Academic Appendix

In this appendix, we review the main content of the book for academics. This includes faculty, instructors, administrators, and professional staff working in universities and having some degree of contact with college students. To help academics navigate the topics of this book, we provide scholarly focused chapter titles below that correspond to the more accessibly written chapter titles geared toward our primary audience of incoming college students. These academic titles will enable academics map the primary table of contents to the scholarly topics and keywords included within the content of each chapter.

TABLE OF CONTENTS FOR ACADEMICS

Chapter 5—Cultural and Institutional Capital: Resiliency amidst
    Social Inequalities

Chapter 6—Diversity, Networks, and Inclusion: The Crucial Role of
    Social Connections

Chapter 7—College and Civic Engagement, Vocation and Career
    Direction

Chapter 8—Navigating College (and Life) with Research-Based
    Decisions

Each chapter features the following four sections: (1) student stories; (2) summaries of scientific research; (3) advice on accessing campus resources to gain social support; and (4) activities to promote reflection on the topics of the chapter. The final chapters of the book have two additional sections: (5) togetherness social interactions among students and in groups; and (6) tips for navigating college now and with an eye to launching successful, satisfying, and long-term careers. Together, these can be remembered with the mnemonic S-S-A-A-T-T (like the SAT college entrance exam): stories, science, advice, activities, togetherness, and tips.

STORIES: AUTOETHNOGRAPHIES

One aspect of the book that we know academics may be curious about is how we collected the student stories. We did so by applying a method for autoethnography described by Ellis, Adams, and Bocher (2010).[1] Importantly, we did not use a random sample of college students. The autoethnographies were collected within a sociology course, which raises the issue of self-selection (which students elected to enroll in the course). That means the findings of this study need to be understood alongside other and more generalizable forms of data, such as those garnered from nationally representative and randomly selected samples. Nevertheless, we think that any self-selection issues in these case studies would be comparable to those embedded in many psychology experiments, in which students from a broader campus elect to sign up. Moreover, that these

case studies come from a large, public university should mean that they are more generalizable than the stories of students from small liberal arts universities, especially those that are highly selective. Since many existing generalizations about young people are drawn from psychological experiments using students at small liberal arts universities, we expect our case studies to be at least be as indicative of broader patterns as many other contemporary studies are. Moreover, the course from which we draw our autoethnographies is used across the entire student body as one option to satisfy the required social science electives. As such, our sample includes students from across a range of interest in sociology and who represent a diverse array of social and economic backgrounds, as well as academic and career goals.

Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that the student-written autoethnographies were greatly influenced by the text used in the course: Susan J. Ferguson's *Mapping the Social Landscape: Readings in Sociology* (2013). Students were encouraged to use the materials from class to analyze their own lived experiences. To the extent that the students used this text in terms of writing their autoethnographies, this text also greatly influenced this work. Scholars interested in studying the qualitative aspects of student college experiences may be interested in advancing this approach without the students reading that text, to explore autoethnographies in the absence of a text, or specifically a sociology text, to inform students' interpretation. Alternatively, scholars interested in engaging students further with text-based analysis may wish to have students complete alternate assignments that focus on the applications of this text alone, in the absence of the autoethnography assignment that our students completed.

To provide some social context to the student case studies, there were a total of 49 autoethnographies collected, and from these we selected 36 for inclusion in the student stories. Of these, six are non-white students (16%). In terms of gender, there were 18 females and 18 males reported in the case studies. However, in 15 of these cases, we switched the genders in the descriptions (13 were switches from female to male, and 2 were from male to female). We changed the genders intentionally in order to contribute to

constructions of gender that do not reify preconceived notions of which majors, emotions, experiences, and decision-making processes are most associated with each gender. We think it is important that students learn from both genders. Additionally, all student names were changed to protect confidentiality. Also important to note is that we sought and obtained an IRB protocol to conduct and publish this research, and we provided students with informed consent forms to include with their autoethnographies in this book. More generally, we recommend treating these auto-ethnographies as worthy learning tools, and we appreciate the raw and real-life stories that our students shared. That said, there are many other approaches available to collect qualitative and in-depth data.

SCIENCE: LITERATURE REVIEWS

In conducting the literature review that informs this book, we employed three social science frameworks: sociological, psychological/counseling, and higher educational. In the sociological framework, we focused particularly on social inequality, especially the way personal hardships and privileges are social issues. For this reason, this book could be adopted in many introductory sociology courses; it shows students how the sociological imagination relates to their own experiences in college. The psychological and counseling framework undergirds most of our approaches to student advising. The focus in integrating advice sections was to empathize with the existential predicaments and life course developmental tasks that confront most young people during college, and to give them some practical tips for responding well to these. That said, we did not focus as thoroughly on the laboratory experimental research in psychology. There are many existing resources that delve deeper into those topics, and this book is meant to add to, but not replace, those approaches. In the higher education framework, the focus was on describing the university as an ecosystem full of diverse social supports. In integrating these social science approaches, we drew most heavily from scholarship on emerging adulthood, as well as studies of social inequalities and higher education.

ADVICE: QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

To collect the advice for students provided throughout this book, we conducted qualitative interviews with advising staff who are part of our co-authorship team, as well as with the expert on social inequalities on our team. We trained a graduate student in qualitative research in order to conduct these interviews and developed a semi-structured interview guide. The graduate student audio-recorded the interviews and later transcribed them. The transcripts of these interviews became the original draft of the advice sections, which were then extensively revised by the first and second co-authors to integrate the ideas across interviewees. These interviews used the following questions: (1) "[Read case study.] What do you think is understandable, normal, or endearing about [Name]'s story?" (2) "If [Name] approached you for advice, what would you say?" (3) "What are the 2 most important takeaways for [Name] to know about how to navigate college?" In conducting and analyzing these interviews, our graduate research assistant learned a great deal about navigating college and ultimately used this project to inform her master's thesis data. Nevertheless, producing the advice sections in this way may have integrated more repetition across student responses than would normally be found in real-world advisor sections. Recording the contents of actual advising sections would be a potential improvement for future projects of this kind.

ACTIVITIES: CLASS, GROUPS, AND INDIVIDUALS

Included later in an online supplementary appendix are numerous classroom activities that correspond to each chapter of the book. We envision this book being adopted in a one-credit, eight-week, first-year seminar, in which one chapter can be assigned each week. Alternatively, in a 15- or 16-week semester, one chapter could be read across two weeks, perhaps supplemented with additional readings. This book could also accompany a textbook in an introductory sociology course, as a way to aid students in

applying the sociological imagination to their personal experiences, and the experiences of other students, in college. Most of our activities have these two kinds of courses in mind. Additionally, we believe this book could be employed within student advising and other service activities, or orientation activities; the activities would only have to be altered from a classroom setting to small groups. Faculty and staff who have the opportunity to meet with students individually—for example, in office hours— may also advise students to complete various activities on their own, as they can provide personal reflections.

TOGETHERNESS: SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

The togetherness sections take a novel, experimental approach. The youngest member of our co-authorship team suggested the idea, thinking that the "reality TV" style of interaction would be appealing to younger generations of entering college students. The sociologists on our team reveled in the opportunity to show some of the social interactions that are crucial to college experiences, rather than merely discussing them in the abstract. Needless to say, we cannot begin to cover the range of social interactions possible among the students who became our case studies. Plus, the interactions described here may skew more positively than real student interactions, and it would be interesting for future scholarship to creatively integrate some of the more negative and de-energizing aspects of peer-to-peer interactions as well. To address this limitation, we encourage instructors to ask students what other interactions they imagine.

TIPS: INTERPRETATIONS

We think of the tips sections of each chapter as akin to the discussion section of articles: they are interpretations based on research, not all of which have been directly tested. Our primary goal in the tips section is to bring scholarship on college-related social experiences out of the jargon-filled

world of journal articles, which are often over the heads of most college students. In the interest of accessibility, the academic emphasis on precision was necessarily lessened. We recognize that campus contexts are diverse, and the advice we offer presumes the administrative structure of our own campus, which is similar to many large public universities; most notably, our university moved several years ago to a system of professional advisors who are distinct from faculty mentors. Other university contexts may not have this division, in which case the tips and advice will need to be reinterpreted relative to other institutional structures. Nevertheless, the overarching approach of helping students figure out who is best to approach for what kind of assistance can apply broadly, as can the general urge for students to take ownership of their learning process. Yet, we still emphasize the need for academics to engage with students in ways that are authentically tailored to the specific circumstances of the student's experiences.

ACTIVITIES: WHAT WE (CAN) TEACH

Despite the challenges and stresses they can present, classrooms can be places of exponential learning, and social science classes in particular expose students to ideas that enable them to reflect on themselves. Self-reflection is an essential tool in finding one's way through college, and so for each chapter we offer activities that can promote such reflection. To find these classroom activities, visit the book's page on the Oxford University Press website.

These activities can also be implemented in other group settings, and are even amenable to individual reflection. We draw upon our own best practices (in classrooms, advising, and as former participants in student groups) to suggest ways to address the changes we describe, within the context of contemporary higher education and an up-to-date sense of the economic prospects that students have. Thus, in linking the previous sections, our aim with the activities for each chapter is to engage students in the problem-naming and problem-solving processes that are most crucial

for success in college. These activities reflect the experiences, roles, and diversity of our author team and work well in raising student awareness of the issues this book addresses.

NOTE

1. Ellis, Carolyn, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner. 2010. "Autoethnography: An Overview." *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 12(1): 1–18. Retrieved from http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1589.