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# **A Cultural Model of the Social Universe at Lehigh University**

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Spring 2008



## **Introduction**

For my thesis I will be analyzing the social perceptions at Lehigh University of the undergraduate students in this college community. Through informal conversations with friends, peers, faculty, and staff, I have been made aware of several ways in which the Lehigh campus is itself divided. I am interested in the subcultures that exist on campus and how people perceive their campus social universe. Recently due to events on campus there has been a lot of talk about campus climate and problems with diversity. As a result I am interested in painting a picture of the campus to try and see where the divisions lie and what may be causing the general sentiment of discontent.

The goal of this thesis is to construct a cultural model of Lehigh social perceptions by determining if there are general themes throughout the campus on the ways in which people are perceived and grouped. This research project is based on the idea of a cultural model, what it means, what it can tell about a community, how to construct one, and how to be sure that one is present or not. I have done research on campus perceptions through two sets of interviews. The overall purpose of my research project is to understand how students classify themselves and their peers. I want to discuss of the different perspectives that are present on campus and compare them. The way that people perceive themselves and others within the Lehigh community is the underlying objective.

I became interested in the topic of my research from being aware of the feeling that Lehigh University lacks diversity. I knew that the campus climate survey was done in order to evaluate the environment on campus and how comfortable the population feels. I wanted to expand upon this research by developing a picture of what the campus looks like socially in a picture. My original goal was to come up with a picture of sorts that had each group represented



by a dot on a graph of sorts. Then I would be able to see how similar people perceive each group to be. Unfortunately it turns out that people do not actually talk about the groups on campus by listing them all and thus my original plan did not work out. I ended up focusing on dimensions of difference because that is how people talk about groups on campus. I will go into more detail about this throughout my paper.

To begin this project I must first attempt to define the nature of university life along with its many different aspects that become salient through background research. I am going to discuss literature that discusses campus climate and aspects of a social universe. In doing this I will define the terms and look at how these are applicable to my research. Then I am going to briefly review the concept of a cultural model and how that will fit into my research. Next I will go through my methods of how I conducted my interviews and how my process changed. Then I will go into my sample descriptively and talk about problems and how representative it is. Next I will discuss my results and analyze what I got out of the interviews that I conducted. Finally I will conclude my paper by talking about the cultural model that I found at Lehigh University and discuss its significance as well as where to go from here.

### **Background Literature**

#### ***Campus Climate***

I started out by trying to define campus climate. It is a term used very often to talk about the environment at an institution of higher education. A lot of research has been done about college campus climates. *Campus Life: In Search of Community* presents an idealized view of college life should be like and what it should strive to be. The problem with this is the word *should*. Where do these assumptions come from and whom do these standards apply to? The book defines several aspects of a college community that are necessary: education



commitment, respectful and accepting community, diverse and fair environment, defined roles for all, caring community, and celebratory rituals (Carnegie 1990: 7-8). Are these aspects all visible to the students? Are they important to the students? What atmosphere do students want at a university? What do they see now? These questions and many others are all raised issues not addressed on Carnegie's piece. This work is only concerned with the idealistic role of the undergraduate student. But does this view encompass the reality of campus climate. Depending on one's role in the university, the perspective available is very different, for example students and professors view the university in vastly different ways (Moffatt 1989: 25).

Most of sources that deal with campus climate define it by delving into the different aspects of the college climate instead of actually defining the term. The most comprehensive definition of climate or atmosphere that is being used was developed by Tagiuri (cited in Anderson 1982: 369). Climate and atmosphere translate into the environmental conditions, which include four dimensions: ecology, milieu, social system, and culture (Anderson 1982: 369). Ecology refers to the physical aspects of one's environment, where as milieu, social system, and culture refer to three social aspects, respectively people, relationships, and beliefs (Anderson 1982: 369). The real purpose of this definition is to show that the term campus climate is very inclusive. Ecology is representative of the tangible structures of the institution that are not a part of the students or people. The milieu consists of background and demographic characteristics of students. The social system of climate on a college campus is the organizational structure and patterns or rules of operating and interacting. The culture dimension of climate encompasses the beliefs, values, cognitive structures, and meaning (Anderson 1982: 370). All of this together composes campus climate and what it is like to live at a specific university.



Because the term campus climate is so elusive despite the aforementioned definition, I have not used the term or the four dimensions to describe or classify the data I collected from interviews. Campus climate tends to be evaluated in terms of 'good/bad' or 'positive/negative.' My research is not concerned as much with whether the environment is liked, rather it is aimed at discovering all the pieces of the perceived environment.

### *Social Universe*

What is the social universe? The social universe is all of the social aspects (people, relationships, and beliefs) of a particular setting. The biggest difference between campus climate and social universe is that the former has evaluative connotations attached where as the latter does not. Social universe instead relies simply on detailed descriptions to set a framework. This is the term that I will use because it applies to Lehigh University's social interactions and its various aspects. Many different facets of campus climate are present in the social universe.

Through this research I have found background information on several dimensions of difference that are a part of Lehigh's social universe. Dimensions of difference that exist on Lehigh University's campus include: gender, race, academics, living situation, extracurricular activities, and reason for being here. All of these dimensions of difference influence students' social universe in one way or another. Now I am going to briefly discuss each one including background literature about the dimension and how this is applicable to Lehigh's social universe specifically.

### *Gender*

Gender is an obvious dimension of difference as well. In any situation the members can always be dichotomized into male and female. On Lehigh's campus it is very obvious that males dominate the engineering school and so this will be an interesting dimension to delve into at the



university. I wonder if females and males are represented distinctively in other dimensions specifically at Lehigh. Gender plays a role into constant divisions that appear in academic experiences, living situations, reasons/motivations for being at college, and possibly many other aspects of college life in general.

### *Race*

Race is a dimension of difference that has been made visible most prominently through the student group 'The movement;' it is one of the reasons that I decided to study the social universe at Lehigh. This group of students has made it clear that Lehigh has many issues which need to be dealt with in regards to many issues about minorities, race and gender in particular.

Perceptions are influenced by experiences on campus. Several studies have been done to identify the ways that black students' experiences differ from those of whites in their creations of a college climate. Due to the sensitive nature of racially loaded terms and exchanges, African American students have added stressors (Cureton 2003: 307). Other research shows that personal backgrounds coming in to college have much larger impact on the way that students experience a situation (D'Augelli and Hershberger 1993: 77; Moffatt 1989: 27; Yamomato 1968: 230). While whites and blacks may have similar encounters in a college setting, black students were more stressed out by their experiences (D'Augelli and Hershberger 1993: 77). This may have something to do with the fact that they come from very different environments at home (D'Augelli and Hershberger 1993: 77). The fact that black students feel so dissimilar from their white peers due to socioeconomic disparities and other background variations causes them to have a negative perspective from the get-go (D'Augelli and Hershberger 1993: 78). More recently it is apparent that blacks and other racial minorities do not face overt racism, but rather subtle racism (Moffatt 1989: 142). This stems from white students who come from a



setting where they have never had to deal with other races (Moffatt 1989: 145). These students do not necessarily intend to be racist, but are unsure of how to deal with situations that include other races. The scary thought about all of this is that race can make such a difference even though it is not a biological phenomenon and only a social construct.

### *Academics*

At Lehigh University there are three undergraduate colleges: the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), the P.C Rossin College of Engineering and Applied Sciences (RCEAS), and the College of Business and Economics (CBE). Each of these colleges has a different school of thought due to the college's specific focus. For example RCEAS is concerned with creating structures and/or objects with the focus on what is most practical and possible physically; CBE students are concerned with the doing what phenomena will work best for the economy; and CAS students are generally more concerned with approaching life from several different points of view because the variety of majors differs greatly. Within these colleges, departments may also be a dimension of difference because each department is run differently which affects the students in numerous ways.

The way that a department functions influences the students dramatically due mostly to the beliefs of the department. Students get involved in different departments based on their interests or their intentions by attending college. Some students choose a major purely for pursuing a certain career after they graduate (Moffatt 1989: 277). Others choose a major based upon their own interests (Moffatt 1989: 282). Depending on the reason that a student joins a particular department, students fluctuate in the ways that they perceive the specific department, the experiences that they have within it, and the way that they view the college and university overall.



### *Living Situations*

The place where one lives constitutes one's living situation. This affects one's social universe more than may be obvious at first glance. Where one lives determines whom that person interacts with on a regularly in one's daily schedules. Living situation is a salient dimension of difference at Lehigh because it influences the people that one interacts with on a regular basis. People who live on campus are much more secluded to the Lehigh bubble of reality, while those that live off campus are able to interact on Lehigh's campus and in south side Bethlehem habitually. Even within those who live on campus the freshmen have a much different experience in their dorms than upperclassmen living in on campus apartments or suites because of the layout of the rooming situations.

Living situations influence the interactions that students have daily and thus influence the way that they perceive the university. Freshmen live on campus and are assigned roommates. Sophomores can choose roommates and so they get together with their friends but still live on campus. Juniors are more mature and usually ready to move off campus. Seniors are even more mature or burnt out on the college experience and live off campus usually (Moffatt 1989: 54). The class that a student is in affects where that person lives to an extent, which in turn has a large impact on the daily life of the student. The goals and attributes of a department affect the students in the academic department (Vreeland and Bidwell 1966: 253). This article also discusses interest and interaction, showing that there is positive correlation between the two variables: (Vreeland and Bidwell 1966: 250)

### *Extracurricular Activities*

At Lehigh extracurricular activities present a dimension of difference due to the fact that undergraduate students participate in a variety of extracurricular activities. Whether it is sports



activities, political groups, Greek organizations, religious associations, or other specific interest groups, these organizations make a difference. When the word group comes into context in a conversation extracurricular activities are one of the first types of groups identified because they are explicit 'groups' recognized by the university.

Extracurricular activities are indicative of one's interests at least in part. People participate in activities because they have an interest in the activity at hand. Extracurricular activities structure and influence some of the time that people spend interacting with others outside of classes.

Extracurricular activities consist of anything other than class time and study time (Havice 1971: 90). These activities that a student participates in are representative of what students are interested in because if they have enough time to participate in a club then they must at least be interested in the issues/activities of the club. Extracurricular activities may be originally chosen due to interests, but it is not a one-way street. These non-academic activities also influence interests, beliefs, and values (Yamomato 1968: 94). Students are able to create a personal identity within respective clubs and through these clubs (Havice 1971: 92).

Greek life is a large extracurricular activity on college campus' (Moffatt 1989: 39 and Havice 1971: 95). There are positives and negatives to Greek life, such as the bonding that occurs and some the bad behavior (underage drinking) that Greek organizations promote, respectively (Havice 1971: 99). Right now strong Greek identities exist on certain campuses (Seaman 2005: 196), such as Lehigh university, though there are some movements to get rid of the Greek system (Seaman 2005: 173). For alcohol problems, hazing concerns, and other college life difficulties fraternities and sororities are being used as scapegoats (Seaman 2005: 187).



In general extracurricular activities can be a figurative home for students because they find a family with other people doing the same things. Specifically college sports, whether its club or varsity, may create a niche for some people (Seaman 2005: 207). Religious clubs can also create an inclusive habitat for students because it can largely influence one's experiences (Havice 1971: 127).

### *Reason/Motivation*

One's reason or motivation for being at Lehigh affects one's social universe because it provides a lens through which that person views their social universe. One such way to think about motivation for being at a college that has been done in the past involves classifying people into five different groups (Warren 1968: 216). Warren begins with research that has identified four subcultures that exist on college campuses and uses these, but breaks down one of the groups further. The five groups are defined as such: **Vocational** – motivation for college has to do with attaining a certain job after receiving a degree; **Academic** – motivated for college based on an eagerness to learn as much as possible; **Non-conformist** – sees college as a place to do one's own thing and express one's self outside of expected norms possibly; **Identity seeker** – sees college as a place to figure out who one is; **Status seeker** – sees college as a place to increase societal status and gain prestige (Warren 1968: 216-217).

I used these five categories in my interviews for people to self classify themselves. These are important to consider because these are applicable to any school, college, or university. Students will be at higher education institutions for different purposes with aims at accomplishing a variety of things.

### *Cultural Models*



According to D'Andrade, schemas are the building blocks of models. Schemas are cognitive pieces that are arranged into an intangible mental object. An example of this would be the concept of buying and selling. People understand that when one wants to obtain an item one must use currency in trade for the product and vice versa in order obtain currency one must provide a product or a service. Models are more complicated than schemas in that they can be a composition of schemas. Cultural models are not understood overtly; rather they are based upon inherent comprehension. These models can be deciphered by observing and listening to the words that an informant uses to explain the process because the nature of the model is entrenched within these words (D'Andrade 1995: 180). An example of a cultural model is what Americans think about the nature of the education system in this country. This would include thoughts on why people go to school, what the different possibilities about order and places are, and the weight that education holds. In order to understand this cultural model it is necessary to analyze the way that people talk about the education system by asking questions about the system itself and several of its aspects.

Using this definition of a cultural model as a basis for my research, it is important that I conduct interviews by talking to informants, rather than just free-listing tasks, to acquire the responses. People speak differently than they write, especially when writing lists. Writing is generally more formal than speaking because one has more time to compose thoughts when writing rather than speaking. To me this means that a person's words may be less filtered in an interview/conversation setting as opposed to a written list or paper. As a consequence more insight can be attained as to the true nature of a person's thoughts through verbal interaction as opposed to written interaction.



undergraduate. In order to compile a cultural model it is necessary to gather several perspectives and analyze the words that are being used to describe the abstract concept. From these words and descriptions hopefully a complete abstract image can be formed with several different aspects and the ways in which the concepts are connected. Ideally my interview questions, conversations, and free-listing will result in a cultural model of the social universe of Lehigh University.

### **Methods**

The research design for this project is to create a cultural model of the undergraduate students at Lehigh. The interviews free-listing exercises, serving as exploratory research, will help me to create a cultural model of the Lehigh undergraduate body.

I began by interviewing a small sample of 8 undergraduate students, one male and female from each year. I questioned them first on the different groups and subcultures that they interact with, then on all of the groups that they see on campus. I prompted them to expand upon their answers by identifying where their friends and others fit in. I want them to distinguish all of the groups that they interact with. I then asked them to distinguish dimensions that make a difference in creating groups in campus. Finally I asked the student to self-identify within the five categories of motivations for being at school (refer to appendix A).

I recruited the people for the original interview (8 students) by using a snowball sample. I started with some people I know that fit the criteria that I have established (gender and year at Lehigh) and asked if they would like to participate. I then asked them to refer others that they know who might be interested. Unfortunately most people were not very helpful in this matter and so I basically picked all of the people myself. I identified students to participate in this until I interviewed the people that I have previously specified (one male and female from each



undergraduate year). To contact the students originally I used e-mail, phone, and face-to-face contact in order to set up an interview time that was acceptable for the informant and myself.

Then I intended to interview a larger sample of 16 undergraduate students, 2 males and 2 females from year. In the end my second sample only consisted of 12 informants, 7 males and 5 females. This interview was a bit more in depth, as the informants have a ranking task that I created from the terms collected from the previous interviews. I identified 6 dimensions of difference through the first set of interviews and asked the participants to order these dimensions from most salient to least salient (refer to appendix B).

The students (12) who participated in the second part of the research project (ranking task) were identified through the same snowballing techniques that I used for the first sample. The snowball sampling worked better for this section and I have several informants who I did not previously know. I originally hoped to find 16 informants for this part, but only ended up with 12 due to time restraints.

### **Sample**

Males make up 55% of the informants and females make up 45%, which is actually representative of the campus as a whole. By race my sample consists of 70% white informants and 30% non-white informants. In my sample of informants, College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) contains 12 informants (60%), P.C. Rossin College of Engineering and Applied Sciences (RCEAS) has 6 informants (30%), and College of Business and Economics (CBE) has 3 informants (15%). According to the admissions department at Lehigh University the actual layout of the campus is CAS 40%, RCEAS 32%, and CBE 28%. Most of my informants live on campus (90%) and then a few live off campus (10%). This is not accurately representative of the campus as a whole. My sample also under represents Greeks, as they are only 25% of my



sample, but closer to 50% of the undergraduate population. (For more detailed information about the samples refer to appendix C).

This sample obviously has biases associated with it mostly due to the fact that I knew all of the interviewees prior to the interview. I like to think that I have a diverse group of people that I know and associate with, nonetheless, there is a possibility that people who would be friends with me are 'certain types of people.' While this can be looked at a negative, it has also been very helpful with analyzing the data that I have from the interviews because I know many details about these people that I would not otherwise know from just the interview.

### ***Results and Analysis***

I will present and analyze the results in this section. First I will go through the sample as a whole. Then I will go through the sample separated by each of the demographic dimensions of difference that I thought were significant: gender, race, academics, living situation, and Greek affiliation. Next I will go through sample sorted by the self-identified groups. Finally I will look at the ranking task of the six given dimensions of difference for the second sample.

Each of the tables' only analyses the first term listed by the informant due to the fact that the lists were of different lengths and types. I did not want to compare lists of different sizes because then the issue of how much ranking each term has comes into play. For each section the first table is of the mentioned groups that the informant interacts with; the second table is of all of the identified groups by the informant; the third table is of identified dimensions of difference or factors that divide people; the final table is the ranking tabulation of the given dimensions of difference. These questions and listing activities were each asked to try to get a general picture of how the person views the undergraduate environment on campus. What are the groups that are present and what separates these people into groups?



*All Informants* college, department, or classes. Greek refers to responses that indicate any

When all informants were asked to list all of the types of people with which he or she interacts with academic types of people were mentioned most often (60%), athletic types of people next (25%), and groups of people identified through interests the least amount (15%) (refer to Informants Table A). It is important to note that the categories identified by terms for each table were sorted by me. People did not necessarily say the exact words that I used, but what they mentioned fell into these categories. The term academic includes responses that refer to classes, major, department, and specific college. The term athletic includes responses that refer to sports clubs, sports teams, and working out. The term interest refers to types of people that are identified by something in which they are interested in such as extracurricular activities, etc.

When all informants were asked to list all of the types of people which he or she views as being present on campus the informant classified people first by Greek affiliation most often (45%) then by academics (25%) and finally each interests, demographics, and political terms (10%) (refer to Informants Table B). Asking people to identify all groups present on campus was too large a task to ask. It did not make sense to ask this question in this way because people do not organize everyone into these specific groups initially. People use broader categories such as extracurricular activities first and then possibly separate some of these into the smaller groups. For example someone might say there are all of the fraternities and sororities, but no one went ahead to list all of these Greek organizations. Another person might say that club sports or varsity sports are groups, but this person would not go on to identify all of the different sports. This might be because this person does not know all of the groups or because listing them is simply unnecessary in his or her mind. Academic in this table still refers to responses that



indicated major, college, department, or classes. Greek refers to responses that indicate any Greek organization, or participation in Greek life. Demographic refers to responses that indicate terms such as gender, age, race, etc. Political refers to responses that identify types of people through political affiliation and political participation or apathy. Interests still refer to types of people that are identified through their interests and activities (outside of Greek and athletic). In this table it is obvious that Greek becomes the most common answer even though it was not identified when asked about the groups that one interacts with. Greek life is not something that one person primarily identifies with, but is something that comes out when describing life at Lehigh. When asked to identify groups that one interacts with the list of terms is shorter than when asked to identify all groups on campus. This makes a lot of sense because people identify with a part of the campus and not the whole campus.

Informants identify the following dimensions of difference: Greek and interest references (25% each), academic references (20%), and then living situation and race (15% each) (refer to Informants Table C). This is obviously a question that results in a variety of answers that have a presence on campus.

When the informants from the second round of interviews were asked to rank the six dimensions of difference that I provided for them Academic references, extracurricular activity references, and reason for being at Lehigh were considered the most salient (25% each). Living situation was considered the next most salient (17%) and finally race (8%) (refer to Informants Table D). The six dimensions that I provided the informants were discovered through analyzing the initial 8 interviews and background research for the most salient dimensions of difference that were identified: gender, race, academics, living situations, extracurricular activities, and reasons for being at Lehigh. It is important to note that gender was never identified as the most

salient dimension of difference on campus. Each of these terms was written on a note card and then the informants were asked put the terms in order from most salient in creating subcultures to least salient.

<i>Free-listing</i>	<i>Interaction</i> <i>Informants</i> <i>(20)</i>
<i>Academic</i>	12 (60%)
<i>Athletic</i>	3 (25%)
<i>Interests</i>	3 (15%)

<i>Free-listing</i> <i>Terms</i>	<i>Groups</i> <i>Informants</i> <i>(20)</i>
<i>Academic</i>	5 (25%)
<i>Interests</i>	2 (10%)
<i>Greek</i>	9 (45%)
<i>Demographic</i>	2 (10%)
<i>Political</i>	2 (10%)

Informants Table C:

<i>Free-listing</i> <i>Terms</i>	<i>Dimensions of</i> <i>Difference</i> <i>Informants</i> <i>(20)</i>
<i>Academic</i>	4 (20%)
<i>Living situation</i>	3 (15%)
<i>Interests</i>	5 (25%)
<i>Greek</i>	5 (25%)
<i>Race</i>	3 (15%)

Informants Table D:

<i>Given</i> <i>Dimensions of</i> <i>Difference</i>	<i>Given</i> <i>Dimensions of</i> <i>Difference</i> <i>Ranked</i> <i>Informants</i> <i>(17)</i>
<i>Academic</i>	3 (25%)
<i>Living situation</i>	2 (17%)
<i>Extracurricular</i> <i>Activities</i>	3 (25%)
<i>Reason for being</i> <i>at Lehigh</i>	3 (25%)
<i>Race</i>	1 (8%)



Informants Table A

	<b>Interaction Groups</b>
<b>Free-listing Terms</b>	<b>Informants (20)</b>
<i>Academic</i>	12 (60%)
<i>Athletic</i>	5 (25%)
<i>Interests</i>	3 (15%)

Informants Table B:

	<b>All Identified Groups</b>
<b>Free-listing Terms</b>	<b>Informants (20)</b>
<i>Academic</i>	5 (25%)
<i>Interests</i>	2 (10%)
<i>Greek</i>	9 (45%)
<i>Demographic</i>	2 (10%)
<i>Political</i>	2 (10%)

Informants Table C:

	<b>Dimensions of Difference</b>
<b>Free-listing Terms</b>	<b>Informants (20)</b>
<i>Academic</i>	4 (20%)
<i>Living situation</i>	3 (15%)
<i>Interests</i>	5 (25%)
<i>Greek</i>	5 (25%)
<i>Race</i>	3 (15%)

Informants Table D:

	<b>Given Dimensions of Difference Ranked</b>
<b>Given Dimensions of Difference</b>	<b>Informants (12)</b>
<i>Academic</i>	3 (25%)
<i>Living situation</i>	2 (17%)
<i>Extracurricular Activities</i>	3 (25%)
<i>Reason for being at Lehigh</i>	3 (25%)
<i>Race</i>	1 (8%)

*Gender* and race (11% each) (refer to Gender Table C). Females mentioned living situations most often. Men were 55% of my sample and women were 45%, consistent with the campus as a whole. I used gender to see if it made a difference in the ways in which people responded. The way that the two groups identified types of people with which they interact with is similar to all of the informants. Males identified academics most often (64%) athletic next (27%) and lastly interests (9%). Females also identified academics most often (56%) and then athletic and interests (each 22%) (refer to Gender Table A).

When a male was asked to free-list all of the groups that he is aware of, he listed Greek references (55%), then academic and political (18% each), and finally demographic references (9%). Females on the other hand mentioned both Greek and academic as the first group (33% each), then interests (22%), and finally demographic (11%) (refer to Gender Table B). From the tables it is apparent that only males list political terms as groups present on campus, where as only females identify interest terms for groups. Politics tends to be a male dominated profession and thus it makes sense for males to be more likely to mention political factors first as a way of classifying people. As far as females being the only ones to enumerate interests as a way of classifying all of the groups on campus, I think these findings are less significant. Interests is a rather broad term that could potentially encompass most of the other identified groups. For lack of a better categorizing system, interests has taken on a number of terms that do not fit in other groups.

When males were asked to list dimensions of difference or factors that divide the campus into subgroups Greek affiliation was listed most often (36%) followed closely by interests (27%) and then race and academics were identified (18% each). Females conversely identified living situation most often (33%) with academics and interests next (22%) and subsequently with



Greek and race (11% each) (refer to Gender Table C). Females mentioned living situations most often while males did not mention this dimension of difference as a first factor at all. So why does living situation make a difference to females but not males? Females may be more affected by proximity to objects; if a girl is near something more often she would feel a connection to it, where as this is not necessarily true for a guy. I have noticed from my current and previous living situations that roommate problems are a bigger deal to females than to males and this concurs with the idea that females are affected by proximity.

Males ranked extracurricular activities first most often (43%) when given six dimensions of difference to place in order of salience and academic, living situation, reason, and race all equally (14% each). Where as females ranked both academics and reason for being at Lehigh first (40%) and then living situation (20%) (refer to Gender Table D). There were only five females in the last ranking task and six possible answers; this factor obviously affects the results because there were more dimensions than the total number of female informants for the second set of interviews.

All of the informants who ranked greek/extracurriculars as first were males. These findings are interesting, but it needs more exploration in order to draw any conclusions. Gender is not identified as an important dimension of difference by anyone and it also does not seem to make a significant difference when compared to the overall results in most categories.



Gender Table A:

<i>Free-listing Terms</i>	<i>Interaction Groups</i>	
	<i>Males (11) 55%</i>	<i>Females (9) 45%</i>
<i>Academic</i>	7 (64%)	5 (56%)
<i>Athletic</i>	3 (27%)	2 (22%)
<i>Interests</i>	1 (9%)	2 (22%)

Gender Table B:

<i>Free-listing Terms</i>	<i>All Identified Groups</i>	
	<i>Males (11) 55%</i>	<i>Females (9) 45%</i>
<i>Academic</i>	2 (18%)	3 (33%)
<i>Political</i>	2 (18%)	0
<i>Interests</i>	0	2 (22%)
<i>Greek</i>	6 (55%)	3 (33%)
<i>Demographic</i>	1 (9%)	1 (11%)

Gender Table C:

<i>Free-listing Terms</i>	<i>Dimensions of Difference</i>	
	<i>Males (11) 55%</i>	<i>Females (9) 45%</i>
<i>Academic</i>	2 (18%)	2 (22%)
<i>Living Situation</i>	0	3 (33%)
<i>Interests</i>	3 (27%)	2 (22%)
<i>Greek</i>	4 (36%)	1 (11%)
<i>Race</i>	2 (18%)	1 (11%)

Gender Table D:

<i>Given Dimensions of Difference</i>	<i>Given Dimensions of Difference Ranked</i>	
	<i>Males (7) 58%</i>	<i>Females (5) 42%</i>
<i>Academic</i>	1 (14%)	2 (40%)
<i>Living Situation</i>	1 (14%)	1 (20%)
<i>Extracurricular Activities</i>	3 (43%)	0
<i>Reason for being at Lehigh</i>	1 (14%)	2 (40%)
<i>Race</i>	1 (14%)	0
<i>Gender</i>	0	0



*Race* for a wider range of reasons, such as athletics, or have stayed in groups of non-whites by

joining. The following tables are organized by race with participants in either the white category (70%) or the non-white group (30%). White informants first listed academic groups as the ones that he or she interacts with most often (57%) with athletic and academic groups being equally mentioned first after that (21% each). Non-white undergraduates listed academic interaction groups most often (67%) and then athletic (33%) (refer to Race Table A). Non-whites mentioned athletics, but not interests as a first term in this task. The reason for this could possibly be that many times minorities are involved in an athletic community and that is the reason for coming to Lehigh.

When whites were asked to identify all existing groups on campus, Greek groups were mentioned first (43%) slightly more than academic groups (36%) then came interests (14%) and finally political (7%). Non-whites mentioned Greek organizations most often (50%) then demographic groups (33%) and finally political groups (17%) (refer to Race Table B).

In free-listing dimensions of difference, whites identified academic and interests most often (29%) then Greek (21%) followed closely by race then living situation (14% and 7% respectively). Non-whites listed Greek most often (50%) with living situation, interests, and race each mentioned equally (17%) (refer to Race Table C).

In ranking the given dimensions of difference, my sample of non-whites (2 informants) is simply too small to draw any conclusions (refer to Race Table D).

Race was identified as a dimension of difference after I analyzed the initial interviews. The biggest difference in answers between the two groups was that whites were by far and consistently more likely to list academics as a first mention in any task. Why were non-whites less likely to write down academics? It would appear that possibly non-whites have come to

Lehigh for a wider range of reasons, such as athletics, or have stayed in groups of non-whites by joining Greek communities that fit their demographics.

	<i>Interaction</i>	
	<i>White</i> (14) 70%	<i>Non-White</i> (6) 30%
<i>Free-listing Terms</i>		
<i>Academic</i>	8 (57%)	4 (67%)
<i>Athletic</i>	3 (21%)	2 (33%)
<i>Interests</i>	3 (21%)	0

	<i>All Identified Groups</i>	
	<i>White</i> (14) 70%	<i>Non-White</i> (6) 30%
<i>Free-listing Terms</i>		
<i>Academic</i>	5 (36%)	0
<i>Political</i>	1 (7%)	1 (17%)
<i>Interests</i>	2 (14%)	0
<i>Greek</i>	6 (43%)	3 (50%)
<i>Demographic</i>	0	2 (33%)

Race Table C:

	<i>Dimensions of Difference</i>	
	<i>White</i> (14) 70%	<i>Non-White</i> (6) 30%
<i>Free-listing Terms</i>		
<i>Academic</i>	4 (29%)	0
<i>Living Situation</i>	1 (7%)	1 (17%)
<i>Interests</i>	4 (29%)	1 (17%)
<i>Greek</i>	3 (21%)	3 (50%)
<i>Race</i>	2 (14%)	1 (17%)

Race Table D:

	<i>Given Dimensions of Difference Ranked</i>	
	<i>White</i> (10) 53%	<i>Non-White</i> (2) 17%
<i>Given Dimensions of Difference</i>		
<i>Academic</i>	2 (20%)	1 (50%)
<i>Living Situation</i>	1 (10%)	1 (50%)
<i>Extracurricular Activities</i>	3 (30%)	0
<i>Reason for being at Lehigh</i>	3 (30%)	0
<i>Race</i>	1 (10%)	0
<i>Gender</i>	0	0



Race Table A:

	<i>Interaction Groups</i>	
	<i>White</i> (14) 70%	<i>Non White</i> (6) 30%
<i>Free-listing Terms</i>		
<i>Academic</i>	8 (57%)	4 (67%)
<i>Athletic</i>	3 (21%)	2 (33%)
<i>Interests</i>	3 (21%)	0

Race Table B:

	<i>All Identified Groups</i>	
	<i>White</i> (14) 70%	<i>Non White</i> (6) 30%
<i>Free-listing Terms</i>		
<i>Academic</i>	5 (36%)	0
<i>Political</i>	1 (7%)	1 (17%)
<i>Interests</i>	2 (14%)	0
<i>Greek</i>	6 (43%)	3 (50%)
<i>Demographic</i>	0	2 (33%)

Race Table C:

	<i>Dimensions of Difference</i>	
	<i>White</i> (14) 70%	<i>Non White</i> (6) 30%
<i>Free-listing Terms</i>		
<i>Academic</i>	4 (29%)	0
<i>Living Situation</i>	1 (7%)	1 (17%)
<i>Interests</i>	4 (29%)	1 (17%)
<i>Greek</i>	3 (21%)	3 (50%)
<i>Race</i>	2 (14%)	1 (17%)

Race Table D:

	<i>Given Dimensions of Difference Ranked</i>	
	<i>White</i> (10) 83%	<i>Non White</i> (2) 17%
<i>Given Dimensions of Difference</i>		
<i>Academic</i>	2 (20%)	1 (50%)
<i>Living Situation</i>	1 (10%)	1 (50%)
<i>Extracurricular Activities</i>	3 (30%)	0
<i>Reason for being at Lehigh</i>	3 (30%)	0
<i>Race</i>	1 (10%)	0
<i>Gender</i>	0	0



## *Academics*

Note here that the interview representations of CBE is far less than any other and for most of the tables there are more listed responses than there are informants from CBE. When CAS students identified groups that they interact with the answers were split with athletic groups mentioned first most often (42%), then academic (33%), and finally interests (25%). RCEAS and CBE students only mentioned academic groups first (100% each) (refer to Academics Table A). The reasons for this phenomenon seem rather significant; people in the College of Arts and Sciences interact with people outside of just their academic groups. From this I can extrapolate that CBE and RCEAS students are generally oriented more toward occupational ends and therefore the academic part of college would be most important. CAS, on the other hand contains a more diverse set of aims for its students.

CAS students, when identifying all existing groups on campus, identified Greek organizations most often (33%) then academic groups (25%) interests and political (each 17%) and finally demographic (8%). RCEAS students mentioned Greek organizations first most often (67%) and then academic and demographic each (17%). CBE students were spread out in their responses with each academic, Greek, and demographic being mentioned equally (33%) (refer to Academics Table B).

CAS students are fairly split when listing dimensions of difference on campus with interests taking a small lead (33%) then living situation (25%) followed closely by academic and race (17% each) and then finally Greek coming in last (8%). RCEAS students split equally between academic and Greek dimensions of difference with each being mentioned first (50% each). Engineers only mentions academics and greek affiliations which appears to be rather significant. Why do these two dimensions appear most salient particularly to engineers?



Possibly academics take up a vast majority of their time (more than from other colleges) and Greek life may be their primary outlet for free time. CBE students listed Greek most often (67%) and then interests (33%) (refer to Academics Table C).

When CAS students were asked to rank six given dimensions of difference in order of most salience both academic and reason for being at Lehigh were most salient most often (40% each) and then living situation was mentioned as most salient (20%). RCEAS students split their answers five ways with each one being mentioned first equally (20%): academic, living situation, extracurricular activities, reason for being at Lehigh, and race. CBE students agreed that extracurricular activities were most salient as dimensions of difference (refer to Academics Table D). It is important to note that in this way of classifying the students there are some tables that have more responses than number of informants in one category.

Major, college, and classes are identified as dimensions of difference on campus referred to as academics. It looks like college does make a difference in perceptions of the undergraduate social universe. For most of the tables CAS has a wider variety of responses, except when given the dimensions of difference to rank. Overall it does seem that the different colleges provide different answers but the data is not very consistent. RCEAS and CBE are somewhat similar in their responses for tables A and B, but not as much in C and D has too few informants to discuss.



Academics Table A:

<i>Free-listing Terms</i>	<i>Interaction Groups</i>		
	<i>CAS</i> (12) 60%	<i>RCEAS</i> (6) 30%	<i>CBE</i> (3) 15%
<i>Academic</i>	4 (33%)	6 (100%)	3 (100%)
<i>Athletic</i>	5 (42%)	0	0
<i>Interests</i>	3 (25%)	0	0

Academics Table B:

<i>Free-listing Terms</i>	<i>All Identified Groups</i>		
	<i>CAS</i> (12) 60%	<i>RCEAS</i> (6) 30%	<i>CBE</i> (3) 15%
<i>Academic</i>	3 (25%)	1 (17%)	1 (33%)
<i>Interests</i>	2 (17%)	0	0
<i>Political</i>	2 (17%)	0	0
<i>Greek</i>	4 (33%)	4 (67%)	1 (33%)
<i>Demographic</i>	1 (8%)	1 (17%)	1 (33%)

Academics Table C:

<i>Free-listing Terms</i>	<i>Dimensions of Difference</i>		
	<i>CAS</i> (12) 60%	<i>RCEAS</i> (6) 30%	<i>CBE</i> (3) 15%
<i>Academic</i>	2 (17%)	3 (50%)	0
<i>Living Situation</i>	3 (25%)	0	0
<i>Interests</i>	4 (33%)	0	1 (33%)
<i>Greek</i>	1 (8%)	3 (50%)	2 (67%)
<i>Race</i>	2 (17%)	0	0

Academics Table D:

<i>Given Dimensions of Difference</i>	<i>Given Dimensions of Difference Ranked</i>		
	<i>CAS</i> (5) 42%	<i>RCEAS</i> (5) 42%	<i>CBE</i> (2) 17%
<i>Academic</i>	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	0
<i>Living situation</i>	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	0
<i>Extracurricular Activities</i>	0	1 (20%)	2 (100%)
<i>Reason for being at Lehigh</i>	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	0
<i>Race</i>	0	1 (20%)	0
<i>Gender</i>	0	0	0



*Living Situations*

The following tables are organized by living situation as either on campus (18 informants – 90%) or off campus (2 informants – 10%) because this item was identified as a dimension of difference from the original set of interviews. Unfortunately I do not have a large enough representative sample of people living off campus in order to make any connections from this data – for each task the number of off campus informants is less than the number of different answers. When off campus identified all groups present they agreed it was major. Other than that the on campus group was fairly representative of the whole (mostly b/c it was the vast majority of all the participants). The on campus group is such a large percentage of the whole that it is essentially the same (refer to Living Situations Tables A-D).

Living Situation Table C: Difference

	On Campus (18) 90%	Off Campus (2) 10%
Free-living Terms	3 (17%)	1 (50%)
Academic	2 (11%)	1 (50%)
Living Situation	5 (28%)	0
Interests	3 (17%)	0
Greek	3 (17%)	0
Race	3 (17%)	0

Living Situation Table D: Difference Ranked

Given Dimensions of Difference	On Campus (11) 92%	Off Campus (1) 8%
Academic	2 (18%)	1 (100%)
Living Situation	2 (18%)	0
Extracurricular Activities	3 (27%)	0
Reason for being at Lehigh	3 (27%)	0
Race	1 (9%)	0
Gender	0	0



Living Situation Table A:

<i>Free-listing Terms</i>	<i>Interaction Groups</i>	
	<i>On Campus (18) 90%</i>	<i>Off Campus (2) 10%</i>
<i>Academic</i>	11 (61%)	1 (50%)
<i>Athletic</i>	5 (28%)	0
<i>Interests</i>	2 (11%)	1 (50%)

Living Situation Table B:

<i>Free-listing Terms</i>	<i>All Identified Groups</i>	
	<i>On Campus (18) 90%</i>	<i>Off Campus (2) 10%</i>
<i>Academic</i>	3 (17%)	2 (100%)
<i>Political</i>	2 (11%)	0
<i>Interests</i>	2 (11%)	0
<i>Greek</i>	9 (50%)	0
<i>Demographic</i>	2 (11%)	0

Living Situation Table C:

<i>Free-listing Terms</i>	<i>Dimensions of Difference</i>	
	<i>On Campus (18) 90%</i>	<i>Off Campus (2) 10%</i>
<i>Academic</i>	3 (17%)	1 (50%)
<i>Living Situation</i>	2 (11%)	1 (50%)
<i>Interests</i>	5 (28%)	0
<i>Greek</i>	5 (28%)	0
<i>Race</i>	3 (17%)	0

Living Situation Table D:

<i>Given Dimensions of Difference</i>	<i>Given Dimensions of Difference Ranked</i>	
	<i>On Campus (11) 92%</i>	<i>Off Campus (1) 8%</i>
<i>Academic</i>	2 (18%)	1 (100%)
<i>Living Situation</i>	2 (18%)	0
<i>Extracurricular Activities</i>	3 (27%)	0
<i>Reason for being at Lehigh</i>	3 (27%)	0
<i>Race</i>	1 (9%)	0
<i>Gender</i>	0	0



### *Greek Affiliations*

The following tables are organized by Greek affiliation as either Greek (25%) or non-Greek (75%). When Greek students listed the groups that he or she interacts with academic and interests groups were mentioned first most often (40%) and then athletic groups were listed first (20%). Non-Greeks mentioned academics first by far (67%) followed by athletic groups (27%) and then finally interests groups (7%) (refer to Greek Table A).

When Greeks were asked to identify all groups on campus both Greek and political groups were mentioned first most often (40%) and then athletic groups (20%). For non-Greeks, Greek groups were mentioned most often (47%), then academic groups (20%), followed closely by both interests and demographic groups (13% each) (refer to Greek Table B).

Greek students list interests and Greek groups first (40% each) and then living situation (20%). Non-Greeks on the other hand are fairly spread out among all of the possible answers (refer to Greek Table C).

As far as ranking the six dimensions of difference that I provided for informants, Greeks agreed that extracurricular activities were most salient, while non Greeks did not have a clear agreement to which factor is most salient (refer to Greek Table D).

Greek affiliation was identified as a dimension of difference throughout the interviews. Overall Greeks were less likely to mention academics as an important dimension. It seems significant that academics was the other item that was probably mentioned most often. Greeks did not mention demographics or race as the first item where as it was mentioned by non-Greeks. This may be due the fact that the Greek system is historically segregated. Some fraternities or sororities are known as being 'black frat,' 'Jewish sorority,' etc., as a consequence



Greek members may see themselves and their peers as part of a specific organization over a specific race.

	Interaction Groups	
	Greek (3) 25%	Non Greek (15) 75%
Free-listing Terms		
Academic	2 (40%)	10 (67%)
Athletic	1 (20%)	4 (27%)
Interests	2 (40%)	1 (7%)

	All Identified Groups	
	Greek (9) 25%	Non Greek (15) 75%
Free-listing Terms		
Academic	1 (20%)	3 (20%)
Political	2 (40%)	0
Interests	0	2 (13%)
Greek	2 (40%)	7 (47%)
Demographic	0	2 (13%)

Greek Table C:

	Dimensions of Difference	
	Greek (3) 25%	Non Greek (15) 75%
Free-listing Terms		
Academic	0	4 (27%)
Living Situation	1 (20%)	2 (13%)
Interests	2 (40%)	3 (20%)
Greek	2 (40%)	1 (7%)
Race	0	3 (20%)

Greek Table D:

	Given Dimensions of Difference Ranked	
	Greek (2) 17%	Non Greek (10) 83%
Given Dimensions of Difference		
Academic	0	3 (30%)
Living Situation	0	2 (20%)
Extracurricular or Activities	2 (100%)	1 (10%)
Reason for being at Lehigh	0	3 (30%)
Race	0	1 (10%)
Gender	0	0



Greek Table A:

	<i>Interaction Groups</i>	
<i>Free-listing Terms</i>	<i>Greek (5) 25%</i>	<i>Non Greek (15) 75%</i>
<i>Academic</i>	2 (40%)	10 (67%)
<i>Athletic</i>	1 (20%)	4 (27%)
<i>Interests</i>	2 (40%)	1 (7%)

Greek Table B:

	<i>All Identified Groups</i>	
<i>Free-listing Terms</i>	<i>Greek (5) 25%</i>	<i>Non Greek (15) 75%</i>
<i>Academic</i>	1 (20%)	3 (20%)
<i>Political</i>	2 (40%)	0
<i>Interests</i>	0	2 (13%)
<i>Greek</i>	2 (40%)	7 (47%)
<i>Demographic</i>	0	2 (13%)

Greek Table C:

	<i>Dimensions of Difference</i>	
<i>Free-listing Terms</i>	<i>Greek (5) 25%</i>	<i>Non Greek (15) 75%</i>
<i>Academic</i>	0	4 (27%)
<i>Living Situation</i>	1 (20%)	2 (13%)
<i>Interests</i>	2 (40%)	3 (20%)
<i>Greek</i>	2 (40%)	3 (20%)
<i>Race</i>	0	3 (20%)

Greek Table D:

	<i>Given Dimensions of Difference Ranked</i>	
<i>Given Dimensions of Difference</i>	<i>Greek (2) 17%</i>	<i>Non Greek (10) 83%</i>
<i>Academic</i>	0	3 (30%)
<i>Living Situation</i>	0	2 (20%)
<i>Extracurricular Activities</i>	2 (100%)	1 (10%)
<i>Reason for being at Lehigh</i>	0	3 (30%)
<i>Race</i>	0	1 (10%)
<i>Gender</i>	0	0

## Self Identity

The following tables are organized by self-identified reasons for being at Lehigh/college when given a list of 5 reasons discovered through background research. Informants were able to choose more than one group. The five categories are: academic, vocational, non-conformist, identity seeker, and status seeker (Warren 1968: 216-217). It seems that generally academic and vocational self-identifiers represents the larger whole of informants in my sample. In listing interaction groups all but non-conformist and status seeker followed the trend of the whole (these two put athletics as first and everyone else put academics). While identifying all groups everyone except status seekers put Greek first (status put academic). For dimensions the answers were spread out as well as for the ranking. This may be a dimension that actually makes a difference but it is difficult to say due to small number of informants generally in each group (refer to Reason Tables A-D).

Terms	Academic (11) 55%	Vocational (9) 45%	Non Conformist (4) 20%	Identity Seeker (4) 20%	Status Seeker (3) 15%
Academic	2 (18%)	2 (22%)	1 (25%)	1 (25%)	0
Living Situation	2 (18%)	1 (11%)	0	1 (25%)	0
Interests	3 (36%)	2 (22%)	0	0	3 (100%)
Greek	1 (9%)	3 (33%)	1 (25%)	2 (50%)	0
Race	2 (18%)	1 (11%)	2 (50%)	0	0

Reason Table D:

Given Dimensions of Difference	Academic (7) 58%	Vocational (6) 50%	Non Conformist (1) 8%	Identity Seeker (2) 17%	Status Seeker (2) 17%
Academic	1 (14%)	2 (33%)	0	1 (50%)	0
Living Situation	1 (14%)	2 (33%)	0	0	0
Extracurricular Activities	1 (14%)	1 (17%)	1 (100%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)
Reason for being at Lehigh	1 (43%)	1 (17%)	0	0	1 (50%)
Race	1 (14%)	0	0	0	0
Gender	0	0	0	0	0



Reason Table A:

	<i>Interaction Groups</i>				
<i>Free-listing Terms</i>	<i>Academic</i> (11) 55%	<i>Vocational</i> (9) 45%	<i>Non Conformist</i> (4) 20%	<i>Identity Seeker</i> (4) 20%	<i>Status Seeker</i> (3) 15%
<i>Academic</i>	6 (55%)	6 (67%)	1 (25%)	3 (75%)	1 (33%)
<i>Athletic Interests</i>	4 (36%)	2 (22%)	2 (50%)	0	2 (67%)
<i>Interests</i>	1 (9%)	1 (11%)	1 (25%)	1 (25%)	0

Reason Table B:

	<i>All Identified Groups</i>				
<i>Free-listing Terms</i>	<i>Academic</i> (11) 55%	<i>Vocational</i> (9) 45%	<i>Non Conformist</i> (4) 20%	<i>Identity Seeker</i> (4) 20%	<i>Status Seeker</i> (3) 15%
<i>Academic</i>	3 (27%)	3 (33%)	1 (25%)	2 (50%)	1 (33%)
<i>Political</i>	1 (9%)	1 (11%)	0	0	1 (33%)
<i>Interests</i>	1 (9%)	0	1 (25%)	0	1 (33%)
<i>Greek</i>	5 (45%)	4 (44%)	2 (50%)	2 (50%)	0
<i>Demographic</i>	1 (9%)	1 (11%)	0	0	0

Reason Table C:

	<i>Dimensions of Difference</i>				
<i>Free-listing Terms</i>	<i>Academic</i> (11) 55%	<i>Vocational</i> (9) 45%	<i>Non Conformist</i> (4) 20%	<i>Identity Seeker</i> (4) 20%	<i>Status Seeker</i> (3) 15%
<i>Academic</i>	2 (18%)	2 (22%)	1 (25%)	1 (25%)	0
<i>Living Situation</i>	2 (18%)	1 (11%)	0	1 (25%)	0
<i>Interests</i>	4 (36%)	2 (22%)	0	0	3 (100%)
<i>Greek</i>	1 (9%)	3 (33%)	1 (25%)	2 (50%)	0
<i>Race</i>	2 (18%)	1 (11%)	2 (50%)	0	0

Reason Table D:

	<i>Given Dimensions of Difference Ranked</i>				
<i>Given Dimensions of Difference</i>	<i>Academic</i> (7) 58%	<i>Vocational</i> (6) 50%	<i>Non Conformist</i> (1) 8%	<i>Identity Seeker</i> (2) 17%	<i>Status Seeker</i> (2) 17%
<i>Academic</i>	1 (14%)	2 (33%)	0	1 (50%)	0
<i>Living Situation</i>	1 (14%)	2 (33%)	0	0	0
<i>Extracurricular Activities</i>	1 (14%)	1 (17%)	1 (100%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)
<i>Reason for being at Lehigh</i>	3 (43%)	1 (17%)	0	0	1 (50%)
<i>Race</i>	1 (14%)	0	0	0	0
<i>Gender</i>	0	0	0	0	0



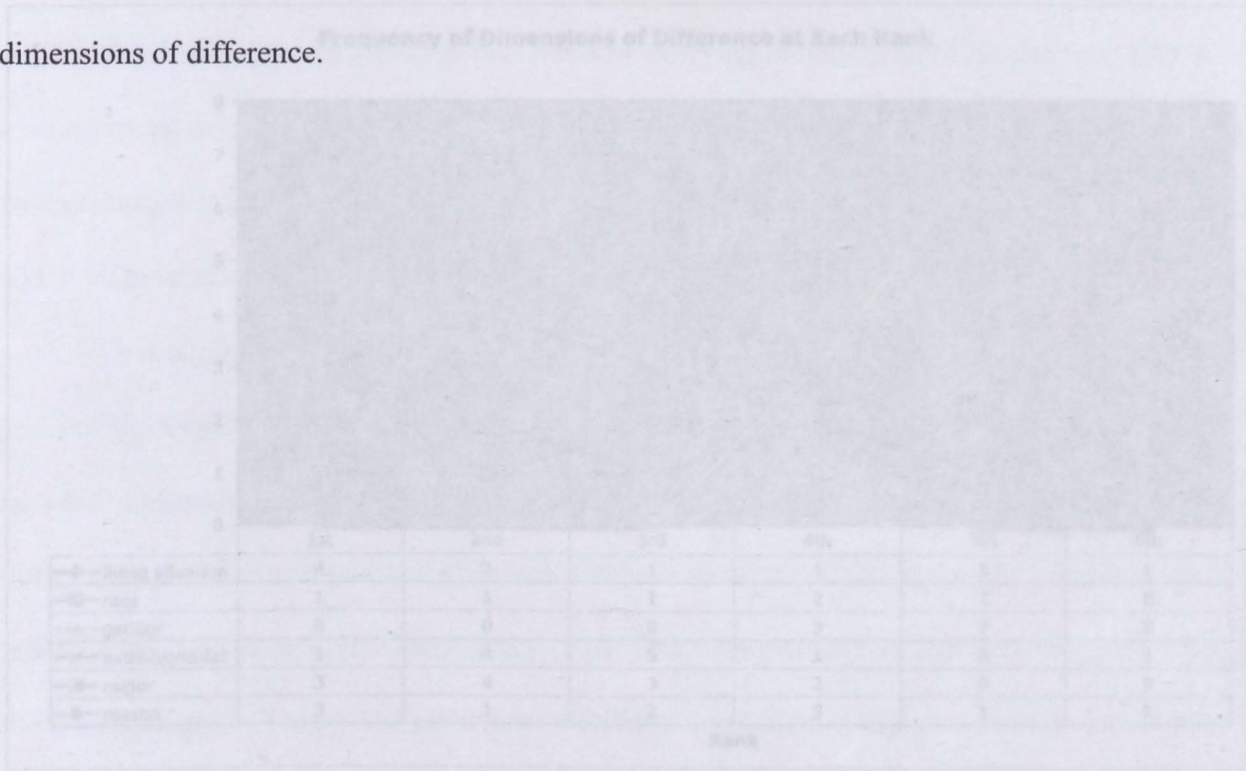
### *Dimensions of Difference*

The following graph represents the Frequency of Dimensions of Difference in the ranking task that the second set of informants completed. This table shows a lot of information about all dimensions of difference. Only for this table, I used all of the items because each list was the same length and the terms are all consistent. Living situation peaks as the first term and is ranked as such 33% of the time. Academics or major peaks as being ranked second also 33% of the time. Important to note with this dimension that after the 4<sup>th</sup> spot it is not listed; everyone ranked major in the top 4 out of 6 terms. Reason for being at Lehigh peaked at 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> spots being ranked as such each 25% of the time. Reason remained as a dimension ranked fairly consistently throughout. Extracurricular activities peaks at being ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>, 42% of the time. Race peaked as the last ranking at 50% of the time and gender peaked as the second last ranking at 58% of the time.

I think the significant information that comes out of this is the rankings on gender and race. Why are these two peaking at the last two ranking spots? They are dimensions of difference that exist in and outside of Lehigh's campus. So it could be the fact that the questions were phrased in a way that focused on groups at Lehigh University. I think it is more than that, though. Many people complained about diversity on Lehigh's campus and then we had the campus climate survey. The focus of this campus wide survey was on issues with diversity. As a consequence problems with diversity were highlighted in the findings (although white males were very comfortable here on average). My interviews were not asking about problems with diversity in race or gender and this affected the way people responded. I also think that saying that race or gender are salient as dimensions of difference may not be seen as politically correct



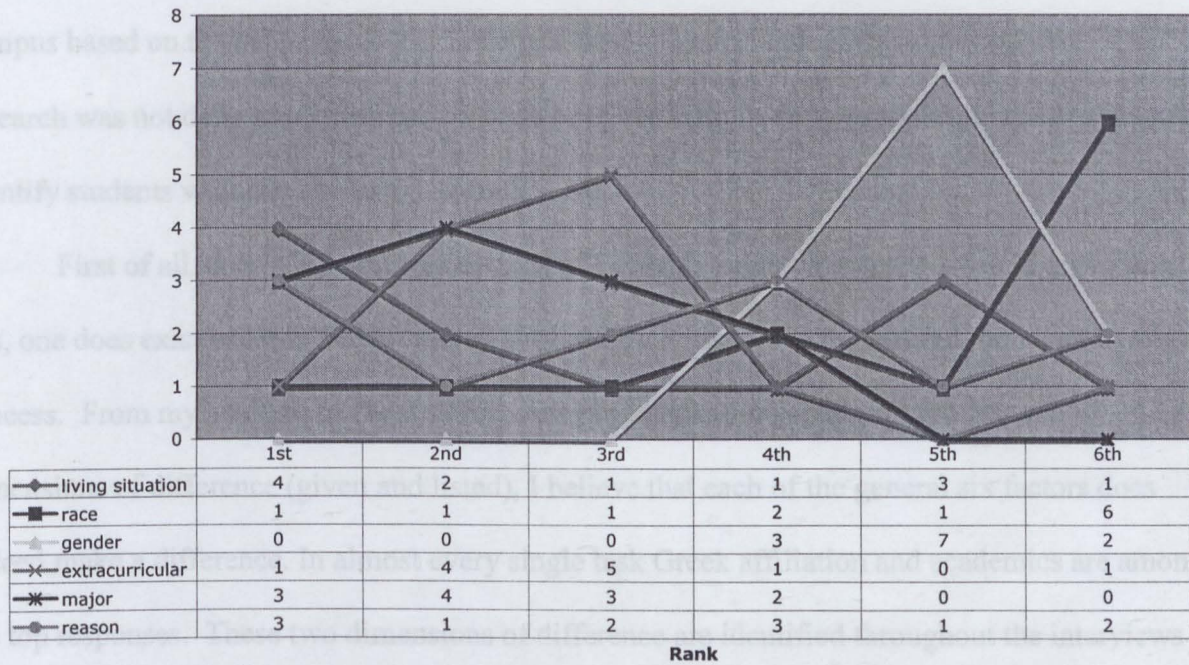
when talking to another. As a result most people were careful about the way they ranked the dimensions of difference.



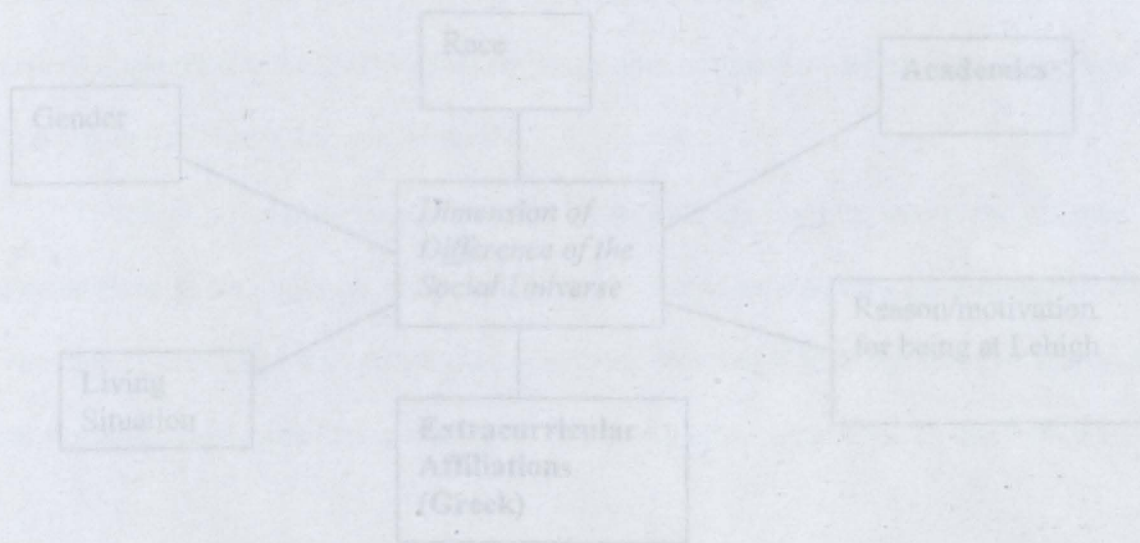


Conclusion

Frequency of Dimensions of Difference at Each Rank



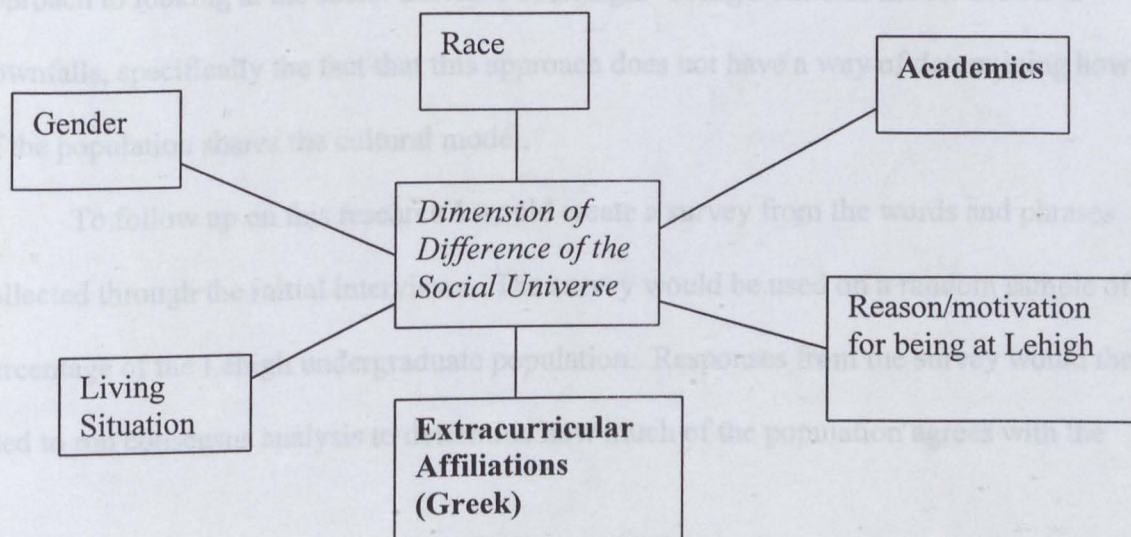
and stand out as possibly being more significant than the other dimensions of difference. At this point more research would need to be done to conclusively show which dimensions make a greater difference than others. Refer to the following simplified diagram as a reference of a potential critical model of the dimensions of difference of Lehigh University:



## Conclusion

Conducting these interviews was one way of trying to understand Lehigh University's campus based on the perceptions that undergraduate students have of their environment. The research was not done to identify the true nature of the campus demographics, but rather how to identify students view the university socially.

First of all, does a cultural model exist of Lehigh's social universe? I would argue that yes, one does exist because I encountered similarities in responses throughout the interviewing process. From my analysis of the first responses to interaction groups, all groups, and dimensions of difference (given and listed), I believe that each of the general six factors does indeed make a difference. In almost every single task Greek affiliation and academics are among the top responses. These two dimensions of difference are identified throughout the interviews and stand out as possibly being more significant than the other dimensions of difference. At this point more research would need to be done to conclusively show which dimensions make a greater difference than others. Refer to the following simplified diagram as a reference of a potential cultural model of the dimensions of difference at Lehigh University:





presented cultural model. On top of this the survey would show if more than one way of  
organism I wanted to look at how my research compared with the Campus Climate Survey. My  
results did not necessarily support or rebut the campus climate survey. The campus climate  
survey that Lehigh University used to assess the university climate showed that white males are  
comfortable at Lehigh (Rankin 2007: v-viii). This makes sense because these people are in the  
majority and have no reason to feel out of place. My research did not focus on comfort levels  
within the university, but instead on the way that people classify others at the university.  
Because the campus climate survey intended on determining how comfortable people feel about  
Lehigh's campus climate and my thesis worked to identifying a social universe the results are not  
quite comparable.

My study has several limitations. First of all my sample is biased because most of the  
informants were people that I knew before hand. The type of people who know me may be some  
how be inherently different than the people who do not know me. Along those same lines, my  
results are not generalizeable to the whole Lehigh undergraduate population because I do not  
have a random sample of informants. On top of this I do not have an adequate number of  
informants to analyze groups and dimensions of difference effectively. I used the cultural model  
approach to looking at the social universe of Lehigh. Using a cultural model has some  
downfalls, specifically the fact that this approach does not have a way of determining how much  
of the population shares the cultural model.

To follow up on this research I would create a survey from the words and phrases  
collected through the initial interviews. The survey would be used on a random sample of a  
percentage of the Lehigh undergraduate population. Responses from the survey would then be  
used to run consensus analysis to determine how much of the population agrees with the

presented cultural model. On top of this the survey would show if more than one way of organizing the dimensions of difference exists.

After all is said and done I am left with a lot of questions. Can dimensions of difference truly be categorized into a cultural model? Generally cultural models are used to sort through dimensions of difference and not the other way around. The fact that I am left with dimensions of difference means that maybe I need to dig a little deeper to uncover the implicit knowledge of the social universe at Lehigh. How do I go about discovering the actual social universe and not just its dimensions of difference? I could start with only one dimensions, such as academics or extracurricular activities, and delve into it. Would having informants list all of the possible groups in one of these such dimensions be effective?

Dimensions of difference are how the students at Lehigh University explicit describe their social universe. In order to ascertain the implicit knowledge it is first imperative to reveal what people can explicitly state. The next step is to use these explicit dimensions to analyze the implicit understandings.



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## Appendix A – Original Interview

### Informal Interview Set Up –

I am doing research on the undergraduate students at Lehigh University and I am interested in finding out about the way that you perceive the social universe at Lehigh. I am interested in the types of people you interact with on campus and the groups that you identify as present at Lehigh.

Some of the questions are going to be listing types of activities, so please allow me time to write down the items that you mention. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Ok so first of all,

What are all of the different groups of people that you interact with on campus?

To expand upon that,

Please list all of the different types of undergraduates that exist at Lehigh University.

Ok now,

Can you think of different types of students?

Now to get you to think about more types of groups,

What are the factors that you think divide undergraduate students on campus?

What about factors that divide all people on campus?

Where do you fall in these classifications?

Do you fit in more than one category?

Where do your friends fit into these categories?

How do you see Lehigh?

If you had to place yourself in one of these categories, where would you place yourself:  
concerned with future occupational activities and with preparation for them; college is important primarily for entrance to desirable occupations  
intellectually involved; pursues knowledge; identifies with faculty and scholarly activities  
attention is focused primarily on his own attitudes and concerns rather than on group activities or norms; prides himself on being independent of group pressures; sees himself as an individual; may be intellectually inclined, but on his own terms rather than those of the faculty  
concerned primarily with the pursuit of an identity; introspective; explorative; his relations with others and with groups are used to try out roles; concerns with others are primarily in terms of their response to his own behavior, and as possible role models to try out, rather than because of any inherent interest in them as individuals  
concerned primarily with other people, but largely in terms of their prestige and the status that will rub off from them onto him; sees his own advancement in terms of the influential people he can become intimate with; deeply involved with campus groups, but primarily in the terms of the status that goes with the membership.



## Appendix B – Edited Interview

### Informal Interview Set Up -

I am doing research on the undergraduate students at Lehigh University and I am interested in finding out about the way that you perceive the social universe at Lehigh. I am interested in the types of people you interact with on campus and the groups that you identify as present at Lehigh.

Some of the questions are going to be listing types of activities, so please allow me time to write down the items that you mention. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Ok so first of all,

What are all of the different groups of people that you interact with on campus?

To expand upon that,

Please list all of the different types of undergraduates that exist at Lehigh University. And by this I mean all of the undergraduate subcultures that you can think of.

Ok now,

Can you think of any other different types of students?

Now to get you to think about more types of groups,

What are the factors that you think divide undergraduate students on campus?

Which of these factors, that you have come up with, do you think is the most important?

These are factors that have come out through previous interviews as main factors dividing people on campus, can you place them in order of importance:

Living situation,

race,

gender,

involvement in extracurriculars,

major/college/department,

and reason for being at school (motivation/type of personality)

What are differences that make a difference on campus?

What about factors that divide all people on campus?

Where do you fall in these classifications?

Do you fit in more than one category?

Where do your friends fit into these categories?

How do you see Lehigh? When someone says Lehigh University, what do you think of?



### Appendix C

If you had to place yourself in one of these categories, where would you place yourself:  
Academic - concerned with future occupational activities and with preparation for them; college is important primarily for entrance to desirable occupations

Vocational intellectually involved; pursues knowledge; identifies with faculty and scholarly activities

Non-conformist - attention is focused primarily on his own attitudes and concerns rather than on group activities or norms; prides himself on being independent of group pressures; sees himself as an individual; may be intellectually inclined, but on his own terms rather than those of the faculty

Identity seeker - concerned primarily with the pursuit of an identity; introspective; explorative; his relations with others and with groups are used to try out roles; concerns with others are primarily in terms of their response to his own behavior, and as possible role models to try out, rather than because of any inherent interest in them as individuals

Status seeker - concerned primarily with other people, but largely in terms of their prestige and the status that will rub off from them onto him; sees his own advancement in terms of the influential people he can become intimate with; deeply involved with campus groups, but primarily in the terms of the status that goes with the membership.

3. female, CAS; on campus; white; academic/status seeker; non Greek
4. male, RCEAS; on campus; international student; vocational/academic; non Greek
5. male, RCEAS; on campus; white; identity seeker; Greek
6. female, RCEAS; off campus; white; identity seeker; non Greek
7. female, CAS; on campus; white; vocational; non Greek
8. male, CBE; on campus; academic/vocational/status seeker; non Greek
9. male, RCEAS; on campus; white; academic/vocational; non Greek
10. female, CAS; on campus; black; vocational; non Greek
11. male, CBE; on campus; white; non conformist/identity seeker; Greek
12. male, RCEAS; on campus; white; academic; non Greek



## Appendix C

My informants from the first set of interviews consist of the following people (described

### My Perceptions

by the six dimensions of difference that I analyzed throughout the different tables):

1. female; CAS; on campus; white; academic; non Greek
2. female; CAS; off campus; white; academic/identity seeker; Greek
3. female; CAS; on campus; black; non conformist; non Greek
4. female; CAS; on campus; white; non conformist; non Greek
5. male; CAS; on campus; white; vocational; Greek
6. male; IBE – RCEAS and CBE; on campus; international student; vocational; non Greek
7. male; CAS; on campus; black; academic/status seeker; Greek
8. male; CAS; on campus; white; vocational/academic/non conformist; non Greek

For the second set of interviews my informants consist of the following types of people:

1. male; CAS; on campus; white; vocational/academic/non conformist; non Greek
2. female; CAS; on campus; white; academic; non Greek
3. female; CAS; on campus; white; academic/status seeker; non Greek
4. male; RCEAS; on campus; international student; vocational/academic; non Greek
5. male; RCEAS; on campus; white; identity seeker; Greek
6. female; RCEAS; off campus; white; identity seeker; non Greek
7. female; CAS; on campus; white; vocational; non Greek
8. male; CBE; on campus; academic/vocational/status seeker; non Greek
9. male; RCEAS; on campus; white; academic/vocational; non Greek
10. female; CAS; on campus; black; vocational; non Greek
11. male CBE; on campus; white; non conformist/identity seeker; Greek
12. male; RCEAS; on campus; white; academic; non Greek



Appendix D

*My Perceptions*

The following tables are tabulations from groups I identified through pile sorting the informants myself. Interestingly enough when I grouped the informants gender and college seemed to be the most important factors for creating piles. At the same point I do not think that I would mention gender as a dimension of difference on campus. Group A refers to white, non Greek females who are International Relations/Political Science majors, and identified as academics; Group B refers to non Greek females who are psych majors, and identified as vocational; Group C refers to non Greek females who are English/journalism majors, and identified as non conformists; Group D refers to males in the Engineering and business schools, not in the Greek system, and who identified as academic and/or vocational; Group E refers to males International Relations majors, not in the Greek system, who identified as academic, vocational, and nonconformist. I am not sure if using these groups makes sense because each one is rather small and not all of the participants are included in the groupings. It is also important to note that each of the groups has less informants than possible responses for the most

Pile Sort Table D

part (refer to Pile Sort Tables A-D). Thus this section is only an appendix.

Given Dimensions of Difference	Group A (2) 17%	Group B (2) 17%	Group C (0)	Group D (4) 33%	Group E (1) 8%
Academic	0	1 (50%)	0	0	1 (100%)
Living Situation	0	1 (50%)	0	1 (25%)	0
Extracurricular Activities	0	0	0	1 (25%)	0
Reason for being at Lehigh	2 (100%)	0	0	1 (25%)	0
Race	0	0	0	1 (25%)	0
Gender	0	0	0	0	0



Pile Sort Table A:

	<i>Interaction Groups</i>				
<i>Free-listing Terms</i>	<i>Group A</i> (3) 15%	<i>Group B</i> (2) 10%	<i>Group C</i> (2) 10%	<i>Group D</i> (5) 25%	<i>Group E</i> (2) 10%
<i>Academic</i>	2 (67%)	2 (100%)	0	5 (100%)	0
<i>Athletic</i>	1 (33%)	0	1 (50%)	0	2 (100%)
<i>Interests</i>	0	0	1 (50%)	0	0

Pile Sort Table B:

	<i>All Identified Groups</i>				
<i>Free-listing Terms</i>	<i>Group A</i> (3) 15%	<i>Group B</i> (2) 10%	<i>Group C</i> (2) 10%	<i>Group D</i> (5) 25%	<i>Group E</i> (2) 10%
<i>Academic</i>	0	1 (50%)	0	1 (20%)	1 (50%)
<i>Interests</i>	1 (33%)	0	1 (50%)	0	0
<i>Greek</i>	1 (33%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	3 (60%)	1 (50%)
<i>Demographic</i>	1 (33%)	0	0	1 (20%)	0

Pile Sort Table C:

	<i>Dimensions of Difference</i>				
<i>Free-listing Terms</i>	<i>Group A</i> (3) 15%	<i>Group B</i> (2) 10%	<i>Group C</i> (2) 10%	<i>Group D</i> (5) 25%	<i>Group E</i> (2) 10%
<i>Academic</i>	0	0	1 (50%)	1 (20%)	1 (50%)
<i>Living Situation</i>	1 (33%)	1 (50%)	0	0	0
<i>Interests</i>	2 (67%)	0	0	1 (20%)	0
<i>Greek</i>	0	1 (50%)	0	2 (40%)	0
<i>Race</i>	0	0	1 (50%)	1 (20%)	1 (50%)

Pile Sort Table D:

	<i>Given Dimensions of Difference Ranked</i>				
<i>Given Dimensions of Difference</i>	<i>Group A</i> (2) 17%	<i>Group B</i> (2) 17%	<i>Group C</i> (0)	<i>Group D</i> (4) 33%	<i>Group E</i> (1) 8%
<i>Academic</i>	0	1 (50%)	0	0	1 (100%)
<i>Living Situation</i>	0	1 (50%)	0	1 (25%)	0
<i>Extracurricular Activities</i>	0	0	0	1 (25%)	0
<i>Reason for being at Lehigh</i>	2 (100%)	0	0	1 (25%)	0
<i>Race</i>	0	0	0	1 (25%)	0
<i>Gender</i>	0	0	0	0	0



**LEHIGH UNIVERSITY  
HUMAN SUBJECTS QUESTIONNAIRE**

Submitted By (Proposer): Christina Stegura Department: Sociology and Anthropology

Mailing Address: Box H469 Phone No.: 610.597.8628  
 E-mail: cms309@lehigh.edu

Title of Proposal: A Cultural Model of the Lehigh Social Universe

Principal Investigator (Faculty Investigator/Supervisor/Advisor): Nicola Tannenbaum

New Proposal  Start&End Dates: January 2008toMay 2008

**TYPE OF PROJECT**

- Master's Thesis \_\_\_\_\_
- Dissertation \_\_\_\_\_
- Other Graduate Student Project \_\_\_\_\_
- Undergraduate Senior Thesis
- Undergraduate Course Project \_\_\_\_\_ Course #: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other UG Student Project \_\_\_\_\_ Please Explain: \_\_\_\_\_
- Non-Sponsored Research \_\_\_\_\_
- Sponsored Research \_\_\_\_\_ Please List Sponsor: \_\_\_\_\_

**REVIEW CATEGORY**

- Expedited Review \_\_\_\_\_
- Limited Review
- Full Committee Review \_\_\_\_\_

**CHECKLIST OF ITEMS TO ENCLOSE**

Form

	Number of Copies Required		
	Expedited	Limited	Full
a. Human Subjects Questionnaire	2	4	15
b. Informed Consent and/or other Explanation of Study to Subjects or Parents/Guardians	2	4	15
c. Instruments (surveys, tests, etc.)	2	4	15
d. Progress Report (if renewal)	2	4	15
e. Full Proposal (dissertation, sponsor application, etc.) <i>Double-sided copy</i>	1	1	1
f. Certificate of completion of on-line tutorial	1	1	1

**SIGNATURES**

Proposer's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

For student **or non-faculty** projects:

This is to certify that I am the Principal Investigator for this study; I have examined the procedures involved in this study, and I take overall responsibility for the conduct of this research.

Principal Investigator's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator's name: Nicola Tannenbaum E-mail: nt01@lehigh.edu  
Print or Type

Dept/Center Approval (if required): \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Print or Type

**Please return to:** Ruth Tallman, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
 526 Brodhead Avenue (610-758-3024)

**LEHIGH UNIVERSITY  
HUMAN SUBJECTS QUESTIONNAIRE**



1. Summarize the purpose of the proposed research, making clear the research question(s) and hypothesis(es). Avoid the use of technical terms or discipline specific language. Your explanation must be concise and clear to those unfamiliar with your field. Describe all study procedures. Limit this section to one page.

For my thesis I would like to take a look at the social perceptions at Lehigh of the Lehigh community. Through informal conversations with friends, faculty, and staff, I have been made aware of several ways in which the Lehigh campus is itself divided.

I hope to begin by interviewing 8 undergraduate students [4 male and 4 female] to identify different subdivisions that these people see on campus. Then I will continue with a triadic comparison activity with 16 students [8 male and 8 female] in order to recognize similarity judgments about the subdivisions.

The outcome of this task will be to construct a cultural model of Lehigh social perceptions. Hopefully there will be an underlying consensus throughout the campus of how people are perceived to be organized. This research project will be based on the idea of a cultural model, what it means, what it can tell about a community, how to construct one, and how to be sure that one is present or not. I will do research on campus perceptions as well as use the campus climate survey from last year for background information.

The overall goal of my research project will be to understand how students classify themselves and their peers. I want to be aware of the different perspectives that are present on campus and compare them. The way that people perceive themselves and others within the Lehigh community is the underlying objective.

2. Describe the research design. Specify how the data will be used to answer the proposed research question(s). Provide the name of each of the measures that will be used (attach a copy of each), provide information on the reliability and validity of each measure (references or results from prior use of the measure). State the details of the statistical or qualitative analysis that will be used to analyze these data.

The research design for this project is to create a cultural model of the undergraduate students at Lehigh. Tabulations from the triadic comparisons will help me to create this cultural model. Triadic comparisons will consist of several questions, each listing three terms identified through interviewing. The informant will be asked to identify the item that is most different in each triad. Through doing the comparisons the data will show similarity judgments. This exploratory research will help me to create a cultural model of the Lehigh undergraduate body.

I will first interview a small sample of 8 undergraduate students, one male and female from each year. I will question them on the different groups that they see on campus. I will prompt them to expand upon their answers by identifying where their friends and others fit in. I want them to distinguish all of the groups that they interact with.

Then I will interview a larger sample of 16 undergraduate students, 2 males and 2 females from year. This interview will be more structured, as the informants will be filling out a triadic comparison task that I have created from the terms collected from the previous interviews. These students will be asked to choose the term that is most different in several triads.



3. CHARACTERISTICS OF SUBJECTS

Sex: M  F  Both

Special Ethnic Group: Yes  No

Number of Subjects: 24

Age Group: 18+

Handicapped: Yes  No

Institutionalized: Yes  No

General State of Health: Normal

Other (Explain):

4. If subjects are either (A) children, (B) mentally incompetent, or (C) legally restricted (i.e., institutionalized), please explain necessity for using this particular group. **[Studies using these populations always involve some risk, Question #11 must be answered]**

N/A

5. How will the subjects be sampled, recruited or otherwise enlisted as subjects in this study? If subjects are recruited from a school, an institution (group home, church, adult day care, etc.), a university, or a similar situation where you are collecting data within the confines of the group/institution, **documentation must be provided confirming that permission has been obtained** from the school administration, a person with authority within the group/institution (professor of a class from another institution that is being recruited), or the director of the program (group home, adult day care, etc.).

I will recruit the people for the original interview [8 students] by using a snowball sample. I will start with some people I know that fit the criteria that I have established [gender and year at Lehigh] and ask if they would like to participate. I will then ask them to refer others that they know who might be interested. I will do this until I have interviewed the people that I have previously specified [one male and female from each undergraduate year]. To contact the students originally I will use email or phone and set up an interview time that is acceptable for the informant and myself.

The students [16] who participate in the second part of the research project [triadic comparisons] will be identified through the same snowballing techniques that I used for the first sample. This part of the data collection will be using paper and pencil to fill out a form. As a result, I will allow students to take the forms with them and return them in a reasonable amount of time.

6. Describe the manner in which informed consent will be obtained for each appropriate category.

A. Adult Subjects (Includes persons 18 years of age and over). Subject consent required.

I will use informed consent papers. I will allow them time to look over the paper, ask questions, and then sign it. They will retain a copy of the paper and I will retain the copy with their signature on it.

B. Institutionalized Subjects: Subject consent form and consent of appropriate, responsible institutional staff person required.

N/A



C. Parents/Guardians consent for Child Subjects (Includes all persons under 18). Written permission is required of both parents or the child's guardian for each child under the age of 18 who will be the subject of research. The permission of one parent is sufficient if: (a) the other parent is not reasonably available or is incompetent; or (b) only one parent has legal responsibility for the care and custody of the child; or (c) the research is such that it either does not involve more than minimal risk to the child or involves more than minimal risk but also presents the prospect of direct benefit to that child. Please provide a justification if you will only be asking for the signature of one parent. *Note: Protocols for research being conducted in elementary, middle or high schools must be accompanied by a letter of approval from the principal or superintendent of the school.*

N/A

7. If subjects are 14-17, will their written assent be obtained? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.  
If no, why not? If yes, how? (Please see requirements regarding assent under "Children as Subjects in Research" in the Lehigh University Policy.)

N/A

8. If subjects are 14 and younger, will you obtain their assent? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_.  
If no, why not? If yes, how?

N/A

9. What precautions will be taken to insure the privacy and confidentiality or anonymity of the subjects?  
(Please include the reporting of data.)

I will have a list of the people who have been interviewed, but this list will not be available to anyone else. The name of the person who has been interviewed will not be connected with their answers on the triadic comparisons or for the free listing task. I will simply compile a list of everyone who has been interviewed and their responses will be assigned a case number. The case numbers will be linked to fake names that will be used for reporting data in my thesis.

10. What specific procedures will be taken to safeguard the data in your possession?

The data in my possession will be kept safe in my room which has a lock on it. Everything will be placed in organized folders. No one will have access to the information besides myself.

11. Are audio or visual images of the subjects going to be recorded? Yes \_\_\_ No x.  
If yes, the following questions should be addressed:

a. What type of recordings will be made (audio or visual)?

N/A



b. How will the recordings be utilized in your study or analysis?  
N/A

c. What specific procedures will be taken to protect the recordings?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

N/A

EXPLAIN

d. Do you envision any other uses for the recordings, such as illustrations in publications or as a training tool?  
N/A

N/A

e. Will the recordings eventually be destroyed? When? How?  
N/A

N/A

12. Since there are always some risks in any study, even if minimal, describe in detail the possible physical, psychological, social, legal, economic or other risks to the subjects, either immediate or long range. Estimate the seriousness and extent of the risks.

The possible risks that could arise in the study would be mainly psychological. Informants may end up thinking about the environment that is present at Lehigh University during the interview. This may lead to introspective thinking about where the informant fits into everything. This topic has already been brought up on campus through the Climate survey. Therefore, I do not foresee any serious risks that can occur from this research; analyzing social perceptions at Lehigh University poses minimal risks.

13. Describe the procedures that will be used to reduce the risk. How effective do you feel they will be?

Informants will be able to stop participating in the study at any point in time. They will not be required to finish if they feel that they are being exposed to any risks. This procedure should be fully effective in eliminating the minimal risks that may arise.

14. Assess the benefits of this research to:  
(A) The subjects

This research benefits the subjects because it allows them to analyze their own view of Lehigh's undergraduate campus.

(B) Society at large

The Lehigh society at large, specifically all tied to the undergraduate society, will benefit from this research because this study aims to construct a multidimensional model of the way undergraduate students perceive their peers. Social perceptions at Lehigh University are an issue that the campus has been concerned with recently, as evident from the campus climate survey.



Society at large will benefit from this research because it will add to the conversation on college campus environments. It is important to understand how young adults perceive themselves and their environments.

(C) Do you feel that the benefits significantly outweigh the risks involved?

Yes   x   No       

### EXPLAIN

The benefits of this research significantly outweigh the risks involved. The risks of participating are minimal, while the benefits to subjects and the whole of society are greater. Participants are able to withdraw from the study at any point and they are able to refuse to participate in the beginning. The information that will be gained from this research can provide greater insight to campus life at Lehigh and possibly at other universities. The benefits of understanding social perceptions should not be overlooked.



## Thesis Proposal – Social Perceptions at Lehigh University: A Cultural Model

For my thesis I would like to take a look at the social perceptions at Lehigh of the Lehigh community. Through informal conversations with friends, faculty, and staff, I have been made aware of several ways in which the Lehigh campus is itself divided.

I hope to begin by interviewing 8 undergraduate students [one female and one male from each of the four undergraduate years] to identify different subdivisions that these people see on campus. Then I will continue with a triadic comparison activity with 16 students [two male and two female from each of the four undergraduate years] in order to recognize similarity judgments about the subdivisions.

The original interview will use questions to understand the way that the individuals see themselves as fitting into Lehigh University, the types of people that they interact with, and the groups [overt and subtle] that they perceive on campus. Triadic comparisons will consist of several questions, each listing three terms identified through interviewing. The informant will be asked to identify the item that is most different in each triad. Through doing the comparisons the data will show similarity judgments. Similarity judgments are basically data that show what items people think are similar and different. This exploratory research will help me to create a cultural model of the Lehigh undergraduate body.

I will recruit these people by using a snowball sample. I will start with some people I know that fit the criteria that I have established [gender and year at Lehigh] and ask if they would like to participate. I will then ask them to refer others that they know who might be interested. I will do this until I have interviewed the people that I have previously specified [one male and female from each undergraduate year]. To contact the students originally I will use email or phone and set up an interview time that is acceptable for the informant and myself.

The students [16] who participate in the second part of the research project [triadic comparisons] will be identified through the same snowballing techniques that I used for the first sample. This part of the data collection will be using paper and pencil to fill out a form. As a result, I will allow students to take the forms with them and return them in a reasonable amount of time.

The outcome of this task will be to construct a cultural model of Lehigh social perceptions. Hopefully there will be an underlying consensus throughout the campus of how people are perceived to be organized. This research project will be based on the idea of a cultural model, what it means, what it can tell about a community, how to construct one, and how to be sure that one is present or not. I will do research on campus perceptions as well as use the campus climate survey from last year for background information. This exploratory research will help me to create a cultural model of the Lehigh undergraduate body. In the end I will compare my results with the results of the recent campus climate survey in hopes that they confirm or expand upon the information.

The overall goal of my research project will be to understand how students classify themselves and their peers. I want to be aware of the different perspectives that are present on campus and compare them. The way that people perceive themselves and their peers within the Lehigh community is the underlying objective of this senior thesis.



Instruments

Informal Interview Set Up

I am doing research on the undergraduate students at Lehigh University and I am interested in finding out about the way that you perceive the social universe at Lehigh. I am interested in the types of people you interact with on campus and the groups that you identify as present at Lehigh.

Some of the questions are going to be listing types of activities, so please allow me time to write down the items that you mention. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Ok so first of all,

1. What are all of the different groups of people that you interact with on campus?

To expand upon that,

2. Please list all of the different types of undergraduates that exist at Lehigh University.

Ok now,

3. Can you think of different types of students?

Now to get you to think about more types of groups,

4. What are the factors that you think divide undergraduate students on campus?

What about factors that divide all people on campus?

5. Where do you fall in these classifications?

Do you fit in more than one category?

6. Where do your friends fit into these categories?

7. How do you see Lehigh?



When someone says Lehigh University, what do you think of?

### Triadic Comparisons

These will consist of three terms at a time that all emerge from the previous interview questions.

Ex.

For each example choose the one that is most unlike the other two:

- |    |       |        |      |
|----|-------|--------|------|
| 1. | Apple | Orange | Pear |
| 2. | Car   | House  | Cup  |

The possible risks associated with this study are minimal.

You may not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, but participation may help to increase knowledge that may benefit others in the future. The information that you possess about social perceptions is invaluable to this research and your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Any data or answers to questions will remain confidential with respect to any identity.

Any information collected through this research project that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law.

Your decision whether or not to participate is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time without jeopardizing your relationship with Lehigh University.

If you have any questions about this study and what is expected of you in this study, you may call Christina Stegure at 610.597.8628 or Nikola Tannenbaum at 610.758.2429.

You may report problems that may result from your participation or direct questions in regard to your rights as a subject in this study to Ruth Tailman, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, Lehigh University, (610)758-3024. All reports or correspondence will be kept confidential.

To confirm that you have read and understand the foregoing information, that you have received answers to any questions you asked, and to consent to participate in this study, please sign below.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject's Signature

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the study to the above subject.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator's Signature



**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

This form is to request your agreement to participate as a subject in the research project on social perceptions at Lehigh University conducted by Christina Stegura, an undergraduate student in the Sociology and Anthropology Department, Lehigh University, as a part of her Senior Thesis project, under the supervision of Nicola Tannenbaum, a professor of Anthropology at Lehigh University.

The purpose of the study is to construct a clearer understanding of social perceptions at Lehigh University.

The procedures which will be used in this study are free listing tasks and triadic comparisons as well as some interviewing questions to prompt for explanations of any answers. Informants will be given as much time as needed to complete tasks, but the procedure should not last, in total, more than thirty minutes.

The possible risks associated with the study are minimal.

You may not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, but participation may help to increase knowledge that may benefit others in the future. The information that you possess about social perceptions is invaluable to this research and your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Any data or answers to questions will remain confidential with regard to my identity.

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You may report problems that may result from your participation or direct questions in regard to your rights as a subject in this study to Ruth Tallman, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, Lehigh University, (610)758-3024. All reports or correspondence will be kept confidential.

To confirm that you have read and understand the foregoing information, that you have received answers to any questions you asked, and to consent to participate in the study, please sign below.

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Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject's Signature

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the study to the above subject.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator's Signature



