fowler's (1981) theory of faith development, Chickering's (1969, 1993) theory of college student development, and Cross's (1978) and Helm's (1990) theories of racial identity. *Life-span* theories constituted the third point on the continuum, and *Transitional* theories, where Schlossberg now situates her theory, acted as the anchor opposite contextual theories. Though the theories were discussed as separate points, Schlossberg was clear in her assertion that the distinctions were artificial demarcations, devised for the purpose of understanding the differences among the theory families. In reality, the theories overlap and interact, much as the various components of Schlossberg's transition theory (Fassinger & Schlossberg, 1992; Schlossberg et al., 1995).

The collaboration with Elinor Waters and Jane Goodman (Schlossberg et al., 1995) culminated in a major reconceptualization of the transition model and the theories that contribute to the concept of transitions (See Figures 3 and 4). Though many of the integral components were still present, the "packaging" reflected new theoretical viewpoints. With the second revision came the return of *ethnicity* to the demographic characteristics that play a role in the transition, accompanying SES, gender, age and stage, and health. Psychological resources, such as ego development, commitment and values, and outlook are still in place. Personality as a separate category is absent from this model, but frequent references to the individual's "personal style" appear within the section on psychological resources. The individual's outlook has been further defined as *optimism* and *self-efficacy*. The purpose of the transition model was to provide a systematic framework for helping professionals to assist individuals in understanding transitions and assessing where the individual is in the transition process.

The first component of the model is *approaching transitions* (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Questions about what type of transition is occurring—as well as the impact on the individual's roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions—are salient in the approach process. A second aspect of this part is the *transition process*, where the question becomes where the individual is in the transition—moving in, moving through, or moving out of the transition.

Schlossberg and her colleagues described the second major component of the transition model as the individual's potential resources—the *4S system*: the *situation, support, self*, and *strategies*. From an intervention perspective, individuals must take stock of the coping resources available to them that are associated with each of the four dimensions. *Strengthening resources* (the 4Ss), the third component of the model, encourages the individual to take charge of those aspects of the transition within his or her control. Current resources are strengthened and new resources developed.

After completing revisions of previous models (Schlossberg, 1981, 1984), the latest version of the transition theory became more holistic and richer in its descriptive power with the addition of concepts from anthropology, sociology, and transition management related to the “betwixt and between” time in transitions (van Gennep, 1960). Van Gennep, an anthropologist, described transition experiences common to all societies:

The life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to another...For every one of these events there are ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well-defined. (pp. 2-3)

Inherent within the rite of passage is the concept of *liminality*, from the Latin “limen,” meaning “threshold,” to describe the time of existence between two states of being. Ceremonies

connected to these rites of passage may symbolize the individual's *separation* from an organization or group, such as high school graduation; *incorporation*, the individual's movement into a new role or relationship, such as a marriage ceremony; or the period of *liminality* itself, such as a baby shower for an expectant mother and father. Depending on the type of passage, one or the other of the periods within the transition becomes the most salient.

Schlossberg identifies liminality as occurring after the individual has moved into the new environment and is beginning to learn the rules of the setting while establishing new roles and relationships. However, Nicol (2001) suggests that liminal experiences actually begin during the senior year of high school. In her longitudinal study of the twelfth grade year in a secondary school in British Columbia, Nicol found that students already articulated thoughts and feelings of being "betwixt and between," had already entered a time of uncertainty about their identities and their goals, and already spoke of personal transformation. One of her participants commented, "You are at a point in your life where you think you are an adult and everybody else thinks you are a kid" (p. 176). Nicol further stated that the liminal period is idiosyncratic, beginning earlier for some students than others and, for some students, "the liminal time extends beyond graduation well into the first year of living in the adult world" (pp. 250-251).

William Bridges, a professional in the field of transition management, offered a new twist to the meaning of transitions in life. Bridges (1980) advanced the notion that the transition process actually begins with *endings*. "Endings are the first phase of transition. The second phase is a time of lostness and emptiness before 'life' resumes an intelligible pattern and direction, while the third phase is that of beginning anew" (p. 17). Once individuals begin the process of disengaging from a previous role and context, they move into the liminal stage—the time Bridges refers to as the *neutral zone*. And finally, at the end, individuals reach the

beginnings of something new—new roles, new relationships, new work or tasks—the next state in life.

Ebaugh (1988) and Louis (1980) shed further light on role exits and entrances during a transition. Ebaugh, a sociologist and former nun, studied others who had chosen to leave the convent as well as ex-doctors, professors, teachers, athletes, and others who transitioned from one profession to another. She contends that “role exit is a process of disengagement from a role that is central to one’s self-identity and the reestablishment of an identity in a new role that takes into account one’s ex-role” (p. 23). This process of role exit often occurs gradually. On the other hand, Louis (1980) concentrated on what happens when individuals enter a transition. She found that regardless of the type of transition, everyone undertakes the learning of the rules, norms, and expectations—an acculturation into the shared, but often tacit, knowledge of the new environment. This socialization process may be expedited by orientation procedures and mentoring activities developed by those in the new environment, whether it is a company or an educational institution.

Schlossberg’s addition of these concepts from other disciplines provides a thread, woven throughout the transition process, as the individual is *moving in*—becoming socialized to new roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions, *moving through*—experiencing the liminality of the neutral zone, and *moving out*—disengaging from the identity and routines of the former role (Schlossberg et al., 1995, p. 44). The life-span development theories from which these concepts were derived also provide foundational assumptions for Schlossberg’s framework about the perpetual nature of transition experiences in human existence and the fact that the reaction to life changes depends on the type, context, and impact of the transition.

Schlossberg's Research

Schlossberg has tested her theory with two populations—nontraditional students returning to higher education and adults going through career transitions. The model has proven to be a useful framework for managerial staff and career services in business and education (Leibowitz & Schlossberg, 1982; Leibowitz, Schlossberg, & Shore, 1991, 1992; McEwen, Komives, & Schlossberg, 1990; Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988; Schlossberg, 2004; Schlossberg & Leibowitz, 1980) and also for professionals working with nontraditional college students (Schlossberg, 1967, 1970, 1989; Schlossberg, Lassalle, & Golec, 1990; Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989; Schlossberg & Warren, 1985). Schlossberg's consultation and workshops in the business sector have sought to improve induction, mentoring, job satisfaction and retention of employees. In the field of higher education, Schlossberg has limited her use of the model with nontraditional as opposed to traditional age students because of the intrinsic difficulties of re-entering an educational system "off time." Many nontraditional students have families and jobs, along with a "time gap" in their educational experience, that complicate their transition. According to Schlossberg, Lynch, and Chickering (1989),

We believe that the character of the adult experience and the character of educational institutions are out of synchrony. A dilemma exists: Adults are heterogeneous, and as they age, their life patterns become more divergent; meanwhile, bureaucracies tend to be rigid and hierarchical, in many cases encouraging dependency rather than autonomy.

(p.1)

These barriers to the educational transition create the opportunity for intervention and improvement. Schlossberg has sought to remedy this through devoting her efforts to the nontraditional college population.

Critique of Schlossberg's Theory of Transition

A major strength of Schlossberg's current theory of transition is its interdisciplinary foundation in life-span development and use of adaptation and coping literature. The compilation of ideas from scholars in their respective fields has led to the perspective of transitions as complex experiences encompassing many variables. However, aside from the attempt to respond to critics of the original model, Schlossberg has been largely silent about the rationale for her two revisions of the theory. Questions about the exclusion, inclusion, or reappropriation of different concepts in the various revisions of the theory remain unanswered. Situational variables such as role change, source of the transition, timing, and duration as well as support variables have remained constant. On the other hand, changes in characteristics of the self have been consistent. Of particular concern is the perceived instability of conceptual definitions when examining variables of the individual self. For example, Tyler's (1978) behavioral attributes, proposed as part of an individual's psychosocial competence in Schlossberg's original model, included planning and goal setting. These attributes are missing from the first revision, though a mention of planning as part of Erikson's (1963) *initiative versus guilt* stage contributes to Schlossberg's subsequent definition of competence.

The neglect of a discussion of goals or goal setting as part of the transition process is an oversight that should be addressed in future conceptualizations of transition theory. Often transitions are a direct result of an individual's purposeful, goal-directed behavior. *Long-term goals*, *distal goals*, and *life goals* are terms that have been associated with planned life changes. Long-term goals are often accomplished by the achievement of *short-term goals*, also labeled *proximal goals*, or *subgoals* that enable the individual to measure progress toward the end goal.

Further, goals influence the individual's motivation, decision-making, and strategies (Schutz & Lanehart, 1994) as they negotiate the transitional situation.

Personality, part of Schlossberg's self system, is a construct that has been represented multiple ways in Schlossberg's revisions with no explanation as to the reason for variation. Furthermore, Schlossberg has listed multiple representations of personality from other theorists in the discussion of her revisions, with the last embodiment of personality as "ego development, outlook, and commitments and values" (Schlossberg et al., 1995). The construct of personality has been troublesome to Schlossberg as she has had difficulty settling on consistent aspects of personality to include in her theory.

A second issue in need of investigation is the assumption that nontraditional college students struggle with a more difficult transition because of the time gap since their last classroom experience. Despite Schlossberg's contentions about the unique difficulties of nontraditional college students, traditional age students face their own combination of challenges in this transition. In contrast to most nontraditional students who have already established a life independent of their family of origin, many traditional students are simultaneously experiencing disengagement from the familiar surroundings of home and community, family, friends, school, church, and even family pets. Many have not taken on the level of responsibility that nontraditional students have already assumed and are "still immersed emotionally, psychologically, geographically, and usually financially in their family of origin" (Arnstein, 1980, p. 160). Juggling tasks such as attending class, studying, getting proper nourishment and rest, managing personal finances, completing housekeeping chores, doing laundry, and scheduling medical appointments without the oversight and support of parents can be construed as a daunting experience.

In a groundbreaking study, Silber and his colleagues (1976) were among the first to examine students *during* the transition as opposed to retrospectively studying the transition and adjustment to college. These researchers identified five major tasks commonly encountered in the transition from high school to college:

1) separation from parents, siblings, and close friends; 2) greater autonomy in regard to making important decisions, assuming responsibility for oneself, and regulating one's own behavior; 3) establishing new friendships; 4) pressures (internal and external) toward greater intimacy and adult sexuality; and 5) dealing with new intellectual challenges. (p. 112)

Findings of the first phase of Silber's study prior to entering college revealed that competent students engaged in anticipatory coping behavior, using both direct action and intrapsychic (mental) strategies. Students employed strategies such as referring back to other transitions in schooling, seeking advice and information about the transition, anticipatory socialization—adopting and rehearsing “college-like” behavior, voicing positive statements about their preparation for college, lowering aspirations of their academic performance in college as opposed to high school, and general optimism about their college experience (Silber et al., 1976). As these students moved into their freshman year, they devised ways to maintain self-esteem and manage anxiety by adapting prior skills to the new environment, setting and prioritizing both proximal and distal goals, substituting social and extracurricular goals when academics proved disappointing, making friends, and using interpersonal support (Silber et al., 1976).

Arthur and Hiebert (1996) studied both traditional and nontraditional college students at different points during their first year of college. Four disparate themes in strategy use were found. In contrast to Silber and colleagues (1976), the first theme revealed that participants in

this study tended to use coping strategies that were familiar to them even when other strategies may have been a better fit for the situation. A second theme was the use of positive appraisal. Arthur and Hiebert noted that if positive appraisal was used in combination with task-focused coping, students were more able to manage the transition. Gender differences was a third theme emerging from the data. Female students reported higher levels of stress and used more emotion-focused coping than their male counterparts. Finally, the fourth theme revealed students age 20 and older were better able to match strategies to the situation at hand. Students who entered college directly out of high school consistently used familiar coping skills regardless of the situation, including emotion-focused coping and disengagement (p. 101).

Despite the uncertainty and stress many students feel, the transition from high school to college also evokes excitement and anticipation. Moving to college is viewed by students as an ideal opportunity to “start over,” to make new friends, and to reinvent themselves. Identity transformations become a tension between maintaining aspects of the former self the students consider to be essential parts of their identity, and leaving behind aspects they want to change (Ebaugh, 1988; Karp et al., 1998). Academic and extracurricular opportunities at this level may far surpass any high school offerings the students have experienced, and are mechanisms for personal development and achievement of personal goals.

Wapner et al. (1983) acknowledge the ambivalent emotions with which students greet the transition to college and the differences in pretransition and posttransition environments. Going from a familiar setting to an unfamiliar setting, from having a bedroom to yourself to having to share a room with a virtual stranger, from being a high school leader to a relative unknown on campus, or from externally imposed rules to self-reliance and freedom, arouse both positive and negative emotions (p. 124).

Student affairs professionals in higher education are aware of the difficulties and stresses that may affect students and have claimed Schlossberg's model as an appropriate framework from which to develop interventions that ease college adjustment for traditional and nontraditional students (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Nonetheless little, if any, research has been done with traditional aged students going through the transition to college. "Given the limited amount of research to date, studies, perhaps of a qualitative nature, that examine the transition experiences of college students have the potential to be very informative" (Evans et al., 1998, p. 120). Likewise, Terenzini et al. (1994) suggested the transition from high school to college is, to a great extent, unexplored (p. 56). Further research should be conducted with traditional age students going through the multidimensional transition to college. Other types of transitions and other populations should also be explored using this framework to test its adequacy with different subgroups, multicultural, and cross-cultural populations.

A third issue that bears examination deals with the scope of the theory. Schlossberg discusses transitions at a macro level that is useful in its broad scope and wide application across various experiences. Nevertheless, transitions are composed of daily events, decisions, and problems to be addressed beyond the onset of transitional ideation. Therefore, despite the wide angled lens with which transitions are approached in Schlossberg's model, another area of research has the potential to make a significant contribution to our understanding of individual behavior in times of transition—the area of self-regulation. The addition of self-regulation to the theory of transition provides an integrated model, including both macro and micro level approaches to the understanding of transitions, as individuals confront major and minor events within the process of change.

The Integration of Transition Theory and Self-Regulation

One of the most important qualities humans possess when faced with new situations and tasks is our ability to self-regulate (Zimmerman, 2000). Self-regulation allows us to monitor and manage our thoughts, emotions, and behavior as we engage in adaptation. In this section I seek to integrate Schlossberg's theory of transition with constructs from general models of self-regulation. To accomplish this, I begin by examining definitions of self-regulation and then discuss areas of self-regulation and transition that overlap, as well as those that interact, using Schlossberg's 4 S system—Situation, Self, Support, and Strategies—as a frame.

Defining Self-Regulation

Self-regulation is a construct that has been characterized as difficult to “define theoretically as well as to operationalize empirically” (Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2000, p. 4). It comes as no surprise, then, that theorists have not always agreed on a definition for the construct. There are, however, several common conceptions about what constitutes self-regulation. Self-regulation encompasses a set of cognitive and affective processes and behaviors that are directed toward and adapted during the pursuit and achievement of personal goals (Carver & Scheier, 2000; Demetriou, 2000; Jackson, Mackenzie, & Hobfoll, 2000; Kuhl, 2000; Matthews, Schwan, Campbell, Saklofske, & Mohamed, 2000; Schutz & Davis, 2000; Shah & Kruglanski, 2000; Zimmerman, 2000). Moreover, many self-regulated processes and behaviors are thought to be self-generated, planned, and cyclical (Zimmerman, 2000, 2002), adjusted and adapted in a changing environment (Demetriou, 2000; Matthews et al., 2000), and support not only the monitoring of our progress and adjustment of action toward a goal, but the adjustment of the goal itself (Carver & Scheier, 1982; Demetriou, 2000; Jackson et al., 2000; Matthews et

al., 2000). Shapiro and Schwartz (2000) and Kuhl (2000) further suggest self-regulation toward a goal can be both a conscious or an unconscious, automatized process.

Situation

Self-regulation and adaptation and coping during transition share a number of the same constructs and ideas (Matthews et al., 2000). Self-regulatory actions and coping responses are linked and are interacting throughout the transition process. First, during transitions, individuals encounter changing environments—changes in roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions (Schlossberg et al., 1995)—that prompt them to set new *goals*. In fact, the transition itself, such as the desire to go to college, may be a goal toward which the individual strives. A variety of terms are used to describe a desired outcome such as a goal; for example, Carver and Scheier (2000) list “*current concern* (Klinger, 1977), *personal strivings* (Emmons, 1986), *life task* (Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1987), and *personal project* (Little, 1983)” (p.42) as indicative of synonymous terms.

Regardless of the trigger or the source of the transition, individuals who aim toward adaptation to new circumstances (a personal goal in and of itself) must identify proximal goals and tasks that will start them on the right path. If the transition is anticipated, the individual has the opportunity to engage in a more prolonged self-regulative *forethought phase* (Zimmerman, 2000) of goal setting and strategic planning for the change ahead. Processes of *forethought* may happen prior to initialization of any aspect of the transition and also during the transition as different tasks are being attended to. Behavioral attributes of the individual in Schlossberg’s first model that contributed to adaptation included goal setting and planning, another tacit nod to the importance of self-regulation during transition.

Because of the multidimensional nature of many transitions, individuals are dealing with multiple goals simultaneously (Carver & Scheier, 2000; Shah & Kruglanski, 2000). For example, the freshman in college is often juggling social, academic, and personal demands in a new campus environment. The goals formulated are at various levels of abstraction and are hierarchically organized (Carver & Scheier, 2000; Shah & Kruglanski, 2000; Zimmerman, 2000). The goal “I want to be a good student” is more abstract than “I will study two hours tonight.” Even more concrete is the goal “I will read pages 27-60 in my history text.” Carver and Scheier (2000) suggest the more abstract goals are “higher-level goals” (connected to being) with “lower-level goals” (connected to doing) becoming more and more concrete as people move down the hierarchy. Additionally, the student commonly has a hierarchy of goals related to pursuing new social networks and possibly other hierarchies that relate to enhancing personal skills and talents during the college years.

Though there are times when a single activity or means can work toward the attainment of two goals, such as studying with a new group of friends, many times the students’ goals and means to attain them will conflict (Shah & Kruglanski, 2000). The concept of the goal as a *current concern* seems especially appropriate when focusing on multiple goal pursuits. Carver and Scheier (2000) suggest individuals have multiple current concerns. Often, however, the student must choose between goals, or there may be times when a goal in one dimension of the transition is more valued and becomes more salient to the student. In other words, that goal becomes the student’s *immediate current concern*, implying there are situations when individuals cannot or choose not to work concurrently on different goals, and one goal becomes the focus for the current moment.

Self

The relative value of personal goals suggests the *concept of self* in self-regulation and the *category of self* in transition theory. Our goals are often reflections of our background, our commitments and values, and our feelings of self-efficacy about particular goals. A new role we anticipate in a transition may bring to the fore the idea of our *possible self*, either the way we would not prefer to be or the way we ideally envision ourselves to be (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Our *sense of self* (Carver & Scheier, 2000) and our *self-knowledge* (Matthews et al., 2000) influence the goals we choose as well as the way we self-regulate and cope with transition (Matthews et al., 2000; Schlossberg, 1984; Schlossberg et al., 1995; Whitbourne, 1985) during the *performance phase* of self-regulation, times when we are actually carrying through with tasks we have identified and for which we have planned during the forethought phase (Zimmerman, 2000).

Self-efficacy and optimism, termed a person's *outlook* by Schlossberg (1995), are also known as *self-referent traits* in the self-regulation literature. These personality traits impact which coping or self-regulatory strategies we choose during the forethought phase and the outcomes we may expect at the end of the performance phase. Another personal characteristic that contributes to individual differences in self-regulation and response to transition is the need for closure (Shah & Kruglanski, 2000), an inability to deal with ambiguity (Schlossberg et al., 1995) that may lead the individual to choose a hasty means to a goal prematurely, rather than carefully considering other means of attainment.

Using metacognitive monitoring skills, a person may decide progress toward a goal is too slow. With this type of evaluation, negative affect arises that spurs the individual to increase efforts, thereby arousing positive emotions (Carver & Scheier, 2000). This effect may interact

with and exacerbate the premature choice of means for those intolerant of uncertainty. On the other hand, the more competence the people feel in a given situation, the more people assess themselves to be in control, and the more motivation they possess to engage their self-regulatory skills effectively and persist toward higher, possibly more adaptive goals (Zimmerman, 2000).

Kuhl (2000) proposes a *personality systems interaction* (PSI) framework, in essence combining cognitive mechanisms and motivational purpose in goal-directed behavior (p. 126). This integration supports both the unconscious, intuitive and the conscious, intentional aspects of self-regulation. The four mechanistic macrosystems in PSI—our intention memory (thinking), extension memory (feeling), intuitive behavior control, and object recognition—all work in conjunction each other, modulating positive and negative affect to aid in regulation toward goals.

Our affect determines the energy flow among the four macrosystems and influences the role each has at any given time (Kuhl, 2000). Therefore, the individual's personality and affect modulate cognitive performance and determine whether the individual engages in self-control (conscious action control) or self-regulation (implicit and unconscious processes). Students engaging in self-control will deliberately inhibit thoughts of other activities in which they would like to participate in an attempt to carry out the goal of studying. Students engaging in self-regulation will consider all the activities and find a way to satisfy all their desires, either by combining activities or by prioritizing them (p. 115).

Demetriou (2000), on the other hand, proffers other important aspects of self and personality in self-regulation toward a goal—thinking styles and temperament. Thinking styles have their basis in personality traits such as extraversion and openness to experience, as well as information processing preferences (p. 222). Temperament embodies such traits as extraversion, persistence, adaptability, mood, and the need for regularity of routine. These traits constitute

many of the predispositions affecting individuals' ability to adapt to a new environment. For example, establishing social networks and dealing with new norms and expectations are a more natural inclination for individuals possessing extraverted and adaptable temperaments.

Demetriou (2000) posits that mind, personality, and self are interrelated in their development.

Research suggests that personality traits such as introversion and neuroticism are associated with higher levels of stress and emotion-focused rather than task-focused coping. Neuroticism further affects accuracy of situation appraisal, and introversion has been tied to worry and reduced self-efficacy in self-regulation. Future research on the specific interactions of these different systems on self-regulation should be conducted (Demetriou, 2000).

Previous experiences with similar transitions or tasks influence not only the individuals' self-efficacy, but also how they view their current performance as they enter a *self-reflection phase* of self-regulation (Zimmerman, 2000). Transitions are a time of comparing of pretransition and posttransition environments, a time of comparing how individuals have handled the current transition compared to similar situations, *and* a time of comparing themselves to others going through the same transition. Individuals' attributions of outcomes of self-regulation depend on their self-evaluations as well as their examination of external factors that influenced the situation. Causal attributions they generate during this phase will cyclically influence their self-regulation in the future (Zimmerman, 2000).

Strategies

Appraisals of transition consist of both primary appraisal—assessing whether the situation is positive, negative, benign, or irrelevant—and secondary appraisal, assessing coping resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Based on feedback from the secondary appraisal of resources, responses or strategies are chosen. Matthews and his colleagues (2000) list *cognitive*

stress processes as one of the constructs of the cognitive-social framework of self-regulation consisting of appraisal of the situation, task-focused coping, and emotion-focused coping.

“Coping is closely linked to self-regulation in that choice of coping strategy reflects evaluation of personal competence to deal with the problem at hand” (p. 177). Further, emotional regulation aids in the attempt to reach transitional goals by allowing individuals to control the type, intensity, and timing of emotional experiences that help or hinder goal-directed processes (Schutz & Davis, 2000).

Schlossberg similarly suggested three types of coping responses or strategies, drawn from adaptation and coping literature (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978): 1) *responses that modify the situation* such as information and advice seeking, direct action, and efforts at negotiation; 2) *responses that control the meaning of the problem*, such as positive comparisons (those mentioned previously), selective ignoring of those aspects of the transition not progressing well, and substitution of priorities (focusing on dimensions that are valued when other dimensions are not going well); 3) *responses that help manage stress after it has occurred*, such as emotional discharge, denial, passive acceptance, withdrawal, magical thinking, and avoidance of worry (Schlossberg et al., 1995, pp. 72-73).

Support

The level of support surrounding individuals as they move through transitional times in their lives often ameliorates the impact of stress and is therefore an important resource in adaptation. Family, friends, significant others, and the support of institutions and agencies involved in the transition function as sounding boards, sources of advice and information, and other tangible sources of aid such as money, housing, and so forth (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Praise, emotional support, and optimism exhibited by the support network are further positive

influences on adaptive self-regulation and coping. Moreover, individuals own senses of self and self-knowledge are enhanced by what their peers and colleagues reflect back to them. This is especially important when negative affect—anxiety or worry—prevent them from accessing or attending to positive facets of self-beliefs (Matthews et al., 2000).

Interpersonal or social resources also play an integral role in self-regulation literature. When individuals have deficits in their own psychological resources, they must take stock of the external sources available to them. Jackson and her associates (2000) posit the idea of *communal regulation* or *self-in-social-setting regulation*, whereby “individuals self-regulate and monitor their actions within a network of socially mediated factors, such as family, organizational, and group-based needs, goals, and desires” (p. 276). This notion is related to Louis’s (1980) claim that individuals moving into a new environment or system must learn the agendas and needs of the system along with the rules, norms, and expectations. Individuals, “nested” within the new system, may negotiate and regulate within the context to meet their own as well as the system’s needs (Jackson et al., 2000).

Inherent in the social cognitive triadic processes of self-regulation are person, behavior, and *environmental* influences (Zimmerman, 2000). “People who neglect to use social and physical environmental resources or who view them as an obstacle to personal development will be less effective in regulating their lives” (p. 24). Individuals may learn vicariously by observing those who are either proficient at transitional tasks and are gauged as successful or, conversely, those who are not making progress in the transition using ineffective strategies. For the individual in transition, proficiency becomes an approach goal, and avoiding the ineffective behaviors becomes an avoidance or antigal (Carver & Scheier, 2000). Through both self-regulation and communal regulation optimal functioning and adaptation to transition occur.

Discussion

My review was guided by several questions: First, how are transitions conceptualized in the literature? Second, what components are included in extant models and theories of the transition process? Third, how are adaptation and coping described and conceptualized? Fourth, how do models of self-regulation intersect with models of transition? Finally, how do these models and theories relate to specific transitions, such as the transition from high school to college? In this review I have attempted to examine how transitions and adaptation are conceptualized in the literature and explore specific constructs related to them. I have also traced the history of Schlossberg's transition theory and integrated components of this theory with constructs from models of self-regulation. Clearly, there is a great deal of overlap and interaction between transition theory and self-regulatory constructs (See Table 6).

Schlossberg provides a framework within which self-regulating individuals progress toward adaptation, while managing stress in dealing with a major life change. Therefore, I propose an integrated transition model, making explicit the cyclical interaction of the transitional situation, the individual in transition, the types of support, the coping and self-regulatory strategies, and the self-regulation process (See Figure 6).

Self-regulation takes place within a triadic person-behavior-environment system (Zimmerman, 1989, 2000), "each of which is separately dynamic as well as jointly interactive" (Zimmerman, 1998b, p. 2). A transition is, indeed, an event within a person (self)-behavior (strategies)-environment (situation/support) system, where "human functioning is explained in terms of a model of triadic reciprocity in which behavior, cognitive and other personal factors, and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants of each other" (Bandura, 1986, p. 18). Characteristics of the individual are brought to bear on the situation, influencing

behavioral and cognitive strategies which, in turn, impact the situation. Outcomes then affect the individual's perceptions of him or herself in a cyclical fashion.

When important transitions occur in people's lives, they have a desire to control the events through self-regulation of thought, emotion, and action (Schunk, 2004, p. 84). The elaboration of an integrated model ties together specific cognitive, motivational, and behavioral concepts to explicate the self-regulation process that goes beyond the daily changes we encounter in our environment, that is, the self-regulation and coping necessary to work through major transitions in life.

CHAPTER 5

INTERLUDE 2: FRESHMAN COLLAGE:

VISUAL AND VERBAL “SNAPSHOTS” OF THE FRESHMAN YEAR

Academic Life

Definitely have to earn your weekends here.

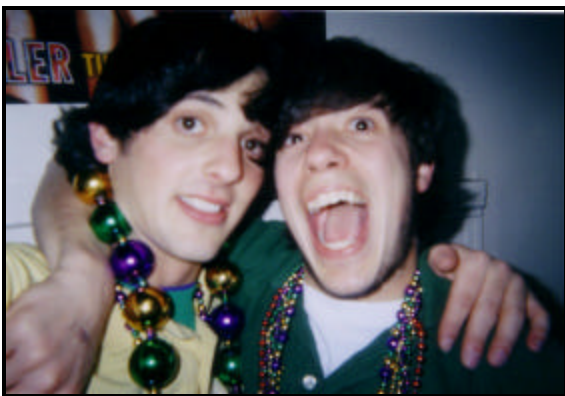
—Heather

You can screw around and who knows if you’ll be around next year?

—Sam

Here, it’s more like you make the choice every day whether you’re going to study or whether you’re going to go out.

—Amanda



I wouldn’t say that coming to college is a walk in the park, but it was easier than I thought it was going to be.

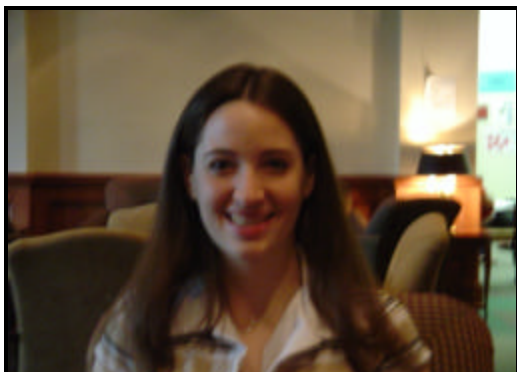
—Anna

What possessed me to take 2200 Intro to Ethics, I’ll never understand.

—Heather

My friends say, “Oh, it’s spring; let’s go play.” I say, “No let’s go study.”

—Suzanne



The academic transition is kind of a slap in the face.

—Lisa

Sometimes you just got to take a slap in the face.

—Jennifer

I feel like I'm doing pretty well...I have to keep up with all the material, cause it's really easy to get behind. If you get one day behind, it's like three weeks almost. They don't slow down for you.

—David

It's interesting that the people who go to the study sessions are people who usually do well, and you'd think that the people who usually don't do well would put in the extra effort to change whatever it is that they're doing wrong and do better with it and understand the material more. It seems like the reason they aren't doing well, I guess, is because they're *not* doing things like the study sessions and they're not putting in the extra effort that is required. And I was standing at the bus stop and I heard someone say "It feels like chemistry is my life now, and I hate it." It's hard to understand your priorities while in college, but I remind myself constantly that this is why I'm here in the end. I mean, having fun is an important thing, but you know, your academics is ultimately why you're here right now. And I don't want to regret it later, something I didn't do and have it be an enormous life choice.



—Sara



Over the summer, they asked us what our target GPA for first semester was, and I said, "4.0," of course. Isn't that everybody's target GPA?

—Lisa

Figure it out. I will. I'll figure it out. Figure it out.

—Heather

CAN'T SLACK OFF!

—Suzanne

Residence Life



Move-in day here is insane.

—Jennifer

I definitely think if you can live with somebody in Russell than you could live with somebody anywhere.

—Kali

Everything could be fine just the way it is if I just had more space. Like, when I'm sitting at my desk, I feel really closed in and I have a *really* big computer, so, I don't have desk space to spread my work out to see it more

easily. And then, I also don't have floor space. I feel comfortable in there and after a hard day, it's nice to come back and sit on my futon, but I don't feel at home there. I feel like I'm living in someone else's space, and I feel like I'm living on top of my roommate like at all times.

—Justin

I think the freshmen *should* live in dorms cause they get to meet people, and they get to have a good time. It's just the whole college experience.

—Michael

We always joke about how miserable the dorms are. We're so ready to move out.

—Amanda

The hall I live on is *so amazing*, and I love them to death and so 3 or 4 of us are all in chemistry and we work I think about the same level and so we just go run back and forth through the halls, cause we're so close to each other, about questions and stuff like that. Like do you know this one? And I'll know one and we just sort of help each other like explain it. During test time we kind of study together. We have flash cards, and we quiz each other.

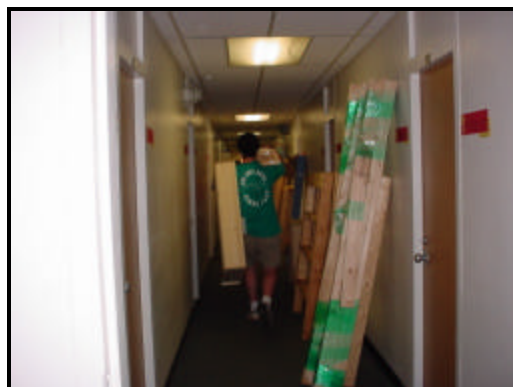
—Sara



Living in the dorms it's like, I seriously think that the first, the very first year of college is to put as much stress and to poke you in as many different places as possible just to see if you can handle it. Because, like, the stress of just living in such a small room with another person that has no air conditioning, no ventilation, freezing cold at night, hot as blazes in the day. You never have what you need. You're never comfortable. I haven't sat in a

reclining chair in a year. I just *really* want to do that.

—Justin



Roommates

It's been wonderful. We were very lucky. We've gotten along very well. We actually, we get along the best in the hall. Everyone else is fighting and we're like "Fight? What's that?"

—Suzanne

We hardly talk to each other. We don't really. I really try to avoid her. Like, she's passive-aggressive. And I guess whenever she sees me in the room studying, it's just like she... I don't know. It's not a good feeling.

—Tina



I completely dislike my roommate.

—Heather

Me and my roommate are kind of two different people. Like, we get along good, but we just have two different ways of living. Like he's very messy, and he's very like your stereotypical...like doesn't go to class, he's only taking like 9 hours, you know. He's, just doesn't care. And I'm kind of more, Type A personality, like I keep my room pretty clean. I do everything, and stay on top of things. So, I guess, I mean, we get along like, we haven't

fought or anything but we definitely have two different styles of living. We're two different, whole, completely, concepts on everything.

—Michael

Greek Life

Definitely, definitely rush stands out. It was crazy just lining up in lines, and having your name called and that whole thing. I don't even know how I got through that week.

—Alison

I kind of went about it maybe the wrong way. I went in set on a couple of houses that I really liked. And I didn't end up getting those in like the last days, so I was just like "I don't want to do that." It isn't a big deal but I mean, it's kind of like being rejected.

—Suzanne





I didn't realize how important, and maybe it's with what seems the majority of the freshman class, but sororities are *very* important. Especially on *my* hall. People know whether you're in a sorority or not and it's a little hard to gain footing with the other students if you're not in a sorority right now. I mean more of the freshman people who are just *coming* to college as well. Because it almost seems like the need to...there's the desire to become part of a group as soon as possible. To find someone to connect with so, that was a little harder than I at first imagined. You

have to work a little bit harder to get other students to realize that just because I decided not to join a sorority that I can still have fun. I can still get to know them.

—Becky

Professors

I was in a first speech class with a woman who, oh, she was scary. She was real scary. (Laughter) She was like "Shenara don't care if you fail. Shenara don't care." Like, "Oh, my God." It's like my first class of the day and I was like, "I want to go hooome."

—Jennifer

It's nice to have somebody who you feel like kind of cares about you a little bit in this huge university.

—Kali



I recognize that there are courses that are not interesting and I think that's mostly because of the professor. I feel like *any* course can be interesting if the professor taught in a way that it *was* interesting.

—Tina



I know a lot of college professors do lots of research and some of them are only here because they do research, they teach on the side just to keep their job. I think that their primary thing should be that they should teach and they should be there for students.

—Michael

Sleep

In English, I wish people would wake me up when I fall asleep. When they say you're on your own in college, you really are. They don't stop for anything. If you fall asleep that's your problem.

—Heather

I had my geography mid-term sometime last week, I think, and I had *not* been reading *at all*, and I fell asleep in every single class and so I didn't know any of the lectures.

—Lisa



Oh, astronomy's going fine. I don't go to lectures that much, because I fall asleep and I seriously can't help it. (Laughter) Like it's a physical thing. I cannot stay awake. I think it's because of my 8 a.m. classes, where I also don't have a choice over. So, like I'm kind of doing that class on my own.

—Lisa

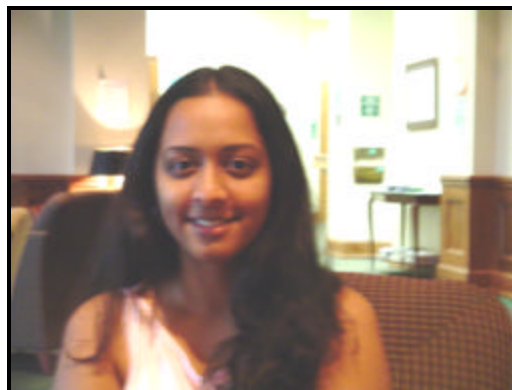
I like history but at 8:00 in the morning I tend to doze off or sleep in and then it just being a 300 person class, you don't get the attention, I guess.

—Jonathan

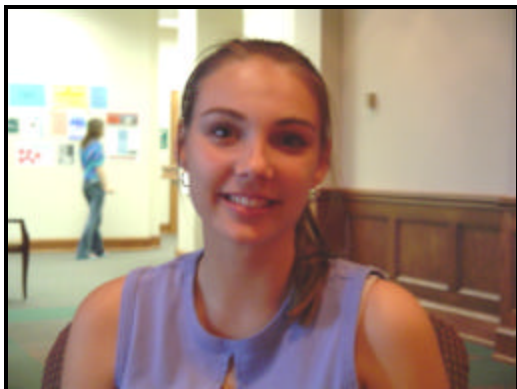
Testing

I don't feel like you should take tests on computers. It's so stressful because you're working with a timer on the computer, and you're like looking at that constantly. You're in this little booth and that (Laughter), and I've always been used to taking it on a desk. The stress level goes through the roof when I'm in front of a computer screen. I feel like I'm trying to beat the computer or something. You answer all the questions and then you press "submit."

Constantly worrying if you typed it in the right way cause there are certain ways you type it in, certain ways you don't having to deal with that cause we're going to have it next semester and so, I've just been trying to cope with it.



—Sara



Whoever thought of putting tests on computer should just...I wouldn't even admit to it, because you'd have so students coming after you, it's not even funny.

—Heather

Pre-calculus tests have stood out, because I always end up...I always find myself sweating.

—Sam

My first final. Like I went in feeling fine and then like in the middle I just felt like really sick. I don't

know why if it was something I ate or something but I felt really sick. And then, but later that day I went in for my psych one, and I felt the same way so it was either something I ate that day or just the fact that it was just my first college final. I was a little panicked, but I mean, I don't feel that anymore when I go in and take tests or anything.

—Jonathan

I had my very first test in poli sci and psychology the same day and they're back to back. (Laughter) I only have three tests in each of those classes this semester, so the night before, I had been up late studying. I stayed up until maybe like 2:00 studying really hard for those tests. And I had a geography and Spanish test later on that week, too. Then at 4:00 in the morning, the fire drill went off. And so, we went outside and it was really cold and raining outside, and we were out there for about an hour and a half and I fell asleep in my car, so, we went back inside at like 5:30 in the morning and went to bed. And it turned out some guy had just put newspapers in the ovens. So anyways, went to bed and got up and went and took those tests in the morning. And they turned out totally fine, but I was totally wiped out. I made like 100 on one of them and then 97, 98 on the other one. So it turned out fine, but it was sooo stressful cause I had no sleep.



—Kali

Buses



Getting on the buses and how crowded they are. How many times I thought we were going to hit someone, how many times I thought *I* was going to be hit and how many times I thought we were going to flip (laughter) while hitting a corner cause those bus drivers are crazy.

—Heather

I kind of expected to learn my way around in the summer. In the first couple of weeks, I was starting to doubt that. You know, cause we were all just still following each other around, hoping somebody knew where we were going. Like one day we couldn't get on the bus because it was full, and it was like 9:00 and we had to get to class by 9:15, so we ran the bus route, because we didn't know you know... We didn't know, oh, you can just go cut through north campus and you're there, so there we are running the bus route to class.

—Michelle



Growing Up



I really have no clue where I'm going yet.

—Sam

I needed to grow up as a person, and I needed to just be more comfortable with myself and what I was about and my morals and everything.

—Jennifer

You're a teenager, you think you know all, but you don't. My mom always told me that. I believed her before; I just never admitted it.

—Anna

I guess just like also learning to live on your own is a big deal. Learning like really who you are. I just feel a lot more like confident in who I am now. Just because like I know I can get through this on my own. I *know* I can do this. I set my own schedule. I don't have to worry about what other people think about this, you know? Which is just a total different atmosphere, I guess, than what I grew up in.

—Kali

I have a friend coming up here next year, and I just told her like "have an open mind about stuff" because, you know, I have friends that have different morals and values than I do, but don't look down on them for that, cause then you won't have any friends. It was like have an open mind about everything. Still do what you want to do, but kind of make friends with everybody whether they do what you want them to or not, pretty much.

—Michelle

Study Environments



I know when I go to the Student Learning Center, I'm going to do work. I don't know why it's taken me that long to figure it out, but I figured it out, so...and it works. It works really well. Actually going there tonight. Need to start paying rent there instead of instead of in Russell.

—Heather

It's *really* hard to study in the dorms. I grew up like studying in my room. That was my study place, so the way the dorms are set up, you can't study there too much. I mean, you can go to the study room, yeah, but like you can't study in your room. With another person in there, it just doesn't work. If I didn't live in a two person dorm, I'd probably have better grades cause you get more studying done. And you don't have to go somewhere and spend the time going there, coming back, cause you just waste so much time just commuting. It's just the whole commuting process wastes a lot of time.

—Jonathan



I need lots of light. I like a lot of light, so during that time, I'll just pop every light on in the room. Then I can find enough light I like windows open. I like to see the upper light coming in. That's why I can't work in the academic center. It's too dark for me. I just fall asleep.

—Becky

I'm still on the search for like my...my ideal environment.

—Sara

Friends

The social transition probably means leaving not only friends and people that have known you and who you are, and coming into an environment where you could be someone completely different, or the same person, and having people judge you or becoming your friend or forming these new relationships that are probably going to last a lifetime.

—Sara



I think I'm better at making friends than keeping them. Not because like I'm mean to them or anything, but just because when I meet somebody, I'm very talkative and I want to learn about them and then after we've hung out a few times, there is kind of not much to talk about anymore. (Laughter) And so I'm really good at making good *acquaintances*.

—Lisa

I think what I like about UGA, and I guess a lot of campuses is that you can find your group. You can find who you relate to if you look. They're out there.

—Sara

Freshman Philosophy

I'm just doing enough to get by.

—Sam

GPA's are *not* everything in the world.

—Heather

It's been a roller coaster of a year and first year of college should be that, you know?

—Jennifer



I think college is a whole different world. It's just a whole different ball game.

—Michael



I tell myself a lot “this too shall pass.” I read that somewhere.

—Lisa

Is it legal, moral, and ethical?

—Heather

Everything *always* takes more time than you think it will.

—Lisa

Everyone seems to be a generic somebody, and I’m not that generic somebody.

—Tina

Look at The Key.

—Sam

Check The Key and make sure you get a teacher that gives a lot of A's.

—Lisa



I’m domestically challenged.

—Heather

I really don’t think there’s any set truths at all, ever. I mean, yes, maybe the sky is blue and the trees are green. But I always...I can’t help but wonder, you know, is my blue different than your blue? Is my, you know, what I see as blue, do you see as my green? You know what I’m saying?

—Jennifer

We were “summer people.”

—Anna

I'll Always Remember...

I've enjoyed my first year. The best thing was football season. And just the spirit. I love the spirit on this campus. That's what keeps me here. If I were only going for academics, I'm sure I'd want to go to some prestigious school like Harvard or Yale. Just to have the name to go along with it. I'm here for the spirit of the college and the *Bulldog Nation* to be here. I love it and that's what keeps me here, is the love of that and the love I see the other students have for it.

—Becky



I rode my bike to Jacksonville. Have *you* ever done that?

—Suzanne

Actually, I fell off my bicycle.

—Suzanne

Just random experiences where I was like, “Man, that’s the college experience.” My friends and I went to see *The Vagina Monologues* a few weeks ago. Probably just fun things like that.

—Kali

Just being here and meeting new people, game days. That’s a *huge* experience for your first time. Going downtown. I guess you wouldn’t really think about the academic stuff at all.

—Jonathan

De-stressing after tests. We’ll just go out to a coffee shop, or one of my friends has a yellow beetle, and so me and her every time we hit the stress level, we just go and ride in it.

—Sara



It was actually the night in one of those pictures of the closing dinner, and it rained when we were leaving and a couple of the girls were like Yeah, let's play in the rain. And so, we had gotten bathing suits and just like shorts and a t-shirt. We went. We played in the rain. We rolled down the hill.

(Laughter) We had so much fun, and then one of the girls had heard like a myth where if you like swim in the fountain they have on north campus then you're like, it brings you good luck in the year before you graduate. We're like, "Let's get a head start, you know, in Freshman College. Anyway, we like jumped in the pond first like and it was...we just had so much fun, like the girls and I.



—Alison

The University of Georgia



I love being in Athens, and I like being close enough to home to go home when I need to, but far enough away that I don't see my parents.

—Lisa

When I walk around campus, I see it as such an amazing, typical college campus. And I go visit my friends in their universities, and it doesn't feel the same. There's something about the environment and it's very a university atmosphere and just walking around and

sometimes I don't want to take a class. I just want to walk cause it's just so pretty, and I think that puts me into the mind set of being in college.

—Sara

There's so many things that stood out in my freshman year. Definitely like football season. First football season as a student. That was really big. Getting involved with the BSU and just really feeling at home there and knowing that that's the place I should be. And living in the dorm and doing Freshman College. That'll *always* be there. Definitely.

—Suzanne

I couldn't see myself anywhere else. I couldn't imagine...I think it's the total college experience.

—Heather



CHAPTER 6

PORTRAITS IN TRANSITION:

EXPLORING AN INTEGRATED MODEL OF TRANSITION AND SELF-REGULATION

The transition [from high school to college]...is a transition of you. You're starting this new journey in your life of discovering another part of who you are without so many people always supporting you all the time, and you're sort of alone. And that's when you sort of understand who you are.

—Sara, summer prior to college enrollment

I get real excited because I'm ready to go, but I also get kind of sad because it's like I'm leaving everything and have to pack up my life and take it somewhere else. I was talking to a guy that's also doing the summer program. He was like "Well, Michelle, I don't care. The stuff I don't take, mom can do whatever with" and I figured it's totally different for a girl. Cause I was like I'm not taking my dried prom flowers, but I want to keep them, you know, and stuff like that. So it's kind of sad packing everything up, and I think one of my biggest fears is not staying in touch with my high school friends. Because we're all, our little group, we're all going different places. But I don't...it's more excitement than...I mean, I'm ready to go, so...

—Michelle, summer prior to college enrollment

Basically that I'm looking forward to it, but at the same time, I don't really know what to expect. It's a whole different world, and I've just got to adjust to it. I'm just from a small town, and kind of getting used to that bigger atmosphere, all those other people, the 300 people classes, and how everything is dependent on you. It's like, you get your laundry. You cook. You have to find out what to do. There's no one there to remind you...You have to wake up, you know? No one...no one cares. It's all about you. So...that's what I'm saying—just having all the burden put on you, and how I'm going to deal with it all, and situate it all out.

—Michael, summer prior to college enrollment

The graduation ceremony and the celebrations surrounding it were many weeks past when these words were spoken. The newly graduated seniors had said their good-byes to friends

that, despite the current transience prevalent in schools, they had known for many years. The students had also begun to say good-bye to home environments that had long defined their sense of self and, as Michelle expressed, were packing up their lives and taking them somewhere else. Excitement is evident in their voices, but so is uncertainty. They are feeling the tension between what lies ahead and what is past. They are beginning the process of “negotiating a delicate balance of independence and dependence, autonomy and reliance on others, distance and closeness, change and stability” (Karp, Holmstrom, & Gray, 1998, p. 256).

The transition from high school to college is a highly anticipated and celebrated rite of passage in a young person’s life. In contemporary society this multidimensional transition represents one of the first major steps into adulthood and manifold opportunities for personal growth. New social networks, new environments, and new identities as well as lives of increased autonomy, independence, and responsibility await these students. However, many students do not possess adequate coping skills, academic strategies, or resilience to easily negotiate the changes with which they are faced. For example, studies on the first year of college indicate that students considered academically capable often have appropriate credentials for admission to college, but do not have an adequate repertoire of academic strategies to face the challenges of the college classroom (Fielstein & Bush, 1998; Olson, 2001; Roueche, Baker, & Roueche, 1984). Furthermore, success in this transition necessitates leaving behind the familiar environment and structure of home and family and integrating into a new culture, the college campus, with its inherent lack of structure or oversight. Therefore, the transition to college constitutes a multifaceted change requiring coping and self-regulatory strategies on academic, social, and emotional levels.

Despite the many studies on the first year of college, few studies have sought to explore student experiences during the actual transition to college—that is, from the time of high school graduation through the adjustment and integration into the academic and social communities of the college campus. High school students often begin the process of separation from friends and family during their senior year (Liebmann-Smith, 2001; Molnar, 1999). Students continue to loosen, and even sever, ties with significant others in the summer between graduation and entrance to college. Additionally, students become preoccupied with expectations about college as well as the challenges and changes ahead, making that period of time critical in their transition (Wolf-Wendel, Tuttle, & Keller-Wolff, 1999).

Therefore, an understanding of students' experiences and meaning making while *moving through* this phase of their lives will allow the education community to better inform, support, and enhance a more seamless journey from secondary to post-secondary education. The current study focused on students' perspectives and highlighted their voices as they spoke of their own transition to higher education, beginning in the summer after high school graduation and continuing through the first semester of their second year of college. The purpose of this study was to explore participants' experiences of the transition from high school to college and examine the adequacy of the integrated model of transition and self-regulation proposed in Chapter 4 with traditional age students as they anticipated and coped with the transition.

Findings

To present my findings, I have chosen to highlight the contrasting stories of two participants, Tina and Heather. The uniqueness of psychological, physiological, and other personal characteristics as well as exposure to different life conditions naturally led to different paths in the transition for these two students. The stories are represented in a manner to

foreground the students' voices as they tell of their perspectives of the transition from high school to college. Quotes from other participants serve as a backdrop to support or reveal dissimilarities in transition experiences.

First Interview, June 2003

Tina

Tina graduated from a large public high school in a medium-sized city. She was part of a rigorous International Baccalaureate program that she thought was appropriate for her on various levels—academically, socially, and personally. Tina was a self-described “loner,” making new friends rarely, but the relationships she made were long lasting. During our conversation she was quiet and somewhat subdued. When asked how she saw herself as a student, she responded,

I was never really the popular one. I'm pretty much the academic bookworm. (laughter) Even in IB, they talk about my group of friends like...“They study all the time.” And they're like, “You guys have no fun.” I'm very focused. People have told me that I'm “the perpetual student.” I love studying. I really do. Like um, biology especially. I just sit down in my room, and I go at it.

Tina took an active role in her college selection process. Unlike other participants in this study, she took full advantage of information not only from friends and family, but also from the university itself. As computer savvy as all the participants were, few sought information on the UGA web site. Because attending college is such a cultural norm, all the participants had family members and older friends who had attended or graduated from a postsecondary institution, and participants often relied fully on advice and anecdotal information from friends and family members.

The other participants gained a mixture of accurate and inaccurate information that left them with distorted perceptions and expectations of college life. For example, participants' expectations about the core curriculum held common misconceptions. Michael said, “Everybody has to take the same stuff, so I will pretty much just leave it in their [the academic advisors']

hands. I don't know if that's a good or bad thing." Likewise, Amanda explained, "I'll probably just go to the advisement situation and...just take what the typical freshman takes. I mean, you know, the usual. I think there's not too many options for the freshmen in terms of academics." Tina, on the other hand, became the local expert at her high school, and other students planning to attend the university went to her for help.

Tina's life up to that point had focused exclusively on school and home. Her Asian American heritage was a tremendous influence on her life experiences, which could be considered sheltered by mainstream American adolescents.

It's still difficult when you compare my life with someone who has American parents. I come from a really strict family, and I'd like to have time to...I'm not allowed to do a lot of things. Like it was until sixth grade that I was allowed to cross the street by myself. I've never lived outside Georgia. I've never been anywhere by myself. Like I've never slept over at anyone's house. They've never let me, so *that* will be an experience.

Although her family encouraged Tina to further her education, she felt the tension between pursuing her own independence and maintaining support and relationships with her family. Furthermore, she was trying to find a balance between accepting institutional support and establishing a sense of self-reliance.

They [her family] were really against me going to UGA. They wanted me to go to a local college to stay close to the family, but I thought it would be best for me...for me personally, to get out on my own. So, I thought that it would be best for me to be able to be more independent and to know certain things before I graduate, and I go on to other things. The local college gave me scholarship money, but I didn't want to be babied. Like if I sit at home, I know I would be. I'd be very dependent, and I know that [the local college] would baby me because of the way that I was treated when I was here. They're like basically, we're going to do everything for you, and we're going to make sure you have this, and you have that. And you don't have to do anything, cause we'll do it for you. I liked that, but I wanted to be able to have some independence.

Tina's efforts to disengage from her old environment were being met with resistance by parents and other extended family. On the other hand, she found herself in a debate over her

bedroom with a younger male sibling who was more than ready for her to leave. This appeared to be an ongoing power struggle between Tina and her brother.

Males are valued more than females [in my culture], so my younger brother was given a car before me. I call myself a feminist...I definitely believe that girls should be very independent. They should know how to do things. They should not be put down just because they are female, and supposedly the “weaker” race, or what have you.

Tina’s decision to attend the Freshman College Summer Experience (FCSE) was a direct response to family tensions as well as other personal reasons.

One big thing was that I would be getting away from home. (laughter) That was one reason, and the other reason is because I wanted to get a head start. Like, my family is really pressuring me to go to med school, but I’m not really sure. So I wanted to get up there and start looking at the careers at the career center and start getting help in like, choosing which major and which career, because if you want to do premed, you have to start as early as possible. That was another reason. Um, another reason is um, because I wanted to get a head start because I’m not used to having so many people around. I didn’t want to be overwhelmed by so many people. I thought that 300 people would be living in one place-one area, that I could make friends easier, because I have a hard time making friends. I’m just getting around to being a little social. (laughter) So, I thought it would be best...the freshmen thing...to meet people ahead of time and get some sort of “base” established first, so that I’m not so frightened when 2000, 4000 people move in, in that one... And I could get some credits, so that um, you know, in case I change my mind-like a major. In case I change my major pre-professional program later, I would still have some space to graduate within the four years...I have to prepare myself, because they’ve drilled it into my head that no one is going to help you but yourself and your family. So I want to do what’s best for me, and you know, be a success.

Heather

I met with Heather at a public library because she had already planned a trip into Athens the day we scheduled the interview. She was there to take care of last minute details before moving to the University of Georgia campus. My field notes chronicled our first meeting:

Heather walked into the library a little breathless from rushing around to get there. She was dressed neatly in a khaki skirt and orange blouse. Heather is an upbeat, extraverted young woman who is highly articulate. Rapport was easily established as we chatted about her preparations for college on the way to the interview room.

Heather, the daughter of military parents, had moved several times during her life. She had most recently lived in a small town in Georgia and attended a private high school originally established in the era of desegregation. The student population at her high school still represented the homogeneous roots of the middle class farmers and merchants of the area who could afford to send their children to private school.

Despite plans of many of her classmates to go to local two-year and less selective four-year colleges, Heather aspired to attend a more rigorous four-year university. Her high school courses included college preparatory and advanced placement. According to Heather there were no “feel good” classes like industrial arts and family and consumer sciences. Electives consisted of academic courses like American government. When first interviewed, Heather saw herself as an atypical high school student.

I have that discipline. I know when it's time to study, and I know what it is I need to get done. I really don't consider myself a typical student. I actually enjoy class. I like learning new things that I don't already know, and so whereas some kids are just there to be there because they *have* to be, I try to make the most of each class, and learn what I could out of each. And I would do some things outside of class as well. I'd ask a teacher, you know, what's a book I could read?

While still in her senior year, Heather began the process of disengaging from home. For her, the period of liminality had begun. She shared,

I didn't cry at my graduation. So, I can't say I'm really sad to leave home. I think this past year has been different for me. More so than any other year, because I didn't have to have my parents come in and check on me and say, “Are you doing your homework?” And, it was kind of weird. I slept at my house. That was all I did. I was in and out all the time, moving around.

Heather saw college as a natural “next step” in her academic career. Her father and older sister both had advanced degrees, and her family had created an expectation of college attendance. She stated,

I don't think it was really a decision. It's always just been a given. I think it was just something I've always wanted to do. And I never had another option. I've never imagined not going. As far as I'm concerned, it's just always something to do. And to further...I think you have to, almost, now. I mean, you can't get a job without a good college education. So it's just something subconscious that I knew I was going to do next, and didn't ask questions.

The University of Georgia was not her first choice college, but she had come to accept the university as a good fit. She expressed many positive expectations about her future as a college student. For example, the structure of college class schedules was appealing after having been through the seven classes a day, 50 minutes a day per class in high school. "I'll be able to get in-depth and maybe find something I'm more interested in than biochemistry, or maybe finally find a niche." She looked forward to having more unstructured time and was not concerned about adjusting her time management. Her academic preparation was perceived as being solid. "I think I'll be okay. Well, I *know* I'll be okay." She did, however, have concerns about her own tendency to overextend herself.

I don't want to get overwhelmed and try to do too much. I think I have a tendency to do that, whether it's school, or my personal life. Like becoming involved in extracurricular activities. Sometimes I just wear myself into the ground, cause I don't know when to stop. And so, I don't want to do that academically. I need to know when it's time to put down a book or walk away, or just go walk somewhere. So I think that's probably what scares me.

Socially, Heather anticipated vistas opening for her. Her thoughts about her high school network were those of being "forced to interact with 23 other kids every day," as compared to the excitement about the possibility of choosing her own friends. Even though she had a bond with the other girls in her graduating class, Heather acknowledged the bond was "three years in the making," so establishing a new social group was going to be a "crash course in friendship," a scary thought for her.

In trying to make sense of the move to college, participants looked for analogous events in their lives. Previous experiences helped them grasp the meaning of becoming a college

student. Schlossberg's "previous experiences with similar transitions" might bring up thoughts of previous transitions in schooling, but my participants envisioned 1) being separated from family and 2) familiarity with the campus. These responses revealed a concern about leaving home. Alison, a dancer since childhood, mentioned a month-long dance camp she attended each summer. Becky, who had been home schooled, made several trips to the UGA campus over the years, increasing her familiarity with the area and her comfort level with living on the campus.

Instead of comparing her transition to college to her other transitions in schooling, Heather also made sense of the experience by comparing it to other times away from home and family. Heather referred to herself as "Miss Independent." Rather than crying at camp, she was the child who always wanted to stay longer.

I know I'm ready. My parents know I'm ready. Everyone else in the world knows I've been ready for this. They've been telling me, and so it's coming. It's finally here, and I'm excited about it...I'm not going to dive in head first, but I'm not going to sit on the sidelines and wait for it to come to me...That's the thing, I just have to find my groove... So, I'm excited about meeting new people, and meeting people from different areas. I'm excited about learning new things and taking what I already know to the next level, and possibly doing something with that. But, other than that I'm just extremely optimistic about it, and I don't have any preconceived notions of what it should be for me or what it's gonna be like. Everyone has their own different experiences, so it's like a white piece of paper in front of me, and I'm ready to go at it.

Furthermore, attending the Freshman College Summer Experience gave Heather the opportunity to "start early when there's not 35,000 students running around and get ahead of the game before everyone else. And know where I need to go, where I need to be, what I need to do beforehand, rather than figure it out along the way."

Second Interview, October 2003

Tina

By mid-semester in the fall, Tina characterized her transition thus far as a pondering of "who am I apart from the significant people in my life." Although there were still "remnants" of

who she was, she questioned the religious beliefs she had followed as well as different aspects of her identity. As Ebaugh (1988) suggested, Tina and the other participants were trying to decide which aspects of their identity would be retained and which would be left behind. Religious beliefs and political beliefs were frequently the target of change, sometimes to the surprise of the participant. For example, Kali shared,

I guess [I'm surprised by] the fact that my ideas about who I was could change so much in like a really short amount of time. I didn't think that I would really drink that much, or be in a relationship, stuff like that. And now, I'm constantly like questioning those things. Like *always*, all the time questioning that. This is just totally different environment than what I'm used to. It's like stuff that I would think would be really weird before now, is like "Eh, whatever." And then also like some of my beliefs about Christianity, I guess, are constantly being questioned because I...and then like my political beliefs. Because before I came up here I was like "Yeah, I'll probably join the college Republicans." And then I'm like "I don't know about that," you know. You want to like stick to what you believe, but then you're always like trying to make sure it's the best thing, really to be believing in. And you try to see all sides.

The role change was not just "high school student" to "college student." The role change was an identity negotiation as the students came into contact with others' values and beliefs. Some participants discussed the importance of maintaining religious and other organizational affiliations as part of their identities—bringing familiar roles and routines into the post-transition environment.

Tina had also gained some of the independence for which she had expressed the desire in her first interview.

I can go wherever I want to at *anytime* that I want to instead of having to ask my mom, instead of having to borrow the car. Like, here I can just take the bus or I can ask someone who is down the hall from me to give me a ride. Um, going to classes, making sure that...well, *now*, I'm picking my classes instead of having it picked for me.

Independence was a more significant step for Tina than for other participants in this study because of her background. The simple act of doing many things by herself was a new experience, but one that she welcomed.

Although freedom and independence were salient issues to these new college students, institutional structures and practices existed that maintained external control over their lives to some degree. One of the external control issues the participants faced revolved around class schedules. Some lamented the fact they were “stuck” with 8:00 a.m. classes because of their freshman status and registration time. Suzanne said,

English class is *really* hard because it’s at 8 o’clock in the morning, and I’ve discovered that I don’t like 8 o’clock in the morning classes. I don’t like that small English class at all, ‘cause it is...it IS so intense. And I’m so *out* of it. I have people tell me “You look awful at 8:00 in the morning.” And I’m like “I know, because I’m in my pajamas. I mean, I don’t care. Just be glad that I’m here.

As Tina had anticipated, the social aspects presented more of a challenge than academics. The smaller atmosphere in Freshman College aided her in making a few friends, and one of her friends encouraged her to become involved in a residence hall committee, but that was the limit of her involvement. She was still trying to “find her place.”

During the summer I was surrounded by these people I didn’t know, and by these people that I really didn’t have a common personality with. And so, for the very first time in a long time, I felt weird. I felt really out of place. And, I mean, I’ve *always* felt weird, I’ve always felt different from other people and I was happy about that. But, now, it was a bad sort of a weird. Like I didn’t fit in, and it made me want to fit in and I’ve never...well, I *have*, but that was a long time ago, and I thought I would never experience it again. I thought I was comfortable enough with myself that I wouldn’t experience that feeling again. But it...I guess it was a shock to me about how just like how these people are. And not being able to find a group that would suit me as I found in high school.

Tina’s comments allude to the importance of establishing social networks for support as college students work through daily events and situations.

In contrast to the social dimension of her transition, Tina’s ongoing dedication to her academic goals had led to *boundedness*, the integration of new academic structures, demands, and routines into her everyday life.

I honestly don't *feel* like I'm in college. I just feel like I'm here, and I'm doing work. It's what I've always done and there are just different circumstances and different situations. But it's not the big grand thing that you see on TV. You know? Like, I've actually thought about that in the past few days. I don't really feel like I'm in college. I'm just walking around, going to classes. The only difference is like my family's not here.

Tina's work ethic prompted her to put studying before socializing. She desired more of a balance in the form of involvement in other activities in which she was interested, but "I have to study" had become her mantra. Her problem was finding a place to study. Tina's bedroom at home had been her haven and study space. Translating that to a preferred college study space, her residence hall room, conflicted with her roommate's use of the room as a leisure and social space. Tina became "Goldilocks" looking for the perfect spot. The student learning center on campus was too noisy, the lights in the academic center were too low, and some of the study lounges felt too isolated. No place was just right. She expressed that she was "off-balance," and this created strain in her relationship with her roommate. Tina had already put her name on a list for a private room in the spring. Roommate conflicts were common in the group of students in this study. By the end of fall semester, seven out of the seventeen participants had changed roommates.

Heather

When Heather entered the academic center in the residence hall where I was conducting interviews, I immediately noticed a marked difference in her appearance. Gone was the neatly dressed young woman. In her place was a student in sweats who slumped down in the chair, letting her shoulder length hair fall over her face as she shared what had transpired over the last four months. I posed some of the same questions to her that I had in the first interview, including what the phrase "academic transition to college" meant to her now. Heather was very vocal about the incongruence between her expectations and her reality:

It's definitely been more difficult than I thought. It's more personal responsibility and your own individual time. The one thing that's thrown me off the most has to be not having class every day of the week. And making sure you stay on task every night of the week to keep up with those classes. And I think that's probably one of the biggest changes. Um, the lack of individual time here has really thrown me off as well. And especially in classes that are my core classes, like chemistry. There's 358 students in my chemistry class and I need that individual attention. And it's...the opportunity's there, but you have to seek it out. You have to want to do it. And I think that's another thing that's taken time to get used to. But it's...it's a great leap from high school. But, again, like I wouldn't be here if...if the university didn't think I couldn't do it, so, I know I can do it, and I'm going to do it. So, it's just different. Very different.

Transitions are a time of comparison. After the move to campus participants made sense of what they were going through by comparing their former environment to the transition environment, just as Heather did. Schlossberg refers to this action as assessing the impact of the transition by comparing the pre- and posttransition environments. Sara, another participant, described her academic transition,

It's not only a transition in *how* you learn and all the techniques you've been using up to the 12th grade. You know, you've had one set technique and it sort of worked, but here you have to change your studying styles, because not only are you living here and having to deal with those changes, but having to just deal with changes around you and your environment. You know, not having one *certain* place that you've always gone, or having your parent...being dependent on our parents to force you to study. You're kind of on your own, and having lots of distractions. (laughter) I think it involves more factors now than it did before.

The distractions of which Sara spoke were often mechanisms for accomplishing social goals, yet they also served to impede other goals. A strategy mentioned by some participants to avoid succumbing to distractions was vicarious or observational learning. For example, Michael, who had already shared several valuable lessons he had learned from an older brother, was still learning through observing others. He said,

I like to have fun stuff like that, but the fact that there are sort of like so many immature people. And like living in the dorm, you see somebody's acting like they're still in middle school. And people like me, who don't have jobs you know, and all that and they like go to class 2 hours a day but yet they're so lazy, they don't want to do that. I guess it's just people that don't take it seriously from the get-go, because you always hear these

stories that people regret their junior and senior year they wouldn't have screwed around, and yet people don't seem to learn from that.

Heather, too, used observational learning as one of her strategies. She referred to hearing people on her hall coming in at all hours of the night. "You can't just play around like that. Especially me, because I have to get up too early." After choosing her courses for fall semester, she "threw a monkey wrench" in her schedule by joining ROTC. Her first class moved from mid-morning to 5:00 a.m. physical training with the other cadets. Although she thought she had made the right decision, the demanding schedule had taken its toll on her time and her grades. Heather's strategy to remedy the academic difficulties was to take direct action and seek help from her instructors, primarily her precalculus professor.

A concurrent stressor for all the participants taking precalculus, including Heather, was computer-based testing. Heather expressed her frustration,

I understand the material and I can do the work blindfolded if I needed to. But when it comes down to taking the tests, the tests are on the computer. And that has thrown me off so horribly. It's...to me, it's the worse thing in the entire world you could ever do to any student is put math on a computer.

Pressure from poor grades was compounded by the pressure to keep the Hope Scholarship, a benefit that Georgia residents earn by maintaining a B average in a designated college preparatory curriculum in high school. The students' college grade point averages are evaluated in 30-hour increments to ascertain if the student is maintaining a B average in college. If not, the student loses the scholarship until the next evaluation. *Emotional discharge*, venting their feelings to friends and family members, was a common strategy participants used to cope with the stressors such as this. Heather shared,

I came into college and I thought "I'm not going to be one of those students who...who feels like they need to do well to stay on Hope," and I didn't, until I started realizing that my grades were slipping and that at the end of this semester, I'll have 24 hours. I've only got 6 more hours of evaluation after that, and there's a need to perform. Otherwise, I'm

off of it, and that's...I don't like it, 'cause it kind of makes you do it for the wrong reasons and it's like this thing just hanging over your head and saying, "Oh, you better do well. You better do well. You're going to lose all this money" and you definitely don't want that. And it's frustrating. I found myself asking a lot of questions like, "Why am I in college? This is so frustrating! Like, should I be doing this? Why don't I just go join, you know, the Army and cut out the middle man?" But, I don't know. I went over to my friend's house who was here last year right after that um...that precalculus test and just started crying. I was like, "I don't know what I'm doing here. This is so different from what I thought it was going to be. I don't know how to handle it, and I don't know how to deal with it."

When I asked the participants about their academic goals in the second and third interviews, the majority responded, "I want to keep Hope." The scholarship, something perceived as a benefit to them, limited the scope of students' goal setting to just maintaining the grade point average necessary to keep the scholarship. Many did not look beyond that externally imposed goal of maintaining a "B" average to set their own internal academic goals.

The infrequency of assessment at the college level was another element of external control for these students who were used to weekly quizzes and tests in high school. The common college scenario of the mid-term as your first grade made it difficult for these students to regulate and monitor their studying. Even with other types of assessment, some students were not certain if they were putting forth enough effort. Kali said,

I'm thinking that I have an A in my stat class, A or B in my biology class, and the same with the lab...So, my grades are pretty good but I feel like I'm not working very much, which is frustrating to me because I feel like I don't know. I'm kind of stressed out about it, but there's like nothing really I can do about it.

Infrequency of feedback made self-regulation more challenging. The ability to monitor performance or progression toward academic goals is enhanced by timely and appropriate feedback from instructors. Without feedback or some standard against which to measure performance, students were frustrated and anxious because they did not know where they stood. Moreover, the participants came to the university with "good student" identities which, at times,

were an obstacle to their willingness to try different self-regulatory strategies to accomplish academic tasks. Their response when high school strategies were ineffective was that they just needed to “work harder,” not necessarily change their approach to the task.

By the time of our interview at the midterm of the fall semester, Heather finally believed she was “getting it together.” Finding a routine that both suited her and kept her grades up had been difficult. Added to her academic and social life was the idea that she had already begun the process of integrating into a career at the same time. Her comments parallel the “fear of overwhelming herself” she discussed in the interview before coming to campus.

Sometimes I wonder if I’m taking too much. Yeah. I feel so different taking on that ROTC. It just seems life would be so much easier if I didn’t have that one thing, but I’ve got to balance the two. That’s probably what scares me is because both [academics and ROTC] are equally demanding.

Time was a precious commodity to Heather. She reminisced about her thoughts coming into the first interview,

I remember coming in the first interview and saying, I’m looking forward to the “me time”, and having time to just sit around and “No,” (Laughter) I don’t have any time to do *anything*. So, I’m either cleaning or trying to get ready for the next class or trying to get ahead if I can and um... It’s frustrating, but it’s doing me good. I guess. I hope. We’ll see.

Further, by concentrating on her academic courses and ROTC, Heather thought she was neglecting the friends she now considered her second family. She attributed her social network to Freshman College, claiming, “If I had to deal and balance with that [establishing a social group] coming into all this, people would think I was a hermit, and that I was just the rudest person in the entire world.” In spite of the progress in the social arena, Heather still expressed the need to “find a balance” between academics and ROTC.

Third Interview, March-April 2004

Tina

Because stress at home was still an issue for Tina at the end of her first year of college, coming back to the campus after visits home was “an escape” for her. She expressed satisfaction at her insistence on the University of Georgia as her college choice, despite going against family wishes. Her relationship with her mother had grown deeper, but Tina found herself wanting only to go home for short visits. She said,

There’s no way I can deal with all of that family drama. I really do want to be there for my mom, because she’s the only one at home right now with my three brothers. Two of them aren’t doing well in school. And I want to be there and help her cope with things too, because I know it’s really hard for her. But at the same time, I just don’t want to deal with any of that. It’s too much. I like having family around me. It’s still very important to me. I just don’t want to be around them 24/7, fifty-two weeks a year.

Disengagement from old roles and routines continued throughout the first year of college. Students handled loosening ties with family in different ways. Some participants kept close ties to parents, calling and visiting home frequently. Others tried to make a “cleaner break” by infrequency of contact. When participants were asked about an emotional experience that stood out for them, disengagement from parents was a salient theme. Anna shared,

My mom called me yesterday and she’s like, “You never, you never call anymore. I leave messages. You don’t call.” And I go, “I feel like I just talked to you.” And it’s really been like a week. And I was like, “I just talked to you,” and she’s like, “NO. NO. You never call.” And she’s all emotional. I was like, “Sorry” and so I sat and talked to her for 45 minutes. I was like, “Mom, I’m really not meaning to blow you off, I just feel like I just talked to you. Time is flying.”

In an August 2004 article in the *Athens Banner-Herald* newspaper, Link quotes a University of Georgia housing representative who called students’ cell phones “an umbilical cord back home,” claiming that where once college students called home only occasionally, now, with

the advent of the cellular phone, they talk to parents daily. Suzanne found her parents' communication expectations to have advantages and disadvantages.

The only connection I *have* with [my mom] is through talking with her on the phone. And that's been good and it's bad because sometimes I'll be on the phone and I'll be glad, and other times it's like, "my mom left a message on my phone. I've got to call her. I don't want to do this right now. I've got other things I have to do" and that's when it's frustrating is when because I know she misses me and she wants to talk to me, but, yet it's like "I just talked to her yesterday. I don't want to talk to her today." (Laughter) Sometimes it's good, sometimes it's almost a hassle. Not because it's hard, because like, "I don't have anything to tell you today so we're just going sit on the phones and listen to each other breathe."

Tina's demeanor, voice, and facial expressions in the third meeting indicated positive events had taken place in the intervening months since our last conversation. I found it interesting that the trigger of this new found happiness was the dissolution of a romantic relationship. She explained,

My boyfriend broke up with me. (Laughter) The thing about that is that I spent most of my time with him last semester, so it was either him or school work. But this semester without him being there, I'm able to go out and go to seminars that I wanted to go to, go to movies that I wanted to go to, and just do things with my friends. I've connected a lot more with my friends this semester. And I'm definitely getting more involved in clubs and different organizations. This semester really has been full of social experiences. It's just been in stark contrast to how I was last semester with everything being concentrated on my boyfriend. I'm going out and doing a lot more things with *everyone*. My social skills have definitely developed a lot more because I'm getting out there and I'm meeting people, or I'm trying to, at least. People have really surprised me because they're a lot nicer than I thought they were.

With the academic dimension of her life already in line, this shift in priorities allowed Tina to pursue the variety of social opportunities of which she had spoken wistfully in the second interview. Tina's request for a private room second semester had also been granted, providing her with a study environment in which she felt most comfortable.

Because Tina (an honors college student) had not taken two honors courses the previous semester, she was required to take two during the spring. Despite this, she found her schedule to

be a lighter load than during the fall. Other students might welcome a more relaxing pace but, for Tina, relaxing translated to a decreased work ethic, and that bothered her.

I think largely it's because I have an easy work load. I wasn't expecting it to be like this, because I was taking two honors classes this semester and they were going to be in literature...My standards are still as high as they were in school. It just seems like my work ethic has gone down which really bothers me 'cause I don't...ever since the breakup actually, like, I've been less focused on my academics. Like they're still where I need to be, but I wish that I would take more time to study. Like I *still* do all my homework on the week-ends just in case like something comes up during the week day that I can't do it or what have you. But I wish that I would be more like I was in high school.

Tina was working toward a balance in her life, but was not completely satisfied with her present status.

I feel like I'm still in the same place that I was. And I'm not moving forward all that much except for socially now. I would like to go forward all around. I want to be challenged in the way that I'm going to work hard. You know? It makes you feel bad when you see other people studying and you're not.

Heather

The Heather that I had met in the first interview greeted me when she walked in for our final conversation. Her outward appearance mirrored her inner state. After a rough fall semester, she had finally “figured it out” and was, once again, an upbeat, pulled-together young woman.

I think overall, I ended up with a 2.62. Semester? I think it was a 2.2. (Laughter) It was pretty bad, but the Freshman College classes helped in my overall GPA, so, not horrible, just not where I needed to be. I don't want to say I don't have the time to dedicate as much work as I needed to to each class, but I think, again, that was just a matter of me trying to figure things out and how much *did* need to be spent with each class, and so this semester's looking a lot more promising, which is good.

Part of “figuring it out” for the participants in this study was applying knowledge from lessons learned during the transition process. Poor class attendance in the fall resulted in decisions not to take 8:00 a.m. classes or larger, auditorium-style classes because those were easiest to skip.

Another part of “figuring it out” was using effective strategies to deal with the new, and sometimes difficult, situations. Better use of a daily planner and different time management strategies made a big impact on Heather’s life. Finding an appropriate study environment on campus also brought about positive academic changes.

The organizer in there. [Pointing to her book bag.] [Laughter] The best thing I think I’ve invested in, in so long. I just think I’m more focused and not necessarily more organized, just better time management skills. My class schedule’s a lot better. I *like* having the early classes. I think it’s just a matter of finding out what time frame is best for your work. And for me it’s morning, early afternoon and then relax in the afternoons—late afternoons and I’ll just get my work done later on that night, probably about 9 ‘til 11. And get some sleep whenever possible. (Laughter) So, that’s good. I like my organizer. It helps me see things out earlier and that way I think...I can actually *see* I have 8 days before this test and if I knew so much, it’s going to be that much easier on me. Rather than not having it, [I’d be] “Oh, I’ve got 8 days. That’s a long time,” you know? And it’s really not when I had to figure out everything else I had to do. I went day by day during the fall semester, and now, I’m going week by week and what I have to do each month and it’s easier to prioritize stuff like that. So I think that’s probably the main difference if I had to guess.

Heather, like Tina, was moving toward what each considered to be a more appropriate balance.

Heather acknowledged her emphasis on her social network and her neglect of academics in her first months as a college student.

I think I’m more driven, and more focused. It was...it was really easy to get off track first semester. I have *no* idea why what is so different about fall than there is spring. I think there’s less activities to do. I think football season throws a big wrench in things, ‘cause that knocks out your weekend *completely*. From Thursday on, you might as well just not even do anything. The social transition and other situations I was put in was a lot different, for the better, for me in college, and so I think I focused on that more and valuing that above why I was really here. And so now that that’s been established, and I know I have solid ground underneath me, I can go ahead and do the academic things I need to do and everyone understands that. If I come in the hall, and say, “Hey look, for the next week don’t bother me. I have to do this and it’s important” and if I say “No, and...I don’t care what’s going on, just don’t ask me.” They’re like, “OK no problem.” And I did the same for them. So, I think that’s good being able to say, “No.”

Heather's comments also illuminate the antithesis of friends as social support. The very people who serve as a means of support such as family, friends, and intimates, may also be a *hindrance* to personal development as well.

Another salient aspect of Heather's personal development was becoming more at ease with uncertainty and working through situations beyond her control. Her involvement in ROTC prompted questioning of her career direction. Her peers saw her as the perfect lawyer, articulate and able to support a particular argument. Heather was still interested in biochemistry, but was also considering going to flight school. This type of uncertainty wreaked havoc with her motivation at times.

If I can't see the outcome, or at least have a feeling about it, then it's hard for me to do it and do it well. 'Cause you're still uncertain, and I don't want all my effort to be for nothing once I get there. I just have to trust that I'm doing the right thing, which is hard for me.

Furthermore, Heather found out just before our third interview that she was named top cadet in her class. Normally, that honor would mean the opportunity to go to airborne school over the summer, but a health problem with which Heather had been dealing kept her from going. Heather reframed frustration over this eventuality into a determination to use the summer to get ahead in her course work, rather than focusing futile anger and attention on a situation over which she had no control.

Summer school for many participants, including Heather, also meant keeping their independence. Heather explained,

I like being here. I don't want to go home. So, I'm going to summer session. (laughter) Going home drives me nuts. There's just...there's nothing left for me at home. I don't like to go home. Being here, it's a different type of environment in the sense when you have a problem with someone you can sit down rationally and you can discuss that with someone. Whereas at home, my parents will say—go into “parents mode” where they will yell first and then want to sit down rationally and discuss it. Or, discuss it while you're yelling in a raised tone. And you're like, I...I don't do this anymore. I

love them to death and I need them and their support's always there for me and I realize that. But at the same time, I just...I have so much stuff to worry about here and I have my own life to try to establish, and I like being on my own. They always knew I was going to be one to go off and do the independent thing. *Always* knew it. They *knew* I was not going to have any trouble doing stuff, and so I think that kind of kills them a little. I think that's part of my decision to do summer session, too, just so I could stay up here. And I think as long as I have that...that blanket of academics to hide under (laughter) my parents aren't going to see through my real reasoning. I don't despise going home. My parents aren't horrible people. I've just kind of come into my own right now. And even with my sister went through all that. She was very dependent upon...even when she got *married*, she flipped out. She went, "I'm leaving our family, and I'm not part of our family anymore and I'm not going to do it," and dadada, and I'm like, "Let me out of here. I'm moving on. I voted myself off the island. (laughter)

Reflecting on her transition process over the year, Heather recalled,

I didn't want to be here to begin with, and now I don't want to leave. So, I just...I couldn't foresee myself being anywhere else. I'm sure I'll be tired of it over the years. I know a lot of seniors who just say, "It's just time to leave," you know, which is understandable I think with any place. But, for me, I'm just getting started. I'll leave my mark in Athens at UGA eventually.

Correlated to disengagement from family was the decision of the majority of the participants to take courses during the summer. Although some participants planned to spend summer with their parents, the impetus for other students to do summer school was their desire to avoid moving back home. Jennifer declared,

I am staying in Athens. I am taking Maymester off. But I am doing through session. I'm taking 3 or 4 classes in through session. I love Athens, and if I go home, because I went to a boarding [and day] school, everybody moved away so if I went home *now*, the only people there are my family, and my family can be a pain. (Laughter) So, I just think I'd be better off here. A lot of my friends are staying this summer, so that'll be fun to hang out with them and hopefully get my grade point average up. And get some hours in.

Other students enjoyed the summer routine the prior year and spreading course hours over the entire calendar year. Sam shared, "I'm going to be up here for some classes so I'll try to get six hours out of the way so that'll make it easier for me come the fall and the spring." Kali's goal was more long-term, "I'm going to try to finish school in three years if I can. I wasn't really like

gung-ho about that. I've been looking at my schedule this semester, so I'm taking classes this summer.” Regardless of the reason, 13 of the 17 students planned to take summer classes.

Discussion: Extending and Elaborating the Integrated Model of Transition and Self-Regulation

The purpose of this study was twofold: 1) to explore participants’ experiences of the transition from high school to college and 2) to examine the adequacy of the integrated model of transition and self-regulation with traditional age students as they anticipated and coped with the transition to college. Several themes, related to the *structure* of the transition as well as the 4S System—*Situation, Self, Support, and Strategies*—from Schlossberg’s transition theory, emerged in the interviews that extend and elaborate on the integrated model of transition (See Table 7).

The Structure of the Transition from High School to College

Type of transition. Schlossberg suggested individuals must determine whether the transition is a positive, negative or benign event in their lives (1981, 1984, 1995).

Conceptualizing transitions as a series of events and situations opens the transition experience to ongoing appraisal as individuals are confronted with different scenarios, each appraised on its own characteristics. All the participants in this study considered the transition to college to be normative and anticipated. Justin’s response was indicative of many I interviewed. He said, “I’ve wanted to go to the University of Georgia since I was like six. Like, it’s never been a question. I’ve just always wanted...like I’m going to college and doing all this.” When I asked about their decision to go to college, most participants talked about their application process and the final decision of where they would attend. Their cultural, middle class background and the normative nature of this transition was evident in that there was no “moment of decision” to further their education beyond high school. It was such “a given” to them, they interpreted my question as, “Tell me about your decision to attend the University of Georgia.”

Like Heather, not all of these participants had selected the University of Georgia as their first-choice college so, in part, the transition had a sense of being externally imposed for those students. In some cases the participants did not have the standardized test scores for admission to the first choice institution. Others had to compromise with parents who wanted them to stay in-state because of the Hope Scholarship Program. Because the Hope Scholarship covers tuition, fees, and a book allowance for all students, it is often difficult for parents to rationalize their child's attendance at an out-of-state university.

Onset of liminality. According to Schlossberg (1995), liminality occurs for individuals in the *moving through* phase of the transition process, such as after students move to the college campus. Participants in this study expressed thoughts and behaviors of disengagement and liminality beginning during the senior year of high school, echoing Nicol's (2001) findings. Heather's thoughts about her senior year being "weird" because her home became just a place to sleep mirror this theme. Other participants expressed their liminality in different ways. For example, in the summer before entering college, Sara mentioned her changing relationship with good friends from high school, "It's like this family that I'm leaving behind. We literally had become so close, and it's already happening where we're not even talking...I haven't talked to some of them in a month, just about." Kali talked about the anger she was feeling at her attempts to disengage from parents who wanted to preserve the same relationship they had with Kali during her high school years. "I'm about to be living by myself!" was her response to their unwanted questions and oversight.

For these students, liminality did not begin with the physical move to a new environment. They were already mentally projecting themselves into the next phase of their lives well before the actual move to the university. Of particular interest was the students' decision to attend a

summer program, a transitional strategy itself. Many of these students declared their “readiness” to make the move, and liminality was an interesting construct to examine in this particular context, because these students *had* chosen to shorten the liminal time between high school and college. One participant, Justin, stated his dislike of the “break” between high school graduation and college—a part of the liminal time.

Like I was *so* ready to get out of high school and into UGA. I didn’t want the break. Like this two weeks is the...the month between has been horrendous. (laughter) I’m *so* ready to go cause I feel like I’m slipping already. Like I’m falling out. But...um, very avid. Very eager, I guess.

Asynchronous development in the dimensions of the transition. A holistic picture of the transition from high school to college involves multidimensional adaptations academically, personally, emotionally, and socially. The contrast of Heather’s and Tina’s stories clearly supports the notion of asynchronous development across the dimensions. Individuals going through this transition are presented with situations on a daily basis that require them to make decisions, problem solve, and choose between concurrent goals as they engage in self-regulatory acts. Although the participants acknowledged the primary reason they were attending college was to further their education, the social opportunities the college environment provided were advantageous to their overall development. Finding a “balance” between different aspects of life, an overarching goal so often mentioned by the participants, was not such an easy task for the Heather, Tina, and other participants as well. In contrast, Sara had reached a more effective level of balance in her decision making:

As a student, I think I’m pretty wise 70% of the time. I think I’m wise in the choices I make in terms of how much I study, so I think I’m a *good* student. Not excellent, but okay, I guess. I study when I need to. In terms of going *beyond* that and studying more, I feel like I *should* do it, but then that’s when the balancing the time comes into play. Having to decide should I study extra or should I relax and have fun with my friends? So that’s when it starts conflicting, I think. But I think right now it’s okay. I think ‘cause it

is freshman year I'm still trying to adjust to everything. I think I'll have it figured out soon.

Lori: When you're trying to decide about studying or going to spend time with friends, what usually tips the scale one way or the other?

Sara: I usually prioritize. I won't go if I know I have a test coming soon and I don't know anything, or if it's something where I know a friend really needs me like this weekend, one of my friends is from out of state. She's really missing her family and I was going to study extra chemistry, but I didn't. I just sort of spent time with her so she wouldn't feel so alone. So I guess prioritizing and seeing what should come first and what shouldn't. If I'm just feeling so overwhelmed where I think a little break would be good, then I do. And sometimes if I just think that I'm really falling behind or if I remember my parents or something, then I'm like "Maybe I should study right now." Feeling a little guilty or something. (Laughter) Yeah.

Sara's comments provide a clear example of self-regulation within transition situations. Her forethought, planning, and monitoring her thoughts, emotions, and behaviors allowed her to move concurrently toward academic, personal, and social goals.

Minitransitions. Schlossberg (1995) suggests that transitions involve, in part, groping with new routines, relationships, and assumptions. The transition to college inherently involves multiple changes introduced each semester. New classes mean a new schedule, different buildings, and different bus routes. New professors mean adjusting routines, organization, and possibly new strategies to meet their requirements. Thus, as one semester ends and another begins, minitransitions take place within the context of the larger transition. Minitransitions may have more of an impact on one of the dimensions of the transition as opposed to others: academic, social, or personal.

Between the summer 2003 and the fall 2003 semesters, the undergraduate student population went from approximately 9,000 students to 31,000 students. The Freshman College Summer Experience students were all housed in one residence hall, making for a "small community" feel on a large campus. All these factors influenced participants' views of the changes from a summer session to a full-fledged semester. Participants expressed feelings of

anxiety about leaving the summer program and coming back to the “chaos” of the campus at the beginning of the fall semester. Michelle said,

We knew there'd be lots of people here, but when I came back for fall it's just like “Whoa!” Like something's always going on, all the people like just like masses of people and stuff. I mean, being here this summer you know, we got used to not having to wait in line for the dining hall, and not having to look for a parking place. And like fight for one close, and when I came back like I was, you know, drove around the parking lot. I didn't even know the parking lot turned in the back because we'd never gone back there.

They also expressed differing opinions about the change in schedule from having only two classes the same four hours every day, to having multiple classes at various times of the day or evening. The perspectives revealed during the second semester interview seemed to focus on the differences in schedules and how students spent their time. Participants discussed the different teaching styles of their professors, the changes in the number of “reading intensive” classes they took each semester, and how the various formats of assignments in their classes required adjustment in scheduling and time management each semester. Some also had campus jobs to fit into their schedules. The idea of minitransitions was further encapsulated in the opportunity for evolving social networks over time on a campus of over 30,000 students. One participant, Jonathan, recognized his first social group in the summer was leading him to neglect academics, so he forged connections with a new group in the fall. Furthermore, the aforementioned roommate conflicts created changes in social networks.

Pervasiveness to boundedness. A final structural aspect of the transition supported by the results of this study was Lipman-Blumen's idea of pervasiveness to boundedness (1977).

Pervasiveness occurs in the initial stages of a transition, when the individual is totally preoccupied with thoughts and feelings about the transition. Over time, the ever-present attitudes and behaviors slowly integrate into what becomes everyday routine, bounded within

their identity. Pervasiveness was apparent in the second interview as students were totally engrossed in varying dimensions of the transition. The vast majority of second interviews were longer than either the first or third, even with less probing and follow up on my part. Thoughts about the transition appeared uppermost in their minds as they answered my questions with little hesitation.

In contrast, many aspects of the transition had become matter-of-fact to the participants by the spring semester. Discussions of social and academic boundedness were prevalent in the third interviews. Applying knowledge they had learned in the summer and fall allowed participants to adapt and integrate more fully into the academic and social community of the University of Georgia campus. Sara summed up her progress over the first year of college:

I'm definitely changing my study habits, especially from last semester. That was the semester more to realize what study habits work and don't work, and now I have a certain way of doing things and it *is* working a lot better. I don't study too much in advance or I forget everything 'cause I have a tendency to do that, but I *do* study a few days more, and I'm using more of active learning in terms of doing chemistry problems. Before I would just study them, but now I actually make myself do them over and over again. And study groups, I tend not to do a *lot* of those 'cause you know, talking and stuff like that, but just to go over concepts for chemistry. And besides that, I think I've just been getting into the norm of things just trying to understand how everything works and hoping to make it through so. And last semester did go really well, and I was really scared but I did make it on dean's list so I was really excited, and then this year just hoping to improve my faults from last year.

Socially, I think that has been the biggest change in me so far. My interactions with others have allowed me to acknowledge more about myself in a way. And I've developed a lot of close friends that I *never* thought I would. And my friendships here have gotten closer because you're around them all the time, whereas before, you know, you had your home time and your school time and they were separate. And so I kind of *like* that because you got away from everything and you kind of run a personal space of your own. And here, it's all 24/7. And it can get frustrating, and but it can be very rewarding, too. And it's just been highs and lows, and I've just realized that your friends will always be there as well, too. What I've realized about this semester is that we've all kind of had our low points where we're just stressed out and frustrated and some of my other friends will come and talk to me and do little things for me that really matter. And then they also experience that, too. And so, before I never knew how to handle it, and now I know how to go about it to help them as well. I think the friendships are deeper

and more meaningful now because we know everything about each other's days and thoughts and everything and we're all from such different places and backgrounds where in high school, you were from the same district, the same city, everything. And here all these different types of people with their different views and everything, you come together. A big transition I made is compromising. I think just meeting so many different types of people, not only from different places but from different personalities, as well.

Personally, I'm definitely changing in terms of being more self aware. Being deeper, understanding who I am more than what I thought I was. Before, I had a set idea of who I was and who I wanted to be, and I'm realizing that things aren't as clear-cut and box-like. Coming here and being around so many people and realizing what exactly about me I didn't like. And that frustrated me because it didn't fit the image I had of me before. And slowly I started just understanding that, you know, I *am* going to be unhappy sometimes. That you can't just be this happy person 100%. Whereas, before, I tried to make everyone smile and I *never* really knew how to be selfish, which *is* important sometimes. To just have your own needs and... and so I'm definitely learning to understand the person that I am, and becoming aware of who I am. Um, also, in terms of interactions with other people and trying to correct the things I *didn't* like. I guess I'm also just trying to understand my priorities, I think, is a big thing. Do I put friendship first? Do I put family first? Do I put academics first? And constantly just making decisions, and I think that's what college has given me. Independence, basically.

Extending the 4S System

Schlossberg's transition theory, along with models of self-regulation, provided an integrated model of transition that served as the framework for this study. Therefore, I will address my findings using components of the 4S System to discuss how my results mirror, differ from, or elaborate on extant theory and the initial integrated model.

The situation. As previously stated, the transition from high school to college was perceived as normative, anticipated, and "on time" for the participants in this study. In Schlossberg's terms, participants viewed the identity negotiation and role changes they experienced as a role gain, rather than a loss. The college environment offered opportunities to develop and mature as they disengaged from their previous roles within their families and their former communities.

Participants' views of analogous past experiences that were used to help create a meaningful prediction of what their transition would be like did not directly coincide with Schlossberg's conceptualization of "previous experience with a similar transition." Participants did not discuss the transition from elementary to middle school or middle to high school. Uppermost in their minds was moving away from home and establishing their own place in the campus community. Therefore, their analogous experiences centered on more long-term absences from home.

Participants talked at length about their *expectations* of the transition, an aspect of the situation that should be addressed when examining individual's transition experiences. The expectations these students had formulated were based on a combination of many sources of information. The participants learned, directly and indirectly, about transition experiences, academic experiences, and social experiences from family, friends, teachers, and even the media. They already had preconceived notions about college being "the best four years of your life," about the differences in structure, timing and infrequency of tests, and about large lecture classes. Many participants suggested that their informants had scared them with horror stories about a variety of classes the informants had taken. Participants further talked about high school teachers using "scare tactics." Teachers during their senior year were heard to use phrases such as "this is not going to fly when you get to college." For the most part, the students found no basis for an alarmist stance. One participant in particular commented,

College is *not* scary. I thought that college would be terrifying and I wouldn't know what to do and nobody would want to help me, and I still feel like nobody's going to help me, but I feel like I'm capable of taking care of things myself. So it's OK. Like I just...nobody *ever* told me that college would not be scary. Nobody ever told me that, and I wish now that I could tell high schoolers, "It's not scary. You don't have to be scared about it because you will *learn*." It's not scary. It's comfortable. It's just...it's...it's not *easy*, it's just not scary.

On the other hand, the expectation and concern participants expressed about increased responsibility were congruent with their ensuing experience of independence. Juggling different responsibilities was a challenge, even to these highly capable students.

The self. Personal characteristics and psychological resources were major factors in each individual's reaction to the transition. Based on findings of this study, I would suggest several additions to this facet of the model. Because the transition to college places such emphasis on the academic dimension, I would add *educational background* and other pertinent skills as an important resource. An individual's pretransition self-regulatory strategies also aid in adapting to the posttransition environment.

Schlossberg, echoing Troll's (1981) claim that personality is a complex construct, limited her conceptualization of psychological resources to the personality characteristics of ego development (maturity), outlook (optimism and self-efficacy), and an individual's commitments and values. Expanding the self resources to a broader definition of the psychological constructs of *self* and *personality* would provide a more accurate and holistic picture of aspects of self that influence individual's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors during transition events.

Psychologists are still struggling with definitions of both self and personality, as well as the enmeshed relationship between the two constructs. Mischel and Morf's (2003) stance is that personality psychologists and self psychologists, in their attempts to understand many of the same phenomena, such as self-control, self-regulation, goal-setting, reactions to success and failure and so forth "are—albeit often unknowingly—developing parallel concepts, measures, and findings" (p. 20). Their stance parallels my premise that self-regulatory constructs overlap with transition, adaptation, and coping constructs and confirms the inclusion of self-regulation processes when examining transitions.

Leary and Tangney (2003) suggest there is tremendous cost in splitting self theory from personality theory and vice versa; and therefore posit a psycho-social dynamic processing system, incorporating both the *trait* and the *dynamic processing system* from personality theory. The system is activated by the interaction of the individual's traits in response to various features of the situation at hand. As Leary and Tangney commented,

The psychosocial dynamic processing system captures a self that is both variable across different types of situations, but relatively stable within them. It is an agentic doing system, an organized cognitive-affective (knowing, thinking, feeling) system, and it is an interpersonal system. (p. 32)

They further state that the self develops through the process of dynamic reciprocal interactionism. It is my contention that this conceptualization of self is a more useful construct with which to explore the person-behavior-environment system during life transitions.

The supports. Participants quickly found the entities considered supports may also represent hindrances. Tina's story of the ending of her intimate relationship illustrated this. It was only after the break-up that she was able to make the kind of progress in her goal pursuit that she desired. Social networks were crucial to integrating to campus and negotiating stressful situations. Thus, students were reluctant to disappoint new friends and felt compelled to acquiesce to their peers' wishes and invitations to socialize, especially when first trying to establish their network.

That was not the case with the already established family support. The majority of participants made pointed efforts to disengage from family, even when met with resistance and dismay from parents. Some parents visited campus frequently, especially during football season when they themselves were part of the athletic festivities on campus. Students' subsequent response to this (and other circumstances) was the decision to stay on campus year round, taking classes during the summer.

Institutional supports, particularly those from instructors, were integral to students' academic success. Some students ultimately found professors' online notes a hindrance; nevertheless, scaffolding in the form of outlines and power points online were perceived as helpful. Participants frequently used office hours provided by instructors as well as tutoring services. Other aspects seen as hindrances were the institutional bureaucracy, small living spaces, some of the study areas in the campus environment, and early morning classes.

Results of the study also posit another support: the individual as *self-support*. Even though self is one of the resources in the 4S System, self-support arises from participants' verbalizing their sense of "it's all up to you." They perceive many situations as their sole responsibility. Further, if they *do* find they need help, it must be self-initiated. They do not have their parents looking over their shoulders to make sure studying is completed. They do not have the high school counselor down the hall, calling them in to aid in decisions about their future. If participants have 8:00 a.m. classes, they have to choose to get themselves out of bed and go to class. After all, as one participant joked, "I don't have a personal secretary, you know?"

The strategies. Participants used the gamut of strategies suggested by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and Schlossberg (1995). They attempted to modify situations by seeking information and direct action. Additionally, my participants used *vicarious learning* and *self-talk* as strategies to both control the meaning of the situation and manage stress. They often compared themselves positively to their peers who were dealing with their own transition situations. They managed stress by exercise, venting their feelings to friends and family, built relaxation time into their schedules, expressed hopefulness about their transition, and, when necessary, passively accepted situations beyond their control.

Future Research and Implications

Further research should follow a variety of students attending different types of postsecondary institutions to provide a broader description of the transition process and students' self-regulatory behaviors within that process. Research of a theoretical nature that looks to better define the constructs within the integrated model of transition should also be pursued. The integrated model of transition is also offered to serve as a framework for future research.

This study revealed implications for personnel at different levels of education. Consideration should be given to dispelling some of the myths high school students embrace about college life and the expectations instructors will have of them. High school students need better guidance about information seeking when they are in the college search process, giving the students a more accurate picture of what core curricula consist. High school students need instruction to find and evaluate institutional information on the internet.

Students should be encouraged take ownership in establishing their schedules and inform themselves about the core requirements at their institutions from the time of their orientations throughout their college years. Residence hall programming should reflect student needs, whether it is conflict resolution with roommates, maintaining a healthy lifestyle while in college, or dealing with disengagement from home.

Academic affairs and faculty would benefit from awareness of the incongruence between student expectations and the reality of the college classroom. Additionally, more frequent feedback from instructors could be of help to students as they try to adjust their skills and strategies to a new academic environment. Students' perceptions of different spaces on campus designated as study areas could be used to enhance these spaces to meet student needs.

The implications of this study reflect the multidimensionality of the transition from high school to college as well as the complexity of the individual student. The development of the whole student is at the core of institutional mission in higher education. This study attempted to describe the students' perceptions of their transition experiences along various dimensions. The results may serve to better inform practice and programming and ultimately ease the transition experience for future students.

CHAPTER 7

EPILOGUE

The participants in this study all returned to the University of Georgia for their second year of college. Two of the 17 lost the Hope Scholarship at the first 30-hour review, but were confident of their ability to regain the scholarship at the next review. Differences in responses to the questions about the easiest and most difficult aspects of the move from high school to college pointed to the unique qualities that each participant brought to the transition. For example, some participants thought living in the residence hall was the easiest aspect and most conducive to their integration to campus. Others thought it was the most difficult, specifically living in tight quarters and sharing a bathroom with a large group of peers. Anna was surprised that homesickness was not an issue. Time management and finding a new routine proved to be the most challenging for her.

Many participants continued with activities begun in the freshman year. Suzanne still enjoys her affiliation with the Baptist Student Union. She decided to give rush another try and had better success the second time around. She joined a sorority and is serving as a resident assistant in her residence hall. Michelle has become more involved with her major's professional association. Anna spent her first year attending different clubs' meetings and has found "her place" with Amnesty International.

The changes in living arrangements that were highly anticipated at the end of their first year have been positive for some, but not for others. Lisa's move to an apartment-style residence hall has been positive. She is finally getting enough sleep this year and, with less distractions,

her grades have improved. Likewise, Jonathan's move off-campus has created a better study environment. Alison admitted it is difficult to study in the sorority house and is traveling to the Student Learning Center to complete her academic work. Going from living with one close friend to four sorority sisters has presented additional challenges.

Final Words

The challenges participants' faced and lessons learned while adapting to the new college environment translated into advice for high school seniors as the seniors enter into the transition from high school to college. Participants' ideas are offered as suggestions to students currently contemplating or experiencing the transition from high school to college:

For one thing, I'd tell them probably the best decision I made in college was to do the Freshman Experience. And I wouldn't tell too many of them that because it's a good thing I didn't come up with too many people by me. That made me go out and have to meet people and I didn't really have too many people to fall back on. So, I'd probably tell a couple kids to do that. Tell them to not let everybody know they're going to do it because it's...it's probably just a different situation for a couple guys I knew that came up with all their good friends. And they didn't branch out as much.

—Sam

I would just tell them to go with their heart and not let anybody else influence them. Because sometimes, it can be helpful, but often times it can not be. And, in fact, one of my really good friends was up here visiting this weekend, and he *loved* Georgia. He loved it when he visited here. And he swims. And he ended up going to Auburn cause they had a better like swimming program, but he didn't like it as much. And we were talking about it, and he was like, "If I had to do it over again, I would have come here instead." And he just listened to everybody else and what everybody else had to say, and they convinced him.

—Alison

I've told several of seniors, "Go to Freshman College." (Laughter) "Go to Freshman College." Especially if you're wanting to come somewhere like here, and you're not sure because if it doesn't work out during the summer, then you can change. But really doing a lot of research. I mean, looking into it, cause some people automatically knew where they want to go, but, me, I had no clue, really what I wanted to do. And I mean, honestly people ask me, "Are you familiar with so and so college?", and I'm like "Yeah. Cause I looked at it. I looked at the information about it. I know. I know everything about it." Really considering, you know, what's going to be best for yourself. Not what's going to

be the most fun or anything like that, but really what's going to be best for you to get you from where you want to go *after* college.

—Suzanne

Well, just think...think more long term, I mean, like have fun, and be impulsive and spontaneous sometimes, but just um, you know, it's like, you know, study while you go to college and, you know, and kind of balance your social life and study habits and just keep a fine balance and try to, I guess like do the best you can, not try to fall so much into one or the other, so. Not try to study all the time but at the same time, don't party all the time. Just try to find a good balance and get your equilibrium.

—Michael

I have a lot of close friends that are still seniors and I told the ones that are coming to Georgia, I told them they should do summer school just because it kind of gives them a head start. I've mostly been helping them get their stuff together for the dorm and what they need and what they don't need and stuff like that. I told them to take an easy fall semester just because they're getting used to everything especially with football season, they won't want to sit down and study. So, that's probably about it, I guess.

—Amanda

Two grads from my high school are planning on coming here in the fall, and one of them I was actually very close to in high school. I give her little tidbits of advice, like a cell phone is really helpful, you know. You know, little things for your dorm, just make sure you have a computer. The biggest piece of advice that I can give her is take advantage of the people you know here. I never had anybody who is older than me to kind of push me around and, not push me around, but, you know, *lead* me around and say, "Don't go there at night, go here at night. Don't walk here by yourself. Here's where your class is, you know." Somebody driving me around the campus saying, "This is Ag Hill," you know. I had to find that out all on my own, and my biggest piece of advice for her is to take advantage of me. I'll help you and like seriously, I'm one of your best resources. For people who I don't know and who want advice, *don't* get so worked up about it. You're going to be fine. It's *not* a big deal. You just go through the motions. It's like just going to a new school. It's not this big, scary, frightening transition that everybody's working it up to be. I think in our high school, they *scare* you into doing well. You know, "This isn't going to fly. You're not going to do this in college" and blah, blah, blah, and they scare you into feeling like, I'm never going to make it. And you *are* going to make it. I mean, everybody's going to make it. I mean, whether, if you don't make it through college, it's not the end of the world. Maybe it's just not for you. But, you know, you're always going to survive and you're going to make it through your life. Just looking back at how scared I was to come here, it just makes me *laugh*. It was so *stupid* of me, but so funny and that fear is so real to me still. Like I remember how that felt. I remember how scared I was. But, you shouldn't be scared. It's so much fun. It's not this big scary thing and yeah, you're probably going to have to work harder, but you're just going to have so much more fun.

—Jennifer

Do the Freshman College Summer Experience. I did “Hunker Down” with housing in the fall. And the students all moved in, and they were all struggling in the heat. There was like 50 times more than there were when we moved in. And I was just like, “Man, I’m glad I’m already in here. I’m glad I know my way around. I’m glad I’m prepped for classes.” I just...so many ups for that. And like in one part maybe it talks about “Oh a lot of students don’t want to give up their summer,” like I didn’t give up my summer. We had weekends. We had only two classes a day and then the rest of the day. I mean, there was a lot of reading and studying, but then we also had this mandatory traveling around campus and activities and stuff. I’d say do that. And I’d also say that classes move over into college. Like don’t ignore high school, especially senior year even though people are like senioritis totally. I mean, still pay attention because you’re going to use that stuff, especially math classes build on to each other.

—Anna

They really need to leave some stuff at home. Also, Athens is...like downtown, things will be crammed into every space they can go in. Stores, shops, stuff like that. Everything’s not clearly labeled and designed out for your comfort and your convenience. And so, you may have to drive 10 miles to get to Wal-Mart or, you know, your favorite place to eat maybe like a hole-in-the-wall, but you just have to adjust to that. And I think a lot of them don’t want to. A lot of them don’t realize. They want to come up here and then they want the same living conditions as they had back home, and I think part of coming to college is the fact that you live like a poor, poor kid and you live with the clothing on your back for a week at a time or eating Ramen noodles at midnight because you’re out of money or you don’t have anywhere to go or stuff like that. So, they have to adjust to a new life style and they *need* to, cause it’s a good thing to have like sort of both worlds. A lot of them just won’t want to.

—Justin

I think that they should be open to change to, you know, like growing from stuff. I also think that they should be really careful about becoming involved too much in drinking or drugs or anything up here because it’s really easy to get involved with that, and it’s really hard to come back from that. There’s a lot of people who didn’t do very much stuff before they came up here, and now they’re just messed up. I would say just be careful. I mean, college is about like growing up and you know, it’s OK to do *some* of that stuff. Like I definitely go out and stuff, but just be careful because that can become *everything* in a *very* short amount of time. And then, probably also to still hold on to the things that are really important to them and to not lose sight of those just because you’re in a completely new environment.

—Kali

Know what you’re going to do, and I definitely would recommend the summer program. I went because I met a few friends. If you’re really shy, you should definitely go for a summer program or something that helps you transition to college. Know what you’re getting yourself into. Research the university or two-year college or whatever that you’re going to go to. *Know* what they offer. *Know* what you need to do. *Know* what classes you’re going to take even if you’re undecided you know, like go ahead and try to figure

out like what classes would you be interested in within like the graduation requirements and try to figure out *something*, because it'll help. If you're not that great at socializing right now, perhaps you should consider like going with a couple of friends to a college because I know that was a big deal for me. Like I...I needed to go to a college where I had a few friends there, because without them you know, I would have been completely a hermit, and I wouldn't have enjoyed college at all. Go ahead and like while you're figuring out your classes, start e-mailing professors or start e-mailing financial aid ahead of time to see what their policies are, what they need for you to do and just, you need to know *everything*.

—Tina

Don't be afraid. Like, don't be afraid to have fun, and just meet a lot of people. Don't be afraid of messing up to the point where it cripples you, and you don't do anything. And then I'd also tell them think long and hard about the consequences of your actions. Take advice that other people give you. Just keep it in perspective, because I've gotten a lot of advice over the last year, a lot things like from classes and like what I should do with my life. And I mean, it's stuff that like a *lot* of things that people have told me, it's just not true, you know. Like people tell me, "Don't do this class with this teacher. It's *terrible*." And it's awesome. And it's just other people aren't *me*. And, so I would tell them just because somebody's older than you, and they might be more experienced, yeah, take what they say into consideration, but don't take it as the law. I would just tell them to do their own thing. Just have fun and be their own person. And go to class. (Laughter)

—Lisa

That's pretty easy cause I have a friend coming up here next year. I just told her like "have an open mind about stuff" like because, you know, I have friends that have different morals and values than I do, but don't look down on them for that, cause then you won't have any friends. You know have an open mind about everything and still do what you want to do, but kind of make friends with everybody whether they do what you want them to or not, pretty much. Be sure to stay on top of things because if not, it'll catch up behind you. And like, everybody's always told me that, you know, I finally figured it out that's true and it'll catch up behind you if you don't. So always kind of stay on things and keep up with your work and if you get one bad grade, don't let that bring you down.

—Michelle

That studying isn't a joke. Watch how much you go out and party would probably be a big thing. Cause I guess anybody...just new freedom is...try to go out as much as possible, but it does get old. Just the whole...get to know people. Don't stay with just your old group of friends. Branch out. Don't live with a group of people that you know, at first. Like all my friends live in different dorms, so that's good. So we *don't* just hang out with each other cause if we all lived in Russell, I think that's the only group you'd hang out with. So, just split up and move around and you meet a lot more people.

—Jonathan

I would tell them to accept that they're going to have weaknesses and to find help for those and to go an extra mile. Don't be I guess, lazy and stuff. I just see so many people, I don't know, copying off of each other. Like homework and stuff, and I think that hinders how you learn. And so I think just not to go into the easy trap cause it draws you in and so you know, even though it's going to be hard and it's going to be difficult, and it's going to be time consuming, *do* it because it will...you will definitely be paid back in the end. It will definitely be rewarding when you're at the test, and you know exactly what to do. Um, to find the right balance between social and academics. All the time in the dorm or wherever I am, it's frustrating with people who are different majors from you, and it's not as time consuming as chemistry can be, and they're all having fun and it can be really frustrating and agitating, but you just have to remind yourself about long-term goals and just keep those in mind I think. And just build friendships and meet different people. Not to meet one type of person and go to all these different things that are offered here because you learn so much from them.

—Sara

It is not difficult at *all*. It depends on what high school they went to of course, but I mean, be prepared to do exactly what you did in high school, and I would even think they would be a little easier than that. If they prepared for that, then they'll be over-preparing in a sense and have a little bit of freedom like, you know... Most the...it's mostly the people I know that were from public schools were saying that they have so much more free time in college. And, maybe that's because they feel that they don't have to go to *every* class, too. (Laughter) I have advice for most of my friends now who are seniors. Some of them haven't found out whether they've gotten into UGA yet or whether they, you know. They're still all frustrated about the college process, and I just mostly have advice for them, "yes it's frustrating now, but once you decide, it's, you know, you have that, you can be at peace with that. And it's all over. It's frustrating now but it's going to be over soon. When you get to college next year, you forget all that stress that you had. Where am I going to go to college? How do I know this is the right choice? Or what am I going to do here? It's just...you forget all that." Like I barely, you know, nothing sticks out too much from May and June, you know, of last year when I had to...when I was doing all the things to do with graduation and I was *so* frustrated, and it was just tiring and, you know. I decided at the last minute that I would come to UGA instead of another college, but I don't even remember that now. The best thing is now it just seems like it was meant to be.

—Becky

First I'll tell them to try to get in Freshman College if they could, cause it's really fun. And um, to be open-minded, I guess. I think they'll do fine transition-wise, but study...they're going to study harder and I know they will, but, yeah. I think they'll do good.

—David

It's just not what you think. I think there's so much flimsiness and just glitz and sparkly feel-good stuff in high school that just *doesn't* exist here. It's the real world, and even in

college, even when you're ready to graduate from college, it's a whole new level, I'm sure. There are no second chances. There are no excuses. There are no make-up tests, anything like that. And it's a totally different phase in life, and they need to be prepared for it and ready for it. Just...at least the knowledge that it's coming. That it's *not* going to be the same. Cause I think I would have been thrown in the deep end had I not done Freshman College. A lot of my speaking comes from a point of view where it was a small town and everyone knew everyone, so it's going to be different from say someone who goes to Lassiter High School in Atlanta, you know? But, I think a lot of people are in for a rude awakening. (Laughter) It's just that, it sounds bad, but that's honestly what it was for me. But it's a matter of what you do with it once it's been dealt to you. So, nothing could have prepared me for this. I don't think. I think Freshman College eased it and made it a little bit easier, but it just didn't prepare me for the brunt of it. And it's not bad. I knew I could deal with it and turn it into something positive, but I know a lot of people who can't, and who probably won't and will never...and will fight it every step of the way or quit trying. So I think that's what I would tell them, it's just be prepared for it. Be prepared for the academic aspect of it and be prepared for the life you'll have outside of it, cause you'll end up being friends with people you wouldn't have thought twice about in high school. You'd have thought, "No way." And I look at all the girls in my hall, and they're *all* in sororities and I'm in ROTC, and those are two extremes, but we just get along and it works and we both support each other. I would never see myself supporting sororities or anything like that if I didn't know these people. Just be open-minded to the changes that you're going to come through. You cannot be close-minded in that situation. Otherwise, it's going to be the worse. It can either be the best thing for you or the worst thing for you. I think there's no middle ground in that case, and for me it's turned out to be the best, so far. So, that would be my advice.

—Heather

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Table 1 Research Timeline

June 2003	Data collection commenced with first round of individual interviews Artifact collection
July 2003	First observation—Orientation weekend and Freshman College Summer Experience classes Artifact collection
August 2003	Analysis of interviews begun and continues throughout process
October 2003	Second round of individual interviews Focus group Artifact collection
March 2004	Third round of individual interviews Focus group—minority students Artifact collection—participants' class notes, text annotations, and copies of planner pages Observation of help session
September 2004	Questions sent to participants via e-mail

Table 2 Data Collection Phases

June –July 2003	October 2003	March-April 2004	September 2004
Interviews	Interviews	Interviews	E- mail
Observations	Artifact Collection	Observations	
Artifact Collection	Focus Group	Focus Group	
		Artifact Collection	

Table 3 Demographic Breakdown of Participants

Participant	Gender	High School	Mother's education	Father's education	Ethnicity	Residence ¹
Heather	F	Private	High school	J.D. Law/ Military	European American	ST
Becky	F	Home school	Bachelor's	Bachelor's	European American	LC
Alison	F	Public	Bachelor's	High school	European American	LC
Amanda	F	Public	Bachelor's	Bachelor's	European American	LC
Susan	F	Private	Master's	2-yr.	European American	ST
Hillary ²	F	Public	Not available	Not available	European American	LC
Jessica ²	F	Public	Not available	Not available	European American	ST
Lisa	F	Public	Bachelor's	2 yr. & tech	European American	LC
Sara	F	Public	10 th grade	Master's	Asian American	MC
Tina	F	Public	1 yr. College	Partial law & Barber	Asian American	MC
Kali	F	Private	Master's	Master's	European American	ST
Jennifer	F	Private	Bachelor's	Trade school-tertiary	European American	ST
Michelle	F	Public	Ed specialist	Master's	European American	ST
Anna	F	Public	Bachelor's	Bachelor's	European American	LC
David	M	Public	Bachelor's	Bachelor's	European American	ST
Michael	M	Public	High school	Bachelor's	European American	ST
Justin	M	Public	Associate's	Associate's	European American	ST
Jonathan	M	Public	Bachelor's	Bachelor's	European American	LC
Sam	M	Public	Bachelor's	Master's	European American	LC

*Participants' names are pseudonyms.

Note. ¹LC= large city, MC= mid-sized city, S T= small town. ²=participants withdrew from study after the first interview when parents' level of education was asked.

Table 4 Schlossberg's Transition Theory

.....**Moving in**.....**Moving through**.....**Moving out**.....
 New roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions Groping for new roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions-Liminality Disengagement from roles, relationships routines, and assumptions

.....**Pervasiveness**.....**to**.....**Boundedness**.....

1) Situation

Event or nonevent (anticipated, unanticipated, positive, negative)

Timing (timing of event within life course)

Role change (gain or loss)

Duration (permanent or temporary)

Past experiences (with similar transitions)

Concurrent stresses (dealing with other issues or transitions)

Assessment (internal or external locus of control)

2) Self

Personal and demographic characteristics

SES, gender, age, health, ethnicity

Psychological resources

Ego development (maturity), outlook (optimism, self-efficacy), commitments and values

3) Support

Intimate (significant other, best friend)

Family

Friends (other friends in social network)

Institution (university, company, community)

4) Strategies

Coping responses

Modify the situation (negotiation, optimistic action, advice-seeking)

Control meaning (positive comparison-count your blessings, selective ignoring of negative aspects)

Manage stress (emotional venting, being assertive, passive forbearance)

Table 5 The Individual in Transition

The Transition Event or nonevent Resulting in change	Coping Resources Balance of assets and liabilities			The Transition Process Reactions over time for better or for worse
Type	Variables Characterizing The Transition	Variable Characterizing The Individual	Variables Characterizing The Environment	Phases of Assimilation
Anticipated	<i>*Event or nonevent characteristics</i>	<i>*Personal and demographic characteristics</i>	<i>*Social Support</i>	Pervasiveness
Unanticipated			Types: intimate, family unit, friendship network, institution	Disruptions
Nonevent	Trigger	State of health		Integration, for better or for worse
Chronic Hassle	Timing	Socioeconomic Status	Functions: affect, affirmation, aid, feedback	
	Source	Sex Role	Measurement: convoy	
Context	Role change	Age and stage of life		Appraisal Of transition, resources, results
Relationship of person to transition	Duration	<i>*Psychological resources</i>	<i>*Options</i>	
Setting in which transition occurs	Previous experience with a similar transition	Ego Development	Actual	
Impact	Concurrent stress	Personality	Perceived	Of preoccupation vs. life satisfaction
Relationships	<i>*Assessment</i>	Outlook	Utilized	
Routines		Commitments and values	Created	
Assumptions		<i>*Coping Responses</i>		
Roles		Functions: Controlling situation, meaning, or stress		
		Strategies: Information seeking, direct action, inhibition of action, intrapsychic behavior		

Note. From *Counseling Adults in Transition: Linking Practice with Theory* (1st ed.). (p. 108), by N. K. Schlossberg, 1984, New York: Springer Publishing Company. Copyright 1984 by Springer Publishing. Reprinted with permission.

Table 6 Integration of Transition and Self-Regulatory Constructs

Situation	Self	Support	Strategies
Event/Nonevent Trigger Timing—on time / off time Control/ Source Role Change--gain or loss Duration--permanent, temporary, or uncertain Previous experiences with Similar transitions Concurrent stress Assessment/Appraisal Sociocultural/Sociohistoric Context	<i>Personal and Demographic</i> Socioeconomic Status Gender, Ethnicity, Health Age and Stage of Life <i>Psychological Resources</i> Ego development Outlook--optimism, self-efficacy Goal orientation Intrinsic interest Commitment and Values -- 1. Achievement and work 2. Good personal relations 3. Philosophical and religious 4. Social service 5. Ease and contentment 6. Seeking enjoyment 7. Personal growth Personality Temperament-- 1. Intensity of emotions 2. Persistence 3. Sensitivity 4. Perceptiveness 5. Adaptability 6. Regularity of routine 7. Regularity 8. Energy 9. First reaction 10. Mood	Family Unit Social Network Intimate Institution <i>Measurement</i> Convoy of support <i>Functions</i> aid, affect, affirmation, and honest feedback Options	<i>Forethought</i> Task identification Goal setting Strategic planning <i>Coping Responses</i> 1. Modify Situation seeking advice negotiation, optimistic direct action <i>Performance</i> Attention focusing, self-instruction, imagery, self-monitoring 2. Control Meaning of Problem responses that neutralize, positive comparison selective ignoring, substitution of rewards 3. Manage Stress after it has occurred Denial, passive acceptance withdrawal, magical thinking, hopefulness, avoidance of worry, Relaxation

Table 7 Transition Theory Revised

.....Moving in.....Moving through.....Moving out.....
New roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions	Groping for new roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions-Liminality	Disengagement from roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions
.....Pervasiveness.....to.....Boundedness.....

Onset of liminality

1) Situation	Event or nonevent Timing Role change Duration Past experiences Concurrent stresses Assessment <u>Expectations</u>	_____→
2) Self	Personal and demographic characteristics Psychological resources Ego development, outlook, commitments and values <u>Psycho-social dynamic processing system, education, skills</u>	_____→
3) Support/ <u>Hindrance</u>	Intimate Family Friends Institution <u>Individual as self-support</u>	_____→
4) Strategies	Coping responses Modify the situation Control meaning Manage stress <u>Vicarious/Observational learning, Self-talk</u>	_____→
<u>Self-Regulation, Search for balance, mini-transitions, and asynchronous duration of transition dimensions</u>		_____→

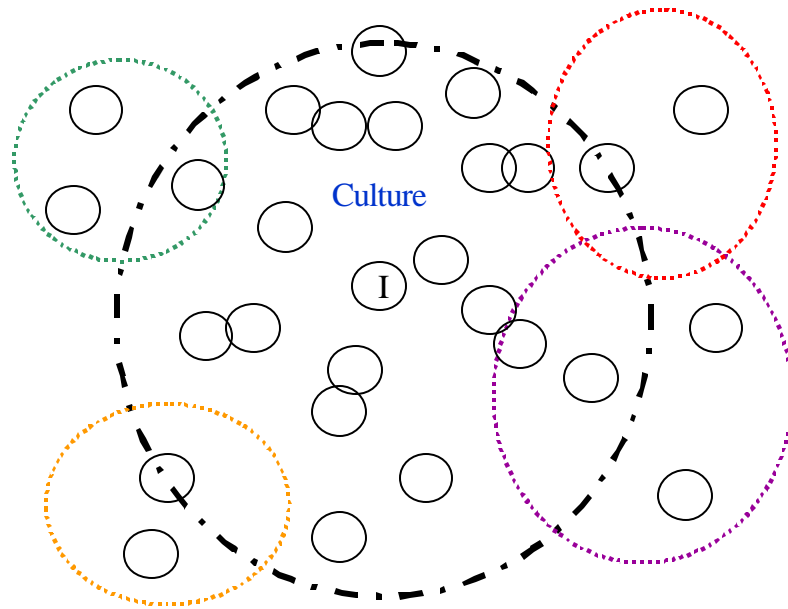


Figure 1. Relationship Between Constructivism and Constructionism

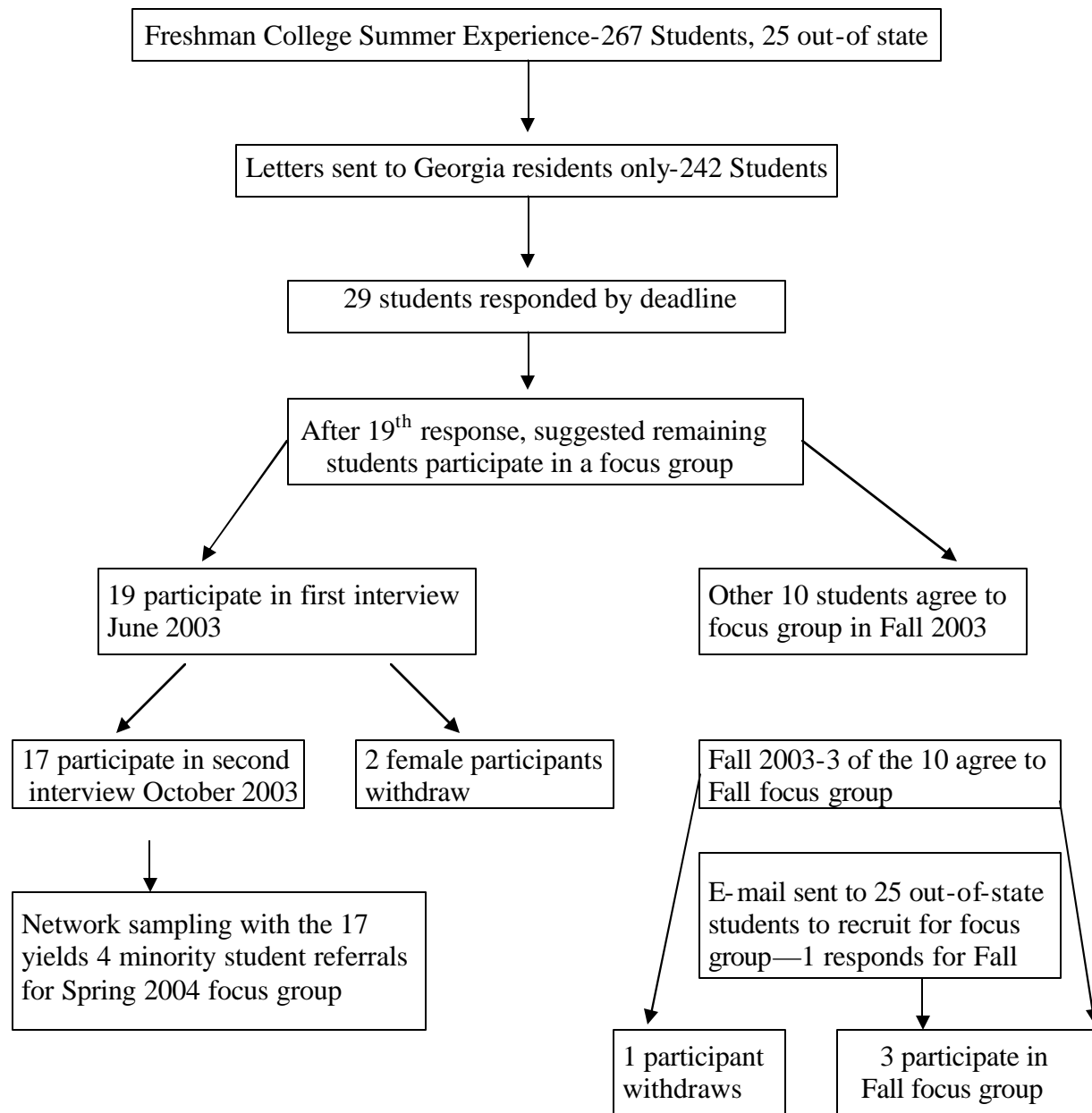


Figure 2. Participant Selection Process

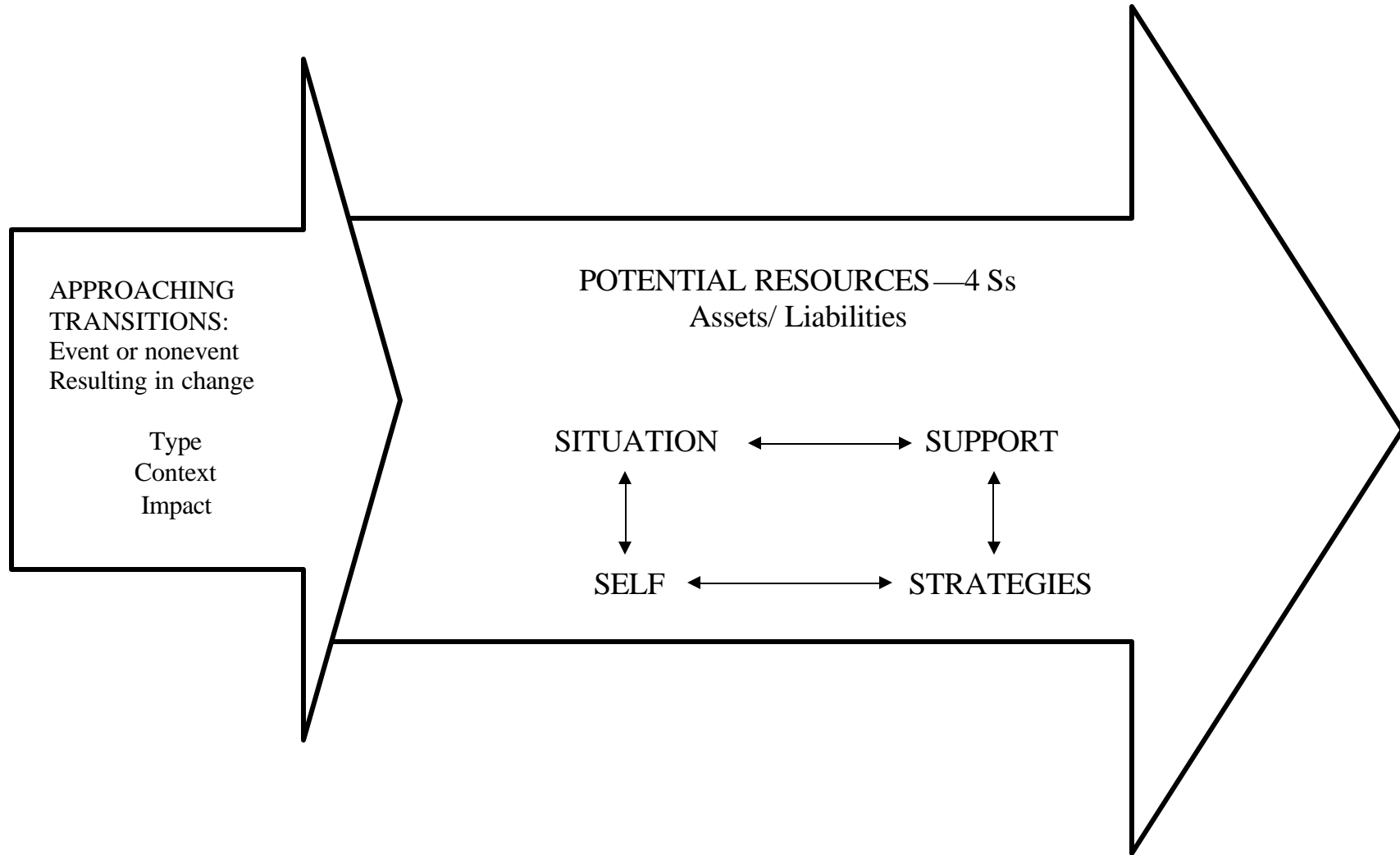


Figure 3. The Transition Process: Changing Reactions Over Time. Note. From *Counseling Adults in Transition: Linking Practice with Theory* (2nd ed.). (p. 27), by N. K. Schlossberg, 1995, New York: Springer Publishing Company. Copyright 1984 by Springer Publishing. Reprinted with permission.

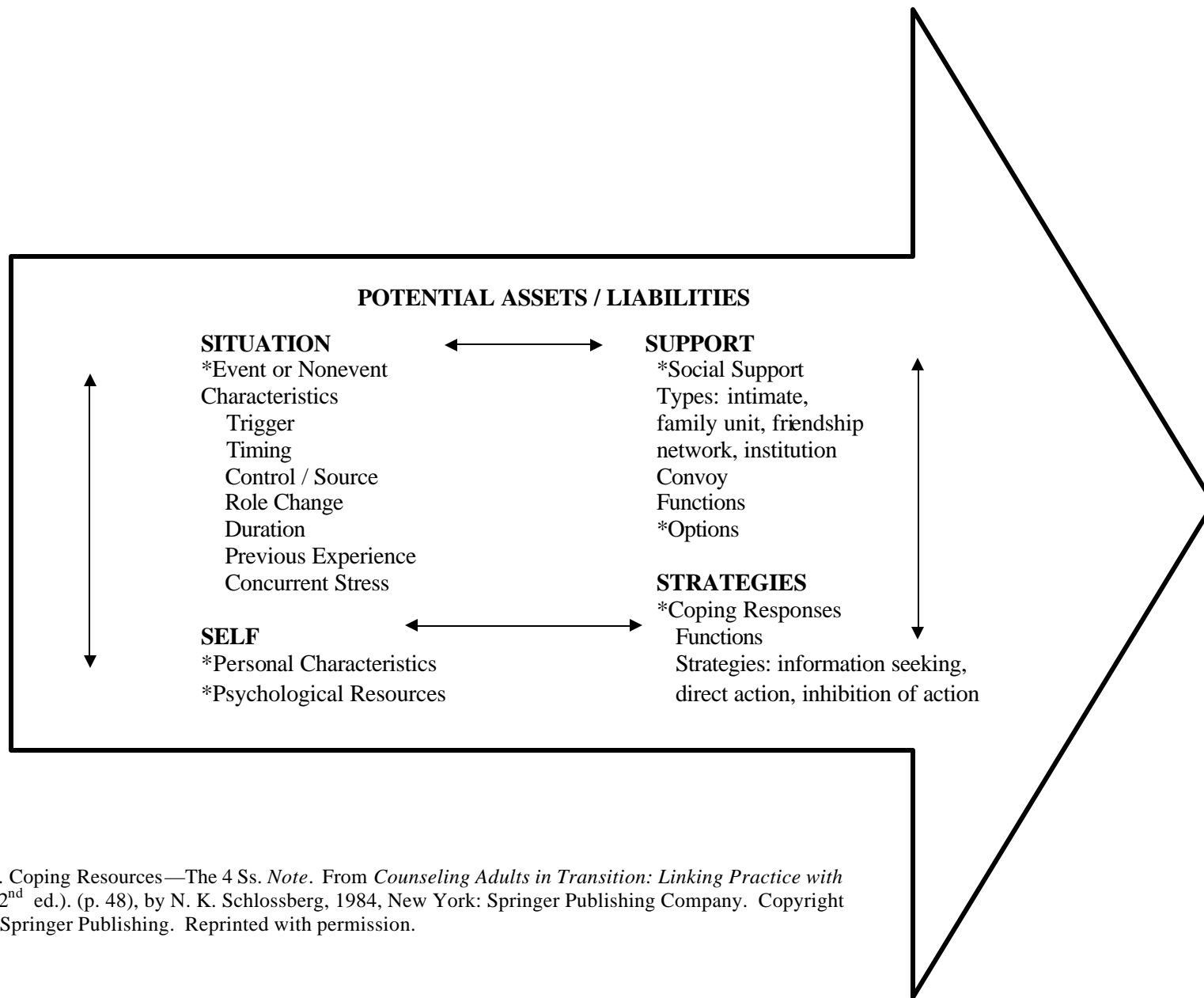


Figure 4. Coping Resources—The 4 Ss. *Note.* From *Counseling Adults in Transition: Linking Practice with Theory* (2nd ed.). (p. 48), by N. K. Schlossberg, 1984, New York: Springer Publishing Company. Copyright 1995 by Springer Publishing. Reprinted with permission.

A Model For Analyzing Human Adaptation to Transition

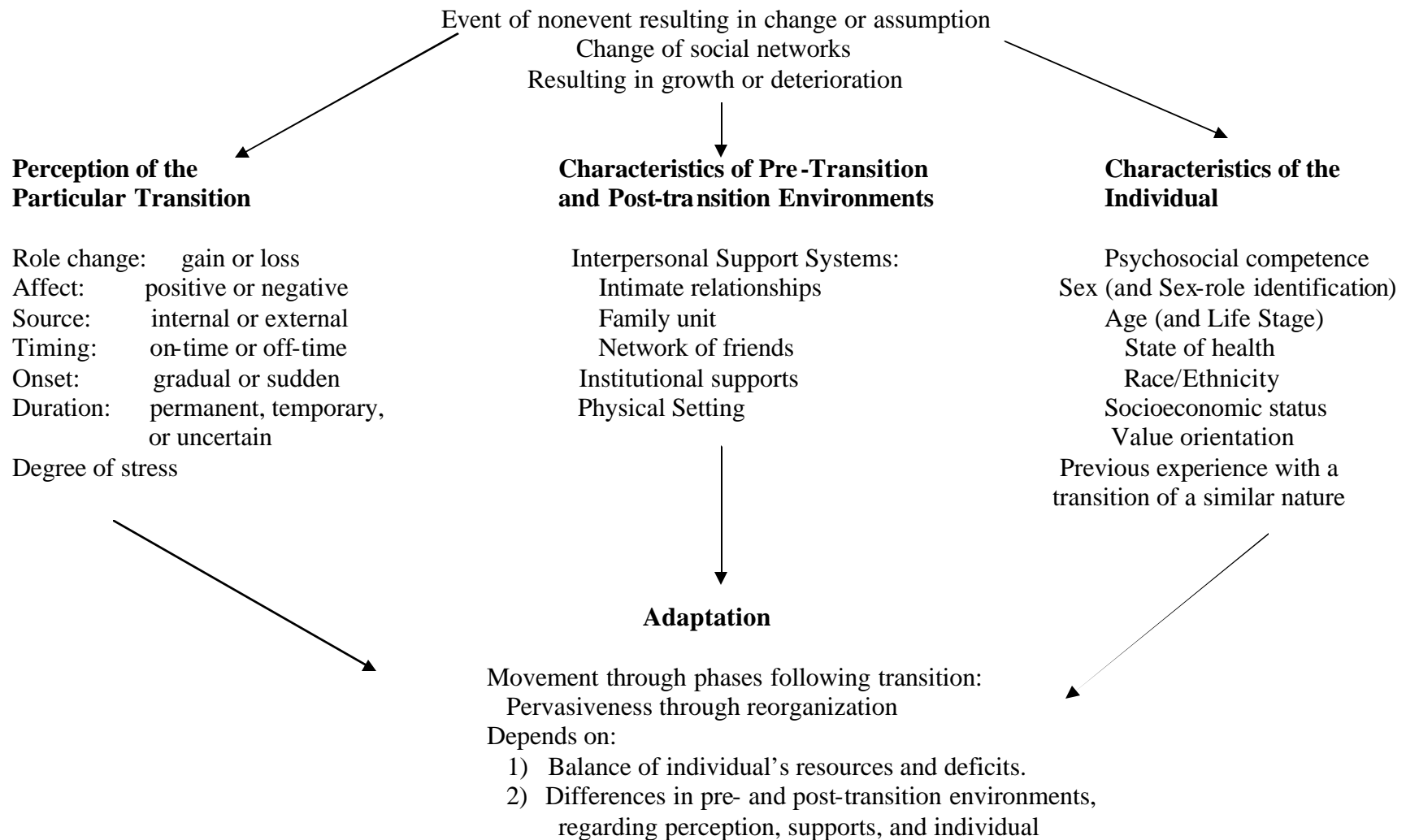


Figure 5. A Model For Analyzing Human Adaptation To Transition. *Note.* From "A Model for Analyzing Human Adaptation to Transition," by N. K. Schlossberg, 1981, *Counseling Psychologist* 9(2), p.5. Copyright 1981 by Sage Publications. Reprinted with permission.

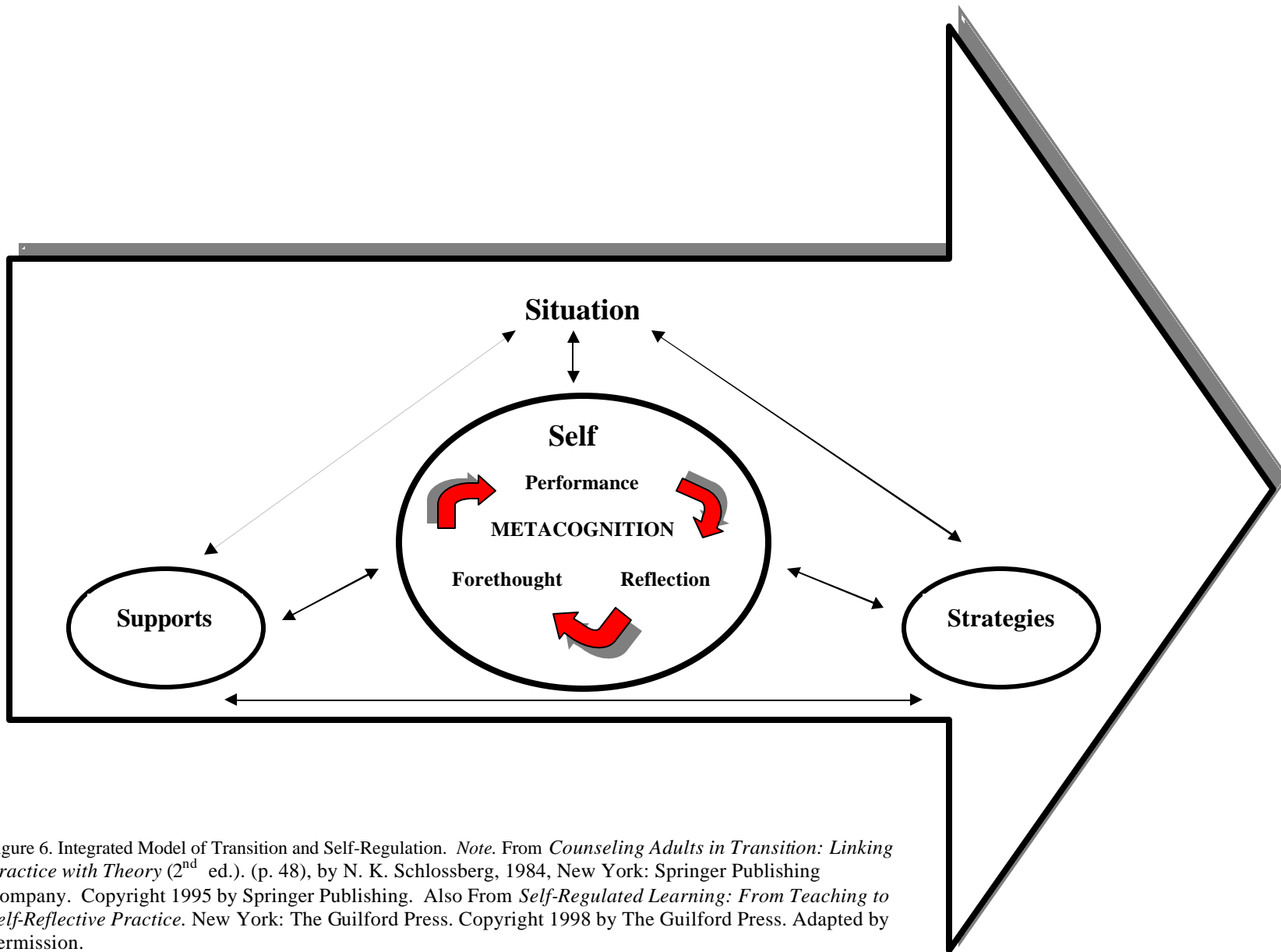


Figure 6. Integrated Model of Transition and Self-Regulation. *Note.* From *Counseling Adults in Transition: Linking Practice with Theory* (2nd ed.). (p. 48), by N. K. Schlossberg, 1984, New York: Springer Publishing Company. Copyright 1995 by Springer Publishing. Also From *Self-Regulated Learning: From Teaching to Self-Reflective Practice*. New York: The Guilford Press. Copyright 1998 by The Guilford Press. Adapted by permission.

APPENDIX A

Interview Protocols

Interview Protocol-June 2003

1. Tell me about the high school you attended.
 - Size
 - Location
 - Public/Private
2. Tell me about your decision to go to college.
3. What differences do you anticipate between high school and college?
4. When I say the phrase “academic transition to college,” what does that mean to you?
5. Think of a particularly difficult assignment or project you had in high school. Tell me how you went about doing that assignment.
6. How would you describe yourself as a student?
 - How do your grades reflect your ability? Do they reflect your ability well?
 - Your test scores?
 - When you think about yourself as a student, what do you feel good about?
 - When you think about yourself as a student, what concerns you?
 - What do you think about your academic preparation for college? What kind of feelings do you have about your preparation for college?
7. Tell me about your study habits in high school.
 - How do you think these habits will change in college?
 - What makes a person a good college student?
8. When I say “social transition to college,” what does that mean to you?
9. How do you see yourself becoming involved in campus life?
10. What do you think about social pressures in college? How does this make you feel?
11. Respond to this statement: My classmates will all be the same as me.
12. Respond to this statement: I will not feel lonely in college. (Deal with it?)
13. When you think about your own transition to college, what emotions come up for you?
14. How did you come to the decision to attend the UGA summer program?

15. What are your expectations about this experience?
16. What course have you chosen for this summer?
17. What courses would you like to take in the fall?
 - Which course do you think will be the most challenging? Why?
 - Easiest? Why?
18. What would you describe as the ideal relationship with your college professors? What do you expect from your professors?

Interview Protocol—October 2003

1. What does the phrase “academic transition to college” mean to you now?
2. What does the phrase “social transition to college” mean to you now?
3. What academic experience has stood out the most for you so far?
 - What social experience has stood out the most for you?
 - What emotional experience has stood out the most for you?
 - What has surprised you most?
4. How would you describe yourself as a student now?
 - How do you feel about your grades?
 - When you think about yourself as a student, what do you feel good about?
 - When you think about yourself as a student, what concerns you?
5. What academic goals have you set for yourself?
 - How do you go about staying on task with those goals?
6. Out of all the strategies you were taught in the Learning-to-learn class, which do you use?
 - What skill that you learned in the program do you value most?
 - What skill do you think will have the most utility?
 - What connections do you see between the skills you learned and your academic classes?
 - Which strategies are you using? (annotating, generating test questions, talk throughs, CARDS, study sheets, concept maps, rehearsing out loud)
 - How do you approach reading your texts?
7. What courses are you taking now?
 - How did you choose those courses?
 - What do you think about the difficulty of your schedule?
 - Which course is most challenging? Why? Have you sought help for this class?
 - Which course is easiest? Why?
 - How do you keep yourself engaged when the course is not interesting to you?

8. Tell me about a testing experience that has stood out for you.
 - How did you study for that test?
9. What do you think constitutes a good study environment for you?
 - Tell me about your study habits now.
 - What has changed in your habits since high school?
 - How do your strategies differ from class to class?
 - Ideally, what would you like to change about your current habits?
10. Starting with the courses this summer, tell me about the types of relationships you've had or have with each of your professors.
 - What do you believe the role of a college professor should be?
 - What do you believe your role as a student should be?
 - Which professors have you met with during their office hours?
 - How do you see yourself as a learner?
 - What classroom atmosphere have you enjoyed the most?
 - The least?
11. What did you find worthwhile in attending the summer program? What expectations that you had going into the program were met?
12. What do you think about your academic preparation you received in high school now?
13. How have you become involved in campus life so far?
 - What have you not pursued that you're interested in?
14. What differences do you see now between high school and college?

Interview Protocol—March 2004

1. What does the phrase “academic transition to college” mean to you? How has that transition been for you so far?
2. What does the phrase “social transition to college” mean to you? How has that transition been for you so far?
3. What are the experiences you've had that have stood out the most for you? academic? social? emotional? What has surprised you most?
4. How would you describe yourself as a student now?
 - How do you feel about your grades? Probe for attributions.
 - When you think about yourself as a student, what do you feel good about?
 - When you think about yourself as a student, what concerns you?
5. What academic goals have you set for yourself?

- How do you go about staying on task with those goals?
6. What courses are you taking now?
 - How did you choose those courses?
 - What do you think about the difficulty of your schedule?
 - Which course is most challenging? Why? Have you sought help for this class?
 - Which course is easiest? Why?
 - How do you keep yourself engaged when the course is not interesting to you?
 - From what courses have you withdrawn?
 7. Tell me about a testing experience that has stood out for you.
 - How did you study for that test?
 8. Tell me about the last time you sat down to study.
 - What has changed in your habits since high school?
 - How do your strategies differ from class to class?
 - Ideally, what would you like to change about your current habits?
 9. How have you developed as a person over this last year?
 - Intellectually? Socially? Emotionally?
 - What personal characteristics do you possess that have aided you in the transition? Hindered?
 - What external situations or events have aided you in the transition? Hindered?
 - In what way have you changed the most?
 10. How has your relationship with your parents changed?
 11. How have your career goals (or major) changed over this year? What do you see yourself doing in five years?
 12. If you had it to do all over again, would you attend college? UGA? Why?
 13. What advice would you give a senior in high school right now about the transition to college?

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Letter

Lori Aultman
325 Aderhold Hall
University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia 30602

Dear Freshman College Summer Experience participant:

Congratulations on your acceptance to the University of Georgia and on your decision to enroll in the Freshman College Summer Experience program. I am a current doctoral student in the department of Educational Psychology, interested in conducting research on students' transitions from high school to college. I have received permission from the director of the program, Dr. Sherrie Nist, to solicit volunteers for my study from the FCSE at the University of Georgia. Freshmen college programs across the country have students fill out questionnaires to evaluate their programs. Very few take the time to interview students to get their perspectives on the adjustment to college. My research will be unique, and I would like your viewpoint to be a part of this study.

This letter is being sent to obtain 20 volunteers to participate in two, 1-2 hour interviews. One interview will be conducted before the FCSE officially begins, and the second will be conducted after the program concludes. I will travel to your home town to meet with you for the first interview. My research will look at students' attitudes and beliefs about the academic, emotional, and social transition to college. An incentive in the form of a \$10 gift certificate will be made available to all interviewees for each interview.

If you have any questions or concerns, please e-mail me at: aultman@uga.edu. If you decide to be a participant in this research, please e-mail me at the account above by June 9th so I can set up a time to meet with you before you arrive in Athens. Have a great summer!

Thank you,

Lori Aultman
Ph. D. Candidate
Department of Educational Psychology
University of Georgia