

Research & Occasional Paper Series: CSHE.3.09

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

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A SERU Project Research Paper*

Transfer Student Experiences and Success at Berkeley

March 2009

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ABSTRACT

The current study focuses on the stigmatization and psychosocial experiences of community college transfer students within the university setting. Two hundred and sixty-three students nearing the completion of their studies at UC Berkeley responded to a series of open-ended questions about their academic, social, and psychological experiences at the university. Results indicate that nearly one-fifth of the respondents concealed the fact that they were transfer students at least once in the past and approximately one-fourth reported experiences of transfer-related rejection. Furthermore, those who reported experiences of rejection were more likely to conceal that they had transferred into the university than those who did not experience such rejection. Despite these reported experiences of concealment and rejection, the overall group of surveyed transfer students in this study proved to be academically successful. The theoretical and practical implications of this research are discussed.

Despite high bachelor's degree aspirations and expectations among high school students (Ingels, Burns, Charleston, Chen, Cataldi, & Owings, 2005), for decades the majority have not attended university directly after graduating from high school (Choy, 1999). In the state of California alone, when considering levels of eligibility among graduates of public comprehensive high schools, public continuation high schools, and public alternative schools, the number of students matriculating to the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) systems is disappointingly low. Out of 335,700 students graduating from California public high schools in 2003, more than 235,000 were ineligible to attend a CSU and close to 300,000 were ineligible to

* The SERU Project is a collaborative effort based at the Center for Studies in Higher Education at UC Berkeley, focused on developing new types of data and innovative, policy-relevant scholarly analyses of the academic and civic experience of students at major research universities. One of the main products of the SERU Project has been the development and administration of the University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES).

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attend a UC (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 2004). While part of this ineligibility may be due to test scores, the gap between university course entry requirements and high school graduation requirements accounts for much of this ineligibility.

In California, the disconnect between secondary and postsecondary education is partially bridged by the Master Plan for Higher Education. This legislation helps to maintain a three-tiered public postsecondary education system in terms of eligibility and selectivity, and also facilitates the transfer process for California community college students. The Master Plan dictates that eligible California community college students are to receive UC and CSU admission preference over other types of eligible transfer applicants, and that there is to be financial support from the state for those meeting certain income requirements (Coons, 1960). Even further, "UC and CSU are to establish a lower division to upper division ratio of 40:60 to provide transfer opportunities to the upper division for Community College students ..." (University of California Office of the President, 2007). Transfer students, particularly those from California community colleges, therefore represent an integral part of the public higher education system as set out by the Master Plan nearly half a century ago.

Despite the popularity of the community college system and the important function it serves in providing access to higher education, a body of literature geared toward understanding the psychological and social experiences of transfer students does not exist. This lack is partially exacerbated by the fact that transfer students and other types of nontraditional students have rarely been studied in their own right. Furthermore, in instances where transfer students have been studied, the primary focus has been on their academic persistence to degree, achievement as determined by grade point average, or comparison to the population of students admitted as freshmen (e.g., Carroll, 1989; Glass & Harrington, 2002; Johnson, 2005). Few studies have looked at the psychosocial factors that influence the university experiences of community college transfers (see Alpern, 2000; Laanan, 2007; Laanan & Eggleston, 2001). While focusing on the academic achievement and persistence of transfer students is both necessary and important, this focus is arguably not sufficient when trying to understand the full experience of transfer students who have attended two or more institutions of higher education.

Studying the psychological and social experiences of transfer students is particularly important because of the potential for negative stereotypes and stigmatization targeting this population, similar to those that exist for other groups of underrepresented university students. Some of the stereotypes and myths transmitted about these students on the UC Berkeley (UCB) campus are that they are inherently less intelligent than students admitted as freshmen, that they are ill-prepared by their two-year institutions to succeed academically at the university level, and that they cheated the admissions system by gaining entry into UCB through the back door, so to speak. Systematic documentation of these anecdotally reported negative stereotypes would make it possible to compare the challenges facing transfer students with the experiences of student-athletes and underrepresented minority students, and of students in the broader university population more generally.

Studying Individual Differences in Feelings of Rejection

The academic, affective, and behavioral outcomes of a non-transfer, yet stigmatized, college population have been studied as they relate to individual differences in feelings

of rejection. In a study of black students attending a predominantly and historically white institution of higher education, Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, Davis, and Pietrzak (2002) found that some students from this stigmatized group expected and were concerned about being rejected as a result of their race (RS-race), whereas others in this same racial group did not share these concerns or expectations. Those who were low on this scale of status-based rejection sensitivity had different academic outcomes and experiences than those who were considered to be on the high end of the scale. More specifically, there were differences between low and high RS-race students in university adjustment, feelings of alienation and belonging, use of academic resources (e.g., review sessions, office hours), and comfort with regard to approaching a faculty member for academic assistance (Mendoza-Denton et al., 2002). Even more striking was that grade point average seemed to be affected by the anxiety about and expectation of race-based rejection.

With status-based rejection as a theoretical influence, we set out to first investigate whether experiences of rejection on the basis of being a transfer student (*transfer rejection*) exist. Despite the fact that the transfer students in our sample were studying at a highly selective institution where students' intellectual capabilities are typically positively stereotyped, we still expected that transfer rejection would exist in this population. In addition, we also set out to test the hypothesis that those who experience transfer rejection would be more likely to hide that they are transfer students relative to those who have not experienced transfer rejection. We refer to the notion of hiding one's transfer student standing as *transfer concealment*. Finally, no predictions were made about the relationship between student variables (gender, underrepresented minority status, age category, and grade point average) and transfer concealment or transfer rejection.

Method

Setting

The current study took place at UC Berkeley, where transfer students make up approximately 33 percent of the annually admitted class of students and 21 percent of the overall undergraduate population. Most of these students (> 90%) attend California community colleges before transferring to the university where they subsequently take, on average, another 2.5 years to complete their bachelor's degree. Newly admitted transfer students are provided with a welcome reception and student orientation analogous to that experienced by newly admitted freshmen. However, new and continuing transfer students also have access to an on-campus student support center and staff that provide them with unique services. At this university, transfer and freshman-admitted students graduate with university grade point averages that are not significantly different from one another.

Participants

Study participants in the overall survey were 263 community college transfer students (159 females, 103 males, 1 gender data not available) anticipating the completion of their last undergraduate semester at the university level. However, given that participants had the option to skip questions as they completed the overall survey, the resulting sample size was 211 for the primary question and 191 for the second question of interest, respectively. Participants' grade point averages ranged from 2.16 to 4.0 ($M = 3.44$, $SD = .38$) and their ages ranged from 20 to greater than 40 years old. The most frequently selected age bracket at the time of the survey was 20 to 24 years old, with 169 (64.5%) of the respondents

selecting this age range; 93 participants were 25 years or older. With regard to the ethnic diversity of the participants, 44.3% of the sample was white, 30% Asian, 16.6% Hispanic, 1.7% African-American, and 0.4% Native American. Foreign students represented an additional 5.5% and respondents indicating an ethnic category of "other" were represented at 2.1%. Participants were demographically representative of the entire population of graduating transfer students.

Materials and Procedure

Two months prior to graduation, approximately half of the community college transfer students on the spring 2006 degree list were invited to take part in an online survey about their academic and social experiences. Students were sent an e-mail invitation informing them about the study and containing the URL to a secure Web site where the survey could be completed after informed consent was given. Log-in required the use of a student identification number as the password to access the survey. Incentives were offered in the form of a random drawing for prizes including four MP3 players and two \$300 gift cards. The response rate was 47.6%; nearly one-fourth of the graduating transfer student population participated in the current survey.

Although many of the survey questions were answered using a five-point Likert scale and "yes/no" check boxes, the primary psychosocial questions examined here were obtained through open-ended responses to the following two questions:

Q1: Transfer rejection. "Please take a second to reflect on whether or not you've had any experiences at UCB where you felt rejected as a result of your transfer student status. If you can think of an experience of this nature, please tell us about it. What happened? Who was there? How did it make you feel? Please describe the experience so that we can understand it from your point of view."

Q2: Transfer concealment. "Have you ever been reluctant to even share that you were a transfer student? Please describe this experience in enough detail so that we can get a sense of the situation you were in."

Grade Point Average. The relationship between each psychosocial variable and the participants' raw university grade point average (GPA), as well as their grade point average category, were also examined. GPA categories included the ranges of 2.0 to 2.49 (C to C+), 2.5 to 2.99 (C+ to B-), 3.0 to 3.49 (B to B+), and 3.5 to 4.0 (B+ to A+).

Coding Protocol and Interrater Reliability

Three research assistants, individually trained by one of the primary researchers, coded the open-ended responses of both the rejection and concealment questions above. Training involved introducing the coders to the qualitative data in hard copy format and familiarizing them with the primary psychosocial variables (transfer rejection and concealment) as well as the qualitative data coding sheets they would use for coding. After training, each coder was instructed to read selected literature on status-based rejection and qualitative methodology. This literature included an article written by Hruschka, Schwartz, St John, Picone-Decaro, Jenkins, and Carey (2004) on the process and purpose of establishing interrater reliability; an article by Mendoza-Denton, Ayduk, Shoda, and Mischel (1997) describing qualitative data; and an article by Mendoza-Denton et al. (2002) on rejection and its influence in academic contexts.. Independent coding began upon the completion of this training.

Each coder began the coding process by determining if a given response to the transfer rejection question met the criteria of an experience of rejection on the basis of being a transfer student. The coding criteria required that an experience be coded as transfer rejection when there was the presence of a perception, effect, or direct experience of rejection on the basis of being a transfer student. Transfer rejection included being looked down upon, put down, treated as inferior, excluded or ignored, not taken seriously as an intellectual contributor to a group, or simply feeling that there was an unwelcoming climate as a direct result of one's transfer-student standing. Importantly, transfer rejection *did not* include not knowing about certain opportunities, not living in the dorms, commuting to campus, not having enough time as a university student, not being familiar with the class scheduling system, and other related responses.

The presence of a rejection experience was coded as a 1, and a direct answer of "no," "none," "not applicable," or any other response directly communicating a non-affirmative response was coded as a 0. The combined Cohen's kappa for all three research assistants on the rejection question was .72. When there was agreement by two or more coders for the presence or absence of rejection, the mutually agreed code of 1 or 0 became the value assigned to a given participant. The primary researcher arbitrated in the infrequent cases in which no two research assistants agreed. Responses were coded as nonresponses when participants either described occurrences and effects not determined to be transfer student rejection or when participants skipped the question altogether.¹

Similar to the coding scheme described for the rejection question, a code of 1 was assigned in the presence of concealment and a code of 0 in its absence. All "no," "never," "none," "not applicable," and elaborated negative responses were given a code of 0. Missing responses due to the participant skipping the question were coded as nonresponses. As was the case for the rejection coding, the agreement of at least two of the three coders determined the final concealment code for each participant. Interrater reliability on the concealment question, as expressed by the combined kappa for all coders, was .91.

Results

Transfer Rejection

Of the 211 respondents, 56 or 26.5% reported experiencing rejection as a result of being a transfer student. When looking at the relationship between rejection and student demographics, both significant and nonsignificant findings emerged. First, there was no significant difference between males and females with regard to rejection, but a greater proportion of women experienced rejection on the basis of being a transfer student compared with men (34% versus 22%).² Findings also indicate a trend such that younger students (20-24 year olds) were more likely to feel rejected on the basis of being a transfer student than were students over 24 years old. However, underrepresented minorities³ were not more likely than white and Asian students to feel rejected on the basis of being a transfer student. There was also no difference in grade point averages between those who reported transfer rejection and those who did not report such feelings or experiences. Below are some quotes⁴ from those both with and without experiences of rejection (additional quotes are provided in Appendix B):

"No one ever judged me because I am a transfer student."

Final GPA: 2.6 in Legal Studies

"I've heard students talk about how transfer students don't deserve to be at UCB because of the perception that it's so easy to get in as a transfer student. I felt like I always had to prove myself to these students."

May 2006 GPA: > 3.3 in MCB, had not graduated as of summer 2006

"Constantly felt rejected my first semester at UCB because I was excluded by continuing students when trying to form groups for class projects."

Final GPA: > 3.5 in Business Admin.

"When I first went to see the undergraduate [-----] advisor about the classes I wanted to take my first semester, she said I was taking too many. ... She insisted that because I was a transfer student I wouldn't be prepared for the work load. She refused to acknowledge that I had taken very heavy loads for all of CC and that I had previously attended a four-year college. I did end up taking all those classes and doing very well!"

Final GPA: > 3.3

Transfer Concealment

Thirty-six participants, or 18.8%, of the 191 respondents to this particular question, reported that they had concealed being a transfer student at least once in the past. When looking at the relationship between rejection and concealment, there was an association between experienced rejection on the basis of being a transfer student and the concealment of one's standing as a transfer student. More specifically, feelings of transfer student rejection were present for 68% of those who concealed being a transfer student (see Table 1a, Appendix A). Furthermore, 91% of those who *did not* feel rejected as transfers *did not* conceal their transfer student standing (Table 1b). When asked if they had ever been reluctant to share that they were transfers, those surveyed responded in a variety of ways, some of which are presented below (see also Appendix C):

"No I always tell people that I am a transfer student"

Final GPA: 3.70 in Theater and Performance Studies

"Sometimes because I did over hear some students talking once about how transfer students weren't 'real' Berkeley students"

Final GPA: > 3.5 in Conservation and Resource Studies

"Yes. in fact, I don't tell other students that i am a transfer until they ask me specifically. transfers are generally viewed as not bright enough to get into UCB in the first place and I don't wanna be associated with that."

Final GPA: > 3.5 in Business Admin

"Yes. I never tell people right away that I am a transfer student. After they get to know me I inform them. I have gotten the impression in the past that transfer students are almost looked down upon so I want people to get to know me before I tell them that I was a transfer student."

Final GPA: > 3.3 in Mass Communications

Although we did not hypothesize that there would be a gender difference for transfer concealment, one did emerge. Women were more likely to conceal than men, with

24.6% indicating that they had concealed being a transfer student, compared to 10.4% of the male respondents (see Table 2 Appendix A). However, aside from these unexpected gender differences, there was no relationship between any of the other demographic or academic variables and the concealment of one's transfer student standing. Thus, no difference emerged for concealment across age categories, either when comparing the four major age categories or when comparing nontraditionally aged students with traditionally aged students. Furthermore, underrepresented minorities did not conceal their transfer student standing more than non-underrepresented minorities, and there was no difference in GPA for those who concealed compared to those who did not conceal.

Academic Achievement

Despite the presence of both transfer-related rejection and transfer concealment in this population of graduating university students, these students were very successful academically. The average GPA for the survey respondents was 3.44, with the majority having a grade point average within the 3.5 to 4.0 range or 3.0 to 3.49 range. Almost all of the participants who felt rejected had a grade point average that spanned the 3.0 to 4.0 range (see Tables 3 and 3a), and 86% (31 of the 36) of participants who concealed being transfer students also had GPAs in this top range of 3.0 to 4.0. Thus, the academic resilience of these students who face very real social and psychological burdens is remarkable. However, the success and persistence of transfer students in general should not be a surprise. Transfer students at UC Berkeley have historically performed very well academically, maintaining university grade point averages that are minutely different from freshman-admitted students (See Table 4). Their graduation rates have been comparable to freshman admits as well, with the most recent (spring 2006) four-year cumulative rate of 88% surpassing the comparable six-year freshman graduation rate of 87%. And a record 55% of the 2004 cohort (predominant in our survey population) graduated in two years (source: Office of Student Research database).

Discussion

In the current study, we investigated the possibility that community college transfer students are stigmatized within the university setting. We further explored the relationship between experiencing transfer-based social rejection and concealing one's transfer student standing. Theoretical models detailing the cognitive and affective processes underlying the management of concealable stigmas posit that rejection experiences and concerns are antecedents of concealment (e.g., Pachankis, 2007). Thus, we expected students who experienced transfer rejection to be more likely to report transfer concealment than students who did not experience transfer rejection.

Qualitative responses from the current study provided a rich account of the social rejection experienced by 26.5% of the respondents who believed they were treated negatively because of their educational background and its connotations. Most pervasive in the reported rejection situations were themes of others judging the intellectual preparation and capabilities of transfer students, as well as their academic legitimacy as university students. Negative perceptions and exchanges occurred when interacting with a variety of individuals, some of whom represented the university in a professional capacity. Professors, advisors, and peers who were usually freshman-admitted students

made remarks and created an environment for some transfer students that could easily be understood as socially uncomfortable and rejecting (see Appendix B).

The words of the respondents illustrate some of the psychological and behavioral consequences of students' experiences of rejection. Indeed, more than 1 out of 6 respondents to the concealment question reported that they had been reluctant, at least once, to disclose that they were transfer students. In general, the motivation to conceal that one is a transfer student seems to correspond to many of the underlying features of the rejection situations reported. The three issues characterizing transfer student rejection and also motivating transfer concealment were (a) being perceived as intellectually inferior or not as academically capable as others, (b) the perception that it is easy to be accepted into the university as a transfer student, and (c) the perception that transfer students had it easy at the community college (see Appendices B and C). The two psychosocial variables were further related in that transfer rejection predicted transfer concealment. This relationship generated a statistic that estimated the odds of concealment to be nearly six times as great for those who have experienced transfer rejection as it is for those who have not had such an experience. Consistent with other findings (e.g., Cole, Kemeny, & Taylor, 1997), the current results support the notion that the concealment of a stigma "is likely to be motivated by fears of negative evaluation and the avoidance of rejection" (Pachankis, 2007, p. 334).

On a theoretical level, these results contribute to the literature on concealable stigma and status based rejection, alluding to a causal linkage between the two in a relatively unstudied population of stigmatized individuals. Overlapping reasons for concealing and for feeling rejected suggest that concealment is the result of rather than a precursor to experiences of rejection. Further, concealment of one's transfer student standing may actually provide a mechanism by which one copes with and prevents future experiences of rejection. Future research needs to more clearly elucidate these mechanisms and their causal links.

Finally, although the active disclosure of being a transfer student was not a focus of this study, this type of behavior was reported by some answering the concealment question. Many students wrote elaborately about not concealing their transfer standing, explaining that they did not conceal because they felt there were many transfer students on campus or in their major. Some of these participants also directly stated that they had met successful transfer students or made friends with other transfers and thus did not feel the need to conceal or have any shame about being a transfer student. These responses speak to the subjective nature of the university-level transfer experience while also providing insight into how the visibility of transfer students may influence how other transfers feel about themselves and their disclosure to others.

Institutional Implications

As the first known study to have data supporting the existence of transfer rejection and transfer concealment, these results can be used to benefit the transfer student experience in a practical manner. For example, some of the most frequent reports of transfer rejection that described facing social exclusion, negative stereotypes about one's intellectual capabilities, and a general aura of illegitimacy, can be drawn upon to create vignettes. Such vignettes could then be incorporated into the diversity sensitivity training of those working with students at the university. Also, graduate student instructors, faculty, and the counseling and advising staff could be made aware of transfer concealment. Indeed, although we did not investigate transfer concealment as

a possible stressor, other research on concealable stigmas support the notion that it is very stressful to conceal an aspect of one's social standing or identity (Pachankis, 2007; Santuzzi & Ruscher, 2002).

Direct legitimization of community college transfer students by the University of California's Office of the President may also aid in dispelling the myths that transfer students are not "real" university students and not intellectually comparable to freshman admitted students. This legitimization may come in many forms, one of which could be an electronic newsletter highlighting successful current and former transfer students at various levels of their academic and professional careers. The presence and highlighting emphasis of successful transfer students could aid in the embracing and disclosure of one's transfer standing for current and future transfer students. More importantly, this type of positive visibility could counter negative stereotypes held by some faculty, staff, and freshman-admitted students about community college transfer students.

This research on graduating transfer students powerfully highlights the importance of studying college populations typically excluded from higher educational studies due to their nontraditional characteristics (i.e., age, community college transfer standing). Much can be gained from surveying nontraditional students on issues that are specifically related to them in their own right and to their college experiences. Surveying transfer students can lead to theoretical expansion and a better understanding of the varied university-level experiences of a unique and diverse population of undergraduates. Gaining a better understanding of both positive and negative transfer student experiences has the potential to facilitate improvement in the campus life of all transfer students and to create an environment that is not only academically accessible but that is also socially and psychologically enjoyable.

What may come as a surprise to many is the extent and detail of the rejection and concealment situations in the presence of high academic achievement. Future research on the multifaceted transfer student experience would therefore greatly improve the understanding of the complex relationship between psychosocial variables and other student variables. Longitudinal surveys that look at change over time more proximally as it occurs, along with experiments that can establish causal links between rejection and concealment, are necessary to overcome the major limitations of this study. More importantly, however, future research that fully considers the psychological, social, and academic experiences of community college transfer students at the university level will benefit future student services providers, policymakers, and, ultimately, transfer students themselves.

NOTES

¹ Our coding criteria resulted in responses that could be categorized as 1) the absence of transfer rejection, 2) the presence of transfer rejection, or 3) other. We were concerned only with differences between those who clearly felt rejected as a result of being a transfer student and those who clearly said that they had not experienced such rejection. This aim provides the rationale for coding the “other” non-rejection responses as nonresponses, which resulted in exclusion from the analyses reported herein. However, analyses were conducted treating the “other” category as nonrejection experiences and the results were not significantly different. Also, treating the “other” category as transfer rejection also had no significant impact on the results. Thus, it is empirically and theoretically justifiable to treat the “other” category as nonresponses.

² Though statistics are not reported in the current paper, both logit and linear regression models were run, supporting all claims of significant relationships between variables.

³ The category of underrepresented minorities exhaustively includes African-American, Hispanic, and Native American students, while white and Asian students are considered non-underrepresented minorities. Students who were classified as “foreign” or “other” were excluded from all analyses that include ethnic categorizations.

⁴ Quotes were not corrected with regard to misspellings; however, when necessary the names of departments and individuals were omitted to protect the privacy of those involved in the reported situations. The omission of such names is represented by a bracket set of dashes ([-----]) or ellipses when such names were mentioned at the end of sentences or between sentences.

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Appendix A

Table 1a. Percentage of respondents in each transfer rejection category and their engagement in concealment (n = 161).

	Rejection: No	Rejection: Yes	Total
Concealment: No	98 75.38%	32 24.62%	130 100%
Concealment: Yes	10 32.26%	21 67.74%	31 100%
Total	108	53	161

Table 1b. Percentage of respondents in each transfer concealment category who had either experienced or not experienced transfer rejection (n = 161).

	Rejection: No	Rejection: Yes	Total
Concealment: No	98 90.74%	32 60.38%	130 100%
Concealment: Yes	10 9.26%	21 39.62%	31 100%
Total	108	53	161

Table 2. Percentage of those who concealed by gender (n = 191).

	Male	Female	Total
Concealment: No	69 89.61%	86 75.44%	155
Concealment: Yes	8 10.39%	28 24.56%	36
Total	77	114	191

Table 3. Academic outcomes of survey respondents at end of term (Spring 2006).*

GPA Category	3.5-4.0	3.0-3.49	2.0-2.99	Total
Total Survey Respondents	128	97	37	262
Percent of total	48.9%	37.0%	14.1%	100%
Number responding to the rejection question	108	74	28	210
Number rejected	26	26	4	56
Percent of GPA category rejected	24.1%	35.1%	14.3%	26.7%
Number graduating	125	90	35	250
Percent GPA category graduating	97.7%	92.8%	86.5%	95.4%

Note: End-of-term cumulative GPAs only available for 262 of the 263 respondents and 210 of those responding to the rejection question.

Source: OSR.de

Table 3a. Summary of end-of-term status for all 263 survey respondents

Graduated Spring 2006*	239
Graduated Summer 2006*	12
Returned to UCB as undergraduates Fall 2006	6
Appear to have stopped out**	6
Total	263

Source: OSR.de

*31 of the graduates felt rejected at some point. 8 of those graduating enrolled as graduate students at UCB in Fall 2006.

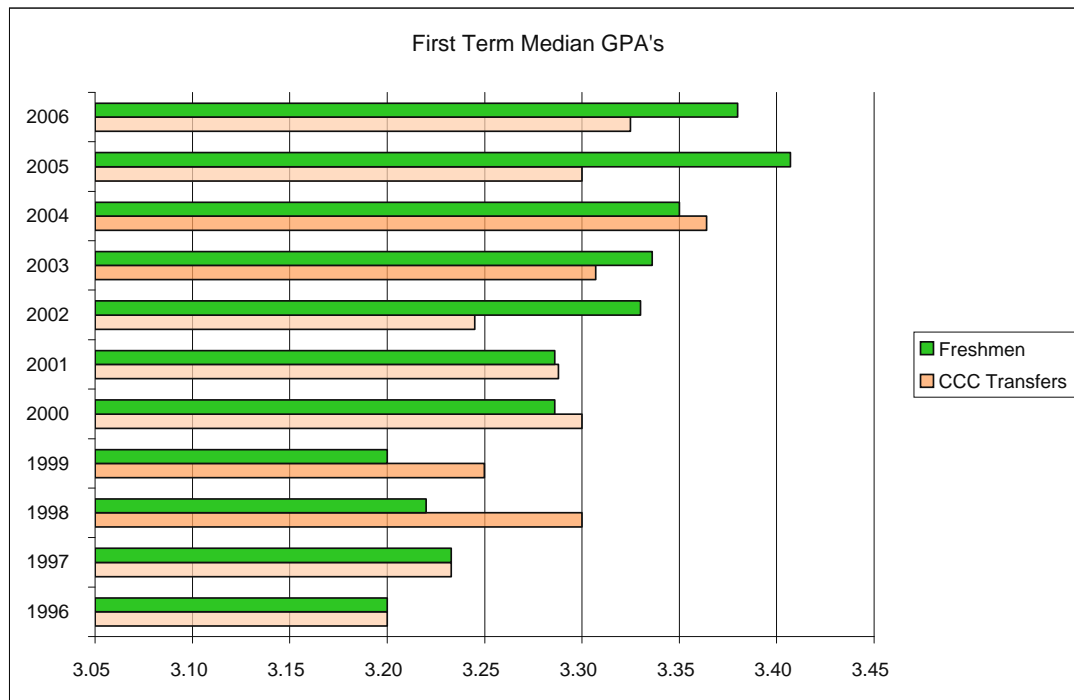
**Of the 6 that appear to have stopped out, NONE felt rejected.

Table 4. First-term GPA of transfer-admitted students and freshman-admitted students at UC Berkeley from 1996 to 2006.

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Transfer First Term GPA										
3.06	3.07	3.13	3.06	3.21	3.07	2.95	3.09	3.09	2.94	3.00
0.69	0.61	0.61	0.65	0.61	0.58	0.63	0.59	0.57	0.58	0.54
2.69	2.75	2.81	2.77	2.90	2.77	2.65	2.79	2.84	2.67	2.78
3.18	3.18	3.25	3.19	3.30	3.19	3.12	3.20	3.22	3.07	3.14
3.57	3.51	3.60	3.53	3.67	3.51	3.42	3.54	3.53	3.37	3.41
1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Freshmen First Term GPA										
3.09	3.13	3.11	3.10	3.17	3.17	3.21	3.23	3.26	3.18	3.27
0.67	0.64	0.65	0.64	0.59	0.64	0.63	0.61	0.57	0.58	0.60
2.70	2.80	2.70	2.73	2.81	2.81	2.85	2.86	2.94	2.88	2.85
3.17	3.23	3.19	3.15	3.23	3.29	3.30	3.30	3.33	3.29	3.25
3.57	3.60	3.56	3.53	3.57	3.66	3.65	3.67	3.65	3.57	3.54

Source: OSR.de

Figure 1: First-term GPA of transfer admitted students and freshman-admitted students at UC Berkeley from 1996 to 2006.



Source: OSR.de

Appendix B

Question 1: Rejection on the Basis of Transfer Student Standing. “Please take a second to reflect on whether or not you've had any experiences at UCB where you felt rejected as a result of your transfer student status. If you can think of an experience of this nature, please tell us about it. What happened? Who was there? How did it make you feel? Please describe the experience so that we can understand it from your point of view.”

“N/A. I've always felt welcome and that people are extraordinarily gracious!”

Final GPA: > 3.5 in Anthropology

“I was in office hours with a professor and I was talking about options for grad school. He talked about how most professorships go to dedicated, traditional students - "it's an old boys club" - and that being a returning student, woman, in my thirties would limit my options. I felt very discouraged, and it's been hard to shake off. And now I feel that I have come across professors who defy that image, but they are the exception. Many of my professors HAVE been old white guys that came from more traditional backgrounds.”

Final GPA: > 3.7

“I applied to a research lab under URAP the first semester when I was at Cal, after the post-doc knew that I was a transfer student, he changed completely and I knew he thought that I would not be able to cope with the tasks in lab. Many of my friends had the same experience also. I felt so sad and that made me didn't want to apply to labs at school anymore. And now I'm working in a research lab off campus ...”

Final GPA: > 3.7 in Molecular and Cell Biology

“a professor telling our class that four out of the eleven transfers accidentally let into the program because of an employee who had been fired. too much information I did not need to hear”

Final GPA: > 3.5 in Landscape Architecture

“In some math classes.. Professors often make condescending comments on the teachers at CC; how they teach calculus.. Some often directly say CC education is the continuation of high school education”

Final GPA: > 3.0 in Mathematics

“Non-transfer students say really hurtful things about transfers and claim it is so easy and that we get to transfer our high GPAs because we had easy classes. In reality, our GPA does NOT transfer with us and we have to work double as hard as they do to catch up and get into the groove of things. It is hurtful because I know transfers like myself worked really hard to come to Cal.”

Final GPA: > 3.5 Double Major in Anthropology & Political Science

“No, on the contrary professors are usually more helpful if they feel you don't know the material as well because you are a transfer student”

Final GPA: > 3.7 in Business Admin.

“A student who was here since freshman year said that transfer students don't have to work as hard to get into UCB as the freshmen do. It was frustrating for me because I think I worked just as hard to be here as she did. I told her this and she backed off a bit.”

Final GPA: > 3.5 in English

“I was having difficulty with a writing assignment and when I was asked by the professor where I took my writing courses I said at community college and the response was - of course that is way you are unable to keep up and I was instructed to drop the course.... Of course I felt like an idiot and yes I dropped immediately b/c if the professor has no hope in me then I figured I was destined to do poorly.”

Final GPA: > 3.3 in English

Appendix C

Question 2: Concealment of Transfer Student Standing. “Have you ever been reluctant to even share that you were a transfer student? Please describe this experience in enough detail so that we can get a sense of the situation you were in.”

“yes! because all the ‘home grown’ students think they are far superior than transfers. even now in my final semester i don't bring it up unless i'm asked or if i need to.”

Final GPA: 2.98 Mass Communications

“I have never been reluctant to share I was a transfer student but have never been eager to share this fact either.”

Final GPA: 3.89 Double Major in Business Admin. & Economics

“Not really. There are many here.”

Final GPA: 3.56 in Business Admin.

“No. It seems that there are enough transfers around campus to allow you to feel that you are not alone or out of place.”

Final GPA: 3.87 in Psychology

“In my first section we were doing introductions on the first day and I said I was a transfer. I can not say exactly why, but I didn't like the reaction I got. From there on out, I usually avoiding saying I was a transfer unless others said so first.”

Final GPA: 3.76 in Political Science

“Sometimes I don't share the information. This is mainly with students in competitive science classes. I can understand how some transfer students could be made to feel like second class citizens, especially by other students.”

Final GPA: 2.94 in Molecular & Environmental Biology

“No, I meet a ton of transfer students all the time. I am very proud of it.”

Final GPA: 3.90 in English

“I do feel reluctant sometimes because I feel other students think I might not have had it "as hard" as they did, but I can certainly disagree.”

Final GPA: 3.36 in Genetics & Plant Biology

“Nope. I love being a transfer student.”

Final GPA: 3.68 in History

“yes, sometimes i feel like if I tell people I am a transfer, then some will make it seem that I wasn't good enough to get in straight from highschool, and transfers have it way easier to get admitted.”

Final GPA: 3.28 in Urban Studies

“I like sharing that I am a transfer student, and I like finding other people who are also transfer students.”

Final GPA: 3.70 in Psychology

“Many successful students at UCB seem to be transfer students so, no, I’m not reluctant to acknowledge my status as a transfer”

Final GPA: 3.85 in English

“Yes. Often I felt as though people just looked more smug or self-righteous.”

Final GPA: 3.73 in Interdisciplinary Studies

“Sometimes. I don’t voluntarily tell people that I am a transfer student, because some people will think that you are not as smart or something.”

Final GPA: 4.0 in Molecular & Cell Biology

“No, not at all. There are many transfer students on campus, and that makes me feel comfortable enough to identify myself as a transfer student.”

Final GPA: 3.30 in Mathematics

“Yes, again because of the stigma attached to it.”

Final GPA: 3.42 in Molecular & Cell Biology