“Digging Up Me”

(An Archaeology of Self)
College is often a time to explore your sense of self in a safe, academically supported, and focused environment. Spending time at a university has a way of inspiring new interests, opening your mind to new perspectives, and forever influencing how you think and process information. It is a period uniquely suited to help individuals discover themselves, and it is this self-discovery that allows college graduates to reflect on their undergraduate trajectory as a defining moment in their lives. From a personal perspective, my time at UNC Charlotte molded and shaped me unlike any past experience has to date. I have encountered new ideas and situations that have fostered my individual growth both mentally and socially. I see my time spent on this campus as a great expedition of self-discovery. My undergraduate experience has allowed me to take a multi-faceted approach to self-exploration and marks a central or critical turning point in my personal and intellectual development, which I will examine more thoroughly later on in this essay.

More specifically, these four years have instilled a love and appreciation for learning in new interdisciplinary fields. Moreover, it has unearthed countless interests and endeavors, which I believe I will pursue for the rest of my life. Emblematic of my time at Charlotte, I have collected many artifacts that serve as reminders of some of the most important and defining moments of my undergraduate career. These include “My Dream Job” paper, a pair of Mickey Mouse ears, a button from Charlotte Dance Marathon, my desktop computer, a lapel pin from my internship, and finally a ticket to the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry that I visited during Spring Break my Senior year–Spring 2016. Looked at as individual objects or as an eclectic assortment of items, these pieces may seem unrelated. However, by looking at these objects through the lens of cognitive reflection and my chosen academic framework of self-
archaeology, they will align in a sensible manner making my journey of self-discovery evident as well as tracking some of the major events along the way.

Self-archaeology can be defined in several ways. Author and psychological counselor Darius Cikanavicius begins his explanation of self-archeology by breaking down the two root words, Self “relating to–of or by or to or from or for–the self” (Cikanavicius). He then defines archeology “an in depth, thorough, close exploration and discovery” (Cikanavicius). Then he continues by listing several short definitions one can use to define the process such as: “Self-archeology – it's the strengthening of the bond with one's true self; Self-archeology – it's the state of awareness and consciousness when you're trying to understand the true meaning and purpose of your present and past actions, motives, and emotional states; Self-archeology – it's taking care of oneself, emotional healing, self-empathy, self-love, self-nurturance, self-education, and personal growth” (Cikanavicius 2013). The most relatable of these definitions is perhaps the third, which mentions personal growth–defined as growing in one’s self and maturing–and self-education–learning about one’s self (Including interests, fears, passions, etc.) In this way, personal growth is part of my analysis of how I have changed throughout the past four years and self-education is a process that I have engaged in throughout my years here at Charlotte, especially over these past two semesters.

The purpose of archaeology is to uncover the mysteries of the past through the excavation of ancient cities, trade routes, and shipwrecks. Archaeology strives to glean a more complete understanding of ancient societies, their cultures, and ultimately how the people of the past lived their daily lives. The first step in the archaeological process is often finding a site. These sites are found through various means such as through historical documents, previous digs, or often by pure accident. Metaphorically, my site as it pertains to this essay is my four years as an
undergraduate student at UNC Charlotte. In this way, the “archaeological dig” refers to this metacognitive reflection and senior portfolio.

When attempting to find a site there are two reasons for archaeologists to begin searching in the first place. First, archaeologists, “may have a specific research question about the past that makes it necessary to search a particular area for certain types of sites or to excavate a site. Second, sites may be endangered by a development project or natural erosion, requiring archaeologists to salvage what information they can before the site is destroyed” (“2.11 The Process of Archaeology”). As it relates to this inquiry both of the above questions are viable reasons to begin this “dig”. To address the first reason for “finding this site” I have specific questions that I am looking to answer as I apply this idea to my personal growth. The first question being, what has my development meant and how have I learned more about myself through this reflective process? Secondly, who am I now that my college career is coming to a close, and in what ways have I changed as well as stayed the same? Finally, how has my time at UNC Charlotte better prepared me for the rest of my life after college, both in future careers as well as in my personal life? Each of these is worth careful exploration and study, and throughout the course of this reflective essay I will uncover the answers to each. To address the second reason, the “site” in which I am excavating is in danger of disappearing. By disappearing I mean that the opportunity to reflect on my time at Charlotte while it is still fresh in my mind is rapidly drawing to a close. As Dr. Tindal stated in our Honors 3790 course during the Fall of 2015, this metacognitive reflection is a rare chance to analyze a portion of our lives and discover what it has meant and analyze how it has affected us. Ultimately if I am to understand how this “site” has affected me I must perform this dig now rather than later.
The second step in the archaeological process is the actual excavation of the site after it has been identified. Before any digging occurs the archaeologists must first clear any vegetation on the site and establish a grid so that they are able to break the site into smaller, individual quadrants. For a site, “The grid is the primary way to maintain context, which is the relationship artifacts and features have to each other” (“2.11 The Process of Archaeology”). Although I wasn’t aware of it at the time, the Honors 3790 Senior Seminar served as the initial grid for my personal archaeological process. That course laid the groundwork for this inquiry, as well as the initial meeting with my committee, which both ultimately allowed me to focus my work on this idea of self-archaeology and the process of an archaeological dig. When looking at the project in its entirety the site is actually the past four years of my college experience and the grid separates the periods of time into semesters.

Interestingly, my personal “archaeological dig” was initiated by accident. As I was preparing to write this essay I was working through an exercise in which I practiced writing the introduction for my original paper. The original paper in question was utilizing the Social Development Theory to analyze and define how my college experience has been a “personal renaissance”. Social Development Theory explains how socialization affects our learning process as an individual and that there are three basic concepts that influence our development: the role of social interaction in our cognitive development, a more knowledgeable other, and the zone of proximal development (Sincero). In the essay’s closing paragraph I utilized a metaphor that likened my college experience to a journey of self-discovery and an archaeological dig. While at the time I didn’t put much thought into this, during a meeting with the faculty committee that has guided me through this process, my advisor Dr. Tindal brought this metaphor further into my awareness and suggested that I further explore the idea. As I contemplated the link between my
time in college, the theme of self-discovery, and the idea of an archaeological dig, everything started to click. These metacognitive reflections ultimately led me to pursue this idea of self-archaeology, or what scholar Ian Hodder terms as archaeology of self which I will use interchangeably throughout this essay.

In his essay “An Archeology of the Self: The Prehistory of Personhood,” scholar Ian Hodder, contends that “As human beings we discover ourselves as we labor, and we find our spiritual and moral sensitivities in our interactions with the world, but self-discovery always seems to involve a tension—a simultaneous movement toward and away from things” (Hodder). In many ways, Hodder’s notion of self-discovery or archeology of self effectively describes my journey from an eager freshman with limited life and academic experiences to a college senior with a more nuanced view of the global community to which I belong and a deeper understanding of the labor and love endemic to the learning process. Over the last four years, my archeology of self—as Hodder suggests—has been a movement toward development both emotionally and psychologically. Like all development, this has pushed me away from older ideas to new ones. It may have changed how I see the world as well as myself in it, but it has not changed who I am at the core. I now see growth as less linear and something akin to a wave. As Hodder suggests I move toward new ideas, ultimately expanding and growing. This is then followed by a retraction to my core self, ultimately making this new growth part of who I am. My core/true self is something that must be unearthed if it is to be understood—a process which is undertaken in this metacognitive reflection. Thus we come to my theme for this essay, archaeology and the archaeological process.

Once the groundwork is laid, it is time to begin the excavation; in the context of this reflective essay the “artifacts” that I am digging up are quite fittingly the artifacts that I
mentioned in my portfolio proposal that was submitted last semester, Fall 2015. (To provide some context, the artifacts that I identified in my portfolio proposal were items of significance that I chose to represent important aspects of myself or experiences that I have encountered throughout my time as an undergraduate student.) Upon conclusion of the dig, or in this case the conclusion of the reflection, the collected data is analyzed along with the artifacts in order to answer the proposed questions and draw conclusions based upon the findings.

Often when dating artifacts, the deeper the artifact is discovered, the older it is. Beginning relatively chronologically with one of the oldest of my artifacts, we come to a paper I wrote titled “My Dream Job”. The crafting of this particular artifact was in my “Introduction to Business” course BUSN 1101, which I took in the Fall of my Freshman year 2012. This artifact symbolizes the first time I experienced personal failure in college, and while my grade on this assignment was not an F, it certainly was not my best work. Throughout my high school career, I was the student that only had to put in minimal effort in a course in order to receive an A and this shaped how I saw both myself as a student as well as education as a whole. In many ways I viewed education as a necessary evil that would ultimately lead me to opportunities to find a good job after graduation. With this flawed mindset I was missing the entire point of what the college experience was all about, learning for the sake of learning.

Entering into my first year of college I had the foolish notion that I would be able to continue to skate through and achieve stellar results with continued minimal input. While I received a B on the “My Dream Job” assignment–considered a good grade by many–I was shaken to my core. I could not believe that I, an honor student, had earned less than what I deemed acceptable at the time–an A. The outcome of this assignment made me step back and analyze my priorities and re-establish my modus operandi for how I would conduct myself in
coming semesters on future projects and assignments. While after this experience I would like to claim that I never made below an A again, that is unfortunately not the case. What this artifact did teach me, however, was that I shouldn’t focus on what grade I receive, but rather on if I have put my best foot forward and completed the assignment to the best of my abilities. Because of this assignment my philosophy on grades and achievement were forever changed. I had learned to appreciate the utility of failure and how mindset plays a major role in what we see as “failure”.

When I first came to this dig site almost four years ago I had what is known as a “fixed mindset” when it came to education and achievement. A fixed mindset as it relates to education is one that as Dr. Carol Dweck, a leading psychologist at Stanford University, states on her website mindsetonline.com as when, “people believe their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits. They spend their time documenting their intelligence or talent instead of developing them. They also believe that talent alone creates success—without effort” (Dweck). This analysis of a fixed mindset is the perfect description of how I initially saw and related my academic achievement to myself as a student. Often when we do not achieve our pursuit of the perfect grade we then fall victim to the idea that we aren’t good enough, smart enough or capable enough to succeed. This can play out in many different ways; for some they take it out on themselves, while others blame the teacher or their circumstances. For me it was generally blaming myself for not studying enough, or simply brushing it off as not important.

Throughout my time at this institution my mindset began to transform from fixed to one of growth. The “growth mindset” is characterized by individuals believing, “that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work–brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment” (Dweck). To see how this difference between a fixed mindset and a growth
mindset, one only need look at the research done in 2001 by Dr. Aronson’s research team. The team conducted workshops with African-American university students, teaching them the concepts of the growth mindset, and how it could improve academic performance and emotional health. The workshops explained how falling into belief of stereotypes could majorly hinder your performance and lock you into a fixed mindset. These events also encouraged the students to seek a mindset of growth and to focus on beating the stereotypes and statistics. The research team then tracked the students throughout their time in college to see if these workshops had any effect. The results of their research were published in a 2002 paper entitled “Reducing the Effects of Stereotype Threat on African American College Students by Shaping Theories of Intelligence”. In this paper it compares and contrasts the African-American students who had attended the workshops with students who had not. When looking at the differences in performance between these two groups of students we can see the power that a growth mindset can have when it comes to overcoming the engrained stereotype that African-American students can not achieve academically. The students who attended the workshops ultimately performed much higher than those that did not. As we can see through Dr. Aronson’s research the growth mindset is a powerful tool that can be utilized to ensure success. The reason these results are so significant is because of what they imply about the psychology of learning and success, something I myself can attest to. When we begin to view learning as a continual process–and failure not as a lack of ability but as a foundation to build off of–we can then better achieve and attain knowledge for knowledge’s sake and be successful learners which is heavily related to scholar-citizenship. (In the context of the University Honors Experience, a scholar-citizen is–someone who seeks achievement both in and out of the classroom. Scholar-citizens go above and beyond to better themselves mentally and strive for success academically while also being
heavily involved in service to their community and doing their civic duty to improve where they live).

This growth mindset, as it is described by Dr. Dweck, is by and large how we as members of the University Honors Program are called to view the scholar portion of scholar-citizenship. As honors students it is often easy for us to get caught up in achievement, and our identity being directly tied to our academic success. As an aspiring scholar-citizen, focusing on grades alone is dangerous. We should instead redirect our aim and shoot for the more important and scholarly goal of learning for learning’s sake. This new outlook on achievement and the importance of knowledge over simply the “recognition of learning” is an important step in my journey of self-discovery because it has set the tone for the rest of my educational experience, which will continue well past my time as an undergraduate student.

The second artifact to be analyzed encompasses a portion of myself that has remained relatively unchanged throughout my college experience. It merits close inspection due to its paramount importance in how I cope with struggles in my life and its instrumentality on my journey of self-discovery. This artifact is of course the Mickey Mouse ears that I obtained during my trip to Disney World in 2013 during spring break of my Freshmen year. When I was younger my parents always said we would go to Disney World, however, due to their busy schedules and my heavy involvement in sports, scouting, and JROTC in high school and middle school we never got the chance. Finally during my Freshman year I had no plans over spring break and my mother was able to take time off from work, thus we made our journey to Orlando. The park was massive and luckily due to the threat of inclement weather—that never materialized—the park was practically deserted. This meant that my mother and I were able to explore and ride the various rides with virtually no wait times. On the first and third days we visited the Magic Kingdom and
on the second Epcot. The experience was magical even though I was a bit too old to believe that
the costumed characters running around were real Disney characters, it was still an experience I
will never forget.

It was on the third and final day of our trip that I purchased my embroidered Mickey
Mouse ears from a shop in the Magic Kingdom. To me these ears symbolize my childhood,
evidence of my “inner child,” and frankly they represent life before and during the past few years
of college. When I was growing up Disney was an important part of my life. My sister and I
watched all of the Disney Classics such as *Bambi, Snow White, Hercules* and *The Lion King*, to
name a few. In many ways, my family and the Disney movies we watched together were the two
constants in my childhood.

As the child of two military officers, our family moved a lot. This constant travel made
for an adventurous childhood, but also made it difficult for me to plant my roots in any one place
for an extended period of time. That being said, no matter where we moved I always had my
imagination, my sister (best friend), and Disney. Due to the integral role that Disney played in
my early life and development, it is fitting that I use these Mickey Mouse ears as a symbol of my
“inner child”. This inner child is something that has allowed me to get through turbulent times in
my life. For instance, on Thanksgiving Day 2011 when my paternal Grandmother died, I looked
for support within my family, but also discovered solace in the Disney films I had watched as a
child. Disney has been an escape for me while in college too, and has been a way for me to
destress when I am feeling overwhelmed by deadlines, exams, or anything else that life has
thrown my way. While Disney has not impacted my journey as a scholar-citizen per se in a
conventional way, I believe it is of paramount importance to my college experience and who I
am give it validity in this reflection. Although the archaeological site that is these past four years
has been marked by both social and intellectual growth, the self-care—which is part of
Cikanavicius’ explanation of self-archaeology—that has been provided to me by embracing my
inner child and using it and Disney as a source of stress relief and reprieve has kept me grounded
and thus has played a defining role in my journey for development as a scholar-citizen. Much
like this artifact has impacted the self-care portion of Cikanavicius’ definition for self-
archaeology, this next artifact relates heavily to his discussion on personal growth.

Often in our lives we are given the chance to be involved in something that makes us feel
like we have made a difference for the better—for me this has been Charlotte Dance marathon.
The third artifact of my “self-archaeology” is a Charlotte Dance Marathon (DM) button, which I
received during the fall of my Junior year 2014. This artifact has gained more importance to me
throughout my Senior year because I have become heavily involved in the cause as a member of
the Executive board, serving on the Public Relations and Marketing Committee (PR) during the
Fall of 2015 and on the Catering Committee this Spring 2016. Charlotte Dance Marathon is the
largest philanthropic student organization on campus, raising over $100,000 for our local
Children’s Miracle Network hospital in its relatively short three year existence. This past year we
raised over $49,000 for Levine Children’s Hospital—which serves the children in our
community—through various events such as: benefit nights at local restaurants, partnering with
Plato’s Closet to raise money through a closeout sale, auctioning off UNC Charlotte Men’s
Soccer jerseys, and many more—these events are held throughout both the Fall and Spring
semesters. All of these separate events culminate with the twelve hour Dance Marathon where
children from the hospital as well as their families join attendees for a night of dancing and the
big reveal of the fundraising total. Dance Marathon’s mission is to raise “money for the patients
at our local Children's Miracle Network Hospital. 100% of the funds raised goes to support the
areas of greatest need in the hospital, which often include life-saving equipment, state of the art technology, and therapeutic programs for patients” (“Charlotte Dance Marathon”).

As a member of the PR committee it was my job to collaborate with the other members of my committee, as well as the event planning committee, in order to help come up with and publicize the various fundraising events that we were holding over the course of the semester. This semester, working on the Catering committee, I am reaching out to local businesses that have sponsored the event in the past in order to maintain our relationship with them and try to ensure that said relationship remains mutually beneficial for both DM and our partners. On average I spent anywhere from three to five hours per week from the start of Fall semester until the final event, which took place from November 7th to the 8th, working to promote the event through creating posters, managing social media accounts, handing out flyers, tabling in front of the union, or volunteering at the various lead up events. The final event was the culmination of our work as the Public Relations and Marketing committee because it was our responsibility to get the word out about the event.

For the Catering committee this semester my schedule is much more relaxed and I am simply calling up new and past partners as well as communicating with them through e-mail. This reduction in duties has brought my total hours down to around one or two per week. Although the time and effort required to work as a DM committee member is time consuming, it is also been incredibly rewarding. It has allowed me to connect on a deeper level with friends that I’ve had since freshman year, while simultaneously forging new relationships with some fantastic people. Due to the amount of sacrifice required as well as the time and energy that must be put in DM allowed me to connect on a level that only people who have worked together to achieve the same goal can. During the late nights and long hours that were spent working on
different parts of the event I found myself connecting more and more with my friend Christie and roommate Cody. While I was close with both of them before, the time we spent working together on the PR committee somehow changed our relationships and made them that much stronger. Throughout this experience I also became close with new individuals such as my friend Megan who I have grown exceptionally close to over the past few months. She has rapidly become one of my dearest friends and was the person that I spent a majority of my spring break with—she is discussed in more detail in my final artifact.

Beyond the social involvement and experience, Dance Marathon has been one of the events that has defined my development as a scholar-citizen. I have always been involved in volunteer opportunities for many organizations on and off campus, but what Dance Marathon has allowed me to do is immerse myself in a cause. This has ultimately required me to make sacrifices for it and put the program’s needs above my own.

The realization that I would have to sacrifice my needs for DM’s coincides with some of the things I had the privilege of learning in Professor Robert Arnold’s Honors Citizenship course during my Junior year. One of the main lessons the course emphasized was the responsibilities of citizenship. More specifically, I learned as a citizen it is required of you to give of yourself in service to your community. This takeaway was partially from my experience working with Mattie Marshall, president of the Historic Washington Heights Community Association. My classmates and I worked with Mrs. Marshall to record the history of her neighborhood—Washington Heights, a historically black community in Charlotte’s center city. This project was an important portion of Professor Arnold’s course but there was also a rather extensive classroom portion as well. This new understanding also stems from the academic portion of the course where we analyzed the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services breakdown on
Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities located on their departmental website (www.uscis.gov).

In Professor Arnold’s class we analyzed this article along with the United Nations Declaration of Human rights in order to better understand the roles we are called upon to play as citizens.

Originally I saw our responsibilities as citizens to be more civic and rigid—such as voting in elections, etc. My revised view is one of philanthropy; I now see that as citizens we must be engaged in service to our communities. This idea has fostered changes in how I see citizenship and as such has played an important part in my journey of self-archaeology as it has helped me to uncover my passion for service. It has helped me to better understand the idea of service before self, thus molding me into a better scholar-citizen but perhaps more importantly a more thoughtful and well-rounded human being. Ultimately what Professor Arnold’s course did for me was give me a theoretical idea of what a scholar citizen is, and through my work with Dance Marathon I was able to expand up idea of service as a responsibility as well as put it into practice. As it relates to my everyday life, I now see my work with my local Humane Society and other organizations as crucial to my citizenship and find myself less focused on the enjoyment I get from the service and more on the fulfillment it provides me, knowing that I am being an engaged citizen in my community.

Along with the citizen aspect of being a scholar-citizen, I have engaged in some scholarly activities that have required self-learning—the most ambitious and impactful of these being the construction of my desktop computer. It is for this reason that the desktop computer that I built during my Junior year 2014-15 is my fourth artifact. I’ve always had an affinity for technology but the idea of building my own computer never crossed my mind until I was introduced to the world of custom computers by Tyler, one of my roommates. To build my computer the first step was setting a budget and selecting the parts that fit that budget. After selecting the parts I was left
to wait for their delivery. Over the course of about a week and a half I had different pieces coming in the mail and my inbox was full of emails from package services—so much so that I’m pretty sure they knew me by name. After patiently waiting for all of the individual pieces to come in I set out to work on building the machine. I started by putting the CPU (Central Processing Unit) into the slot on the motherboard, making sure the pins were slotted in their correct orientation before tightening down the socket’s retention arm. Then I started the painstaking process of fitting my behemoth of a heat sink to the board over the CPU. First I applied thermal compound, ensuring that there was enough to make contact with the entire heat spreader on the CPU and the bottom of the heatsink, but not so much that it spilled out onto the motherboard. Then came the frustration, even with my relatively small hands I found it exceedingly difficult to tighten the three screws that affix the heatsink to the motherboard and insure that it was snugly making contact with the CPU and thus properly extracting the heat and dissipating it away from this key component. Along with attaching the heat sink I also seated both sticks of RAM (Random Access Memory) into their DIMM (Dual In-line Memory Module) slots. Due to the size of my heat sink, the next step in the process, mounting the motherboard in the chassis, was a bit more complicated. I had to use a special long neck screwdriver in order to reach the last two screws that hold the motherboard in place on the standoffs, and even with this tool it still took me a solid twenty minutes to get the screws properly seated and tightened all while making sure they were not so tight as to damage the board. When I had the motherboard in the case it was smooth sailing from then on; I installed the power supply unit (PSU) and plugged in each cable into the motherboard. I then connected the hard-disk drive (HDD) and solid state drive (SSD) as well as the cables for the front USB, input output jacks, and power and reset switches. I finished off the build by putting in the GPU (Graphics Processing Unit) and plugging
the computer into my TV and the wall. At first I was a bit terrified because the computer did not post to BIOS (Basic Input/Output System). After carefully analyzing the computer I realized what I had done wrong; being that it was my first time building I had overlooked plugging in the eight pin CPU power cable and therefore the CPU was not actually running. When I corrected my mistake the system posted and I was able to install Windows and begin setting up my computer for its intended use.

The reasoning behind why I originally decided to undertake this seemingly difficult challenge was fairly simple. I wanted to play video games. While that is certainly one of the many things I utilize my system for it has become secondary. What this computer has truly done is inspire a voracious appetite for learning more about technology. To date I have worked with open source software and operating systems, redundant storage arrays, virtualization, ram disks, virtual private networks and so much more. I continually find myself researching cutting edge hardware such as new enthusiast grade compute units and their architecture from both AMD and Intel. I am constantly watching documentaries, reading articles, and combing through online forums to gain any shred of useful knowledge that I can about networks, the internet, and anything else remotely tech related. The sheer amount of knowledge proliferation that my computer has inspired has more than paid for the initial investment of time and money sourcing the components and building the system itself.

This new found love of technology has awakened an innate need for learning and knowledge dissemination and retention that has been a discovery in itself. It is a part of me that I did not know existed until its awakening last year, and something I had not considered until I began this metacognitive reflection and the process of self-archaeology. This hobby has been cathartic for me because it has given me an escape not only through videogames but also through
informational videos on computer hardware or innovations. Through this hobby I have been given a means to unwind after a rough day or a way to take a break from studying while still remaining fairly productive. It is not often that a hobby gives you the chance to truly better yourself and to grow, and while information technology isn’t a field I would want to work in, computer systems and computer hardware are becoming increasingly more important to every career field and the knowledge I’m accumulating will no doubt serve me well into the years to come.

My fifth artifact is the lapel pin that I received from my supervisor at First Command Financial Planning, where I have been an intern since the summer of 2013. First Command is a company that was founded to serve our military service men and women as well as their families. Today the company is still very much focused on providing sound financial advice to our military service members and ensuring that their families are protected in the case of loss or disability of the service member or their spouse. This is something that I identify strongly with due to my parents’ service to our country. I believe strongly in serving the members of our armed forces because of all they do to insure our safety as United States citizens. My time at First Command helped me to operationalize my scholar-citizenship by helping to serve this important subgroup of our population, while gaining valuable job experience that will benefit me in the future.

It is only fitting that I include this item because it symbolizes the end to my college experience. At the end of next semester I will be graduating and heading off into the “real world,” and even though I do not plan to work for the company that I have been interning with, it has been an integral part of my learning experience outside of the classroom. My internship with First Command Financial Services has been an excellent exposure to the financial services
industry and has allowed me to network with many different members of the business industry. It has also exposed me to many of the theoretical ideas and operational procedures that I have encountered in classes and allowed me to put them into practice. During my time with First Command I was given the opportunity to develop networking and other people skills that were often discussed in my courses but that due to being difficult to teach were never learned. I also became intimately familiar with drafting professional emails and dealing with federal compliance paperwork—again something discussed in my courses but not dealt with hands on. On a daily basis I would communicate with members of the home office, partner organizations, and clients. Ultimately this multitude of interaction gave me a plethora of opportunities to hone these new skills that I am constantly discussing in detail with interviewers as I seek a job post-graduation. It was a bit intimidating for a wet behind the ears freshman to be thrust into an intensive internship with little to no experience but it was very beneficial to my learning process and helped me to develop the confidence I will need to operate in other business environments in the not too distant future. This experience helped me to grow both in a professional environment as well as in my journey towards scholar-citizenship and has been perhaps the most beneficial extracurricular activities I have been involved in during my time as an undergraduate student. It helped me to unearth the raw people skills that I already had while simultaneously helping me to refine and practice them. These people skills include being able to show empathy and interest, both of which are of the upmost importance in the business world. I have also been fortunate to gain experience interacting with coworkers and learning how to show respect to my elders while also seeing that in the workplace I may at times be their equals—something that at first was very hard for me to grasp.
The final artifact that I have uncovered throughout this archaeological dig is representative of the adventurous side of my personality as well as a new found independence. I have always been active and throughout my time at this dig site I have done many things that could be classified as adventurous. But perhaps the experience that has been “most adventurous” over these past four years was going to Chicago with my friend Megan over Spring Break 2016. This was the first time that I had ever planned and executed a cross country trip with only myself and someone roughly my own age to rely upon.

During our Trip we spent three days and four nights in Chicago and three days and two nights in Cincinnati visiting my sister. Over the course of the trip we visited four museums—The Museum of Science and Industry, the Field Museum of Natural History, The Cincinnati Museum Center (including a Natural History, Children, and History museum all in one complex), and the National Underground Railroad Museum, as well as the Shedd Aquarium. We were also able to visit local icons such as Carew Tower in Cincinnati, the Bean, Millennium Park, the Chicago Sports Club, and Navy Pier in Chicago. With all of these wonderful experiences it was hard to select an item represent the trip as a whole, but I finally settled on the ticket that I have from our excursion to the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry.

The Museum of Science and Industry stands out to me because it was the museum I was most looking forward to visiting. As a lover of history—specifically World War Two history—this museum caught my attention because it is home to one of five German U-boats left in existence. The German U-boat was a marvel of submarine engineering during the Second World War and was the bane of allied merchant ships for most of the war. The significance of this particular U-boat—U 505— is that it was the first German submarine captured by the Allies and was key to cracking the Enigma code which the Germans used to transmit classified messages relating to
troop movements and fleet locations. It was the cracking of the Enigma code that helped the Allies gain the upper hand on D-Day and ultimately defeat the Axis powers and secure victory in Europe.

While this trip was incredibly exciting and one that I will cherish for the rest of my life, it was not without its hiccups. On the morning we were supposed to leave Chicago and head to Cincinnati our Uber got stuck in traffic and we missed our 7:45am bus. This meant that we were stranded in Chicago which was stressful and caused my companion Megan to freak out a bit. Being someone who usually keeps a level head in these sort of situations I was able to find a bus leaving later that day and reassure Megan that everything would be alright. For the rest of that day we went to the Shedd Aquarium and enjoyed some Chicago style pizza one last time before catching our bus and saying goodbye to the windy city.

Planning the trip and traveling to Chicago without any parental assistance was a milestone for my independence. Over the past four years I have steadily become more independent and self-sufficient. While I wasn’t terribly dependent on my parents during high school, college was a new experience all together. Having the freedom to do whatever I wished whenever I wished required me to mature and gain valuable time management skills. While others were out partying on the weekends I would occasionally have to stay in and work on projects, and study for exams. That isn’t to say that I never went out and socialized, however, I desired to be successful and that required me to allot my time appropriately to insure I completed my work as well as experienced all that the college life has to offer.

After viewing the various artifacts discussed in this essay, the final step is analysis of them as parts of a whole. The final step in the archaeological process is using the data gained during the dig and analyzing the archeological samples or artifacts. This process occurs after the
excavation is finished, “most people do not realize that the time archaeologists actually spend excavating is the least time-consuming aspect of their research. Processing samples and interpreting the data take several times as long as excavation.” (2.11 The Process of Archaeology). Just as in standard archaeology it is not deciding on the artifacts that have impacted me throughout this process that has consumed most of my time. It has been examining what these artifacts mean to me and in my excavation of who I am that is the important and grueling effort that has been tackled. Through the evaluation and exploration of the artifacts I have presented, conclusions can be drawn and the original questions that I asked at the beginning of this cognitive reflection can be answered. My personal archaeological dig has been filled with lessons both from situations I’ve been in and people that I have met and interacted with. All of these things taught me a great deal about who I am and have helped me to uncover things I did not previously know about myself.

At the beginning of my Freshmen year I was a self-confident adolescent who believed he knew everything there was to know about education and that nothing could phase him. Over these past four years I have matured and realized that I do not know everything. I have also come to the realization that more often than not my way is not the best and certainly not the only way to get things done. I have become more in touch with who I am and now have a firmer grasp on why I am the way I am. My time during this archaeological dig (reflection process), has given me the chance to reflect and analyze each of my varied experiences at this dig site (UNCC) and see how I have grown both intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally. I can see that throughout my years at Charlotte that I have been expanding in different areas and ultimately coming back to center, just as Hodder states in his research. Each expansion brings growth and each contraction (moving back to center) brings me a better understanding of self. I realize now that
this is simply the end of the beginning of my life and that there will be many more questions to answer in the future. However, I find pride in knowing that I have for the most part discovered answers to the questions I asked myself at the beginning of this process.

To answer my first question of this reflection, my social and mental development has meant a discovery of new interests and outlets for stress as well as involvement in my community. I have become more familiar with who I am and while there is still much I have yet to learn, my undergraduate career has established a foundation for which to build my life with a firmer grasp on who I am and how I can be an engaged scholar-citizen. Secondly, while I believe that I have matured throughout my time here at Charlotte, I do not see it as a change or metamorphosis. There is no doubt that I am not exactly the same as I was at the beginning of my freshman year; however, I see myself as a further developed puzzle instead of a metamorphosed individual. I have been given the chance to analyze parts of myself such as my inner child and because of this I have a deeper understanding of what this and the artifact that represents it means to me and my development. This was something that I always knew was there but that I had not dug up and examined thoroughly enough to realize its importance. Finally, my time as an undergraduate has prepared me in many ways, both obvious and subtle. Perhaps the most obvious way in which my time at this “dig site” has changed me is through education. Over the past four years I gained an education that I will leverage to obtain a job, this is perhaps the most evident of ways my time at UNC Charlotte has prepared me for what comes next in my life. But more important than even my education is the ways my journey has contributed to me developing a stronger work ethic, positive self-image, confidence, and a love of interdisciplinary learning.
Over these past four years I have developed and matured into a more complete individual. But this is not the end of my story; it is simply the beginning. Over the past few years I have discovered many new things about myself. Throughout this process of self-archaeology I have had to carefully excavate myself in order to learn who I am and find answers to the questions I began asking myself at the beginning of the year. My “self-excavation” has been a turning point in my life and given me the opportunity to gain a more complete understanding of who I am. Armed with this knowledge I now feel that I am capable of looking to the future while remembering what I’ve accomplished thus far. This has given me the confidence and ability to go forth and achieve my goals and reach heights that four years ago I never would have dreamed possible. My story of self-archaeology and the use of this archaeological process is that I have developed further into a scholar-citizen. While I came into college with a disoriented idea of academic achievement, and an undeveloped understanding of citizenship, I now feel better prepared to face the future and whatever it may hold.
Works Cited


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Regards,

-Wesley R. Sites