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Title: Romantic Relationships and the University

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About the Author: My name is Ingrid Bergstrom and I am a junior at the University of Illinois. I'm majoring in Anthropology and minoring in Philosophy. I'm vice president of Model United Nations Illinois, and upon graduation I plan to attend law school.

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Abstract: My research pursues the questions of how romantic relationships impact incoming freshmen, more specifically, romantic relationships carried over from high school, in which both individuals in the relationship matriculate to the university. My research looked to better understand what elements of the University of Illinois impacted these relationships, what effects these changes had in combination with the students transitioning to college, and if there are any measures the university can take in order to assist these individuals, and any others in relationships. My research found that these relationships do, in most cases, change in response to the individuals moving into a college environment. I would also argue from my findings that these relationships also largely impact the lives of the individuals involved. My seed research did not ascertain the specific ways in which these relationships impact the individuals involved, and I hope that my proposed research will be able to answer that question.

Initial Exercises:

Reading Response

Initial Exercises:

Observation

Initial Exercises:

Analysis of a Text

Initial Exercises: *I interviewed Alyssa[*], a University of Illinois freshman on September 24th, 2007. We conducted the interview at my apartment in Urbana, IL. The interview lasted for approximately 45 minutes.*

A Practice

Interview

I approached Alyssa, a friend of mine, to do the interview. She seemed surprised at the request, but agreed to do it after a short explanation of what it would entail. She arrived at my apartment Sunday evening after attending an exam review session for a chemistry class she was enrolled in. She was dressed casually, in a navy t-shirt from her high school swim team, a pair of gray athletic shorts, and sandals. She had short, light brown hair pulled into a ponytail and no makeup on. When she arrived at my apartment she told me that she was “absolutely starving”, that she hadn’t eaten since breakfast. I fixed her a grilled cheese sandwich and fruit salad, and she ate while I conducted the interview.

I explained that this was a very loose interview, that I was going to ask a few questions, but she was free to talk about whatever struck her, I simply wanted to hear her thoughts. I decided not to tell her what the focus of my research (changing social relationships in incoming freshmen at the U of I) was because I did not want her to feel as if she was restricted from only talking about certain things. I began by simply asking her “so, what I want to know is, -how did you end up at U of I?” She first said “hmmm, well...” she then paused for a second, looking at me and smiling. She then began listing things she liked about the university- that she had friends already attending the university, that she had visited the campus several times and she liked it, and that it was “obviously a good school”. I then asked her what she meant by “good school” and she paused, looking slightly surprised at the question. She then answered that she guessed because it had a great academic reputation and had “really nice facilities and stuff”. After listing the things she liked about the University, she paused and said “but U of I wasn’t really my first choice”, and that she had wanted to go the air force academy. “I was basically accepted, but I got medically disqualified, so yeah... I couldn’t go there.” I asked her if she was considering any other schools and she told me that she sort of did, but that she “was doing so much work for the air force that I sort of let some doors shut, (on other schools) and so it was basically the air force of U of I”. We spoke awhile longer on the other colleges she had applied to. Alyssa stopped talking and got up to get herself a glass of water. She had finished eating.

When she sat back down at the table I asked her if her friendships in high-school had any effect on her decision to attend U of I. She told me “umm no, not really”. Again, I was expecting her to elaborate and was a little surprised, so I responded “not at all?” She paused and began to list her friends from high-school that also attended U of I, and told me that their decision to come here had no influence on her decision to come here. I asked about her boyfriend, if he had any bearing on her decision. She first told me a little about her relationship with her boyfriend. She then told me that her and her boyfriend sat down and had a conversation, and decided that they needed to decide on schools based on what was best for their own interests, and “that the other person should not be a ummm, a factor.” At this point the volume of her voice dropped considerably and she stopped smiling. I then

asked if they were still dating. She smiled and said “Yeah, we are. Coming to college was a lot easier because of him.” I asked her why. She responded “Well, um I mean that having him, having someone that knows me so well, it uh makes it easier when I have to go to a new place.” She told me that when you have new friends and are in a new place it is really helpful to have someone that has known you for a long time, that you can “have long conversations with, someone who can give real advice, that knows where you’re coming from, you know?” We talked about her summer and her attitude about going to college during that time period. We then conversed awhile longer about our mutual friends. She finished her glass of water, and began to stand up, telling me that she had a lot of studying to do, did I need anything else? I told her no, I thought that was everything I needed.

Thoughts/impressions about the interview- My initial and *very strong* thought was how difficult it was to jot down notes and listen to the interviewee and catch everything about the environment at the same time. The difficulty of this was magnified by my efforts to remember and apply all of Emerson’s advice on what should and shouldn’t be jotted down. I decided a few things half-way through the interview; first, that I needed to stop concentrating so intensely on how I was jotting down my notes, and instead just write what seemed important to me. I also decided that like Emerson said, “Through trial and error field researchers develop distinctive practical styles for writing jottings.” (20). As I acquire more experience in the field, note jotting will become easier. I was also somewhat thrown off by how quickly my interviewee answered my questions. I believe that I had a romanticized version in my head about how the interview would go- I would ask a question, and maybe make a few very insightful comments here and there that would spur the interviewee to recount long intriguing explanations from which I could draw brilliant conclusions. This did not happen, not in the slightest. I also decided, after some consideration of Emerson’s discussion of different points-of-view, to write up my field notes in first person. Because I was conducting a direct interview and was a significant part in interaction, I felt this to be the most appropriate.

[*] Pseudonym

Question: Question

What I wish to pursue- and this is a very tentative idea at this point- is something in relation to the changing social relationships in newly matriculating college freshmen at the University of Illinois. The idea of how an individual’s social relationships are effected by the transition

to college has fascinated me for some time, especially in the setting a large university such as Illinois. I have many, many more specific foci and questions I wish to pursue within the framework of that rather large question.

In particular, I wish to know if the social relationships in any way influenced the student's decision to attend the university. If they did in some way I would like to know in what manner. I would also like to pursue the state of social relationships that existed prior to the students matriculation into the university, and how/ if these relationships are maintained during college. I would like to know how new freshmen create new relationships in the university, especially with the university being a very large establishment. I would like to touch on how/if the student is able to integrate existing social relationships with new ones. With so many people at the university being from the Midwest area, I would like to know if this has any effect on social relationships at school, if being close to home inhibits newly forged social relationships, if it encourages it, etc.

I do not quite have a specific hypothesis yet, and I also feel that I need to start paring down these questions. If I do not, I think that my research project will either end up being much larger than I can handle or it will be stretched very thin across too many subjects and lose any sort of focus or direction. However, I am still not sure in which direction I want to go, each question I posed earlier seems incredibly intriguing to me.

Plan: Plan

At this point in time I believe that most, if not all, of my research will be conducted through several sets of interviews. I believe that this is the most effective method because many of my questions deal with either events that have already happened, or physically unobservable processes such as individual's rationality behind doing certain things or making certain decisions. I also need to know the exact social relationships between many of the individuals I will interact with- who they are, how they met, how long they have known each other, how often they see each other, who else is in their social group, etc and simply observing a place will not give me the answers to these questions. Simply observing an area would also be problematic to me because I am focusing my research on newly matriculated freshmen, but it is difficult to tell from observation who is a freshman and who is not. Even observable places with large percentages of freshman

(dorms e.g.) are not exclusively composed of first year students.

I plan on conducting interviews with a wide range of freshmen from as many different demographic categories as possible. Men, women, religious, non-religious, in-state, out-of-state, on scholarship, minority groups, majority groups, those who decided to rush, those who did not, Those staying in standard housing, those staying in private certified housing (e.g. Illini tower), etc. I understand that attempting to conduct interviews with this many people may prove problematic, and I may decide in the future to focus on a smaller group of people (e.g., those staying in private certified housing) I am also not yet sure exactly how many interviews it will be realistically plausible for me to conduct. Because of the nature of my research, I believe that the works by Weiss and Bourdieu would be particularly helpful because of their focus on the interview process, although nearly all of the readings will be helpful in some respect.

Updated Question and Plan

My question has developed and narrowed significantly. I have decided to focus on pre-existing romantic relationships in which both individuals have decided to attend the University of Illinois and continue their relationship here. I want to investigate if and/or how their relationship impacted their decision to come to the university. I also want to see post matriculation, if and how the University has changed/developed/disintegrated etc their relationship. Because of the difficulty in finding individuals who fit this description, I have expanded my project from only relationships of incoming freshman to all undergraduate students. I still plan on the majority of my research being conducted through interviews, ideally with both members of the relationship. I do not plan on focusing my research on any particular demographic, and I will try to be as diversified as possible. I am also considering conducting focus groups if it is within the guidelines of the IRB.

Data: Assignment # 6 Interview

A Project Interview

Background info- I have decided to narrow down my research project to individuals in pre-existing romantic relationships in which both individuals have decided to attend the University. I want to pursue the idea of if/how these relationships impacted each individual's decision to attend the university. I would also like to pursue how the University has impacted or changed the relationship post-matriculation. I have also decided to no longer limit the research

to freshmen, for I would like to see the effects of a few years on such a relationship.

I had some trouble in finding an individual to interview on such short notice- something such as a pre-existing romantic relationship is not easily observed, nor is there some sort of registered student organization for such a category of people. (I actually did go and look on the RSO website). I thought I would not be able to find someone suitable in time, but eventually I found someone, an acquaintance of my younger sister. I contacted her and asked her if she would be willing to let me interview her about her relationship. She was initially told me that she was fairly busy this week and did not know if she could do it. I told her that the interview would only take an hour maximum, and that it would be completely anonymous. She then told me that that sounded fine, and that she was sure she had an hour free somewhere. I gathered that she was a little uncomfortable with discussing her relationship, especially if the results would be in the public arena. I anticipate this reaction from many people that I will attempt to work with, so I must keep this in mind and work to be very sensitive to their needs, concerns, misgivings, etc so that I can gather information that is as "true" to the individual as possible. I also decided to use a tape recorder. I conducted my last interview without one, and I feel that it hindered me- not only did I miss some very important dialogue, I was also very concentrated on trying to catch the exact wording of the dialogue and missed other important aspects of the interview. I also wrote down a few specific questions I wished to ask. I did not do this last time in attempt to make the interview feel more comfortable to the interviewee, but I found that I forgot some of the points I wished to make.

The interview- We met at a coffee shop on campus. I arrived a little early so I could find a suitable table and be there when my interviewee arrived. Rebecca, my respondent arrived shortly afterwards. She was about 5' 5", thin, with light skin, brown eyes and light brown hair. She was wearing a fitted blue t-shirt and fitted jeans cut off at the knee. I stood up and introduced myself to her, and she smiled and sat down.

We chatted briefly for a few minutes and I then gave her a brief outline of my project. I asked her where she was from, what year in school she was, etc. She told me she was a freshman, and she was from a suburb of Chicago. I then asked her a few more questions, her major, what classes she was taking etc. I then began to ask her about her relationship with her boyfriend.

- and so, you've got a boyfriend?

R: (smiling) yeah, yeah I do

-What's his name?

R: David. Well David Shipley is his first and last name

-And you two are both freshmen?

R: Yup, we're both Freshies

-mmhmm, and how long have you two been dating?

R: Umm, well that's sort of complicated. We started dating the first time our Sophomore year. We kinda dated and broke up a few times, you know- high school style. But in like the beginning of junior year things sort of changed, and we got a little more serious after that. Its been like that ever since.

-What do you mean when you said "high school style", why was your relationship "high-school style"?

R: umm, well, I mean you know we weren't very serious and we'd have like little fights and then "break up" (made air quotes) and get back together a few days or weeks later. That happened a lot the first year we were together.

-And what did you mean when you said things got more serious junior year? What happened then?

R: Well, In like the middle of junior year we got into a huge fight about where our relationship was going. I wasn't very happy because he didn't like seem umm, seem serious about our relationship. I told him we should just be done,- like done for good but he didn't want to, and told me things would change. I really didn't think they would, but we stopped breaking up after that and things got a lot better.

I continued with this line of questioning a little while longer, and gathered more information about what their relationship was like during high-school. She told me that they both went to the same high school, that they had the same circle of friends at high-school, and that they were friends for a few months before they decided to start a relationship. I then asked her about her choice for school. She told me that she had wanted to go to a big state school in the Midwest since she had started thinking about school. She had applied to "Iowa, Illinois, umm, Madison, ISU and Northern, yeah I think that's it" I then began to ask her about how and if her relationship influenced her decision to attend U of I.

-Did your relationship with David have any effect on your decision to attend U of I?

R: Hmmm, well that's a good question (Laughs). Well I got into All the schools I applied to. Me and my family decided that Wisconsin was like not worth it, not worth all the money. I didn't really want to go to Northern or ummm, or ISU, they were more of back-up schools. So it was basically between Iowa and Illinois. Both my parents had gone to Iowa so it would have been cool to go there too, but I liked Illinois better. It was be closer to home and I think the classes and stuff are better. Plus I had been here to visit friends a couple times and really liked it.

-So David really didn't have an influence on your decision?

R: Well it was just kind of a plus that he was going to go there. My parents sat me down and made sure that I was making the decision on what college I was going to on my own, and to like not David *keep* me I guess from where I wanted to go. But they really didn't need to, I know how important college is, I was going to do that anyways. But it was nice to know that we wouldn't really need to try and do the long distance relationship thing.

-Were your parents very involved in your decision on where to go to College?

R: (smiles) yeah... we had lots of talks about it. I mean, they just wanted to make sure I made a good decision, but they really did want me to go where I wanted to go. They weren't like upset or anything when I didn't want to go to Iowa.

-Of course, what parent wouldn't want their kid to go to the right place

R: Ha, yeah seriously

-So had David already decided on Illinois before you made your decision?

R: Yeah he did. He really wanted to go here because he wanted to do engineering. I mean he applied to other schools, but as soon as he found out he'd gotten in here

he told them he was coming.

-Ah, I see

R: And you know its funny. It was actually kind of annoying for a little while that we were gonna go to the same school

-Really, what do you mean by that?

R: Oh, no, it had nothing to do with David. It was just that everyone was like oh, so they're going to the same school... like we were only going here so we can be at the same college. And that wasn't true at all, it was just really obnoxious.

-Was that a con for going coming here at all?

R: umm, no not really. I mean I didn't care that much it was just annoying for a little while. To like think it's the only reason I would choose to go somewhere, you know what I mean?

-Yeah I know what you mean

We spoke for a little while longer about her senior year and her decision on where to go to college. I then began to ask her about her relationship now that she and David were in college. We spoke for a few moments. However, she then got a call from her roommate who had locked herself out of their dorm room. She apologized to me several times, but I told her it was fine, she should go help her roommate. I then asked her if she would be willing to let me conduct a follow up interview, there were still some questions I wanted to ask her. She said yes of course. She then told me that she had actually enjoyed herself, that she was nervous about doing this, but it was better than she thought.

-Thoughts/Impressions I believe that this interview went much better than the last one. Her last few comments about it being better than she thought made me feel like I wasn't *completely* incompetent; it was a small personal victory for me.

The tape recorder was very helpful; I could really focus on what the interviewee was telling me instead of concentrating on writing down their responses. Having an outline of the things I wanted to say helped me stay on track and remember the things that I wanted to ask. The Weiss article helped me in the specificity of the questions I asked. Even if I thought I knew what the respondent was trying to convey using certain euphemisms (e.g. "high-school style") I still made sure to ask exactly what she meant by her comments. I was disappointed that my respondent had to leave before I had asked all the questions I wished to know, but I believe that I will still be able to ask them in a follow up interview. I am also planning on asking Rebecca if I can get in touch with David to see if he would also allow me to interview him, I would like to get information about his perspective on their relationship.

Data: Assignment 8- Archive Link

The Archive

I spent quite some time searching in the archives for something that linked to my project. I found that it was quite difficult to put the subject of my project into one or two terms. Although it had nothing to do with my

project, it really had me thinking about the ambiguity and multiple meanings associated many words in the English vocabulary. When trying more specific words such as “girlfriend” or “boyfriend” got no results, I turned to words such as “dating”, or “relationship”. These keywords yielded vastly different results than what I was looking for. The “term” relationship returned a fair amount of information concerning chemistry (the relationship between neutrons and electrons, e.g.). The term “dating” had similar results, the system returned papers from professors on topics such as “relative and absolute dating of Precambrian fossils”. I tried earlier colloquialisms for a romantic relationship such as “courting”, or “going steady”. Going steady got me nothing, while courting turned up a great amount of information on the World Court. After searching through mounds and mounds of results returned from the term “dating”, I found an archive of papers from Nina Ruth Harding (record series number 41/20/155, url <http://web.library.uiuc.edu/ahx/archon/index.php?p=collections/controlcard&id=4522&q=dating>)

Nina Ruth Harding was a student at the University of Illinois from 1920-1925, and her papers contain letters, valentines, information concerning the sorority she was a member of, canceled checks, photographs, dance invitations, etc. Most importantly, the archive description said that all of these letters address dating, student life, and contains a large number of letters from Logan F Peirce, another student at the University.

I chose this article because not only did it mention dating in the description, I was very interested in the prospects of the letters between her and Logan Peirce. As far as I can tell he is not a family member of hers, and he is in a fraternity, and he is a fellow student, so there would be a good possibility that they at some point were in a relationship. At the very least these papers will give me an insight into the student life at the university during the 1920's. My goal here is not to run a comparison between current romantic relationships and those from the 20's, I think instead that viewing the nature of relationships from the 20's may highlight important aspects of a student relationship and/or the influence of the University that I had previously not considered, taken for granted, etc.

Although I do believe that this article may be of some help to my project, because of all the time required in making an appointment and traveling to the archival center as well as the possibility that Nina Ruth Harding and Logan Peirce were not in fact in a relationship, I believe that my time would be better spent conducting an interview. I this sentiment was reinforced when I managed to get a follow-up interview with my previous interviewee (the one whose interview was cut short due to roommate issues), scheduled for this upcoming Friday, and I am very excited at its prospects.

Assignment 8 data piece, a follow-up interview

Assignment 8 part 2

For the second part of assignment 8 I chose to conduct another interview. I was really hoping that I would be able to get a follow-up interview with Rebecca[1], the individual I had interviewed for my second interview. Even though she told me after the first interview that she would be willing to do a follow-up interview I was still apprehensive that I could actually schedule one with her; I've found it fairly common for people to agree to or accept any request or invitation when asked in person even if they have no intention in honoring it, and this would certainly be a situation in which one would feel compelled to do so. However, I was able to get a second interview which I was very happy about. As a procedural note, I have decided to borrow recording techniques from Phillip- from the excerpted portions of my transcript my questions/comments will be bolded, Rebecca's will be regular text, and my thoughts/analysis will be italicized. It was very easy for me to read and understand Phillip's interview when he used that method, so thanks Phillip. I have also decided not to include the full transcript in this text, as it was very long and several portions have nothing to do with my project (e.g. how our days went, the weather, mutual friends we have discovered, comments on a few of the patrons in the coffee shop, our respective tastes in hot beverages, etc)

We met in the same coffee shop Friday evening; I arrived before Rebecca, who came in a few minutes after me. She was dressed in a red wool coat, tight jeans and a short-sleeved green v-neck t-shirt over a white crewneck long-sleeved t-shirt. Her hair was pulled into a ponytail high on her head, and she had no makeup on. I greeted her, and we chatted for a few minutes over how our days had gone. I thanked her a few times for letting me do a follow-interview, and then I got into my first few sets of questions.

Well when we left off I'd started to ask about college, but I remembered a question I had wanted to ask-

okay

Deal, I might as well start then,

(smiles and laughs)

Umm okay, so when you and (pause) David? right?

Yeah, David

Cool, when you guys both figured out where you were going for college and you realized you'd be going to the same school, how umm did you feel about that?

Hmmm, well that's a good question. It's hard. I mean, cause I had a lot of friends that also had boyfriends but were going to separate schools, and they were all like oh my God, your so lucky, its really going to suck having to be away from whoever, but you don't have to deal with that, I'm so jealous blah blah blah" but in my head I'm like "oh my God, you get to go off on your own and I'm going to U of I with my boyfriend and like a hundred other kids from our school"

Uh- huh

I mean, its not like I wasn't excited or happy about it, but sometimes I just felt like I wasn't really going to college, it would kind like another year of high school, you know what I mean?

I did feel like I knew what she meant. It seems as though she has a concern about "what college should be", that among other things it should be a "new" experience that will allow the individual to branch out socially, but she instead felt constrained and limited by attending school with people that she already knew, that she wouldn't have a "clean slate". However, we've been taught not to make assumptions for the interviewee, so I asked her elaborate

I think that I do, but could you um elaborate a little more on why this situation wasn't ideal for you?

Okay, well I don't mean that I was really mad or upset or anything, but it was just that I had kind of wanted to be off on my own for a little while, be away from my parents and to do things for myself and meet all new people and stuff but I don't know, when all these people are coming with me, I felt like I'm still tied to them and I sort of still had to do the things I did in high school.

It seems that she has placed a sense of independence and a heightened sense of control over her life and her activities as an important aspect in attending college, and having her boyfriend and all of her friends come with her will hinder that. I did find it very interesting that she mentioned being away from her parents in this explanation.

I see, and yeah I do know what you mean. And is that how it's panned out? Do you feel now that having your boyfriend and a lot of other kids from your school has um, has taken away from your experiences here?

Well, it's not really what I had pictured in my head. I knew before I came here that the campus was big, but I didn't really realize what that meant. I live in the six pack (a cluster of university dorms), and almost everyone I know from high school lives in other dorms and most of them are a long ways away. It's not like high school where you're all in one spot and so you see each other all the time. I haven't even seen some of the kids from my high school yet.

She has cited here the largeness of the University as a factor in determining her social relationships, this is important, for her experiences would presumably have been

different had she gone to a school with a smaller campus.

And where is David living? How far away is he?

He's at ISR (a set of two university dorms) across campus from me

I did note that she assumes I understand the University of Illinois specific terms such as "The Six Pack" or "ISR"

And has your living location affected your relationship at all?

Well, um I yeah I think so. But (pause) yeah it has though its hard to say how.

I would definitely have to pursue this line of questioning. I believe that teasing out exactly how their relationship has changed is not something she has consciously thought about, it's more of a "gut feeling"

Can you tell me more about how it's changed?

Well, I guess that we don't spend as much time together. No, that's not really right. It's just like more work to see each other, you know what I mean?

Could you expand on that a little?

Okay, well (pause, whispers- oh my god)

At this point three very uniquely dressed people walked into the coffee shop. Although I did not ask them they appeared to be intoxicated and caused a minor disruption before one of the coffee shop employees escorted them out. Our conversation turned to that event briefly before getting back to the interview.

(Rebecca) I'm sorry, what were we talking about?

Ummm, yeah good question. We were talking about how exactly being at U of I changed your relationship.

Yeah. Okay right. Well like I was saying its umm just a little more work I guess.

We're starting to get there, but I'm still not positive in what manner it's more work, and if the University of Illinois has caused this. I still think she hasn't really thought through the reason for the increase in effort in the relationship. I also wish I had asked if she thought it's more work for both parties, or just her.

Why is it more work than it was in high school?

Well in high school we were together like in the same building all day together, and I had a lot of classes with him too. So we saw each other automatically at least a couple times a day.

Uh huh

And even when we weren't in school we had the same group of friends, so we always hung out together all the time.

And how is this different from your experiences as school so far?

Well now we live across campus. And I mean we live closer now than back home but you have to like walk everywhere or catch a bus or something. So it feels like a long way.

Do you have any of the same classes?

Hah, not at all. He's in engineering and I'm still undeclared but I'm just taking gen eds and stuff right now. So we like don't have any of the same classes, and we don't live near each other. So like, if we didn't try at all then we would never see each other. It wasn't like that in high school.

And have your habits or schedules changed at all since you've started college-

Mine and David's?

Yeah sorry

Well I guess its hard to judge

Ugh, I still need to work on clarity in my question-asking techniques

What do you mean?

Well I feel like I'm so much busier than I was in high school, but now that I think about it I don't know. I only have like three or fours hours of class a day usually. But in high school I was there from like seven to four. I don't even know how I did that.

Why do you say you feel busier?

I think it might just be that I do so much more work outside of class. I mean in high school I came home and did my homework or went to soccer and then did it, but I was done by like eight or nine usually. Now a lot of times I'm working until like midnight on stuff.

The difference in structure and schedule changes also seems to be a factor

Is it the same for David?

Umm, I think so, yeah probably, 'cause he like almost never had so much work to do in high school where he wouldn't hang out. But now he's doing a lot of work and says no to things sometimes.

I noticed that she did not claim to know David's changes in lifestyle as fact, she offered her opinion on them and then presented why she thought so. I'm not quite sure yet

what this indicates.

And what about outside of class, are there changes to your life outside of classes?

Well yeah, I mean im changing from high school to college, of course its different.

Yeah, that was a badly worded question. I mean in what ways is your life different outside of class? Like are you involved with activities on campus? Are you and David both in a club together, or do you do your separate things?

Well I'm involved with *****[2] so that also keeps me busy, but I mean we never really did the same stuff or sports or anything in high school, so that really hasn't changed anything.

I thought that this might be a factor, as I have observed it's influence in others couple's relationships, but I suppose it does not apply in this case.

So now that you're at college, do you spend more or less time with him?

Umm, I think that it's about the same, but it's a different kind of time

How so?

Well, when I see him, its more scheduled, so we're together to actually hang out or do something. Not like in high school, when we were together, but in class.

It seems that the structure of the university has forced them to be more conscious about the time they choose to spend with each other- how much time they spend, what they do, etc.

And what about your friends in relation to your boyfriend? Do you still hang out as a group with the kids that came here from your high school, or has your social situation changed.

Well, I've seen the kids from my high school a few times, but we don't really hang out anymore. We did the first couple days of school when we didn't like know anyone, but I haven't seen most of them in awhile

So who do you hang out with now?

I mostly hang out with the girls on my floor now. There's like a group of maybe eight of us, and we all hang out together

I regretted immediately asking the question in this manner, for it might lead my interviewee to feel like she had to give me someone that she spent time with regularly, even if this was not the case.

And what do you guys do together?

Well, we eat, I mean not all of us all the time, but girls from our group will eat together, umm we'll just hang out in our rooms, watch movies and stuff. We go out a lot together too

(laughs)

Does David hang out with you and your friends from your floor?

Umm, sometimes he'll come and eat with us if he has time and wants to come all the way over. He'll come out with us a lot too, but he doesn't do things like watch movies, that's too girlie for him I think (smiles). I hang out with him and his friends more than he hangs out with me and mine.

Why do you think that is?

I don't really know, I think that I get along with them all really well... I guess I think its also that I'm just not as lazy (said with a distinct upward inflection at the end of the word, as if asking if this word was the correct one to use) as him, so I'm over at his dorm more than he is at mine.

I felt that this might be a marker, so I persisted on the issue

And how do you feel about that, that you spend more time at his dorm than he does at yours?

Umm, well I mean its not like I only go over there, he does come to my dorm. But yeah, I get a little annoyed sometimes cause I feel like I'm always going over there and it takes time you know? But it doesn't really bother me. I mean if it did I'd say something to him.

I could see that this imbalance in the effort in the relationship did have some effect on her, but she was very quick to make it clear she was not unhappy with the state of the relationship or the positions each partner was in. Reasserted her power by adding that if she wanted it fixed (by talking to him) she could do so.

And so do you think that this change has done anything to what kind of a relationship you have with him?

Uh, well...

Sorry, I didn't word that very well. I mean, have these differences in your living or social situations changed the umm, nature of your relationship?

Hmm, well I think it has changed, but its hard to say how. I mean I feel differently about the relationship at different times. Like sometimes im really happy, but then sometimes when im stressed or mad at him or something I think about how things were in high school. But I mean the grass is always greener right? When I really think about it, we used to fight a lot more in high school. And now, like I said, when we do spend time together we planned it and we're doing something fun and paying attention to each other and stuff. So yeah, I think I like it better now. Sorry that answer was really long (smiles)

It seems that the important aspects in the relationship for her is the avoidance of conflict, and time spent together where the other person Is the main interest.

At this point I was happy with the information I had gotten from the interview, and our conversation turned to more general topics for a few

minutes before I thanked her for her time, and we both left.

I think that this was a successful interview, I got a lot of information on topics crucial to my project. From her answers it seems to me that in this particular case, the effects of the presence of the University in her life, e.g. her new living situation, separation from her partner during classes, etc has had a positive effect in how she feels about her relationship, albeit not a drastic one. I would be very interested to see where this relationship is in a few years, if it is still in existence.

[1] The name is a pseudonym, I know you were concerned about that professor

[2] Club that if named may lead to my informant's identification

Data: Assignment 9- New Technique

Data Continued

I was planning on just doing another interview, but in a moment of daring I decided to try doing a time allocation data piece. I have thought before that things such as the EUI link would be of little help to me, but was proven wrong after completing the assignment. I asked three individuals if they would mind keeping a diary, but they all declined. I then decided to observe Moonstruck, a local campus coffee house and chocolate shop that couples often frequent. I went on a Saturday evening at 7:30 pm, because there would be lessened chance it would be populated with people studying and a heightened chance that there would be couples there. I came in and observed the bottom floor of moonstruck from 7:30 to 8:30 pm. I approached six couples in the coffee shop and told them I was doing a research project for a class, and could I ask them if they are in a romantic relationship. Three couples said yes, two said no, and one declined comment. I observed three couples that said yes in the coffee shop that were there when I arrived, and one couple that came in holding hands after I had started my observation. I did not ask if they were in a relationship, as I overheard their conversation as they walked in the door, and the male said (in what sounded like a highly sarcastic manner) "why do you even date me?" Because I did not conduct interviews with any of the couples, and I observed them all in a public space, I did not ask them to sign release forms.

I chose moonstruck because it was a public, campus space that often has a high concentration of people in relationships. There was no real way

for me to tell if these couples had been in a romantic relationship prior to college without doing an interview, so I decided to just observe couples. My time chart of activities should be attached.

I noticed that physical contact at fairly regular intervals was something common to every couple, even in this public space. I would be interested to do further observations in non University areas to see if this trend changes. I also noticed that in the setting of the coffee shop, none of the couples conversed very loudly, they all sat within very close proximity to one another, and they ignored every other individual in the store unless it was necessary to interact with them

Data:

Video Plan

Video/Plan

The idea I am visualizing would be realistically impractical, for I would have to locate a high school couple in which both had decided to come to the university, film them, wait until they matriculated, and film them again. The probability that all this would occur is very low, but because this is simply a video plan I am going to outline is anyways.

These shots are modeled after the information gained in the two interviews I conducted with Rebecca. They reflect the descriptions that Rebecca gave me of her activities in high school and at the University.

Black Screen with title, "Romantic relationships and the impact of matriculation to the University of Illinois"

Scene 1: Brief shot of the exterior of a high school building (1-2 sec)

Scene 2: Shot of individuals in the relationship in class with one another, in the hallway, outside their high school, etc. No music or voiceover so it is possible to hear their conversations with one another and with the people around them (30 sec) tight shots in highly populated spaces to encapsulate the crowdedness and the enclosed nature of the high school space

Scene 3: Broad shot of the quad during a high traffic period when many students get out of class, voice "John Smith and Jane Doe attended George Washington High school from 2001-2006. They are now both first year students attending the University of Illinois" Shot focuses in on the couple on the quad coming from different buildings, they meet and walk and talk with one another. No music so it is possible to hear their conversations, as well as the activities going on in the background, different students passing them talking, students handing out flyers, music playing from in front of the union, etc. they will eventually part to go in different directions, to go to class, or to go home, to the union, library, etc. (20 sec)

Scene 4: Shot of Jane Doe being interviewed in a campus space by an ethnographer, being asked questions about their relationship practices during high school, how much time they spent together, where they spent it, which people they were friends with and interacted with, what their routines were after school, etc. (30 sec)

Scene 5: Shot of the interior of Jane Doe's dorm room, speaking with her friends about various issues, their schedules, how their days went, the things they have to get done, if or when Jane Doe would see John Smith, etc (20 sec)

Scene 6: Shot of John Smith being interviewed in a campus space by an ethnographer, being asked about the current routines of the couple, how often they see one another, the kind of time they currently spend together, where they live in respect with one another, which individuals they also spend time with etc. (30 sec)

Scene 7: John Smith and Jane Doe together in some campus space at night, having a conversation with one another, speaking about the events of their days, what is coming up in their lives, when they will be able to see one another in the upcoming days etc. (20 sec)

Zoom out from the scene of the campus space at night, gradually pan out to larger and larger views of the campus at night, capture the vastness of the campus space.

fade to black

credits/acknowledgements

Discuss: Assignment 11: Findings

Upon entering this *methods of cultural anthropology* course, I did not have an idea of what I wanted to study. I had done no prior ethnographic research, no did I have any sort of anthropological focus in which I was previously invested. I believe that this was of great benefit to me when it came to choosing the focus of my research for this pilot project, for I felt no restrictions when making a decision on what would be a valuable project in terms of its connection to the University of Illinois. I chose to make romantic relationships of students at the University of Illinois my focus. More specifically, I choose to analyze pre-existing romantic relationships (i.e. relationships that began prior to either individual in the relationship attending college), in which both individuals matriculated to the University of Illinois. I wanted to understand if attending the university changed any aspects of the relationship for either individual, and if being in a pre-existing

romantic relationship affected their experiences of attending the University of Illinois and living as a university of Illinois student.

I wanted to pursue this because I hypothesized that any relationship *would* in fact change due to the vast lifestyle shift implicit in attending the university. I hypothesized that this relationship change would also inevitably have a great impact on the lives of the individuals involved, for they are already entering a time of great change, and this added element should have an effect on how they experience life at the university. I set out to analyze how the individuals conceptualized their relationships before and after coming to the university, what factors affected and changed their relationships (if any), and in what specific ways did these changes impact the individuals' identities and experiences as college students.

The body of my research up to this point consists of three interviews, two done with the same individual, a time allocation report, analysis of an Ethnography of the University of Illinois document, as well as more informal discussions with people in romantic relationships at the university. Although the body of research currently at my disposal is quite small and limited, I believe that I can make a few tentative arguments which could then be analyzed with further research.

From the data I have thus far collected, I would argue that pre-existing romantic relationships *do* in fact change as a result of the student's matriculation to the university. I drew this conclusion through my interviews with Rebecca as well as through more informal discussions with individuals and their experiences. I would tentatively argue that although many universities would affect pre-existing romantic relationships in some capacity, the University of Illinois possesses several unique characteristics that particularly affect pre-existing relationships and their participants. From what I have gathered thus far, I would argue that the large size of the university (size both in population and geographical space) combined with the arrangement and nature of the majority of the incoming freshmen's living accommodations greatly impacts the nature of the relationship as well as how the two individuals interact with one another and the people around them.

I would argue that going from any high school, even quite a large one, to a University comprised of more than 40,000 students and a campus of several miles will inevitably alter the habits of people in a relationship. Prior to entering the University, the two individuals, if they attend the same school (which I have found to be quite common), would be within the same building or small set of buildings for an extended period of time each day, five days a week. Once the individuals move to the University and become one among 40,000, with hundreds of classes offered to them in buildings spread across an expansive campus, it should be quite likely that the couples

will now be separated by differing schedules and significant distances. This is supported by my interviews with Rebecca, in which she told me that her and her partner have very different schedules, that they live across campus from one another, and that “if we didn’t try at all then we would never see each other”.

The housing policy at the University of Illinois and how it assigns first year students their housing also has a significant potential to impact relationships. The university requires all first year students to live in University of Illinois student housing[1], and the large majority of first year students live in University owned and operated residence halls[2]. The university of Illinois housing process does not allow for the student applying to choose where they wish to live, it only allows for them to list preferences for halls or certain groups of halls, and they are assigned to their halls in accordance with when they submitted their housing contract. As is indicated by the housing FAQ on the Illinois website, many students are not placed in the halls they requested, and the result is most freshmen have little control over where they are assigned their living space[3]. Because of this, couples can find themselves in greatly altered situations, either much closer to or much farther away from their partner than they had previously been or desired to be.

I would argue, as stated previously, that these changes can have a positive or negative effect on the relationship, and consequently on the individual’s experiences as a university student. In the case of Rebecca, it seems as though these changes have rendered positive results on how she views her relationship with David, but this piece of data alone is in no way representative of the rest of the “pre-existing relationship” population. I believe that more research will have to be done in order to determine the positive or negative outcome of these changes to the individual’s lives.

Concerning the research necessary to further pursue these questions and hypotheses, I would argue that the interview is the most valuable method, and that interviews would be the focus of any further research done on this topic. I would assert that this is the best course of action because the subject of relationships is very personal to most individuals, and it is therefore necessary to have a person there with which the informant may build a trusting connection. There may be markers, emotionally charged topics or phrases the informant may touch upon but not immediately discuss, and it is necessary to have an interviewer present who would be able to pick up on those markers and pursue them. However, I would also argue that because of location and distance playing a part in my questions, mapping would also be a research method of value to the project. I believe it would be valuable for individuals to map which places are of significance to them in terms of their daily lives and in terms of their relationships. I would also have them chart their movements on campus so I might see how their movements effect and

relate to their relationship and their lives as a whole.

In conclusion, I will assert that relationships are in fact affected when the two individuals matriculate to the University, and I would argue that the size of the University coupled with the first year housing processes act as major factors in this change. However, I do not claim that these are the only two factors present; in fact I believe that others would come to light in the face of further research. I also assert that these changes do in fact affect the lives and experiences of the individuals involved, but I believe that I do not yet have enough research to determine *how* exactly these changes impact the individual, and more research would also have to be conducted to establish any more findings.

[1] Author unknown, "Your Illinois Experience Starts here", University of Illinois Housing and Dining, Prospective Students, The University of Illinois, 2007,
<http://www.housing.uiuc.edu/audience/prospective.htm>

[2] Author unknown, "Illinois Certified Housing Statistics". Campus Statistics used in Surveys. The University of Illinois, 07-07-2007,
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[3] Author unknown, "Hall Assignments", Housing info- Undergraduate Hall FAQs, The University of Illinois, 2007,
http://www.housing.uiuc.edu/contact/faqs/index.asp?faq=contract#hall_assignments

**Research
Proposal:**

Research Proposal

Statement of Research Problem

The transition from high school to a University, especially a university of the size of the University of Illinois, has the potential to be a jarring and tumultuous experience in the lives of young adults. In addition to negotiating this turbulent time, many individuals also choose to continue romantic relationships from high school, adding another layer of change to the already unsteady transitional period in their lives. However, there are very few programs, very few readily available and well-advertised resources on campus that focus on the impact of relationships and work to assist individuals in dealing with them positively (what "dealing with them positively" might entail is not yet clear, but it is my hope that the research

will uncover answers to this).

As my pilot research indicates, these “pre-existing romantic relationships”, as I have termed them, have the potential to either greatly harm or greatly enhance the experiences of individuals as university students. I propose that research should be conducted to ascertain what these impacts are, in order better equip the university to assist individuals in relationships.

As stated previously, my pilot project research has found that pre-existing romantic relationships, more specifically those in which both individuals matriculate to the University of Illinois, change as a result of attending the university of Illinois, and because of these changes that impact the relationship, individuals involved are consequently affected. Although I would assert that matriculation to almost any university would impact a pre-existing relationship in some way I would argue, with my pilot research as support, that the University has several, exceptional characteristics that particularly affect relationships of incoming first year students. Thus far my pilot research has indicated that these factors (possibly among others) are the geographical size and population of the university as well as the living situations and structure of first year students.

Statement of Proposed Research

In my proposed research, I plan to study the impact wrought by the aforementioned characteristics of the University (that is, the geographical size, population, and living situations) on pre-existing relationships in which both individuals matriculated to the university in order to ascertain the consequential affects they have on the individuals involved. I intend to pursue information of the specific ways in which these changing relationships impact the individuals- is it simply their daily schedules that are impacted, or is there some deeper, more personal aspect of their lives or identity changed by the relationship? I intend to discover if there are more factors aside from those already established that may also impact pre-existing relationships and the individuals involved in them. I also intend to uncover student opinion on the potential for resources as well as their opinions on those already in existence.

Methodologies

Although I intend to employ several research methodologies, I plan to anchor and center the project around interviews. I would assert that this would be the most effective method for several reasons, namely the merits of gaining information through interviews and the constraints placed on other methods by the subject of my research.

I plan to interview two main groups of people; students involved in pre-

existing romantic relationships in which both partners attend the university of Illinois in one category, and university administration in the other. I will conduct singular interviews with several members of the university administration with the intention of gaining more information on the status of current relationship related programs and resources. I intend to interview general university administration such as chancellor Herman, more focused university administrative positions such as the vice Chancellor of student affairs, university housing administration, etc and resident advisers, who are in a position to witness the effect of any programs (or the lack of programs) on the student population.

The second group of individuals I intend to interview are the students involved in these pre-existing relationships. Whenever possible, I hope to interview (separately) both individuals involved in the relationship so that I might gain information on several different aspects of the relationship and ascertain if there are different experiences, concerns, needs, etc between the partners. I intend to interview multiple couples, with the target sample being twenty couples, forty individuals. (I believe that the restraint on this target shall be locating couples with the qualifying characteristics, and they are not readily identifiable or locatable.) I plan to interview each individual three times throughout the university academic school; once in the beginning of the year, once in the middle of the year, and once at the conclusion of the year. I wish to interview them at the beginning when their recollections and conceptions of the nature of their high school relationship have not yet been altered by experiences in college. The interview in the middle of the year is intended to elicit information once the individuals have had the opportunity to live as college students for several months and have experienced many aspects of the transition from high school. The end of the year interview is intended to gather information once the individuals have had the opportunity to experience life as a university student for an extended period of time.

As Anderson and Jack state, "The spontaneous exchange within an interview offers possibilities of freedom and flexibility for researchers and narrators alike." (Anderson and Jack, 1991, pg 11) This statement eloquently states why I feel interviews are such a productive and beneficial research tool- if done correctly, the interview can be a collaborative, beneficial and insightful experience for interviewer and interviewee alike. I intend to interview my student informants with a focus on detecting "markers", or "passing reference[s] made by a respondent to an important event or feeling or state."(Weiss 1998, pg 77) The pursuit of these markers will be essential to my research, for I would argue that because the subject of my research is so personal to most people, much of the information pertinent to my study will be contained in these markers, these aspects of my informants lives that are significant to them but that they may be apprehensive about openly discussing without further inquiry.

In addition to conducting interviews, I also intend to employ a blend of mapping, as described by Nelson, (2000), and time allocation, as discussed by Gross, (1984). As Becker posits, “everything has to be somewhere” (Becker 1998, pg 56). Because my pilot research has indicated the physical space and setting of the university to be of importance, I intend to ask my informants to draw abstract maps of the campus (and possibly the surrounding area) indicating “places of personal interest” (Nelson 2000, pg 63) so that I may better understand how the University spaces relate to the relationship, and to the individual’s life. In conjunction with this method I also intend to ask the informants to keep time allocation journals detailing their movements, activities, time spent on each activity, etc for a twenty-four hour period several times throughout the year. The data gained from these methods will be used to support and enhance the information from the interviews, adding a more physical and temporal context within which I may conceptualize the insights my informants relate to me.

Statement on Ethics

I fully and completely acknowledge that my study includes humans as research subjects, and consequently I intend to strictly comply with any and all guidelines set by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). It should also be stated that I do not intend to comply with IRB only because I am required to; I strongly believe that it is of utmost importance to respect and protect my informants. They should not be looked upon simply as a valuable informational resource, they are human beings and their well-being should be of foremost importance in my research. Because of this, I intend to go beyond the requirements set by the IRB. As Weiss asserts, “The interviewer will respect the respondent’s integrity. This means that the interviewer will not question the respondent’s appraisals, choices, motives, rights to observations, or personal worth.” (1994 , pg 65) I fully intend to use this as a framework when conducting my research.

Significance

The significance of this proposed research is both far-reaching and incredibly important. The concept of “being in a relationship” is a broad concept with very hazy boundaries. It is also something that does not often yield overt and/or obvious negative effects on a student (as opposed to sexual assault, racism, substance abuse etc.) Because of this, I would argue that up to this point, the impact of relationships is not something with which the University has not seriously concerned itself. However, I would argue that even in the absence of overt effects, consensual relationships still have a profound and deep impact on students involved with them, for they are often an incredibly personal, emotional and significant part of students’ lives; in many cases these relationships help to shape and define how individuals

view themselves and the world around them.

Because these relationships are capable of serious effects on students, and because there is very little established findings on the subject, this proposed research would be of great value. The findings of this would assist University administration in better understanding how to create, execute, and maintain programs and resources designed to aide and assist individuals- not only those in pre-existing romantic relationships, but any student on campus in a romantic relationship. These resources and programs, if implemented correctly, have the potential to positively impact the lives of university students- benefiting not only them, but the University of Illinois as an institution.

The contributions this study can make are farther reaching than simply assisting those in relationships on the University of Illinois campus. The study of these relationships can also be used as a valuable tool for better understanding other aspects of a student's social life- social relationships they carry with them from high school, social relationships they develop, how they balance their existing and developing social networks, etc. Because of this, the proposed study has the potential to benefit not only students in relationships, but almost all individuals attending the University of Illinois.

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EUI Links: Assignment # 7 EUI Link

I searched the IDEALS database for some time, and finally decided to choose a project on the 'Freshman Experience' to use as my project link. The Specific title of the project is "*The Freshman Experience*": *freshmen in dorms engaging and getting involved in university life* and it can be found at <http://www.ideals.uiuc.edu/handle/2142/2309>

The article pursues how second semester freshmen's social lives have been impacted by living in the dorms, specifically on how the dorms have changed or influenced their decision on whether or not to "get involved" on campus. The article focuses on students living in standard dormitories on campus. (i.e. not private certified housing such as Bromley Hall or Illinois Tower)

Initially I was hoping to find an article relating to social and/or romantic relationships at the University, but the only article that fit those criteria was one written by an Illinois State University student about social relationships at ISU. Because I want to focus part of my project specifically on if/how the University of Illinois shapes and changes pre-existing romantic relationships, I felt that this project would have been inappropriate.

I chose this article because of its focus on how the dorms shape and impact a freshman's experience and the University. I felt that this relates well to my research focus; I have a hunch that one feasible and possibly major influence on a romantic relationship would be both partners' experiences in their dorms. To have a project detailing what dorm life is like for freshmen would give valuable supporting information to my research. It also may help me to see my research in a new light, help me to formulate questions and angles that I might not have thought of prior to analyzing the project.

I also feel that there is a strong methodological connection between this project and mine. The researcher conducted several sets of interviews with second semester freshmen, which is also the method I am planning on using. More importantly however, the researcher also proposed conducting focus groups in his formal research proposal. I had not previously considered using focus groups in my research methods, and I am not sure if this method is within our anonymity guidelines, but I think that it would possibly be a very valuable and effective method of research for my particular project. I feel this way because interviewees who would otherwise feel uncomfortable speaking about certain aspects of their relationship with just me might feel more comfortable discussing it with a group of people with similar experiences who would be better able to sympathize and empathize. New topics of conversation and new angles or aspects may also

come to light in a focus group that would not have in a one-on-one interview.

Reflect: This semester long project has been a very interesting process. As for the online environment, I greatly appreciated not having to buy any books for this class. I understand that reading materials in pdf format is not the most desirable way to read them, but the online format saved me a significant amount of money. I also really enjoyed the online commenting process. I thought at first that I would not like my work up for everyone to examine, but the commenting gave me some very valuable insights that helped me significantly in my work. I would say that the formatting system in moodle for posting the assignments is quite difficult, and I have spent at least a few hours in total trying to format my text so it would look presentable and readable.

I found it not as difficult to comply with IRB as I had previously anticipated. My subject is of a fairly sensitive nature, so I believe that I would have implemented on my own much of the IRB guidelines. I would also say that in the end, when it came to writing my research proposal, I did not feel entirely confident in making particularly strong claims or assertions based on the amount of research I had done on my subject, for it was quite small. However, I feel that it was also important to do the introductory assignments and not require the students to pick a research topic immediately. Because of this, I might suggest that these research projects be done in groups in the future, so the students have time to decide on a topic, experiment with some of the research methods, and gather enough information to be able to make some positive assertions.

Recommendations: I would suggest that further efforts be put into examining the effects of student relationships and how they impact the student's lives. I would suggest that a good place of implementation on any findings would be in the university operated residence halls, as the majority of first year students reside there. I do not have specific recommendations for any programs or resources, as this information is what I hope to gain during the course of the proposed research.