The sophomore experience at Rowan University from the perspective of selected sophomores

Sarah Beth Bailey
Rowan University

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THE SOPHOMORE EXPERIENCE AT ROWAN UNIVERSITY FROM THE 

PERSPECTIVE OF SELECTED SOPHOMORES

by
Sarah Beth Bailey

A Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Masters of Arts in Higher Education Administration of The Graduate School at Rowan University May 8, 2008

Approved by __________________________
Dr. Burton R. Sisco

Date Approved May 14, 2008

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ABSTRACT

Sarah Beth Bailey
THE SOPHOMORE EXPERIENCE AT ROWAN UNIVERSITY FROM THE
PERSPECTIVE OF SELECTED SOPHOMORES
2007/08
Dr. Burton R. Sisco
Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration

The primary purpose of this study was to better understand the needs of sophomores at Rowan University through interviewing five purposefully selected sophomore students at Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ, in the spring semester, 2008. The study investigated the experiences of selected sophomores in the classroom, outside of the classroom, and with identity and self concept that contributed to student success at Rowan University. Data were collected by means of three interviews with each participant. The interviews took place throughout the spring semester – one in January, one in February, and one in March. The instruments used to collect the data consisted of nine questions each. The interviews focused on allowing students to tell their stories and lived experience through describing events in their sophomore year. The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes each. Data were analyzed using content analysis. Data analysis suggests that selected sophomores have both beneficial and challenging experiences in and out of the classroom during their sophomore year. It was reported that sophomore students are in different places in their identity development and that Rowan University could be doing more to support sophomore students.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Many thanks go to my grandparents, Barney and Janis, who are my biggest fans. I could not have asked for a better fan club.

Thank you to my mom and dad for making me believe than anything was possible with hard work.

Last but not least, many thanks go to Dr. Sisco, who helped me realize I have a valuable perspective and skills in the field of Student Affairs.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

College is a time of significant growth through exploration for students. Most students look forward to college and the diverse experiences provided by higher education institutions. Institutions strive to best meet the needs of students and live up to the grand expectations that students have generated in their minds. Institutions create programs and dedicate staff to support students academically and socially through the many transitions that college brings, yet the institutions still must remain vigilant in meeting the expectations of students, especially sophomores.

Statement of the Problem

A traditional student’s first year in college is recognized as a significant and difficult transition. Institutions create programs and initiatives with the specific purpose of supporting students in the transition between high school and college. A growing number of institutions have successfully reduced first year attrition with these specifically tailored support systems. Yet, with the emphasis placed on the success of first year students, there is a change in expectations of students going into the second year. When students return for the sophomore year, the support programs they have grown accustomed to are no longer available, yet students are expected to continue to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally as they did during the first year (Pattengale & Schreiner, 2000).
This lack of support leaves sophomores to navigate an increasingly demanding curriculum, changing career goals, and struggles to find where they fit on campus without the support they once received. Issues such as these lead to students to consider leaving college (Boivin, Fountain, & Baylis, 2000).

For many years, the focus was on freshman when researching attrition and retention issues. There is still little research about the specific needs of sophomore students and how institutions can best meet their unique needs.

Purpose of the Study

The primary focus of the research was to better understand the needs of sophomores at Rowan University through interviewing a select number of sophomore students about their experiences in college. The findings of this study may provide insight into sophomores’ lived experiences and identify characteristics that were most influential to student success during the sophomore year. The study may also identify factors that hindered sophomore success.

Assumptions and Limitations

The research relies on the students’ honesty and willingness to share during the interviews. Another limiting factor is the many elements contributing to student success are both internal and external. External factors such as family and home life are beyond the reach of the institution. Also the sample consists of sophomore students, so there was not the opportunity to compare students in different class years. Lastly, the researcher is an advocate for greater sophomore support systems at Rowan University and may lead to unintentional bias in the findings.
Operational Definitions

1. Sophomore: A student that has earned between 24 and 57.99 credits, attending Rowan University during the 2007-2008 academic year.
2. Sophomore Slump: A dissatisfaction due to a letdown from their first year and reduced motivation to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally, sometimes causing the student to drop out of college.
4. Student: An individual enrolled at Rowan University in at least 12 credits hours.
5. Success: The persistence through at least one academic year and some level of satisfaction with collegiate experience.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of selected sophomores in the classroom during the sophomore year that contribute to student success at Rowan University?
2. What are the experiences of selected sophomores outside the classroom during the sophomore year that contribute to student success at Rowan University?
3. What are the experiences of selected sophomores at Rowan University that contribute to development of identity and self-concept?

Overview of the Report

Chapter two provides a review of the research and scholarly literature pertaining to the study. This section briefly describes the issues contributing to sophomore retention, freshman research, and theories that are often used when discussing freshman retention.
Chapter three provides information on how the study was conducted. This chapter defines the context of the study, presents information about the population and sampling method used, and describes how the interview questions were compiled, administered, and analyzed.

Chapter four presents the data that resulted from the study. The data show the factors that sophomores identified as contributing or detracting from their success.

Chapter five interprets and summarizes the data and discusses the major findings of the study and recommendations for practice and further research.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Retention

Retention has long been the enemy of higher education institutions. Enochs and Roland (2006) report that 30-40% of college students drop out without obtaining a college degree. Wilder (1993), when addressing the sophomore slump phenomenon, states that 85% of students that drop out do so within the first two years of entering college. Flanagan (1990) in his study of retention concerns at 26 selective liberal arts institutions discovered that retention problems were more dramatic during the sophomore year than in the first year. Pattenagle (2000) indicates that an increasing number of institutions report a disproportionate percentage of sophomores fail to return for the junior year. Educators title the trend the “sophomore slump.” Definitions of the term vary but the connections to the sophomore slump and retention concerns are clear.

Freshman Research

Three decades of research has been dedicated to investigating the needs of freshman students and how to best support this particular group of students. The emphasis demonstrates the importance of the transition between high school and college. The first year is recognized as a critical year when discussing persistence to graduation. This recognition motivated thousands of institutions on a global level to respond by creating support programs dedicated to first year students focusing on the quality of the
freshman student experience. To improve students’ quality of experience these programs strive to support freshman academically and socially (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006).

Graunke and Woosley (2005), contend that much of the research examining student success and attrition focuses on the first year. First year students have entered an entirely new terrain and are looking for connections to individuals, the institution, and a support network to help guide them through the new environment. The authors suggest that many studies have shown the importance of social integration, extracurricular involvement, and institutional commitment.

Enochs and Roland (2006) examined residential learning community programs created to aid in supporting first year students. The authors investigated the relationship between living environment and social adjustment in freshman students and found that one way of assisting students in establishing connection to the university is to provide specific opportunities to integrate into college life. Specific types of environments addressed were the popular residential learning environments with specialized programs created to assist freshman in making the transition to college from high school. Programs such as these include community-building activities, mentoring programs, staff support, and provide academic and social activities to encourage students to make connections with each other, study in groups, and learn from one another (Enochs & Roland).

Porter and Swing (2006) investigated first year seminars that are commonly utilized by institutions to support first year students. It has been reported that first year seminars have become the most studied higher education innovation. A large body of work also suggests that first year seminars have a positive impact on a student’s academic
and social success (Porter & Swing). The content and instruction style of the seminar classes are designed to ease the transition between high school and college.

Kidwell and Reising (2005) paint the picture of a standard first year class room experience aimed at helping others to understand the complex time for freshman. The authors describe the challenge that first year students face as they are encouraged to see professors as facilitators and co-learners instead of holders of ultimate knowledge. The authors assert that, during the first year, students learn to take responsibility for their own learning and embrace discussion and multiplicity (Kidwell & Reising). First year seminar classes introduce students to these ideas, important information about the university, and things they can expect in the next year. These classes usually only exist for first year students and there is not a specific course or program that builds on these specific ideas.

Tinto (2002) challenges that any one freshman program or intervention can boost freshman retention. Tinto contends there are mainly five conditions that support student learning and retention; setting reasonable high expectations, support, feedback, involvement, and relevant learning. First, students are more likely to persist if there are clear and reasonably high expectations set to be met. If low expectations are set students will meet those, but not exceed expectations. Secondly, student support does increase retention, but there are different types and all are equally important. Academic and social supports are especially important. Thirdly, students are more likely to succeed in environments where faculty, staff, and students receive feedback about their work. This is not only true in entry assessment processes, but also early alert systems that are in place. Fourth, students need to be involved in the university community socially and
academically to be successful. Finally, students need to be able to see the value in what they are learning and how it is relevant. Tinto suggests that all of these conditions need to be taken into consideration to support student learning and retention. There is not one specific intervention such as a freshman seminar class that always retains students and helps them persist. He contends the work of faculty and staff is to not only teach or support, but together develop learning environments to take student success seriously.

Sophomore Research

The topics of sophomore experience programs and sophomore retention are relatively new and underdeveloped. Pattenagle and Schreiner (2000) share their years of experience and direct observation of the sophomore slump in action in a monograph series that contains much of the research about sophomore concerns. The researchers witnessed the rise and creation of first year experience programs and assert, “the unintended result is that sophomores are virtually ignored from all sides of the institution” (p. v.) Juillerat’s (2000) research shows that the sophomores at public and private institutions have higher expectations than junior and seniors. This demonstrates the irony and impetus of the sophomore slump. Sophomores have the greatest expectations of upperclassmen yet institutions are focusing many of their resources on first year student retention.

Sophomores are met with a myriad of challenges one of them being the curriculum. Anderson & Schreiner (2000) discuss these challenges. Sophomores that have declared a major face pre-requisite courses designed to “weed-out” those unprepared for the course work. Dealing with this intensified curriculum is difficult, especially when there is little support provided by the university to aid in the transition.
Research findings indicate that sophomore students are not looking forward to the sophomore year academically because of these factors (Anderson & Schreiner). As one sophomore said, “I came back eager to see my friends and faculty I had missed over the summer, but took one look at my schedule of classes and immediately felt depressed” (Anderson & Schreiner, p. 56).

Furthermore, research shows the academic advising structures are many times not designed to support sophomore students. Sophomores may be assigned to academic advisors at random, and many advisors have too many advisees to have meaningful interactions with each student. Another challenge of academic advising is some advisors do not want to dedicate the time it takes to participate in developmental advising (Anderson & Schreiner).

Demonstrating issues pertaining to the sophomore year, in a survey conducted at Pennsylvania State University of 670 sophomores, students were asked to reflect on their sophomore year. The results of the survey demonstrate common characteristics of the sophomore slump (Pattengale, 2000). Responses included,

Not getting anywhere with your goals, excitement is over, nothing is new, want to hurry up and graduate, feel invisible, not the youngest so not getting the attention, but also not the oldest so not give opportunities, a lot tougher, don’t know what path to choose, and high expectations failing. (Moore, 1998, p. 7)

These common characteristics illuminate larger institutional problems in the academic and student services divisions.
Sophomore Research at Rowan University

Stuart (2007), a pilot study investigating the sophomore experience at Rowan University developed an instrument to measure student satisfaction and priorities regarding college the experience of sophomore and junior students. Five hundred and seventy four students participated in the survey and the findings suggest that the Rowan sophomore and junior student populations were most satisfied with the item of challenging the view of a student on the issue of racial or ethnic diversity, issues of campus safety during the day, and the idea that Rowan supports students working toward personal goals. Other top items of satisfaction were student’s ability to meet with faculty outside the classroom and the student’s ability to form relationships with faculty. The research suggested the items that juniors and seniors were most unsatisfied with issues relating to public safety, the University Bookstore, Rowan’s ability to help students work toward their career goals, and the Office of the Registrar. This research highlighting dissatisfaction in Rowan’s support of students in reaching career goals is particularly important during the sophomore year since it is a key time for choosing a major and the direction of a career.

Stuart (2007) makes recommendations for future research practice such as addressing students problems with enrolling in courses by increasing the number of sections for popular classes and changes in enrollment management strategies. Stuart also suggests creating a sophomore experience program and as a part of this program sending sophomore students a letter during the summer welcoming them back for their sophomore year. Lastly, it was recommended that the university engage staff in training
about the sophomore year and the important elements of the year to better serve sophomore students.

Recommendations for future research included utilizing interviews and focus groups to supplement quantitative data. Stuart also suggests conducting baseline testing of students at the freshman and sophomore level to make comparisons. Lastly, a longitudinal study of a small group of students is recommended as a way to identify where students are at in their development and how well Rowan is serving students.

A Developmental Model for Sophomore Students

In a qualitative study of traditional age sophomores, Schaller (2005) suggests sophomores progress through four stages: random exploration, focused exploration, tentative choices, and commitment. Schaller contends that students involved in random exploration are at the beginning of their college career and are not clear about what they are searching for and being challenged by – self, friends, or future. Students that are engaged in the focused exploration stage have very specific concerns and questions about self, relationships, and the future. This stage seems to bring the most possibility for confusion and struggle. The student has not yet made choices, but realizes action needs to be taken and looming decisions need to be made. This leads to the third stage of making tentative choices and the fourth stage of commitment. In the third and fourth stages students are usually able to find comfort and refuge in the decisions that have been made and can focus on having a clear foundation for other life choices. Schaller also suggests optimal learning environments to help support students successfully move through these stages (Schaller).
Optimal learning environments during the random exploration stage include, placing decision making on the student so students can learn techniques to engage in effective decision making themselves, allowing time and space for self-reflection, and providing students the opportunity to engage in self-critique and critique of peers. During the focused exploration stage, the optimal learning environment includes encouragement to explore outside of the classroom through study abroad, internship, and service learning and promoting self-reflection while examining other students’ perceptions. For the tentative choices stage faculty and staff should provide opportunities for focused exploration and guide decision-making processes so that students examine all options. Lastly, in the commitment stage faculty and staff should help students take on more responsibility for their own education and point out their options (Schaller).

Schaller and Wagener (2007) utilized this model of development for sophomore students in their study of 21 sophomore Resident Assistants (RAs) at mid-size private institution in the Midwest. The study was conducted to support residence education professionals as they find themselves hiring more sophomore RAs thus getting to know more about the impact of the position on sophomores is more relevant. The study examined the experience of sophomore RAs and suggests insights and implications for both design of the RA position and recommendations for providing adequate support structures for sophomore staff (Schaller & Wagener).

The findings demonstrate for sophomore RAs who were still undecided in the major were at a disadvantage because this served as a large distraction from the RA job. Secondly, sophomore RAs had difficulty specifically in the first semester to find ways to balance time dedicated to the RA job and social and academic commitments.
Implications to the study included encouraging residence education professionals to develop RA positions that utilize sophomore RA’s skills through appropriate job responsibilities and support such as strong supervision and specifically tailored training. (Schaller & Wagener).

Student Development Theories

Tinto’s Theory on Retention

Tinto in his early work *Leaving College* (1987), outlined a longitudinal model for student departure. The model suggests that students’ academic and social integration are key components to persistence. This model lays a framework from which further investigation and understanding of the success and retention of students in the higher education system can be examined. The first stage is titled pre-entry, and includes factors such as family background, skills and abilities, and prior schooling. These factors have a direct impact in shaping the individuals intentions and commitment toward education thus having an indirect impact on departure.

The second stage is institutional experiences. These take place in the classroom, residence halls, or anywhere on campus. The experiences involve individuals of the college community. Positive experiences increase the likelihood of a student persisting to graduation because it strengthens dedication to goals, commitments, and integration in the community. An example is an individual making a meaningful connection to their roommate or meeting a mentor within the community. Negative experiences decrease the likelihood of persisting to graduation. It leads to lack of connection, investment, and integration in the institutional community and may lead to departure. An example of this
could be a student failing a course or not being able to find a group of friends that relate to personal experience.

The third and final stage is outcome, the student’s decision to leave the university. This can happen in two ways, the student can graduate or depart. If the student departs he/she have not been able to integrate into the institutions and if the student graduates he/she have been able to positively integrate themselves into the institution. Tinto’s (1987) model is a foundation work from which many research studies have been formulated.

Tinto (1987) describes students going through these “rights of passage” and during this time students must disassociate themselves from their former communities and accept their new community – college, friends, and campus community. Gohn, Swartz, and Donnelly (2001) use this theory in their case study of second year persistence to describe the emotional and personal factors associated with sophomore retention and the need for support systems on college and universities campuses.

Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement

Boivin, Fountain, & Baylis (2000) in their research on meeting the challenges of the sophomore year use Astin’s (1993) Theory of Involvement to address the need for institutions to understand sophomore students’ diverse needs. The research suggests mentoring relationships between faculty and students are only second to peers in influencing a students view of college life and satisfaction.

Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement is a foundational work that is often utilized when investigating student retention in higher education. The theory also considers both academic and social factors to student retention. Astin suggests there are
five categories of involvement that impact student success in college (Astin, 1993). The first category is academic involvement. This includes things such as the credit hours being attempted, time dedicated to studying, and honors or advanced placement programs. Factors in this category are academic in nature. The second category is involvement with faculty. It is important for students to have interaction with faculty inside and outside the classroom. The third category is involvement with student peers. The category includes working on group projects, participating in political action on campus, playing intramurals, and tutoring other students. The fourth category is involvement in work. Working full time off campus or part-time off-campus can have negative effect, but working part-time on campus can have a positive effect. The fifth and final category focuses on other forms of involvement. This can be such things as watching television, commuting, volunteer work, marriage, counseling, and alcohol use.

Chickering’s Seven Vectors

Arthur Chickering proposed seven vectors that contribute to the formation of college student identity. These vectors all move in the direction of establishing identity, but they do not necessarily align neatly in a straight line. He called these vectors “major highways for journeying toward individualism” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 35). So there are turns, curves, and speed bumps on the journey that are different for everyone. Chickering and Reisser attempt to depict a picture of psychological development during the college years. Boivin, Fountain, & Baylis (2000) use Chickering’s vectors in their research on first and second year students that stopped attending college. They found that first and second year students leave college for different reasons.
The seven vectors are (a) developing competence, (b) managing emotions, (c) moving through autonomy, (d) developing mature interpersonal relationships, (e) establishing identity, (f) developing purpose, and (g) developing integrity. In the developing competence vector students move from lack of confidence and competence in intellectual, physical, and interpersonal abilities to a high level in each area of competence and confidence. During the managing emotion vector students move away from having little awareness of their feelings and having little control over their emotions – fear, anxiety, anger leading to aggression, guilt, and sexual or romantic attraction - and move towards appropriate and controlled expression and an increasing awareness and acceptance of emotions. The moving through autonomy toward interdependence vector brings students from emotional dependence and lack of self-directed problem solving skills to freedom from having to seek outward reassurance and more awareness and acceptance of interdependence. In the developing mature interpersonal relationships vector students develop a tolerance and appreciation of differences and an ability for healthy intimacy.

Boivin, Fountain, & Baylis (2000) contend that Chickering’s first four vectors lead up to sophomore year, but students are not yet to the developing purpose vector thus students experience a crisis when they are searching for purpose and they do not feel like they can find it. The next vector is establishing identity, at this time a student’s confusion and uneasiness with who they are, is starting to evolve into comfort, acceptance for self, and clarity of who they are and want to be. During the next vector, developing purpose, students move from not having clear career goals and meaningful personal interests and commitments to well thought out career goals, participation and investment in activities.
and strong interpersonal and family commitments. The final vector is developing integrity. During the final vector students have the capacity to affirm their own values while respecting others beliefs, social responsibility, and knowledge of their authentic self.

Perry’s Theory on Intellectual and Ethical Development

Schaller and Wagner (2007) contend in their research it is clear that traditional age sophomore students experience a change in their epistemology. Perry’s (1970) theory on intellectual and ethical development serves as a framework for research on the identity development of college students. Perry’s model suggests that there are three fundamental stages of development in the way a student views the world. The first is duality. Students begin college with a basic duality. Dualistic thinking is based on absolute truths and tends to be very black and white or seen in terms of right or wrong. There is little capacity for gray areas or flexible judgments (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Perry, 1970).

The transition to the next stage occurs when the student realizes that authority figures, parents, or experts do not have all the answers or they question the answers they are provided. Once this realization occurs, it often confuses the student until the student discovers multiplicity. When students are in multiplicity stages things are no longer black and white, but exist in various shades of gray. All opinions and views are seen by the student to be valid and worth exploration. Students begin to think more independently, not waiting for authority figures, parents, or experts to provide them with information. Students also begin to see each other as sources of knowledge (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Perry, 1970).
Relativism is the next stage in Perry’s theory. Multiplists develop into relativists when students realize the need to support opinions. Students no longer see all perspectives and opinions as equality valid. Relativists are able to see arguments and assertions at face value and are able to utilize their analytical skills in this process (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Perry, 1970). Boivin, Fountain, & Baylis (2000) contend that sophomores are still functioning with a dualist perspective. Students in the sophomore year have not yet made the transition into multiplists. This demonstrated the support that is needed from the university to foster student progress from dualism to relativism.

Epistemological Reflection Model

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition in a 2006 Teleconference and Webcast Series titled: The Forgotten Student, Understanding and Supporting Sophomores recommends participants reference Baxter-Magolda (1992) and the Epistemological Reflection Model when addressing the needs of sophomore students. Identity development is an important piece to understanding student needs and concerns. Baxter-Magolda suggests students are in several stages of knowing: absolute, transitional, independent, and contextual knowing. There are five domains of knowing; role of the learner, role of peers, role of instructor, evaluation, and nature of knowledge. Recognizing these domains allows for better understanding of the transitions students are experiencing throughout their college career. It is not only the environment around them is that changing from year-to-year it also how they process information and define knowledge.
Baxter-Magolda’s (1992) research also suggests strategies to foster cocurricular education. These strategies fall under the categories of peer relationships, student organizations, living arrangements, internships, employment, educational advising, general campus environment, and international and/or cultural exchange experiences. The research provides a framework to faculty members and higher education administrators to evaluate classroom effectiveness and student services.

Gardner (2000), in his research at a large public university in the Midwest, utilized the Epistemological Reflection Model as a framework to study how students approach learning through their college experience. He found that sophomores reported they spent most of their time memorizing material for class and when asked for their preferred strategy for learning, more than 60% listed memorizing as their first or second choice. Sophomores preferred strategies that required the least engagement in academic work. This suggests that sophomores are not moving through the domains of learning at a steady pace and may even revert to learning strategies reinforced in high school during the sophomore year.

Summary of the Literature Review

Retention is many times the driving force behind setting institutional priorities, thus meeting the needs of freshman students has become priority for most institutions. There is a rich history of research and experience to draw from when designing programs to support freshman students during the transition from high school to college. There are many support systems that have been heavily researched such as freshman seminar classes and learning communities. Research shows that freshman programs have
succeeded in boosting freshman retention rates, but the question arises have these specialized programs simply pushed the retention problems to the sophomore year?

Sophomore student data shows through student satisfaction research and retention trends there is a consequence to focusing a disproportionate amount of institutional resources on freshman students thus ignoring sophomore students. Sophomore students are struggling to find the support that was so readily available during the first year. A select group of researchers are engaged in the sophomore discussion, but signs, symptoms, and causes of the sophomore slump still lack clear definitions and solutions. There is little research and assessment data about sophomore interventions that have been successful in increasing sophomore retention and fully addressing the sophomore slump.

Tinto’s theory of departure and Astin’s theory of involvement serve as formidable research that guide researchers and serve as a framework for further study. Student involvement and departure behavior are necessary pieces in further exploring the needs of sophomore students. The work of Perry and Chickering serve as a basis to understanding the identity development of sophomore student. Schaller’s developmental model for sophomore students provides specific information about where sophomore students are at in their development process. Schaller also identifies specific characteristics for each stage and suggests optimal learning environments to support based on where students are at in the process. Baxter-Magolda addresses the idea of the changes that are occurring in students knowing and reasoning. Baxter-Magolda suggests that a student’s way of knowing and reasoning evolve over the college experience. This research indicates that it is not only necessary to recognize the factors within the educational institution that
change during the sophomore year, but also the changes in development that are happening within the student and how that changes the sophomore experience.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Context of the Study

This study was conducted at Rowan University, in Glassboro, New Jersey. Glassboro is located in Southern New Jersey between Philadelphia and Atlantic City and is a mixture of suburban and rural areas. Rowan is a selective medium-sized public university that enrolls approximately 10,000 full time and part time students. The university offers 42 undergraduate majors and six academic colleges - Business, Communication, Education, Engineering, Fine & Performing Arts, and Liberal Arts & Sciences. The university also offers 38 master’s degrees, 19 graduate certification programs and a doctoral program of study in educational leadership (http://www.rowan.edu/pdf/factsheet20062007.pdf).

Rowan University has a first year experience program that utilizes first year seminar classes to aid in the transition from high school to college. Furthermore, all first year residential students, approximately 1,000, live within five residence halls. Freshman residential students living in these communities are supported with required tailored programming opportunities geared to meet the needs of freshman students and staff members in these buildings are specifically trained to deal with freshman-specific concerns. In Mimosa Hall, a typical first year residence hall at Rowan University the student to staff ratio is 28:1 (http://www.rowan.edu/studentaffairs/reslife/documents/RL_Handbook.pdf).
Freshman students that are unmarried, of full-time status, and live farther than a 40 mile radius from the university are required to live on campus (http://www.rowan.edu/studentaffairs/reslife/faqs/index.htm#campus).

The five freshman residence halls contain five learning communities. The learning communities are designated by major and consist of one or two linked courses and faulty involvement outside the classroom. The living learning communities provide opportunities for students to connect with fellow students and faculty (http://www.rowan.edu/studentaffairs/learningCommunity/).

All upper class residential students including sophomores are housed throughout three on campus apartment complexes, one town house complex, and two residence halls. All upper class students are housed together; students are not clustered by class year and learning communities are not available for upper class students. Students living in most on campus apartment and townhouse complexes do not have required programming opportunities and the staff to student ratio is much higher than first year halls. For example in the on campus, Edgewood Park Apartment complex the student to staff ratio is 96:1 (http://www.rowan.edu/studentaffairs/reslife/faqs/index.htm#campus).

As of September of 2007 the Vice President for Student Affairs Office has established a new sophomore experience program, “Achieving MORE in SophoMORE” to specifically support sophomore students at Rowan University. The program is designed to foster directed exploration of self, academic plans, and career plans, to create a collaborative support network of faculty, administration, and staff, and to provide information and resources supporting sophomores through specific transitional issues such as choosing a major and study abroad opportunities. The program consists of large
scale programs and a dialog based programming series
(http://www.rowan.edu/studentaffairs/sophomore/index.html).

Population and Sample Selection

The available population for this study was selected students of sophomore status enrolled at Rowan University during the 2007-2008 academic year. There were approximately 2,000 students of sophomore status, earning 25 to 57.99 credits, enrolled during the spring semester at Rowan University. Five students of sophomore status were selected to be a part of the sample. Five different students were chosen to provide a diverse perspective and understanding of the lived experience of a student in the sophomore year at Rowan University. A five member sample was chosen to allow the researcher to have data for comparison and theme recognition, yet be able to individually sit down with each participant for at least a 60 minute interview three times throughout the spring semester. Interviews took place in January, February, and March.

Purposive sampling was utilized to construct the sample population. Each participant was chosen because they provided a unique lived experience to the study. Two male and three were female students were chosen to ensure the equal representation of gender within the study. Different racial, ethnic and age populations were included to ensure diversity within the sample. The intent was to select students that would represent a cross section of sophomore students. For example, each of the five participants represented different campus populations and experiences such as transfer, residential, commuter, student employee, non-traditional student, Greek membership and leaders or members of campus organizations.
Instrumentation

The instruments used to assess students' experiences as sophomores were adapted from interview questions used in a previous study on sophomore attrition (Gohn, Swartz, & Donnelly, 2001) and questions and format taken from Baxter-Magola (1992). The questions from the previous studies were updated, modified and formulated to encourage sophomore students described their sophomore experience and specific issues identified in Pattengale's (2000) research describing the "sophomore slump." There were three interview schedules, one for each interview in January, February, and March.

The schedules (Appendix A) consisted of nine questions each and focused on different areas during each session. In the first session in January, questions focused on academic experience, in the second session in February, questions focused on experiences outside the classroom, and in the last session in March, the focus was on the student's development. All the questions were used during each interview, but the order was not rigidly followed. If the student introduced an area of interest in the course of their response the interviewer was free to make a transition to that subject. The follow-up questions were only used when the students did not initiate discussion in those areas.

The interviews focused on allowing students to tell their stories and describe their lived experience as sophomore students through describing events in the sophomore year, the student's role in these events and the university's role. To determine content validity, the researcher had a sophomore student at Rowan University examine the questions for readability and general content. The researcher also had a faculty member at Rowan University in Educational Leadership Department examine and give feedback about the instruments. This faculty member is an expert in higher education, research, and
evaluation strategies. Following approval from the Institutional Review Board of Rowan University (Appendix B) interviews were conducted.

Data Collection

Signed consent forms were collected before all interviews conducted (Appendix C). The interviews took place in January, February, and March 2008. All interviews were conducted in a conference room located in room 218 Savtiz Hall at Rowan University. Interviews usually lasted approximately 45 minutes in length. The interviews were recorded with a digital recorder then transcribed by the researcher. Field notes were utilized to document participants’ body language and nonverbal communication.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data methods were used when analyzing field notes and scripted interview data. The content analysis procedure began with the interview data being transcribed and organized by question. The data were then read through and key words and phrases were noted in the left margin. From analyzing these key words and phrases a coding scheme was developed. The coding scheme was developed from examining the key words and phrases and grouping these into suitable categories in conjunction with Baxter- Magolda (1992) and the Epistemological Reflection Model was used as a framework to develop categories and a coding scheme. This set of categories was analyzed based on frequency, relationship among categories, themes, and patterns that may suggest generalizations and recommendations (Sisco, 1981, Appendix D).
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Study findings are the result of participant interviews that were collected over a three month period in the spring 2008 semester. Each student was interviewed once a month for three months. Interviews were completed to identify experiences of sophomore students in and out of the classroom during the sophomore year and how these experiences may contribute to student success. Additionally, how the experiences of sophomore students may contribute to development of identity or self-concept. Interviews were transcribed and interpreted using content analysis (Sisco, 1981).

Profile of the Sample

The participants in this study were all sophomore students at Rowan University defined by having successfully completed between 24 and 57.99 credits. Five students were interviewed and all students completed three interviews. The five students that participated in the interviews were a purposeful sample since they represented a diverse sample of sophomore students on campus.

Of the five students interviewed, two of the participants self identified as male and three self identified as female. Two of the participants were minority students – one student self identified as African American and one student self identified as Caribbean American. Three of the participants self identified as white. The sample consisted of students that were transfer students, native students, residential students, commuter students, student employees, Greek Organization members and leaders, Student
Government Association officials, and members of various campus organizations and club sports. All participants’ GPA were between 2.0 and 3.6 and five different majors were represented – chemistry, undeclared, business, sociology, and health and exercise science. Participants were involved in varying levels in high school and all participants were between the ages of 19-23. All participants are New Jersey natives and live within 2 hours and 30 minutes from Rowan University. Two students self identified as being from an urban area and three students identified as being from a suburban area.

Analysis of the Data

Research Question 1: What are the experiences of selected sophomores in the classroom during the sophomore year that contributes to student success at Rowan University?

“As you think about yourself in the classroom, what are the most beneficial experiences you have had during your sophomore year?”

Table 4.1 contains the results of the selected sophomores when discussing beneficial experiences in the classroom. Teaching strategies, professors attitudes, professor – student interactions and classroom structure were the four main themes discussed. Students identified teaching strategies with the highest frequency and classroom structure at the lowest frequency. An interviewee described a beneficial experience inside the classroom that contributed to his success. “If I had a problem I felt comfortable talking to the professor after class. After class, we walked in the same direction, so I would talk to him. He is an awesome guy and I always left that class happy.” Another interviewee described a beneficial experience in the classroom, “the professor always had a good story or way of applying real life situations to what we were
learning that day. I appreciate him very much for that because it helped me learn the concepts.”

Table 4.1

Perceived Beneficial Experiences in the Classroom of Selected Sophomores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Strategies</td>
<td>Class discussion</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Real life examples</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One-on-one attention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visual stimulation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career connections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interesting content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors Attitudes</td>
<td>Helpfulness</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passion about topic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Energetic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor-Student Interactions</td>
<td>Get to know them</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making time to talk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being a mentor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Structure</td>
<td>Able to meet new people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“As you think about yourself in the classroom, what are the most challenging experiences you have had during your sophomore year?”

Table 4.2 contains the results of the selected sophomores when discussing challenging experiences in the classroom. Role of the learner, nature of knowledge, teaching strategies, professor attitudes, professor – student interactions, and classroom structure were the six main themes discussed. Students identified role of the learner with the highest frequency and classroom structure at the lowest frequency.
A chemistry major interviewee described a challenging experience inside the classroom. "I just have to understand that chemistry is always changing. The octet rule does not apply at all anymore – the rule you learned in the 5th grade. My grade school teachers were lying to me, the rule is not true. Everything is changing; there is not just one answer all the time." Another interview described a challenging experience in the classroom. "I am not used to all this work, but I am doing better at managing my time. I am looking at my syllabus and trying to figure out what I need to do for my classes, that is an improvement."

Table 4.2

*Perceived Challenging Experiences in the Classroom of Selected Sophomores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role of the Learner</td>
<td>Staying motivated</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taking responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Knowledge</td>
<td>Comfortable with complexity/ambiguity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New perspectives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Strategies</td>
<td>No real life connection</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boring content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Memorization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor Attitudes</td>
<td>Not caring about students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor-Student Interactions</td>
<td>No connection to professor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Structure</td>
<td>Burdensome work load</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Can you tell me about your perspective on how the value of things you have learned in the past semester inside the classroom?"
Table 4.3 contains the results of the selected sophomores when discussing the value of things learned in the classroom. Role of the learner, nature of knowledge, role of instructor, and role of peers were the four main themes discussed. Students identified role of the learner with the highest frequency and role of instructor and role of peers were identified at the lowest frequency.

An interviewee described the value he places on things inside the classroom. “Last semester was so incredibly difficult; I had three labs and 18 credit hours of intensive engineering courses. It was the hardest thing I have ever done, but it was also the most rewarding. I am not even going to be an engineer anymore, but I learned I can do anything I want. I just have to work hard.” Another interview described the value a student places on the things learned in the classroom. “My history teacher taught us things that other teachers do not. We learned about people and cultures different from our own. I valuing learn about real and interesting things, not just silly dates and battles that do not mean anything to me.”

Table 4.3

*Perceived Value Placed on Things Learned in the Classroom of Selected Sophomores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Knowledge</td>
<td>Application to life situations</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Application to career goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Application to major goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenging/Rewarding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interesting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Learner</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishing priorities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choosing attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Instructor</td>
<td>Establish connection</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Peers</td>
<td>Learn from another</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Can you tell me about the most significant aspect of your year thus far?”

Three out of the five interviewees talked about the most significant aspect of their sophomore year being related to their academic experience. An interviewee described her sophomore experience. “I got a big surprise because when I first came here I only got three ratings (average) on my program evaluations, now I am getting all four’s (good) and five’s (excellent). I feel like I am moving up in the world and actually making progress towards this degree.” Another interviewee described the most significant part of his sophomore year thus far. “This year I am trying to increase my GPA - plain and simple. I need a 3.0 GPA to student teach and I have a lot of work to do to reach that. I am retaking all the classes I failed my freshman year, so this year I just have to be motivated and pass these classes.” An interviewee described a significant element of her sophomore year. “I have to find an internship. It is hard because Rowan is not helping me since it is not a requirement of my Chemistry major, but I want to do any internship so I have some real experience. I have been calling companies and trying to make contact for an internship. It has been very difficult.”

“What do you expect from instructors, professors, and or teachers?”

All interviewees expressed an expectation for instructors to be knowledgeable about their subject area, interested or passionate about the material being presented, present the material in innovative ways, and be understanding and supportive of students. All five students said that some instructors do meet their expectations, but all do not. Overall, students were more satisfied than unsatisfied with instructors. An interviewee discussed his expectation of instructors. “I think Mr. Miller and I both expect things from each other. I would go for help during his office hours and he would always push
me to understand. He would never just give me the answer, which I think is important. He made me understand by asking me questions. That helped me learn the concepts.”

Another interview described his expectations for instructors. “I expect instructors to make class engaging. It is hard to pay attention when you are just sitting there being lectured at. I like discussion and participation. When I enjoy the classes I am in I actually get better grades!” An interview described her expectations of instructors. “I expect my instructors to be understanding. All the classes I am in are only about 30 students, so I think there should be a lot of one-on-one attention and that is what Rowan is known for anyway. My friends at Penn State have about 200 people in all their classes, since there are small classes here I expect instructors to be more intone with me and what I need.”

Research Question 2: What are the experiences of selected sophomores outside the classroom during the sophomore year that contributes to student success at Rowan University?

“As you think about yourself outside the classroom what are the most beneficial experiences you have had during your sophomore year?”

Table 4.4 contains the results of the selected sophomores when discussing beneficial experiences outside the classroom. Student organizations, peer relationships, employment, and housing were the four main themes discussed. Students identified Student organizations with the highest frequency and housing at the lowest frequency.

An interviewee described a beneficial experience outside the classroom. “I have really enjoyed working on campus. I have been able to meet many new people and it has been great making new connections with administrators.” Another interviewee described
Table 4.4

Perceived Beneficial Experiences Outside the Classroom of Selected Sophomores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Organizations</td>
<td>Student Government</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PROS, SOCA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Relationships</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>On campus</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Starting own business</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>On/Off campus</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"As you think about yourself outside the classroom what are the most challenging experiences you have had during your sophomore year?"

Table 4.5 contains the results of the selected sophomores when discussing challenging experiences outside the classroom. Student organizations, housing, and peer relationships were the three main themes discussed. Students identified student organizations and housing with the highest frequency and peer relationships at the lowest frequency.

An interviewee described a challenging experience outside the classroom. "A huge challenge for me was dealing with not getting along with the roommates in my apartment. It was a terrible situation. I had never lived away from home before, so I was used to a certain way of living. I really tried to expand my horizons, but there are some things I cannot live with." Another interviewee described a challenging experience outside the classroom. "I have learned this year that is it important to know who my true
friends are and to surround myself with people that want me to make good choices and succeed. It turns out not everyone is watching out for your best interests and it was a wake up call to learn that."

Table 4.5

*Perceived Challenging Experiences Outside the Classroom of Selected Sophomores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>Roommate conflict</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding a roommate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilities concerns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Organizations</td>
<td>Greek life problems</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not enough time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motivating other people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Relationships</td>
<td>Creating healthy relationships</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Have you identified anyone on one campus you look to for guidance?”

Table 4.6 contains the results of the selected sophomores when discussing identifying mentors on campus. Peer relationships, faculty, and administrators/staff were the three themes discussed. Students identified peer relationships at the highest frequency and administrative staff at the lowest. An interviewee described his experience with mentoring. “I am part of the Harvey Flack mentoring program, so from day one I have had people to go to on campus that could help me out and show me the ropes. Dr. Coaxum is my faculty mentor and he knows a lot about Rowan and he has can made sure I am pointed in the right direction. Another interviewee described her mentors on campus. “I always talk to my friends and boyfriend when I need guidance. If there are things that are stressing me out with classes, SGA, or my sorority they are good at
listening to me and helping me work through it. I also talk to the senior class president on SGA when I am frustrated with the organization. He gives me a good perspective.”

Table 4.6

**Identified On-Campus Mentors of Selected Sophomores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer Relationships</td>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boyfriend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SGA Officer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Faculty from class</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty - mentoring program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators/ Staff</td>
<td>Administrator - mentoring program</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“What is your perspective on the value of things you have learned in the last semester outside the classroom?”

Table 4.7 contains the results of the selected sophomores when discussing the perceived value placed on things learned outside the classroom. Peer relationships, student organizations, general campus environment, and employment were the four themes discusses. Students identified peer relationships as what they valued at the highest frequency and employment at the lowest frequency.

An interviewee discussed the value placed on things learned outside the classroom. “I value being a campus leader. You have to learn how to deal with all different kinds of people and that is no easy task. I have realized that not every thinks like me and knowing that know I am better at compromise.” Another interviewee described what he values outside the classroom. “From working on campus I know it is important to develop yourself outside the classroom and work on your interpersonal
skills. I know I am going to need to sell myself in an interview even though I have good grades. People need to understand it is not all about grades – grades are important – but it is the outside of the classroom stuff that gets you a great job.”

Table 4.7

*Perceived Value Placed on Things Learned Outside the Classroom of Selected Sophomores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer Relationships</td>
<td>Friends in general</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding friends that care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making lasting friendships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trust/Respect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Organizations</td>
<td>Gaining leadership skills</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making connections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Serving the community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Campus Environment</td>
<td>Making good choices</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Balancing commitments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being your own advocate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Intrapersonal skills</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There are more than grades</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Have you ever thought about transferring?”

Four out of the five interviewees said they had thought about transferring. All interviewees stated different reason for considering transferring such as: Program of study better at other universities, disappointed in the Greek life system, poor academic performance, financial reasons, and disagreement with policies and procedures. The one interviewee that said she had never thought about transferring explained why. “I have just never thought about transferring. Rowan is a little further away from home that I would like, but I do not even know where else I would go.”
One of the transfer interviewees described why she thought about transferring from Rowan. “Sometimes I just want to go home, but that would be pointless. I have already transferred once and I am not going to lose credits again! I would rather just stick it out. The first transition was really hard, so I have just decided I am going to graduate from here.” Another interviewee described why she has thought about transferring. “The College of New Jersey has a stronger science program and they actually have the specific major I am interested in, so I have thought about going there. Also, the Greek life here is not really what I thought it would be. Organizations are always getting in trouble and the rules are always changing. There are just so many bad things going on with Greek life at Rowan. It just makes me wonder what else is out there.” An interviewee described why he considered transferring. “I have thought about just going to a community college because I was not sure if I wanted to stay here. Now I think about it because of my parents. They are very upset because I am not doing well in my classes. They feel like I am wasting their money. I do not even want people to give me money for college, but they do. That means I need to meet their expectations.”

“Is there anything else you would like to share with me to help me understand your sophomore experience outside the classroom?”

Three of the five students interviewed discussed the recent death of sophomore student Donnie Farrell. On October 27, 2007 Donnie Farrell was brutally attacked on campus and died several days later (http://www.rowan.edu/farrell/). An interviewee described how the incident shaped her sophomore experience. “The death of Donnie Farrell was challenging. It was difficult to decide how to react. Some people started hating the Rowan and other people worked to make things better. It is a terrible thing
that happened and it just makes you think.” Another interviewee described her experience. “Before Donnie died, I do not think Rowan police really cared about safety. I think they were more interested in busting people for having a red cup (beer) in their hand. They say (Rowan) there were more than enough police on campus the night he was assaulted, but where were they? They were probably breaking up some party that was not hurting anyone to begin with.” Another interviewee explained her sophomore experience. “Donnie being killed was terrible. Rowan says they are doing all these things to make the campus safer, but it all seems empty. A student was killed on our campus and we are going to put up more lights and buy some station wagons to pick up drunken people from parties. I’m sorry, but I do not think they care. Those are not responses that make me feel like I matter and Donnie matters.”

Research Question 3: What are the experiences of selected sophomores at Rowan University that contribute to development of identity and self-concept?

“Are you the same person you were your first year in college?”

Table 4.8 contains results of students when thinking if they are the same person as they were as a first year student. All interviewees responded – no – they are not the same person. The table identifies the epistemological domains where the students found differences. Students identified role of the learner at the highest frequency and role of peers at the lowest frequency.

An interviewee described how the difference between their first year and second year. “I am not the same person I was my first year in college. When I came to college I did not have a direction. I think I was in college because I thought everyone goes to college and my parents wanted me to. Now I am in college because I want to be here and
I want to succeed. I know college is a part of that.” Another interviewee described the difference between her first and second year. “I am more confident now. My first year I was worried what people would think of me for running for an SGA position, now I think people would be surprised if I did not run for an office. I feel like I have made name for myself and I am confident in that name.”

Table 4.8

*Responses to the Question, “Are you the same person you were your first year in college?”*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role of Learner</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting expectations set by self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motivated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goal Oriented</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maturity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have more direction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More invested in college</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dealing with disappointment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Knowledge</td>
<td>Can answer own questions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accountable for having knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have more experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wiser</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Know strengths and weaknesses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Money matters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gaining life skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Peers</td>
<td>Importance of choosing friends</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being in healthy relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“What role has Rowan played in formulating your identity?”

Table 4.9 contains the results of the selected sophomores when discussing Rowan’s role in identity development. Each interviewee expressed different ideas about the concept of identity and Rowan’s role in identity development, but overall the responses fell into two categories: career direction and knowledge of self. The concept of
career direction was discussed at a slightly higher frequency than knowledge of self, but
the two concepts were not discussed interchangeably. If a student discussed formulating
identity as figuring out career path, then he/she did not discuss knowing oneself better
and making different decisions based on that knowledge.

Three of the interviewees expressed not having thought about their identity and
these three interviewees related identity development to finding career direction. The
three interviewees that discussed this concept of identity self identify as Caucasian and
are from the suburbs. An interviewee discussed Rowan’s role in her identity
development. “I am really busy, so I have never really thought about my identity, but
over the summer I do think about what certain things will help me gain more skills and
experiences so I can build by resume. Now, I do not get involved in things on campus
that I am not going to get something out of that will make me more marketable in the
workforce.” Another interviewee discussed Rowan’s role in his identity development. “I
have never really thought about my identity. I know that being at Rowan has made me
realize what I do not want to do. Through taking a criminal justice class and an
accounting class I know I do not want to be a lawyer or accountant. I took one business
class and hated it, so now I know I do not want to go into business.” Another interviewee
discussed Rowan’s role in her identity development. “I had not really thought about what
my identity is. I know Rowan has played a role in me trying to figure out what kinds of
jobs I am interested in. I have also been trying to select a minor, so I have been trying to
figure out what employers in the health and exercise field want to see.”

The two interviewees that discussed the concept of knowing one’s self in relation
to identity development self identified as African American and Caribbean American and
were from urban areas. An interviewee discussed Rowan’s role in her identity
development. “I think education in general leads you to ask yourself who am I and where am I going. My dad would say the church plays this role, but I think the church just tells you who to be and you are expected to be that person. My classes and activities help build up something that is already inside of you, but you already have this. You just have to discover it.” Another interviewee discussed his perspective on Rowan’s role in identity development. “Rowan has played a role in my identity development because I think about the people I went to high school with and how different of a place they are in than me. I am not saying I will be more successful, but we have different priorities and think differently about ideas that we once agreed on. I think if you have the opportunity to go to college, you have the freedom to make your own choices and lifestyle. I have come to realize that the decisions you make will affect you later and help formulate who you are. I have thought about my identity just through coming to school and meeting different people. People from my background and different people. I am more confident now in who I am than I ever have been.”

Table 4.9

Perceived Role Rowan has Played in Formulating Sophomore Student Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career Direction</td>
<td>Interest areas from class</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding strengths and weaknesses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Getting new skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Self</td>
<td>Confident in self</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Embrace background</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intentional decision-making</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Do you feel supported and challenged to explore who you are at and by Rowan”
Four out of the five interviewees discussed that they do feel supported and challenged by Rowan to explore who they are, but they all expressed a similar idea of having to go to specific effort to be challenged and supported. An interviewee described the idea of challenging and supporting self. "I do feel supported and challenged, but I am always challenging myself to be better. I feel like at Rowan if you get good grades they leave you alone. There is nothing implemented to show Rowan is here for you and Rowan wants to push you to do this or to be better. For example, my meetings with my academic advisor are in and out. I get 30 minutes with him and that is it. The advisor is just telling me what classes to take to graduate, and I can read that online by myself. My advisor does not know anything about me or care about me for that matter."

Another interviewee discussed being challenged and supported by Rowan. "I think if you get involved on campus then you are supported and challenged, but if you are not involved you are left out in the cold. I do not know if they emphasize the importance of getting involved enough. To get involved you have to put yourself out there. You might have to go to a meeting where you do not know anyone and some people fear situations like that. Involvement challenges you to take action and be committed to something else other than yourself. The problem is you have to take the initiative to get involved in the first place. Another interviewee described her experience at Rowan. "I think Rowan genuinely wants you to do well, to prosper, to be happy. But you have to put that work in yourself. Rowan does not do anything for you, and maybe they should not. I do not know. But I do know that you are the master of your own destiny. You have to make it happen."
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Study

This study investigated the sophomore experience at Rowan University through the perspective of selected sophomores. The study was designed to understand a sophomore’s lived experience and allow students to reflect on their sophomore year while living it and identify experiences that contributed to the sophomore experience and identity development. The participants of the study were students that had completed 24 and 57.99 credits at Rowan University, defining them as sophomores, during the 2007-2008 spring semester. Three nine question interview schedules were completed and all subjects had one interview in January, February, and March of 2008. Fifteen interviews were completed during three month span in the spring semester.

Qualitative research analysis and coding were used to analyze the data from the transcribed interview sessions. Frequency of themes identified was compiled in table form to show the variety of themes identified and significance of each category. Direct quotes were also used to demonstrate the student’s responses and perspective of their sophomore year.

Discussion of the Findings

Selected sophomores identified teaching strategies, professor attitudes, professor student interactions, and classroom structure to be significant elements of beneficial experiences in the classroom. These were four out of the five themes addressed in
Baxter-Magolda (1992) and the Epistemological Reflection Model, but the Rowan students did not address the fifth theme of evaluation in any of the responses. The data suggest that the classroom experience contributes to student success. When students are engaged by professors with positive attitudes, involved in active classrooms, encouraged to work with peers, and able to get to know the faculty member these themes contribute to a beneficial classroom experiences for sophomores. Also, the data suggests that teaching strategies were significant to the classroom experience.

The selected sophomores discussed challenging experiences inside the classroom. The categories that were discussed by the interviewees included the four categories that were addressed in the beneficial experiences - teaching strategies, professor attitudes, professor student interactions, and classroom structure – in addition to two more categories. The additional categories were the role of the learner and nature of knowledge. These two categories were discussed at the highest frequency demonstrating that classroom elements are important to the experience, but students also have internal struggles of self and knowledge that they are grappling with. Perry (1970) addresses these ideas in his model for intellectual and ethical development.

Nature of knowledge and role of the learner were again addressed at the highest frequency level when sophomores were asked to discuss the value they place on what they have learned in the classroom. Students saw value in knowledge when it was challenging or they could apply it to real life situation. Tinto (2002) challenges higher education institutions to that this idea of “relevant learning” into account with when designing support programs and academic curriculums. Students also valued things they were able to learn about themselves such as motivation and attitude. These findings
support previous studies conducted by Boivin, Fountain, & Baylis (2000), and Pattengale (2000). These studies suggest that sophomores are in a position where they are trying to define who they are and they are struggling to do so within the current design of academic curriculum and student services processes and systems. Schaller’s (2005) study suggests in a developmental model for sophomores that students are most challenged by self, friends, and future and as this challenge occurs they learn more about themselves and others.

Selected sophomores identified student organizations, peer relationships, employment, and housing as beneficial experiences that contributed to experience outside the classroom. Student organizations and peer relationships were discussed at the highest frequency level. These findings support Astin’s (1993) theory of student involvement. Astin (1993) suggests students benefit from being involved on campus. The challenges sophomores identified during the sophomore year were similar to the benefits with the exception that housing was discussed at the highest frequency level as being a challenge. This demonstrates the importance of student services offered at Rowan and more attention needs to be placed on the process in which this takes place.

Selected sophomore identified peer relationships as their on-campus mentors at the highest frequency level. This suggests that students have formed strong relationships with each other, but also raises the question are student the best mentors for each other? Baxter-Magolda (1992) suggests that strong relationships should be formed with faculty and administration. Selected sophomores also identified peer relationships to be something they most valued outside the classroom. This suggests that students are
forming connections with each other, but are they forming connections with the university as a whole and are the support systems in place?

All participants indicated that they are different people now than when they started school as first-year students. The data suggest that students see themselves, knowledge, and peers differently than when they began. This suggests that students are in process of forming personal identity, but it may not be an intentional process supported by the university. Chickering & Reisser (1993) discuss the vectors that all students move in the direction of to establishing identity. This is discussed as the “major highway for journeying toward individualism.” The students seem to be moving in this process, but they are in different places.

The majority of selected students see identity development as career direction while a minority discussed the concept in relation to knowing one’s self. The same majority of students said they had never really thought about their identity before the interviewer asked the question. Whereas, the same minority said they had thought about their identity. Chickering & Reisser (1993), Perry (1970), and Baxter-Magolda (1992) would all suggest that the participants are in different places in their identity development and that the students all need to be encouraged to grapple with ideas of self in relation to the world.

Conclusions

The results of this study generally indicate there is a need for more intentional attention to be placed on sophomore students at Rowan University. The data suggests that teaching strategies, professor attitudes, professor-student interactions, and classroom structure contribute to beneficial classroom experiences. The study also demonstrates
that sophomores consider their own role in learning to be the most challenging classroom experience. Sophomores described staying motivated, time management skills, and taking responsibility for their actions to be the most challenging aspect of the classroom experience. Sophomores reported valuing their classroom experience specifically when it is applicable to real life, challenging, interesting, and rewarding. These are all ideas presented by Baxter-Magolda (1992) in recommendations for curricular education.

The study demonstrates student organization involvement, peer relationships, employment, and housing contribute to beneficial experiences outside the classroom. It is important to note that establishing a mentor was not indicated to be a beneficial experience of sophomores outside the classroom. The research suggests that housing was the most challenging experience outside the classroom for sophomores. When selected sophomores were specifically asked to discuss who their mentors on campus were they identified peers at the highest frequency. The data suggest that students do value experiences outside the classroom. Peer relationships, student organizations, general campus environment, and employment were the outside the classroom experiences that students value most. Astin’s (1993) student involvement theory reinforces the importance of these experiences, but it also suggests that having a mentor on campus such as a faculty member or administrator is very a significant and beneficial experience for college students.

The research suggests that sophomores do feel they are different people as sophomores than they were as first year college students. Sophomores indicate difference in themselves as learners, understanding the nature of knowledge, and roles of peers. The data indicate that the majority of sophomores interpret identity in relation to
career direction while a minority of sophomores interpret identity in relation to knowledge of self. The data indicate that sophomores are in different developmental positions. This is consistent with Perry (1970) and Baxter-Magolda (1992).

Recommendations for Practice

Based upon the findings and conclusions of the study, the following suggestions are presented for better practice and support of sophomore students.

The Rowan community needs to place a greater emphasis on the second year and beyond. This spotlight needs to be shown from the top down. Institutional processes such as course registration, academic advising, and housing assignments need to be reviewed and updated to reflect the unique needs of sophomore students. Seniority based systems will always leave sophomore students with the short end of the stick being the lowest ranking upper-class students. Ironically, seniority based systems serve mostly junior and senior populations and these students are supposed to have the most knowledge and capital within the university.

During this review process and in every day practice administrators and faculty need to take into consideration student development and identity development aspects of all students. Policies, procedures, and systems need to be designed with a philosophy in mind that puts students first— all students - first year students as well as upper-class students. This philosophy needs to be student centered and used to design meaningful and intentional experiences for all students at Rowan University that supports persistence until graduation. The spot-light needs to be placed on the needs of Rowan students, not on whims, wants, and financial priorities of college administrators. Rowan needs to center itself on the needs of its students. This will allow students to be truly valued and
respected members of the university community. In turn, this will allow Rowan students to not simply invest financially in Rowan, but invest as proud community members.

Rowan also has the obligation and responsibility to provide opportunities for self discovery and identity exploration to students. These opportunities should be built into the college experience through academic course content and discussion, involvement opportunities, and one-on-one interaction with Rowan University community members – faculty, administrators, staff, and peers. Rowan University needs to engage students in discussion that allows students to ask themselves, who am I? Why is this important to me? What is important to me? Who do I want to become?

Lastly, none of the selected students that participated in the study mentioned the new sophomore experience program “Achieving MORE in SophoMORE” as a resource or support for sophomore students on campus. The program should be continued to be advertized so sophomore students know it exists. The program should be updated to reflect the needs of students not only through presenting events, but through seeking to create intentional educational interactions with students. An example of this might be creating a mentoring program with Glassboro High School sophomores and Rowan University sophomores. This would allow Rowan sophomores to reflect on where they are while serving the community and mentoring young high school students into college.

These types of interactions allow students to reflect on who they are and also their place in the community. Another example might be providing adventure opportunities for sophomore students. Hiking, camping, and other travel opportunities with faculty, administrators, and peers are wonderful and intentional ways of providing students with
educational interactions that foster exploration. Interactions and opportunities such as these would make the program truly meaningful and student centered.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based upon the findings and conclusions of the study, the following suggestions are presented.

1. Further studies should be conducted with a larger population to confirm the findings of this research.

2. A series of interviews could be done using the same subjects over an entire academic year or more to conduct a more in depth study.

3. A study could be done on specific categories that students identified as contributing to their experience during the sophomore year to identify further implications and significance within sophomore year.

4. An additional study could be done with juniors to see the difference between the two perspectives.

5. Further research and investigation needs to be done to explore opportunities to involve, engage, and support sophomore students at Rowan University not simply to continue their education at Rowan, but to grow personally.
REFERENCES


Tinto, V. (2002) Taking Student Retention Seriously: Rethinking the First Year of
APPENDIX A

Interview Instruments
Interview Schedule
January Session

Introduction

This interview is intended to solicit your ideas about your sophomore year. It will be an open ended interview in order to allow you every opportunity to offer your ideas on each aspect of the experiences that we discuss. Feel free to talk about any experiences or ideas that come to mind as we discuss each area.

1. Were you looking forward to returning to Rowan for your sophomore year?
2. Tell me about the most significant aspect of your sophomore year thus far.
3. As you think about yourself in the classroom what are the most beneficial experiences you have had during your sophomore year.
4. As you think about yourself in the classroom, what has been most challenging?
5. Let’s talk about instructors. What do you expect from them and what do you think they expect from you? (Follow up if necessary: Do you meet each other’s expectations?)
6. Discuss your perspective on the value of the things you have learned in the past semester inside the classroom.
7. I am interested in your perspective on how best to make decisions. Can you describe an important academic decision you have made this year so far and talk about how you went about it?
8. Would you change your mind about any of your academic decisions thus far?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share to help me understand your perspective on your academic experience in the last semester?

Closure

Thank you very much for your time and willingness to share your ideas. As I said before your identity will be kept confidential.
Interview Schedule
February Session

Introduction

Thank you for continuing with the study. Your willingness to continue to participate makes it possible to learn more about the sophomore experience at Rowan University. This interview is intended to solicit your ideas about your sophomore year. It will be an open ended interview in order to allow you every opportunity to offer your ideas on each aspect of the experiences that we discuss. Feel free to talk about any experiences or ideas that come to mind as we discuss each area.

1. Have you ever thought about transferring? (Follow up if necessary: If so for what reasons?)
2. Are there any new developments in your world?
3. As you think about yourself outside the classroom what are the most beneficial experiences you have had during your sophomore year.
4. As you think about yourself outside the classroom, what has been most challenging?
5. Let’s talk about mentors. Have you identified anyone on campus that you look to for guidance? (Follow up if necessary: If so who and why, and if not who do they look to?)
6. Discuss your perspective on the value of the things you have learned in the past semester outside the classroom.
7. I am interested in your perspective on how best to make decisions. Can you describe an important decision you have made this year so far and talk about how you went about it?
8. Would you change your mind about any of the decisions thus far?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share to help me understand your perspective on your experience outside the classroom at Rowan?

Closure

Thank you very much for your time and willingness to share your ideas. As I said before your identity will be kept confidential.
Interview Schedule
March Session

Introduction

Thank you for continuing with the study. Your willingness to continue to participate makes it possible to learn more about the sophomore experience at Rowan University. This interview is intended to solicit your ideas about your sophomore year. It will be an open ended interview in order to allow you every opportunity to offer your ideas on each aspect of the experiences that we discuss. Feel free to talk about any experiences or ideas that come to mind as we discuss each area.

1. What are you looking forward to?
2. Are you the same person you were your first year in college?
3. What do you value most at Rowan and why?
4. What role has Rowan played in formulating your identity?
5. Do you think you make decisions the same way as when you were a first year student?
6. What kinds of relationships have you formed at Rowan and how have they changed, if they have at all?
7. Is Rowan giving you everything you need to be a successful sophomore?
8. Do you feel supported and challenged to explore who you are at and by Rowan?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share to help me understand your sophomore experience at Rowan?

Closure

Thank you very much for your time and willingness to share your ideas. As I said before your identity will be kept confidential.
APPENDIX B

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter
January 2, 2008

Sarah Beth Bailey
Rowan University, Box 58
200 Mullica Hill Road
Glassboro, NJ 08028

Dear Sarah Beth Bailey;

In accordance with the University’s IRB policies and 45 CFR 46, the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to inform you that the Rowan University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved your project:

IRB application number: 2008-083

Project Title: The Sophomore Experience at Rowan University from the Perspective of Selected Sophomores

In accordance with federal law, this approval is effective for one calendar year from the date of this letter. If your research project extends beyond that date or if you need to make significant modifications to your study, you must notify the IRB immediately. Please reference the above-cited IRB application number in any future communications with our office regarding this research.

Please retain copies of consent forms for this research for three years after completion of the research.

If, during your research, you encounter any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects, you must report this immediately to the Associate Provost for Research (856-256-4053).

If you have any questions, please contact Karen Heiser (heiser@rowan.edu or 856-256-4167).

Sincerely,

Roberta Dilioff, Ph.D.
Chair, Rowan University IRB

cc: Sisco, Burton, Educational Leadership, Education Hall
APPENDIX C

Subject Informed Consent Form
Informed Consent Form

I agree to participate in a research study entitled “The Sophomore Experience at Rowan University from the Perspective of Selected Sophomores”, which is being conducted by Sarah Beth Bailey as an assignment in fulfillment of the Master’s Degree in Higher Education Administration at Rowan University. The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of students during the sophomore year and how Rowan University supports sophomore students. The data collected in this study will be submitted as part of a thesis project.

I understand that my responses will be anonymous and that all data gathered will be confidential. I agree that any information obtained from this study may be used for publication or education purpose and that I will not be identified and my name not used.

I understand that there are no physical or psychological risks involved in this study, and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time.

If I have any questions or problems concerning my participation in this study I may contact Sarah Beth Bailey at (856) 256-4188 or Dr. Burton Sisco at (856) 256-4500, ext. 3717.

Signature of Participant ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Signature of Investigator ___________________________ Date ___________________________
The following decisions were made regarding what was to be the unit of data analysis (Sisco, 1981):

1. A phrase or clause will be the basic unit of analysis.
2. Verbiage not considered essential to the phrase or clause will be edited out – e.g., articles of speech, possessives, some adjectives, elaborative examples.
3. Where there is violation of convention syntax in the data it will be corrected.
4. Where there are compound thoughts in a phrase or clause, each unit of thought will be represented separately (unless one was an elaboration of another).
5. Where information seems important to add to the statement in order to clarify it in a context, this information will be added to the unit by using parentheses.

The following decisions were made regarding the procedures for the categorization of content units.

1. After several units are listed on a sheet of paper, they will be scanned in order to determine differences and similarities.
2. From this tentative analysis, logical categories will be derived from the units.
3. When additional units of data suggest further categories, they will be added to the classification scheme.
4. After all the units from a particular question responses are thus classified, the categories are further reduced to broader clusters (collapsing of categories).
5. Frequencies of the units in each cluster category are determined and further analysis steps are undertaken, depending on the nature of the data - - i.e.,
ranking of categories with verbatim quotes which represent the range of ideas or opinions (p. 177).