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I Struggled: Marginalized Students In The Crosswinds Of Academic Probation, Race And Politics

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“I STRUGGLED”: MARGINALIZED STUDENTS IN THE CROSSWINDS OF ACADEMIC PROBATION, RACE, AND POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study sought to understand how African American and Latinx students overcame academic failure to achieve good standing. In this study, Latinx and African American students' academic readiness was a marginal factor in academic success. The following research questions framed the conversation: What are African American and Latinx students' experiences on academic probation? What behavioral characteristics manifest among minoritized students once on academic probation to help them persist towards college graduation? Participants' narratives were filtered through two theoretical lenses, Critical Race (CRT) and LatCrit. CRT and LatCrit theory offered a lens into historical and current perspectives of minoritized student college experiences. Their narratives revealed two key findings. Race and politics impacted three Latinx students' educational journey, silencing two students and putting one at odds with peers. The second finding was students did not seek help. Therefore, university academic support resources went untapped. Regardless, participants obtained good standing.

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CHAPTER 1

CAMPUS ENVIRONMENTS AND ACADEMIC RECOVERY

More than 50 years ago, Black students entered college in record numbers due to the Higher Education Action Act of 1965 (HEA), which promoted equal opportunity and removed institutional access barriers from low-income students (Mumper et al., 2016). This study's analysis reveals college experiences of minoritized students during the 20th and 21st centuries focused on their academic performance and campus environment to understand how African American and Latinx students' behavioral traits influence their transition from academic probation to good academic standing. Narrative inquiry for this study will allow students and the researcher to explore the meaning of academic probation and lived experiences.

In the late 1960s, student activism peaked across the United States by White and Black students for political and social justice. Black students demanded historically White institutions (HWI) recruit more Black students, faculty, and staff and include Black authors and Black existentialism in the curriculum. Students wanted to see themselves reflected in the curriculum, faculty, and key positions on campus. However, college campuses were unprepared socially, politically, or culturally to receive this growing population. Between the 1960s and 1970s, parallel to the Civil Rights Movement, was the Chicana/o Movement, El Movimiento, fighting for social equality and access to quality education for Chicana/o students and restoration of land (Lechuga-Peña & Lechuga, 2018). Mexican American parents of primary and secondary age

students demanded Spanish in schools, the teaching of Mexican American history and culture, and bilingual programs (Spring, 2016). According to Nittle (2021), Mexican Americans proved to be a political force after their political association worked to elect John F. Kennedy president in 1960. President Kennedy's concern for the Mexican American community and their political power fueled the demands for reforms.

More than 60 years later, most college courses and academic programs continue to lack the integration of diversity into required texts or assignments. The academy also lacks a significant increase in domestic faculty of color in pace with the minoritized student growth. Post-secondary institutions face a similar student enrollment increase among Latinx and African American students, projected as the new majority on college campuses. The term Latinx represents "individuals who identify as part of the Latina/o, Latino or Hispanic community and recognizes queerness and gender identity" (Marquéz, 2018, para 5). Shapiro et al. (2016) reported that Black and Latinx college students were less likely than White American and Asian American students to have earned a degree within five years. Racially hostile, unfriendly, and unwelcoming campus environments can interrupt cognitive behaviors and limit meaningful engagement between students of color and fellow students, faculty, and staff (Strayhorn & Johnson, 2014).

Hsieh et al. (2007) learned the way students faced academic challenges and viewed themselves significantly influenced their academic success. A student's motivation and goal orientation were the strongest predictors of student success. Despite the low attainment gap and the empirical research that characterizes college environments as unwelcome and unprepared for African American and Latinx students, percentages of them persist and graduate from college. The Indiana Commission for Higher Education college completion report for 2019 discovered

Indiana's on-time graduation rates for Black students was 20.7% and for Hispanic students was 33.5%. The six-year completion rates were higher at 34.8% for Blacks and 57% for Hispanics (Indiana Commission for Higher Education, 2019). According to the National Student Clearinghouse report compiled by Shapiro et al. (2018), the national average completion rate for Black and Latinx students within six years was at 41% and 49.6%, respectively, while White students completed at 69%.

These studies signal a possible relationship between behavioral characteristics, engagement, and academic success. These characteristics possibly influenced students' efforts to persist through academic challenges during their social college experiences. Additionally, Schreiner (2017) recognized that students of color and those from under-resourced school systems have more difficulties in higher education. She explained that their peers from systematic privilege, White students, were afforded the advantage of resource-rich environments and supportive networks that can help sustain their persistence over a long period.

Vincent Tinto (2017), a leading researcher on the student departure phenomenon, studied 660,000 people who started college but are not currently enrolled. He reflected on student persistence and provided this thought, "Persistence is another way of speaking of motivation" (Tinto, 2017, p. 2). In a parallel opinion, Muenks et al. (2018) correlated motivation to passion and persistence to perseverance. In an interview with Teresa Spann (1990), Tinto shared four of nine events or forces that affected students' decision to leave college: uncertainty, commitment, and match or fit. These four forces are connected to students' passion, perseverance, self-efficacy, consciousness, and support networks. As students encounter academic failure, they leave college because they lack focus and lose passion and consciousness of their purpose. A student's commitment might drive them to enroll in college, but depending on experiences on or

off the campus, “particularly during the first year [these experiences] may pull them away from the institution” (Spann & Tinto, 1990, p. 19). Tinto and Spann’s research suggests that purpose, passion, commitment, and self-awareness drives persistence through academic recovery.

Tinto (2017) challenged universities to understand underrepresented students’ experiences and perceptions, especially from low socio-economic backgrounds. Tinto challenged institutional action to reflect on persistence from students’ lens and actively engage with them as partners. Jones (2013) believed that Tinto’s research uniquely identified faculty members as “principal agents of institutional action whose classroom experiences shape and influence students’ perceptions and interactions with their campus environment, and their decision to stay or leave” (p. 423). Faculty and administrators are important institutional actors in developing a student’s connection to college and persistence.

Background Information

This section explores why students of color may encounter academic challenges by including recent survey data about race relations in the United States and minoritized students’ persistence. According to research, race-related experiences internal and external to the institution influence students’ academic performance. Negative interactions with faculty and the transition to college can cause some students to struggle academically. However, researchers have identified behavioral characteristics that students of color imitate or develop to overcome academic challenges. The topic of race relations in this study incorporates a narrow historical review of race relations on college campuses. Tenets of critical race theory and LatCrit theory apply theoretical lenses for understanding minoritized experiences on a college campus in a highly charged political and social environment. This study will examine the interaction between

behavioral characteristics and academic standings among minoritized students. To begin, we examine aspects associated with academic probation.

Academic Probation

Typically, first-generation students enter the first critical year of college lacking the knowledge of collegiate academic rigor, university systems, institutional literacy, and how to self-monitor independence (White & Ali-Khan, 2013). Some enter college from under-resourced school districts with underperforming schools that did not adequately prepare students for college. As a result, students could move from fully qualified admission to academic probation within their first year in college. A college or university places students on academic probation when they fail to meet the minimum academic standards for their program or cumulative grade point average. When students unsuccessfully complete a semester, they must navigate campus environments and academic pressures while persisting toward degree completion. Empirical investigations revealed that students display interpersonal skills and intrapersonal characteristics to overcome academic obstacles. Researchers identified purposeful institutional structures and support from family, friends, and faculty as providing emotional support and strategies to improve academic performance (Hwang et al., 2014; Museus et al., 2008; Patton et al., 2019; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007; Thomas et al., 2007; Umbach, 2006; Weinberg, 2008; Williamson et al., 2014). Next, the impact of race relations on student persistence is examined.

Race Relations

A Pew Research Study conducted by Parker (2019) of 6,637 adults via an online survey in 2019 revealed the most recent climate of race relations in America among Blacks, Hispanics, and White adults. The study measured the experiences of racial and ethnic discrimination. Black adults surveyed had negative views of the country's racial progress; 78% believed White adults

made minimal effort to ensure equal rights. Regardless of race or ethnicity, "Americans see disadvantages for Blacks and Hispanics in the United States. Most adults (56%) say being Black hurts people's ability to get ahead at least a little, and 51% say the same about being Hispanic" (Horowitz et al., 2019, para 4). Regarding experiences of discrimination based on race or ethnicity, 76% of Blacks and Asians and 58% of Hispanics responded yes to being unfairly treated. Utilizing a modified version of the Masse-Martin scale, which measured skin color, Blacks and Hispanics with darker skin tones reported experiences with racial discrimination more frequently.

Many scholars and students of color believed that college standardized test entrance exams were a discrimination tool in the education arena. National discussions past and present focused on college entrance exams' power to exclude already oppressed racial groups from participating in higher education by requiring high test scores for admission. The standardized aptitude test intended to determine college preparedness and intelligence. However, the use of the test perpetuated the degree attainment gap. A look at the college admission process and the recent scandal where rich and famous White families leveraged wealth and privilege to gain admission into elite schools called to attention the racial inequities present in the educational system (Belkin, 2019). These White and wealthy high school students cheated on the SAT and ACT standardized tests utilized for college entrance and gained entry to college and universities.

Unfortunately, some families from the top 10% continue to use their wealth to game the system. Belkin (2019) reported that suburban families in Chicago transferred guardianship to avoid reporting their income in an attempt to qualify for federal, state, and college-administered grants. Parker (2019) found that the "public (73%) is not in favor of race-conscious admissions" (para 16). However, a federal judge ruled in favor of Harvard's admissions practice to consider

race. Students for Fair Admissions, the anti-affirmative action group, sued Harvard in 2014 for denying Asian Americans college admission based on race. In 2014, John Hopkins ended legacy admissions: preference given to an application from an alumni's relative who typically was wealthy and White. The university acknowledged that doing so impaired their ability to educate qualified and promising students from all backgrounds. By 2019, Ronald J. Daniels, president of Johns Hopkins University, reduced the number of legacy students from 12.5% to 3.5% (Daniels, 2020). Regardless of the institution type, access, as intended by the Higher Education Act of 1965, provides students of color the opportunity for benefits resulting from higher education access, one being social mobility. In turn, minoritized students' participation in higher education allows White faculty and students to gain greater knowledge and perspectives different from their own. This cultural exchange is essential and contributes to the campus climate found at higher education institutions, discussed below.

Campus Climate

According to research findings, a welcoming environment acclimates students to the campus and promotes academic success (Fischer, 2007; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Museus et al., 2008; Turner, 1994). Racially hostile, unfriendly, and unwelcoming campus environments can interrupt cognitive behaviors and limit meaningful engagement between students of color and fellow students, faculty, and staff (Strayhorn, 2008b). Students encounter four interactions in an academic setting: bureaucratic, educational, social, and external interactions (Bean, 2005). According to Cabrera et al. (1999), Black students' academic failure often links to not being socially integrated into the setting on predominately White institutions (PWI). Turner's (1994) qualitative study depicted how students of color attending a PWI use a "guest" metaphor to describe their connection to the campus environment. Lee Daniels, a participant in the study,

described a “guest” as “someone who can never relax and put their feet up on the table” (Turner, 1994, p. 356). An environment in which a guest engages most often may lack a direct social, physical, or tangible connection.

Furthermore, Fries-Britt and Turner (2002) attempted to understand the challenges and support of students’ persistence at traditionally White institutions (TWI) using a focus group. Two themes evolved from their study: the first social and emotional experiences of students on both campuses depended on support and campus involvement; the second, students linked their high or low energy level of confidence towards their studies. Students who attended a TWI noted the contrast in engagement between students and campus culture. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) created a family culture. In contrast, students at the TWI did not seem to know each other (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002).

Moreover, Latinx students at PWIs and TWIs struggled to feel a sense of belonging. A sense of belonging was defined by Rodgers and Summers (2008) as “feelings of membership in the broader community which is an essential piece of the overall attitude students develop about their college or university” (p. 176). Strayhorn (2008b) studied the relationship between Latinx students’ academic and social involvement and their sense of belonging on a college campus. His quantitive study showed 11% of Latinx students’ belonging correlated with grades, time spent studying, and interactions with diverse peers. Similarly, Nora and Crisp’s (2009) study found that Latinx students’ decision to remain enrolled was less about their college social experiences. More important was the size of the Latino population and positive interactions with faculty.

Black students’ retention on PWIs has been historically lower than those who attend HBCUs (Allen, 1992). Seifert et al. (2006) suggested that one contributing factor to completion rates is the institution type. Their research indicated that students at HBCUs experienced

significant student-faculty contact and received more feedback on class performance than peers at research universities. At research universities, students reported lower levels of interaction with faculty. Seifert et al. further concluded that regional institutions seemed less intentional in their role in developing the learning environment than HBCUs. Liberal arts colleges seemed purposefully focused on student learning.

Additionally, Stevens et al. (2018) examined the effect of discrimination on students of color and segmented Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). The researchers reviewed 69,722 undergraduates' responses to the American Health Association national survey data on college students' health and health-related behaviors. They found that while minoritized students attending MSIs experienced less discrimination, this did not lessen the negative impact on their academic performance. In an effort to further understand academic performance, the following section will discuss faculty-student interaction.

Faculty-Student Interaction

Creating a sense of belonging involves many campus partners. Faculty are uniquely positioned within the institution to bridge the classroom and the campus community. Faculty members might influence the persistence or attrition of college students. The number of interactions with academic and social environments directly impacted students' sense of belonging, which affected their persistence or drop-out (Tinto, 1994). Lundberg and Schreiner's (2004) quantitative study using the 4th edition of the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) found the frequency of interaction and quality of relationships between faculty and underserved populations the strongest predictor of learning.

The quality of White or Black faculty relationships with African American or Latino students influenced retention positively or negatively (Neville & Parker, 2017; Strayhorn &

Johnson, 2014; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007). Pérez (2017) argued that the teacher-student relationship and collaboration inside and outside the classroom rises and falls based on these interactions. In Pérez's (2017) study of 21 Latino males, less than one-quarter of the participants had meaningful connections with faculty and administrators on campus. They commented on the lack of support from faculty in reaching their academic goals. McDougal et al. (2018) identified factors influencing student engagement and academic success among African American and African students. Slightly less than half of the 41 participants described interaction with faculty as unsupportive, unwelcome, mistreated, and misunderstood. These experiences made them feel uncomfortable approaching their professor.

According to Neville and Parker (2017), Black faculty at Black and White institutions seemed to care more about student success authentically and academic achievement than White faculty, who seemed disengaged or insensitive. Komarraju et al. (2010) examined seven specific types of student-faculty interactions. The list of impactful interactions included informal and formal, tutorial-style classroom, functional interactions, personal interactions, incidental contact, and disengagement. Frequent communication and interaction between faculty and students outside the classroom seemed to increase students' academic self-confidence and retention. Black students attending HBCUs described Black faculty as caring and doing things such as being available during scheduled times, introducing students to other faculty members, and providing students access to internships or lab space (McCoy et al., 2017). Jussim and Eccles (1992) found that students who were less participatory in their education perceived faculty as ignoring them, treating them stereotypically, and being impatient with their responses. Given these perceptions and concerns, it is essential to understand the faculty of color's role in contributing to Black and Latinx students' persistence. The following section addresses research

associated with faculty of color.

Faculty of Color

Research by Kelly et al. (2017) described the antecedents of campus protests by students as Black faculty's unrest on PWI campuses. Black faculty leaving an institution "is what students at institutions such as the University of Missouri experienced as one instance of unrest and a culture of racism on a college campus" (Kelly et al., 2017, p. 309). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020a), in the fall of 2018, there were 1.5 million faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions. Faculty of color comprised 25% of the full-time faculty positions, including Asian American, African-American, Hispanic, American Indian, and bi-racial populations. Regarding academic rank, 47% of faculty of color hold the rank of full professor.

In comparison, 60% represent the associate level and 66% at the assistant level 47%. Antonio (2002) found that minoritized faculty hold an assistant professor's status than any other level. Hence, 16 years later, this fact continued to hold constant. In addition to a full teaching load, some Black faculty hold positions as mentors, teach diversity classes, and advocate for students (Griffin, 2013; Umbach, 2006). Faculty members of color bring a value orientation and philosophy to the academy (Antonio, 2002). Ford (2011) hoped that Black faculty members' position in the classroom supports White students' resistance to the narrative of Whiteness and maleness as the institutional norm within the academy. The academy can be a place of social change for all students. Black faculty at both HBCUs and PWIs seemed to care authentically about student success and academic achievement and engage students in collaborative learning techniques, which increases student interactions with diversity and retention (Turner, 1994; Umbach, 2006).

African American students acknowledge Black faculty as their "biggest source of support" and the lack of them to be a source of their inability to feel comfortable on college campuses (McDougal et al., 2018, p. 204). The presence of Black faculty in the classroom makes students more "comfortable discussing Black experience because it is easier to relate to them" (McDougal et al., 2018, p. 204). The third and fourth themes of Pérez's (2017) study on Latino students identified faculty and administrative influence on their academic determination. Two Latino participants established a mentor relationship with an administrator of color within the McNair Scholars Program or Upward Bound Program, encouraging them to match efforts to educational goals, meaning to "participate in educationally purposeful activities" (Pérez, 2017, p. 132). The McNair Scholars Program and the Upward Bound Program are initiatives to support minoritized student populations on college campuses. The succeeding section will address diversity initiatives implemented to support students of color.

Diversity Initiatives

In an effort to address student demands, past and present university leadership addressed student demands of the 1960s into the 21st century by focusing on the creation of minority affairs offices, culture centers, and higher ratios of faculty, staff, and leadership positions going to individuals of color (Patton et al., 2019). In Patton's (2006) groundbreaking study of cultural centers, students reflected on the importance of these spaces on campus. Solórzano et al. (2000) defined counterspaces as a place situated outside of mainstream educational spaces for diverse ethnic students to provide emotionally safe spaces, allow students to discuss their concerns, frustrations, and seek counsel. Patton (2006) stated that cultural centers' location and condition reflect PWIs' commitment to improving campus climates and inclusivity. Lozano (2010) conducted a study on culture centers for Chicano students. Culture centers are dedicated areas on

campus, besides the Chicano classroom, to explore a holistic learning experience and engage in activities from social justice, academic mentoring and support, leadership development, and more. Like Latino students, Black students experienced similar benefits of a Black Cultural Center's support and presentation of their heritage history. This safe place provided some students with a sense of home (Patton, 2006).

Schlossberg's (2011) transition theory serves as the conceptual framework for this study. The tenets of critical race theory (CRT) and Latino critical theory (LatCrit) serve as theoretical lenses to analyze stories shared by minoritized students. These multilayered research ideologies, narrative inquiry, and CRT can provide insight into how students respond to adversity, academic failure, and resource utilization. According to Schlossberg's transition theory, four critical factors impact the transition from an event, planned or unplanned, the situation, self, support, and strategy. Therefore, using Schlossberg's theory as a framework positions the academic difficulty as the situation, students' characteristics of the individual as the self factor, institutional and non-institutional structures as support, and actual application of the resources as the strategy. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) recognized the inspiration of critical race theory to "legal studies and radical feminism and philosophers and theorists such as Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida" and radical figures such "Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglas, W. E. B. DuBois, and Cesar Chavez" (p. 5). Scholars of CRT attempted to identify educational barriers for students of color and how they resisted and overcame them (Taylor, 2016).

Along with the psychological impact narratives of race relations under which students navigate academic challenges, the research findings will serve as counter-storytelling to help educators and administrators better understand and make institutional changes to understand

better the experiences and success of students of color. Therefore, this research uses CRT and LatCrit to provide the context of the relationship between race and college degree attainment.

Statement of the Problem

The academy's future challenges will come from declining European American high school students, minoritized students' academic preparedness, and Black and Latinx students' degree attainment gap. A fourth factor: the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas declared that the DACA policy was illegal (*State of Texas et al., v. United States of America*, *et al*., 2021). This decision minimized the impacted undocumented high school students' opportunities to attend college. Undocumented students were allowed to pursue an education under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Without access to permanent citizenship, students are not eligible for state funding or state tuition to attend public universities. However, the latest high school statistics reveal that the United States expects to face a period of limited growth in the overall number of high school graduates. The potential trend is fueled by a decline in European American graduates and an increase in Latinx and Asian/Pacific Islander graduates (Bransberger & Michelau, 2016). The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center Report calculated the six-year college completion rate of Black and Latinx students at 20% percentage points lower than White students (Shapiro et al., 2016). Low graduation rates of the predicted new majority-minoritized students in tandem with the decline expected among White high school graduates may negatively impact the financial state of higher education in the United States. Colleges and universities need to consider seriously the plethora of research about retaining students of color and identify practical and viable solutions for the specific institution types.

Furthermore, the signature report published by the National Student Clearinghouse found the six-year graduation rates for Black and Latinx students in the 2010 Cohort, on average, were 10% lower than the national average of 62.4% (Shapiro et al., 2016). Black students had the lowest completion rate at 49.5%, and Latinx students at 55%. Black men's completion rate was 40%. In their projection of education report, Hussar and Bailey (2016) predicted an increase in Black and Latinx students by 28% and 25% between 2013 and 2024, respectively.

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), which includes 15 Western states and members of the U.S. Pacific territories, facilitates resource sharing among the West's higher education system. In addition to monitoring resource sharing, the commission produces high school graduation reports. For 40 years, WICHE has created "Knocking at the College Door," a report which projects the number of high school graduates for the nation, geographical regions, and states (Bransberger et al., 2020; Bransberger & Michelau, 2016). This report contributed to the national conversation of the future enrollment decline and shift in the ethnic demographics of high school graduates. The 9th edition of the WICHE study examined the academic years 2000-01 through 2031-32. The researchers hypothesized that the number of high school graduates will be volatile by 2031. They projected a nine percent decline by 2031, equating to 3.25 million students compared to the peak in 2013 of 3.47 million (Bransberger & Michelau, 2016).

According to the WICHE report produced by Bransberger and Michelau (2016), between 2018 and 2030, the projected increase in the number of non-White public high school graduates, primarily Latinx and Asian/Pacific Islanders, could replace the decline of White high school graduates. The newest report, the 10th edition, confirmed a fewer annual number of high school graduates between 2026-2037. However, compared to the 9th edition, the expected number of

students of color graduating will be higher than projected in 2025 by 10%. Regardless of the increase in Hispanic and multiracial high school graduates, the Great Recession between 2007–2009, low birth rates drive future declines. According to Bransberger et al. (2020) in the 10th edition report, by the class of 2036, 57% of U.S. public high school graduates will be students of color. Hispanic high school students will increase by 19% in the Class of 2026, then at least 9% in the Class of 2036. The most recent report indicated a 0.4% increase in Black high school graduates in the Class of 2025, but 8% fewer by the Class of 2036. White high school graduates began declining with the Class of 2008 from 1.9 million to 1.7 million by 2019. By the Class of 2036, there will be about 300,000 fewer graduates meaning about 19%.

With the increasing number of Black, Hispanic, and multiracial groups in the total graduation population, Bransberger et al. (2020) believed:

> Higher education does not need more arguments for addressing the glaring inequities among how it serves students of color (other than it being a clear moral imperative), but these data underscore the fact that the traditional-aged student body of the future will continue to have a larger proportion of students from diverse backgrounds. (p.1)

Comprehending college persistence among these two dominant minoritized groups of students is crucial to the academy's vitality. The college attainment gap between White, Black, and Latinx students will transition from a concern to a national crisis with the current graduation trajectory for minoritized students and White high school graduates' decline.

The 2020 U.S. Census portrayed the population as more multiethnic than in 2010 because of the 276% increase in the multiracial racial population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). The increase occurred because the Census enabled individuals to self-identify more accurately. The

Latinx population has grown 23% since 2010. The local statistics in Indiana resemble national population reports with an increase in Latinx and Black individuals. Unfortunately, racial and ethnic educational gaps remained for 2017 Indiana high school graduates (Indiana Commission for Higher Education, 2019). The Education Trust group rated Indiana a D score for its Black-White degree attainment, and Latino-White fared slightly better with a C grade. They compared Indiana to other states with more than 15,000 Black residents (Nichols & Schak, 2019). The Latino-White attainment fared slightly better with a grade of C-. The Indiana Commission for Higher Education Complete College reported that more Hoosiers are graduating from college. There was "an increase of 4.8 percentage points in five years and 2.6 percentage points in one year" (Indiana Commission for Higher Education, 2019, p. 29). The college completion rate for students, regardless of race, completing at the same campus and degree level equals 40.6% for on-time and 61.8% within six years at any university. Black students complete at 20.7%, and 33.5% of Hispanic/Latino students complete on time at the same college and degree level at 34.8% and 57% respectively within six years at any campus (Indiana Commission for Higher Education, 2019). Academic leaders should be encouraged to develop strategic gap reduction plans presented due to research regarding the low graduation rate of minoritized students, the enrollment projections by race/ethnicity, the degree completion rate, and race relations in 2019 (Horowitz et al., 2019; Hussar & Bailey, 2016; Shapiro et al. 2016). Enrollment predictions and graduation statistics underscore colleges and universities' need to strategize directly on students' persistence to graduation.

Purpose of the Study

This research aims to understand minoritized students' non-cognitive skills applied and their transition from academic probation to good academic standing. This research will

supplement the gap in the existing literature on the retention of minoritized students by studying students once on academic probation at a four-year, public, regional university. Studying minoritized students' coping strengths and techniques who experienced an educational setback may inform institutional leaders of possible motivation variables. These variables could influence students from diverse backgrounds to persist to graduation.

Significance of the Study

The era of Donald J. Trump's presidency, coupled with openly hostile racial discourse in higher education, makes a case for further studying minoritized students' lived experiences on college campuses (Mwangi, 2018). The election of the United States 45th President heightened activism across the nation due to his disrespectful, racially divisive, dehumanizing rhetoric, and campaign promise to build a wall between Mexico and the United States. Numerous news cycles provide accounts of White people emboldened to express and verbalize their oppressive beliefs, echoing chants to build the wall, on college campuses, and at a high school football game. When students bring their social and racial ideologies to the college campus, the line between the racial climate in the United States becomes blurred (Mwangi, 2018). According to Pew Research Center researchers, "about six-in-ten Americans (58%) say race relations are bad, and 56% think the president [Donald J. Trump, Sr.] has made race relations worse" (Horowitz et al., para 2, 2019). Regardless of the racial or ethnic group, 65% of Americans agree that it seems more common for people to express racist or racially insensitive views (Horowitz et al., 2019). Horowitz et al. (2019) found that Blacks and Hispanics' discrimination experiences ranged from being mistreated, people seemed suspicious of them, thought of as not competent, or subjects of slurs and jokes.

There are three significant reasons for studying minoritized students' college experiences and behavioral characteristics—first, the low college graduation rates among the future majority of students on college campuses: ethnic minority students. Second, the racial climate, resurgence, and proliferation of racial incidents on college campuses and Americans' negative views of race relations. Third, the stabilization or growth of the future economy needs students of color to earn post-secondary credentials. These three issues signal a need to be placed at the forefront of the educational agenda. In particular, we need to understand how some students persist in institutional climate factors and overcome academic probation. This study will attempt to bridge historical perspectives and recent events to continue the exploration and dialogue involving the expectations and experiences of students of color on college campuses. Regardless of politics, comprehending college experiences among African American and Latinx groups of students is crucial to the academy and the United States' economic vitality.

Important Definitions

In this study, terms related to race and ethnicity are intentionally, interchangeably, and respectfully utilized to be consistent with the researcher's study designation mentioned in the literature review. However, this section provides cultural meanings for African American, Black, Chicano, Chicana, Hispanic, Latina/o, Latinx, and Mexican American terms used in this research and how higher education utilizes them. Race and ethnic identity terms can be confusing and changeable over time. According to the American Psychological Association (2020), terms vary due to personal preferences, datedness, and negative connotations. The association recommends that researchers use designations preferred by participants.

Terms within this paper reflect a participant's ethnicity and shared cultural characteristics. The term African American in this research acknowledges the origin of the

people of Africa and their history on the American continent. The term Black is more inclusive of the collective experiences of cultures from Africa and the Caribbean (Simms, 2018). Interchangeable and acceptable are African American and Black, terms which are appropriate and current in higher education research. One set of terms that have evolved rapidly, especially recently, is the designation of people within Hispanic or Latin cultural groups: hence, terms such as Chicano, Chicana, Chicana/o, Hispanic, Latina/o, Latinx, and Mexican American. Regardless of gender, using one term seems inappropriate and potentially problematic due to the cultural differences between the groups. According to Spring (2016), the use of the word "Latin" by Francisco Bilbao in 1585 to distinguish between Americans "broke the connection with Spain" (p. 87). Therefore, instead of people associated with Spain, Spanish Americans were called Latin Americans. During the early nineteenth century, the term Hispanic "encompassed people living in areas not under the control of the United States or Canada" (Spring, 2016, p. 87).

The term Latin allowed for the inclusion of all Latin-based languages. The term Chicano rose from the Chicano Movement by Mexican Americans who lived primarily in the United States' western and southern regions. The term Latinx appeared in research journals around 2015 as a gender-inclusive gesture and is socially acceptable in educational research. Therefore, this study uses Latinx not only as gender-inclusive but as a "placeholder to describe those that identify as part of the Latina/o, Latino or Hispanic community" (Marquéz, 2018, para 5). There are two reasons for using any of the terms Chicano, Chicana, Chicana/o, Hispanic, Latina/o, Latinx, and Mexican Americans. First, the literature review section acknowledges the author's original language. Second, culture plays a vital role in students' college experiences and academic achievement (Ojeda et al., 2014; Ortiz, 2012).

Summary

The current political and racial climate and degree attainment gap in the 21st century appear to mirror the landscape of education 60 years ago. While acknowledging the minoritized students who leave college, recognizing students' persistence strategies to the next academic level seems equally important. Many students of color who embark on the college journey have disadvantaged characteristics, such as low-socioeconomic status, first-generation, low-performing high schools, and less ethnically diverse college environments than their high school experiences. Coupled with a lack of social capital, disadvantaging characteristics could hinder a student's ability to transition and be successful in a college setting regardless of size and location. During the past five decades, quantitative and qualitative research identified campus experiences that hindered college persistence. The majority of research about the experiences of students of color is predicated on academic experiences and cognitive data. Research has branched into qualitative studies emphasizing storytelling and counterstories. My study will provide specific insights into success and persistence among Black and Latinx students. While the retention and graduation percentages of students of color drastically differ from their White counterparts, there are successful Black and Latinx graduates.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized around five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the study and presents the problem, purpose statement, and research questions. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature surrounding the campus environment, faculty-student interaction, and self-efficacy. Chapter 3 describes the methods, procedures for collecting and analyzing data. Chapter 4 describes the results of the study. Chapter 5 discusses the finding through the theoretical lens of Schlossberg's Transition theory, Critical Race, and LatCrit theories. The study concludes in Chapter 6 with a

reflection on implications for entities within higher education and recommendations for future research related to minoritized students on academic probation.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review merges empirical qualitative and quantitative studies of minoritized students' collegiate experiences on historically White institutions (HWI) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Three common topics have typically been addressed: campus environment, faculty-student interactions, and self-efficacy. A surge of researchers considered non-cognitive factors such as motivation, grit, consciousness, self-awareness, and support networks that enabled students to persist and navigate their transition from collegiate level course work to graduation. The discussion of theoretical frameworks includes Schlossberg's transition theory, critical race theory, and LatCrit theory.

Academic Probation

Colleges and universities' leading challenge is student retention. According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2017), within the first-year persistence and retention rates for the Fall 2015 cohort, 66.9% of Black students had the lowest persistence rate, compared to 72.5% in Hispanics and 79.2% in White students. Several qualitative research studies have suggested that some students of color struggle academically due to non-academic factors such as hostile institutional climate, feelings of isolation, upsetting racial incidents, and discouraging interactions with professors and classmates (Arcand & LeBlanc, 2012; Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Thomas et al., 2007; White & Ali-Khan, 2013). For example, Hernández and

Villoda's (2019) analysis of 681 Latinx undergraduates found that racial microaggression experiences and forbearance coping, meaning to conceal the experience, lowered the students' college persistence attitudes. However, students that sought social support against microaggression committed to finishing college. Stevens et al. (2018) compared the impact of discrimination on academic performance by ethnicity qualitatively. They found that Latinx students reported discriminatory experiences more frequently than African Americans. Higher rates of perceived discriminatory experiences contributed to lower grades on either the exam or course for both ethnic groups.

Academic probation can result from a lack of academic preparedness, off-campus commitments to employment and family, or navigating an unfamiliar academic culture. Murphy and Murphy (2018) attributed Latinx students' academic struggle to "being first-generation, financially independent, working 30 hours per week or more, having dependent children, and being a single parent" (p. 6). White and Ali-Khan (2013) conducted a two-year case study of four first-generation freshmen minority students on academic probation. These students had grade point averages below 2.0 after the first semester. The researchers attributed students' struggle to a "lack of academic preparation, cultural incongruence, and isolation within the predominately White university" (White and Ali-Khan, 2013, p. 27).

Additionally, a study of Mexican Americans found that individuals who had higher cultural adaptation to White Americans and at the same time higher enculturation with Mexican American culture had higher college persistence (Ojeda et al., 2014). Ojeda et al. (2014) defined enculturation as "socialization to and maintenance of heritage culture and norms and acculturation as the adaptation to the norms and values of a new or institutional culture" (p. 5).

Lower persistence seemed to occur when students were distanced from traditional Mexican values (Moní et al., 2018; Murphy & Murphy, 2018; Ojeda et al., 2014; Strayhorn, 2008b).

Aguinaga and Gloria (2015) conducted a quantitative study of Latinx students. They also found that first-generation students' cultural values were more a predictor of persistence. However, for second-generation Latinx students, the university context was a predictor of success.

> First-generation students may focus more intently on how and who they are within the context of familial expectations about value traditionality (i.e., enculturation). In contrast, second-generation plus students may have a broader range of cultural expectations from family and subsequently may be more apt to contend with and/or adopt the values of the university context (i.e., acculturation). (Aguinaga & Gloria, 2015, p. 24)

Hence, the research shows a significant influence of culture and family on academic success, which seems to support students as they navigate the lack of sense of belonging on campus. The emotional stress of academic failure and self-perception seems to slow academic recovery for first-generation students.

Moreover, five themes evolved from a qualitative study by Thomas et al. (2007) of 22 Black first-year students and sophomores on academic probation: (1) experienced the probation as a rude awakening, (2) they needed to feel cared about, (3) wanted creative and relevant pedagogy, (4) needed to actualize autonomy, responsibility, personal efficacy, and (5) preferred not to be judged by their Blackness. Hsieh et al. (2007) examined students' self-efficacy and goal orientation. They learned that the way students faced academic challenges and viewed themselves significantly influenced their academic success. A student's motivation and goal

orientation were the strongest predictors of student success. Watson and Watson (2016) found that Latinx students overcame unpreparedness for postsecondary academic work because of their strong efficacy beliefs. Their strength gave them a higher stress threshold.

A case study of Gloria, a 19-year-old Latina community college study who resides in a "tough neighborhood," happens to describe my proposal's future research site. Gloria shared her life experiences that negatively affected her academics (Navarro, 2012). She worked part-time to help her ill mother, had unsupportive friends, a brother arrested for a street fight, and was herself underprepared for college. Gloria did not have friends on campus, which disconnected her and contributed to a lack of confidence and motivation. For some minoritized students, the need to help the family with financial obligations takes precedence over studying, contributing to academic failure. As the student population shifts to more ethnically diverse and from under-resourced communities, students may "lack the academic confidence and interpersonal skills that success requires. They may not understand the social and cultural norms of academic life" (Navarro, 2012, p. 43).

Hwang et al. (2014) uncovered four broad themes in a study of nine ethnically diverse college students who overcame academic probation. They learned "underachieving students are better able to cope with and overcome academic difficulties when they set clear career goals, use effective learning strategies, consciously put forth more effort, and receive external support" (Hwang et al., 2014, p. 81). Overcoming academic probation for students of color is achievable when institutional support and students' self-efficacy, perseverance, and focus on the goal intertwine. Barouch-Gilbert (2016) studied 14 Dominican Republic students' perspectives and experiences when classified as being on academic probation. More than one participant

expressed feeling mediocre and not belonging in college. Students were concerned about how others viewed them, which caused negative emotions about themselves.

Campus Environment

Research has also been done on campus environment's effect on students' ability to focus on academic course work. Within this section, a brief historical narrative shows student protest progression and the racial activities on college campuses for the past 60 years following the Student Activist Movement in the late 1960s. It goes without saying that political and racial climates within the United States impact the campus environment. Any reference to a campus environment includes the campus climate, demographic composition of faculty and staff, and student peer interaction. All of these contribute to the psychological context of the student experience.

Campus Climate

According to Franklin (2003), "student activism traces back to the 1920s which paved the way for larger reforms in the organizational structures and administrative practices in black higher education" (p. 105). Black student protests caught the nation's attention between 1965-69, occurring in predominately White institutions (PWIs). During the mid-1960s, the term black power was introduced to the national consciousness and college campuses and emboldened Black student activists (Hughes-Watkins, 2014). Black student union groups formed across America as "pressure groups to pursue a wide range of alterations meant to transform higher education" (Hughes-Watkins, 2014, p. 30). Between 1967-69, Black student demands of colleges and universities ranged from curricular changes, cultural sensitivity, culture centers, and the hiring of additional Black faculty and staff (Franklin, 2003). College and university presidents from southern states and West to East Coast received written demand letters from Black

students. Between the 1980s and 1990s, student activism seemed to combat more conservatively the same issues of the Civil Rights Movement and Black Campus Movements of the 1960s with few national headlines. According to Franklin, students' activities for social and educational changes included actions such as nonviolent sit-ins, strikes, marches, and boycotts.

Black Lives Matter and Student Activism

The early-21st century Black Lives Matter movement inspired and rekindled Black student activism for racial and educational justice in higher education (Anderson, 2015). Members of the Black Lives Matter Movement marched and protested against social and racial inequalities in America and the killings of unarmed Black men. Kendi (2015) believed that students' apathetic engagement levels do not compare to students 40 years ago because of the cultural difference between the two generations. The dominant theme of Black student activism in 1980 was inclusion, a sense of belonging, and social integration on campus and in the classroom.

During the past five years, notable student protests have taken place on the campus of the University of Missouri (UM) by the student group "Concerned Student 1950" (Trachtenberg, 2018). The student group name refers to the year the University of Missouri admitted Black students. Trachtenberg (2018) recounted Black students demanding the President and senior leadership remark on the campus's racial climate. Black students reported that White students scattered cotton balls outside the campus Black Cultural Center. In September 2014, the Missouri Students Association president, Payton Head, had racial slurs taunted at him from someone driving by in a pick-up truck. A week after the incident, President Tim Wolfe nor university officials responded to the students' reports. Therefore, students protested the university's "White silence" (Trachtenberg, 2018, p. 12). On October 20, 2015, the Concerned

Student 1950 group issued a list of demands, including President Wolfe's immediate removal. In addition to a student's hunger strike, the UM Black football players did not participate in any football-related activities until President Tim Wolfe resigned or was removed (Trachtenberg, 2018). UM's problems were and are not unique; other universities such as Yale University, University of Kansas, Emory University, and UC Berkeley experienced similar Black student demands.

Shortly after the University of Missouri's president's resignation, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* published 16 universities' names where student-protest movements occurred across America (Thomason, 2015). Among the institutions named were Purdue University, Ithaca College, Amherst College, Guildford College, Claremont McKenna College, John Hopkins, Northwestern University, Georgetown University, Emory University, Virginia Commonwealth University, Harvard Law School, and Wright State University. In addition to MU's historical event, Black students across the country rallied, protested, and made demands of their institutions between 2015 and 2018 (Kingkade, 2015; Mangan, 2015; Song, 2015; Stripling, 2017; Thomason, 2015; Whitford, 2018). The University of California Black students demanded the university disinvest $30 million from a private prison (Song, 2015). University of Alabama's Black students demanded to end the secret societies such as Theta Nu Epsilon's, which historically influenced Student Government Association voting and campus elections (Kingkade, 2015). Cole and Harper (2017) analyzed 18 statements issued by college presidents about racial incidents after receiving negative publicity. While executive leadership broadly addressed the racist incidents, statements lacked acknowledging historical, systemic, and pervasive racism on campus that fueled these events.

Donald Trump's presidential announcement on June 16, 2015, ushered in five years of racial divide and unleashed racial tension within White Americans. Ethnic groups impacted by this tension were African Americans, Mexicans, Hispanics, Latinx, Muslim Americans, and non-citizens. This conflict pivoted Americans, including students on college campuses, back to the era of protest and demands. A campaign rally for candidate Donald Trump took place at a large PWI in the western United States, Califax College (pseudonym) (Logan et al., 2017). African American and Latinx students commented that his remarks were "racist and believed his visit added to the campus hostility" (Logan et al., 2017, p. 263). Two minoritized students believed "the racism and fear that Trump's election symbolized warranted the need for front line activism" (p. 263). Shortly after Donald Trump's presidential win, African American and Latinx students engaged in marches or demonstrations to respond to his election.

On August 11, 2017, the White supremacist rally on the University of Virginia's campus engendered a national, racial debate and conversation. African Americans and fellow European Americans across the United States were shocked, devastated, angry, and perplexed that in 2017 hundreds of White men were carrying tiki torches across the University of Virginia's lawn (Stripling, 2017). The nation dialogued and debated race, oppression, interpretations of the event, access rights of public spaces on college campuses, and free speech. The Charlottesville event motivated Black students at PWIs with ties to slavery to organize and demand the removal of Confederate monuments from public places on campus. Two days after the march, on August 15, 2017, during a speech regarding infrastructure and technology, President Trump addressed the Charlottesville controversy by describing the white supremacist group on one side and the group on the other as both violent, but with good people on both sides. He described the group without

the permit, the protestors, as “very, very violent,” and not all of the permitted group were white supremacists (The White House, 2017, para. 48).

In October 2018, a group of students called the “Concerned 44”, representing the percentage of minoritized students at Seton Hall University, held a 10-day sit-in. They occupied the university’s administrative offices to demand an address to what they considered institutional racism (Whitford, 2018). During the last five years of student demands, national headlines have substantiated the need for higher education to advocate and create advocates for racial and social justice for minoritized students and bridge the racial divide. In 2018, a group of students called “Students Against Social Injustice” protested against removing a Confederate statue on the University of Mississippi’s campus (Parry, 2019). In August 2019, the unnamed Confederate infantry statue remained at the entrance after an agreement five months earlier to relocate the sculpture. In July 2019, three White students of the University of Mississippi photographed themselves with guns in front of a sign memorializing Emmet Til, a 14-year-old African American lynched in Mississippi (Vigdor, 2019). In January 2020, the Confederate monument maintained a position in the Circle at the university due to a delayed vote by The Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning Board of Trustees (Wagster Pettus, 2020a). In her follow-up story, Wagster Pettus (2020b) reported that the Confederate monument would be placed in a secluded part of the campus, the Civil War cemetery.

Microaggressions and Student Interactions

More than 50 years later, the curriculum remains mostly unlinked to diversity except within ethnic study disciplines. College classrooms still lack faculty of color, and across the academy, implicit biases, microaggression, and overt racism regularly occur (Chang, 2002; Flynn, 2001; Morales, 2014; Solórzano et al., 2000; Weinberg, 2008; Yamane, 2002). Sue (2010)

defined microaggressions as “brief and everyday slights, insults, indignities and denigrating messages sent to people of color by well-intentioned White people who are unaware of the hidden messages communicated” (para. 2). Ballinas’s (2017) analysis of Mexican Americans attending a PWI disclosed acts of microaggression from students and school officials, who were made to feel inferior to whites and became aware of the oppression asserted on their racial identity. Thirty Mexican Americans participated in the study, and 27 reported microaggression acts, with one student having eight encounters.

Students encounter four types of interactions in an academic setting: bureaucratic, educational, social, and external (Bean, 2005). According to Cabrera et al. (1999), Black students’ academic failure is linked to not being socially integrated into the setting of PWIs. Turner’s (1994) qualitative study depicted how students of color attending a PWI use the metaphor of a “guest” to describe their connection to the campus environment (p. 356). The term guest used by Lee Daniels, a participant in the study, described a “guest” as “someone who can never relax and put up their feet on the table” (Turner, 1994, p. 356). An environment in which a guest engages most often may lack a direct social, physical, or tangible connection to the visitor. The guest concept provided a context to perceptions of students, staff, and faculty of color regarding the campus climate at the University of Minnesota. Students of color perceived the campus as unwelcome, with inaccessible faculty and student-support resources isolated. Turner (1994) associated minoritized students’ enrollment decline with the lack of belongingness and feeling unwelcome. Fries-Britt and Turner (2002) conducted focused group meetings that attempted to understand the challenges and support of students’ persistence in traditionally White institutions (TWI). Two themes evolved from their study: (1) social and emotional experiences of students on both campuses depended on support and campus involvement, and (2) students

associated their energy, enhanced or declined, with a level of confidence towards their studies. Students who attended a TWI noted the contrast in engagement between students and campus culture. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) had a family culture. In contrast, students at the TWI did not seem to know each other (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002).

Black students' retention at PWIs has been historically lower than those who attend HBCUs (Allen, 1992). Seifert et al. (2006) suggested that one contributing factor to completion rates is the institution type. Their research indicated that students at HBCUs, compared to research universities, experienced more significant student-faculty contact and received more feedback on their class performance. Seifert et al. further concluded that regional institutions seemed less intentional in developing the learning environment than HBCUs. Liberal arts colleges seemed purposefully focused on student learning. The researchers' small study offered evidence that although missions may differ, they matter.

Von Robertson and Chaney (2017) published the study "I Know it [Racism] Still Exist Here," which explored critical race theory on college campuses as the theoretical lens to analyze marginalized groups. They examined racial microaggressions in the educational setting. Von Robertson and Chaney identified factors that created a positive campus environment, such as retention, course offerings, recruitment, and the recognition of diversity, debilitating the effects of racial microaggression. Nora and Crisp's study (2009) found that college social experiences impacted Latinx students' decisions to remain enrolled in college the least. Murguia et al. (1991) discovered that students of color created smaller "enclaves" when they participated in ethnic organizations (p. 436). Smaller settings enabled Latinx and Native Americans to engage incrementally in the campus environment instead of directly with the broader campus community. Baker and Robnett (2012) found that regardless of pre-college characteristics, off-

campus ties and social support from the college played a vital role in retaining Latino and Black students.

Faculty-Student Interaction

Qualitative researchers who study the retention of minoritized students provided verbal accounts of interactions with faculty on Black and White campuses (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Guiffrida, 2005; Hoffman, 2014; Komarraju et al., 2010). According to research findings, a welcoming environment acclimates students to the campus and promotes academic success (Fischer, 2007; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Museus et al., 2008; Turner, 1994). Creating a sense of belonging involves many campus partners, and faculty are uniquely positioned within the institution to bridge students in the classroom to the campus community. Research studies on students' transition and persistence found variables such as campus environment, the racial climate in and out of the classroom, and sense of belonging influenced students' positive or negative college experiences (Davis, 2004; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). With the changing ethnic demographics landscape predicted by 2025, faculty must comprehend minoritized students' educational experiences and address their academic needs (Cole, 2008; Hussar & Bailey, 2016). Faculty members can influence the persistence or attrition of college students. In Lundberg and Schreiner's (2004) study, the frequency of interaction and quality of relationships between faculty and underserved populations were the strongest predictors of learning.

The quality of White or Black faculty relationships with African American or Latino students influences retention either positively or negatively (Strayhorn & Johnson, 2014; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007; Neville & Parker, 2017). Kobrak (1992) argued that the teacher-student relationship and collaboration inside and outside the classroom rises and falls based on these interactions. Black faculty at both Black and White institutions authentically seemed to

care more about student success and academic achievement than White faculty, who seemed disengaged or insensitive (Neville & Parker, 2017). Komarraju et al. (2010) examined eight specific types of student-faculty interactions: informal, formal, tutorial-style classroom, functional interactions, personal interactions, incidental contact, and disengagement. Frequent communication and interaction between faculties and students outside the classroom seemed to increase students' academic self-confidence and retention.

Allen's (1992) multivariate study observed and analyzed statistical outcome variables of relationships between various social, educational, and personal perspectives of Black and White students on their respective campuses. Black students who attended Black colleges reported higher academic achievement than their counterparts attending White colleges. Conversely, Black students who attended White colleges were less socially engaged with faculty than their peers attending HBCUs. The retention of Black students on PWIs has been historically lower than those who attended HBCUs. Seifert et al. (2006) indicated that students at HBCUs experienced more significant student-faculty contact and received more feedback on their class performance than their peers at research universities. A multisite qualitative case study by McCoy et al. (2017) validated these different experiences with students pursuing a major in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines attending either a PWI or HBCU in the mid-Atlantic. Black students attending the PWI shared stories of feeling "weeded out" because faculty missed meetings or did not respond to emails, did not provide space in research labs, or told them they would fail or suggested they change majors (McCoy et al., 2017, p. 663). Black students attending HBCU described Black faculty as caring, available during scheduled times, introducing them to another faculty member, and providing access to internships or lab space.

In Turner's (1994) study, participants described the University of Minnesota's climate as lonely, with professors who do not encourage them, inaccessible instructors, an inadequate number of tutors, and the expectation that students of color will not "make it," with a general lack of concern (p. 359). Von Robertson and Chaney's (2017) participants provided narratives of their experiences, such as they felt faculty did not care. They did not try to make personal connections. In Turner's (1994) study, students provided narratives of lack of encouragement, feedback, accessibility, and individual attention from professors. Student-faculty contact is rated at lower levels at research universities. Regional institutions seemed less intentional in their role in developing the learning environment than HBCUs.

Moreover, Guiffrida (2005) sought students' perceptions of supportive faculty characteristics to develop a phenomenological, grounded theory understanding of these characteristics instead of prescribing a theory or generalizations. During Guiffrida's qualitative study, a common theme emerged among African American students. They described faculty members as student-centered as those who go above and beyond, are supportive, and serve as advocates. Guiffrida recommended the practice of faculty mentorship shift from technical skills of scheduling classes to a network of academic and professional contacts, a holistic approach. When the faculty member is student-centered, their advising approach provides support and career direction (Williamson et al., 2014). Support and advocacy, coupled with going above and beyond, created a realm where "faculty and mentors provide extra tutoring, money, or able [*sic*] to communicate with families about academic and personal issues" (Guiffrida, 2005, p. 710).

According to Guiffrida (2005), such an approach establishes close relationships and genuine belief in pushing all African American students to succeed, meaning graduate college. In this relationship, faculty and mentors are described as a support network who provided extra

tutoring, found financial resources for college, or had the ability to communicate with families about academic and personal issues. Jussim and Eccles (1992) listed faculty behaviors perceived as encouraging and caring in nonverbal, verbal, input, and output variables. They described variables as "smiling, nodding, establishing and maintaining eye contact, providing detailed and higher quality feedback," as more encouraging — being responsive, and providing more opportunities for clarification (Jussim & Eccles, 1992, p. 562). Jussim and Eccles found students less participatory in education when they felt ignored by faculty, treated stereotypically, and responded impatiently. Educational leadership at San Jacinto College in California mandated that African American students need developmental education to be supported by educational planners, developmental program department chairs, and faculty (Williamson et al., 2014). Faculty met with students during class and advising sessions, discussing test scores, course choices, and educational objectives. A study of these students conducted by Williamson et al. (2014) found that African American males' grades were 40% higher than students not in the same semester's student success course.

Faculty of Color

Similar to 50 years ago, Black college students still desire an increase in Black faculty in the classrooms. Research by Kelly et al. (2017) described the antecedents of the campus protests by students as Black faculty's unrest on PWI campuses. Black faculty departure or dismissal from institutions such as the occurrence at the University of Missouri as "one instance of unrest and a culture of racism on a college campus" (Kelly et al., 2017, p. 309). McZeal Walters (2018) shared her belief and lived experiences as a Black woman faculty member. She believed the Trump presidency made microaggressions a "greater reality for women faculty of color on American college and university campuses" (McZeal Walters, 2018, p. 64). A sense on college

campuses is that students can share racialized views openly without fear of retribution, which is characteristic of President Trump. For the last four years, the increase in student activism suggests that "tokenism is no longer appeasing" among minoritized students (Niemann, 2016, p. 451). Niemann (2016) described tokenism as "a rare person of their demographic groups within the context, especially in contrast with the majority, numerical dominants" (p. 452). An ASHE Higher Education report (Museus et al., 2015) focused on systemic racism in higher education. The organization ascribed the underrepresentation of faculty of color on experiences of vicarious or direct microaggressions. The literature review emerged racialized experiences included:

> (1) racism in the academic pipeline, (2) racial resistance to faculty authority and expertise (3) racial hostility in the classroom, (4) racial scrutiny of faculty research agendas, (5) racial taxation from excess faculty service, and (6) racial marginalization and isolation among faculty of color (Museus et al., 2015, p. 61).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2020a), in the fall of 2018, faculty of color comprised only 25% of the full-time faculty positions of the 1.5 million at degree-granting postsecondary institutions. Specifically, African American and Latinx men and women full-time faculty only represent three percent each. Latinx faculty are not only underrepresented in the academy at large, but they are also significantly under-represented at federally funded Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) (Vargas et al., 2020). Most minoritized faculty hold an assistant professor's status more than any other position (Antonio, 2002; National Center for Education Statistics, 2020b). In addition to a full teaching load, some Black faculty hold positions as mentors, teach diversity classes, and advocate for students Griffin, 2013; Umbach, 2006). Black faculty at Black and White institutions seemed to care authentically about students' success and academic achievement. French and Elue's (in press) study found students

felt an ethic of care from Black faculty due to their approaches of an "affirming comment" or "firm restatement," which validate the students' scholarship—then empowered their ability to "engage in reflection and increase consciousness surrounding race and gender" (p.17). The benefit of engaging students in collaborative learning techniques is to increase interactions with diversity and retention (Turner, 1994; Umbach, 2006). Regardless of the increase of students of color, the number of faculty on the college campus remains significantly underrepresented.

Faculty members of color bring a value orientation and philosophy to the academy (Antonio, 2002). The *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003) case involved the University of Michigan Law School's admissions practice considering race as a deciding factor. The defense argued that considering race to increase the representation of students of color was for the greater good and benefit to the campus community. The benefit to the community stance could shift to the benefit of increasing faculty of color (Bowen, 2004). In the classroom, faculty of color bring a diversity of thought and experiences to all students, regardless of ethnicity. For example, Ford (2011) hoped that the Black faculty's position in the classroom would support White students' resistance to the narrative of "Whiteness and maleness as the institutional norm within the academy" (p. 475). The academy can be a place of social change for all students. Antonio's (2002) study found that the behaviors and values of faculty of color counter the socialized norm of faculty-teaching, service, and research. Faculty of color in Antonio's (2002) study appeared to be among the more influential advocates in the academy for expanding their roles as teachers and supporting more holistic educational goals. Faculty of color at all types of 4-year institutions viewed their teaching goals as encompassing students' moral, emotional, and civic development.

According to Neville and Parker (2017), students mentioned that African American faculty bring a "breath of fresh air" to the learning environment (Neville & Parker, 2017, p. 356).

Because of faculty members of color's ability to facilitate the engagement and discussion of diversity in the classroom. A "breath of fresh air" refers to qualities such as down-to-earth, open, passionate, and caring, which students of color were unaccustomed to in the classroom (Neville & Parker, 2017, p. 356). A Chicana faculty member attributed her pedagogy as the means of relating to Latinx students. The faculty member accepted and affirmed students' culture by incorporating storytelling, food, music, and language in the classroom experience (Garcia, 2016). Garcia's study pointed out that Latinx faculty at a HIS connected with students culturally. Latinx faculty saw minoritized students as co-creators of knowledge and believed that all students could be successful, which increased Latinx students' persistence.

Along with increasing faculty of color in collegiate classrooms, diversified curriculum content enriches all students' scholarships. Hurtado (2007) merged affirmative action legal case results and her study on the benefits of diversity in the classroom. She included the University of Michigan's case, which defined "the educational benefits of diversity" as diversity being for institutions' good and ensuring students of diverse ethnic, racial, and socio-economic backgrounds a richer education for students beyond the classroom" (Hurtado, 2007, p. 185). Hurtado created three rationales for linking diversity with higher education's central educational and civic missions: practical, theoretical, and empirical. Hurtado cited possible explanations for integrating diversity: population shift, coherence in undergraduate preparation, and diversity initiatives that remain on the margin. A student's worldview changes or expands while interacting in diversity initiatives, conversations, and activities with their diverse peers (Hurtado, 2007; Terenzini et al., 2001; Umbach & Kuh, 2006).

An example of a student's effort to insert diversity in the curriculum took place in Iowa. Sri Ponnada, a Native American 2015 graduate from the University of Iowa and a student

senator, addressed the racial campus climate by pushing for a change in Iowa's general education program (Brown, 2016). Her efforts supported the concept of the educational benefit of diversity referenced in The *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003) case. According to Sri, students of color experienced microaggressions and racial slurs and saw derogatory ethnic images on campus. She charged the university to restructure a course and design counterspaces for all students to dialogue biases and learn about their peers' differences. Her request materialized in the fall of 2017 (Brown, 2016). Sri was successful in obtaining a course. However, research by Patton et al. (2016) found:

> Students still want a more inclusive curriculum that reflects their experiences, an increase in faculty of color, efforts to recruit and retain Black students, and the establishment of a safe space on campus, such as a Black culture center. (para 15)

For Latinx students, Chicano courses, and building relationships with faculty and fellow students, students persisted through college because of the on-campus support and knowledge base (Nuñez, 2011). These courses enabled Latino students to encounter others from their cultural backgrounds, making them feel less socially isolated. Patton et al. (2019) shared her belief that "if institutional leaders, faculty, and curriculum and culture remain predominately White, little systematic change will occur" (para 28). Formal education and social networking can significantly influence how one processes ideas and beliefs about others. Hence, higher education can challenge ideologies and create new ways of knowing and appreciating the world's diversity.

Nelson Laird et al. (2009) included in their findings that when "faculty members infused diverse perspectives in courses, students had more experiences with diversity, and a greater appreciation for diversity" (p. 78). Chang (2002) conducted a study to evaluate how diversity

course requirements reduce racial prejudice and promote intergroup understanding. The study found that if students were engaged to think critically about social and gender class differences, this would expand their ability to appreciate cultural pluralism and identify and analyze inequalities. Since the 1960s Black Student Demand era, the integration of ethnic diversity into courses continues to be a work in progress (Bowman, 2012; Johnson, 2014; Parker et al., 2016).

More than 20 years ago, the Ford Foundation and the Lilly Project challenged and motivated colleges and universities to reform their curriculum and improve racial and ethnic diversity and campus climate. The Lilly Project (Sedlacek, 1995) targeted four-year independent Midwest colleges, typically PWIs, to raise underrepresented students' graduation rates. The Ford Foundation charged campuses to address diversity and inclusion. The foundation partnered with the Association of American Colleges & Universities to coordinate efforts and disseminate lessons learned. In June 2018, the Lumina Foundation announced the awarding of one-time grants to 19 colleges and universities totaling $625,000 for Racial Justice and Equity on college campuses. The fund responded to the White supremacist racial incident on the University of Virginia's campus in August 2017. The Lumina Foundation funded colleges and universities' innovative ideas and practices to address the tense race relations on campuses. College campuses attempted to address racial friction. Despite foundation efforts, the outcome of reducing racial tension on campuses has remained problematic for decades.

Diversity Initiatives

To counter the racial narratives on college campuses, university leadership addressed the student demands of the 1960s through the 21st century with formalized diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice (DIEJ) initiatives (Patton et al., 2019). DIEJ initiatives resulted in minority affairs offices, culture centers, a minimal increase of faculty and staff of color, and minoritized

individuals in leadership positions. Luedke (2017) studied the role of staff of color, such as advisors, administrators, and program directors who nurtured students who made themselves available and maintained honesty with students. These relationships afforded the valuable social and educational capital of the staff to transition to the students. Students in Luedke's study found that students considered administrators, staff, directors, and advisors of color as safe places. Professional staff forged trusting and stable relationships with students making them feel cared for and supported. Nuñez (2011) suggested that student affairs educators arrange for faculty to use the cultural centers for "informal gatherings to discuss their own personal and professional development as researchers" (p. 653). Clauson and McKnight (2018) suggested that multicultural affairs offices and student activities bring "intercultural competence from the margins of the student life experience to the center" (p. 40). With the use of culture centers, collaboration with student affairs and academic affairs could strengthen campus programs, enable race-conscious focus, and create belongingness (Harris & Patton, 2017).

Both qualitative and quantitative DIEJ studies analyze initiatives implemented from 1968 to 2018 critically. Within the limited number of 45 articles, Patton et al. (2019) found four main categories of efforts: "student support services, curricular initiatives, administration and leadership, and institutional policy" (p. 184). Between the 2000s and 2010, Universities and colleges created Chief Diversity Officer positions to fill the void of institutional needs identified by students of color. Therefore, these positions focused on structural or systemic changes (Clauson & McKnight, 2018). However, the lack of research on DIEJ suggests that the empirical research is missing from the analysis of the effectiveness and the actual benefit to students of color. The attempt to counter the adverse campus climate with curriculum, programming, and minoritized staff may not be effectively implemented or administered.

Patton et al. (2019) questioned if DIEJ initiatives should be implemented considering the subject's lack of scholarship. The absence of research could imply that the demands made by African American and Latinx students lack institutional level priority or that the programs do not exist. Means and Pyne (2017) examined institutional support structures defined as social spaces through the lens of 10 students, primarily of color, first-generation, and low-income. The researchers identified departments, programs, residence halls, classrooms, and student organizations as environments that influenced their sense of belonging and the navigation of their institutions. The most noted institutional support structures to create a sense of belonging were need-based scholarships, affinity organizations, multicultural offices, academic support services, and high-impact pedagogy. However, one Latina student disengaged from an organization feeling it lacked the ability alone to address the campus climate issues for Latinx as well as to hire more faculty and staff of color.

In Patton's (2006) study of culture centers, students reflected on the importance of these spaces on campus. The college campus's intention to create a campus culture accepting diversity provided Black and Latinx students with a sense of belonging. A sense of belonging was defined by Rodgers and Summers (2008) as "feelings of membership in the broader community which is an essential piece of the overall attitude students develop about their college or university" (p. 176). Campus climates can shift to feeling welcome by offering counterspaces (Patton, 2006; Von Robertson & Chaney, 2017). Patton (2006) argued that creating dedicated spaces for ethnically diverse students provided emotionally safe spaces, allowing students to discuss their concerns and frustrations and seek counsel. The cultural center brought students together from the various cultures within black and brown-skinned communities. Black students at the University of Florida believed the Institute of Black Culture was a space to have a sense of

ownership, association, and belonging on campus. Patton stated that cultural centers' locations and conditions reflect a PWI's commitment to improving campus climates and inclusivity.

Lozano (2010) conducted a study on culture centers for Chicano students. According to Lozano, culture centers afforded a dedicated area on campus to explore a holistic learning experience besides the Chicano classroom. Chicano students engaged in social justice, academic mentoring and support, leadership development, and more in these dedicated spaces. A participant in a qualitative study by Means and Pyne (2017) believed student organizations offered her a space to speak Spanish and feel comfortable. Black students as Latino students experienced similar benefits of a Black Cultural Center support and their heritage history. This safe place gave some students a sense of home (Patton, 2006). Spaces, places, and faculty and staff of color are institutional support to help students have a successful academic experience. Diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice initiatives focus on increasing faculty and staff of color who can serve as confidants to teach and strengthen students' coping skills when faced with academic challenges and social adjustments.

Behavioral Characteristics

Despite the low retention rate of the minoritized student population, some overcome the rigor of college curricula, adverse social climates, and classroom experiences to reach good academic standing. Researchers identified several behavioral characteristics that seemed to motivate students to achieve this success milestone. A student's level of efficacy contributed to overcoming academic challenges more than other factors.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy and social cognitive theory developed by Albert Bandura (1995) defined "perceived self-efficacy as a person's belief about their capabilities to organize and execute the

courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (p. 2). One's efficacy beliefs "influence how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and act" (Bandura, 1995, p. 2). The research of Bandura et al. (1996) "analyzed the psychological influences through which efficacy beliefs affected academic achievement" (p. 1206). He found self-efficacy, aspirational, and psychosocial factors accounted for academic achievement. A student's confidence and self-efficacy impact their perseverance during college culturalization and influence persistence. Students with a strong sense of efficacy tackle challenges with optimism, form commitments to them, and sustain their efforts in the face of failure (Bandura, 1995). Rodgers and Summers (2008) believed retention abilities begin before students' arrival on campus, such as efficacy expectations, motivation, and coping skills. Woldoff et al. (2011) noted that Black students' sense of belonging and self-efficacy ranked as influential factors followed by pre-college non-cognitive experiences.

Minoritized Students' Self-efficacy

Campus factors, which influenced minoritized students' persistence, were referenced in numerous articles. Qualitative researchers recognized family support as a human element that inspired minoritized students to achieve academic success (Chavez et al., 2018; Guiffrida, 2005; McCoy, 2014). Farrington (2018) studied four Latino brothers' educational resilience within the context of Latinx culture in New Mexico. The successful professional brothers acknowledged their family structure, commitment to education, and their strong sense of Latinx culture for their self-efficacy. Students' support groups provided coping tips, encouragement, and inspiration to succeed. A study by Vuong et al. (2010) indicated that students' and parents' perceptions of success matched when students successfully earned higher grade point averages. Ceja (2004) used a theory of resiliency to provide a perspective on Chicana parents' influence on the

development of educational aspirations within their son/daughter. In Ceja's study, 20 Chicano seniors attending an inner-city high school in Los Angeles, first-generation college-bound, and low socioeconomic students credited their parents for imparting in them a strong sense of value in education. Even if parents did not have a degree, they communicated and demonstrated motivation, which developed their son or daughter's resiliency to do well in college. Two of the interviewed students' parents used storytelling to contextualize their educational message to drive the point of why going to college was important.

Morrison (2017) used an asset-based informed autoethnographic approach allowing students and teachers to provide their counter-stories of cultural lived experiences. The researcher fused critical race theory in the research process to unveil how students' racial context and cultural assets relate to their perception of their educational journey. Students agreed that a cultural asset-based autoethnography approach in this class strengthened friendships, increased the level of engagement in their academics, and provided the context of their self-efficacy. Vega's (2016) study of 10 high achieving Latinx students recognized that factors such as first-generation status and low income influenced their self-efficacy. These students' internal drive to persist is linked to their parents' struggles and sacrifices and being role models for their siblings.

Rodgers and Summers (2008) believed retention abilities initiated before students' arrival on campus, such as efficacy expectations, motivation, and coping skills. These entry characteristics impact students' environmental interactions, social integration, and academic success. Confidence building gives students cultivation energy and motivates them to succeed academically. Students attending HBCUs in Fries-Britt and Turner's study (2002) reported that learning their history contributed to their positive energy, which helped them finish coursework. However, energy diversion occurred at White institutions because Black students experienced

being the only student of color in the class (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002). A student's confidence and self-efficacy impact their perseverance during college culturalization and influence persistence (Han et al., 2017; Kim & Hargrove, 2013; Rodgers & Summers, 2008). Alva (1995) referred to resilient students as those who "sustain high levels of achievement, motivation, and performance, despite the presence of stressful events and conditions, which places them at risk of performing poorly in schools and ultimately dropping out" (p. 289). McDougal et al.'s (2018) study of 41 students (both African Americans and Africans) described self-reliance as taking the initiative to engage in self-discipline to overcome challenges on campus. They identified behavioral initiatives such as seeking out tutoring, visiting faculty during office hours despite not feeling invited, and focusing on their purpose.

An existential-phenomenological study conducted by Hannon et al. (2016) was inductive, descriptive, and based on African American women's lived experiences attending a PWI. Phenomenological research described aspects of lived experiences, explored the underlying meaning of individual and group lessons, and allowed for unique first-person accounts by the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 13). The four women researchers, Hannon et al. (2016) of ethnic diversity, used the Tennessee model of phenomenological analysis, which required group participation. Five significant themes resulted: (1) multiple worlds, (2) belonging, (3) expectations, (4) awareness of surroundings, and (5) coping. According to Rodgers and Summers (2008), the theoretical model of Bean and Eaton (2001) could not measure cultural elements even though the researchers believed the model operated regardless of ethnicity. Therefore, they updated the model addressing the correlations between students' attitudes towards their institution and included "academic self-efficacy, motivation, achievement goals,

attributions, achievement goals, ethnic and bicultural identity development" (Bean & Eaton, 2001, p. 171).

Minoritized students' positive and strong self-efficacy and college entry characteristics helped them adjust socially and academically to PWI campuses (Gonzalez & Morrison, 2016; Vuong et al., 2010). Woldoff et al. (2011) conducted three focused interviews to explore Black students' sense of belonging and self-efficacy, which ranked as influential factors for Black students followed by pre-college non-cognitive experiences (Nora & Crisp, 2009). Allen's research (1992) focused on capturing African American students' lived experiences during their college journey from entry to graduation. He observed critical predictors of success such as historical, socioeconomic, academic, and parental composition on college outcomes among students who attended a PWI or HBCU. The multivariate analysis investigated relationships between three outcome variables: "academic achievement, social involvement in campus life, and occupational aspirations" (Allen, 1992, p. 32). Allen found that Black students who attended White colleges reported being less engaged in social activities and with faculty.

Watson and Watson (2016) studied first-year Latinx students using a coping self-efficacy scale. Their findings revealed a significant relationship between academic stress and coping self-efficacy. Saunders-Scott et al. (2018) believed that academic stress levels negatively impacted retention after a student's first year. Individuals' efficacy helps them to manage uncomfortable and stressful situations (Bandura, 1995). Latinx students acknowledged strong confidence in their ability to handle adverse conditions. Therefore, students experienced less academic stress (Watson & Watson, 2016). Isik et al. (2018) reviewed 45 articles of students attempting to identify ethnic minority students' motivation in college. They found that motivation factors such as characteristics and personal experiences labeled individual, family-related, school-related, and

social elements associated with students' academic success. Self-efficacy, confidence, and effort were reported as a subcategory of the individual factor influencing ethnic minority students' motivation. Latinx students viewed staying in school as a persistor (Murphy & Murphy, 2018). Wolters and Hussain (2015) discovered that self-efficacy increases a student's perseverance. Students' confidence in their ability to succeed enables them to create and sustain routines that promote academic success (Usher et al., 2019). Individuals' confidence helps them to manage uncomfortable and stressful situations (Bandura, 1995). Purpose and self-efficacy influenced students' grit level (Vela, et al., 2018b). Eskin (2003) believed, "Self-efficacy activates the response to be assertive when interacting with others" (p. 11). Vela, et al. (2018b) revealed that Latinx college students' academic resilience relied on their self-efficacy.

In order to conduct this study and truly understand persistence among Black and Latinx students previously on academic probation, transition theory, critical race theory, and LatCrit are relied upon to provide a platform to dive deeply into the student narratives and understand the nuances associated with their lived experiences. These theoretical frameworks and lenses are described in further detail below.

Theoretical Frameworks

Schlossberg's Transition Theory

In 1981, Teresa K. Schlossberg proposed a transition theory within adult development philosophy focusing on work. She developed this theory while experiencing unexplained confusion about a geographical move for a new job that excited her. The transition model gives structure for "analyzing an individual's adaptation to, and movement through" transitions by "(a) understanding the transitions, (b) coping with transitions, and (c) applying the model to work-life transitions" (Schlossberg, 2011, p. 159). A student's ability to cope through a transition

effectively depends on these asset and liability resources (Patton et al., 2016). Schlossberg identified four resources or critical factors for persevering transitions called the 4 S's system: situation, self, supports, and strategies.

The situation that causes one to be in transition can either be anticipated, unanticipated, or a nonevent—an expected event that fails to occur. College students experience a transition situation when they separate from their previous high school routines, norms, and patterns. Transitioning to college can be a significant event for young adults. Most minoritized students find transitioning experiences challenging and stressful. They begin to realize their minoritized status differently within the college setting. The self-factor considers one's personal and demographic characteristics and psychological resources. Psychological resources include: "ego development; outlook, in particular optimism and self-efficacy; commitment and values; and spirituality and resiliency" (Patton et al., 2016, p. 39). These internal resources and personality characteristics influence how and the length of time an individual perseveres through a challenging transition experience along with age, gender, and socioeconomic status. According to Patton et al. (2019), there are four types of support resources: intimate relationships, family units, networks of friends, and institutions/communities. In addition, new types of support resources at college include student organizations and affinity groups offering affirmation, care, and positive feedback. Strategies to manage transition include changing (modifying the situation), reframing (controlling the meaning of the problem), and reducing stressors after the transition (Anderson et al., 2012). A coping strategy of Schlossberg's theory most relevant to this study is the intrapsychic behavior occurring within the psyche, mind, or personality. New cultural, social, and academic environments can make transitions complicated. Students' inability to navigate these spaces early in college produces a mass exit within the first six weeks

of school (Spann & Tinto, 1990). Match or fit is another cause of student attrition, "feeling at ease or feeling out of place is a critical issue for all students. If students feel the mismatch is too great, [with academic difficulty] the students are likely to leave" (Spann & Tinto, 1990, p. 19).

Schlossberg's (2011) transition theory serves qualitative researchers as a reflective guide to understand how students navigate and experience the anticipated event, such as attending college. Two researchers applied Schlossberg's transition theory to veteran students' college experiences. Schiavone and Gentry (2014) identified the situation, self, and support. In comparison, Griffin and Gilbert (2015) discussed implications for colleges that enroll veterans as students. Schiavone and Gentry (2014) utilized the transition theory while analyzing military veterans who served in war zones, specifically Iraq and Afghanistan, then shifted from deployment to student life. The researchers believed Schlossberg's (2011) theory provided "insight … by shedding light on what impacts veteran students' progression into and out of higher education settings" (p. 30). The study's veteran students named their situation category as either timing, control, role change, duration, previous experience, and concurrent stress. The components of the self-category included psychological status, physical health, and self-efficacy. Their support was categorized as role dependent, either the military, the university, or non-role-dependent, friends and family. Veteran participants admitted to using sarcastic joking or internalizing behavior as strategies to cover up emotional stress or the immaturity of their younger and non-veteran students (Schiavone & Gentry, 2014). Griffin and Gilbert (2015) applied Schlossberg's transition theory to inform higher education of student veterans' barriers and institutional support structures. During the qualitative data analysis, three themes emerged: the need for role-dependent support from the university in the form of personnel and services, institutional structures, and social and cultural support.

McCoy (2014) invited first-generation students of color to share counterstories of their transition experiences into an "extreme" predominately White institution. Applying Schlossberg's (2011) transition theory as a framework, themes from students' stories included:

> (1) the respondents (self) experienced high familial expectations, and influence; (2) the admissions process (situation) was cumbersome and challenging, (3) the challenging transition (situation) from an urban area to an extreme predominately White institution and (4) diversity initiative to help mentor and develop community (support/strategy). (Schlossberg, 2011, p. 161)

Moreover, Schlossberg's (2011) transition theory categorized students' experiences transitioning through various social experiences, unfamiliar environments, and academic challenges. The critical factors for persevering transitions are the 4 S's system: situation, self, supports, and strategies. This study will understand how internal and external resources and behavioral characteristics guide students' progress from academic probation to good academic standing. Unfortunately, some students of color attempt to manage and overcome academic challenges in unwelcoming environments while handling psychological reactions to a setback to their degree attainment. Therefore, using Schlossberg's theory as a framework positions the academic difficulty as the situation, students' characteristics of the individual as the self factor, institutional and non-institutional structures as support, and the actual application of the resources the strategy.

Critical Race Theory

The tenets of critical race theory (CRT) and Latino critical theory (LatCrit) served as the theoretical lens to analyze stories shared by students. Scholars of CRT attempted to identify educational barriers for students of color and how barriers are resisted and overcome to eliminate

oppression in all forms (Taylor, 2016). Academic research can amplify inequalities and associate these barriers to institutional systems that perpetuate disenfranchised groups. Parker and Lynn (2016) used CRT in qualitative research because they believed that CRT "links theory and understanding about race from a critical perspective to actual practice and actions in education for activist social justice and change" (p. 150). The narratives from this research will serve as counter-storytelling to help educators and administrators better understand lived experiences and make institutional changes for the betterment of students of color (Taylor, 2016). Lo et al. (2017) applied the CRT principles to determine how White and Black students perceived race relations on a PWI. They included questions in their survey to measure symbolic racism and traditional racism. The analysis revealed that either White or Black students' negative stereotyping strongly correlated to a negative perception of race relations on campus. White students had a more favorable opinion of race relations on campus than students of color. The difference in attitude suggested that the dominant culture's socialization of race and racism omitted an understanding of how experiences and factors affect students of color. The use of CRT demonstrated the perpetuation of racism.

Latino critical theory (LatCrit) emerged from CRT, involving unique Latinx perspectives not necessarily relevant to the black-white binary. They concentrated on issues such as "immigration, language rights, bilingual schooling, internal colonialism, a sanctuary for Latin American refugees, and census categories for Latinos" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 93). LatCrit theory focuses on forms of racism and marginalization, which are language and Latinx immigration, which differs from African Americans. Education scholars mobilized LatCrit to push back on "proxy discrimination," discrimination due to the foreign accent, name, or ancestry; assimilation, meaning Spanish speaking is unwelcome; immigration policies; and

deportation (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 93). Valdes's (1997) early conversations of LatCrit discourse indicated four levels of the theory's functionality:

> The production of knowledge with the inclusion of socio-legal understanding through critiques of historical and modern experiences. The creation of material, social change that improves the lives of Latinas/os and other subordinated groups. LatCrit represents itself as a struggle on behalf of diverse Latinas/os, but also toward a material transformation that fosters social justice for all. [Finally], to nurture a community of scholars who share a similar approach to legal theory to expand and connect anti-subordination struggles. (p. 7–8)

Gonzalez and Morrison (2016) applied the theoretical lens of LatCrit to their Latinx persistence literature review. They found a lack of Latino culture infusion in research on college student persistence. The lack of focus on culture resulted in a dismissal of the subordination by the dominant culture. The authors recommended that researchers acknowledge the differences in cultures and define and manage context differences. The recognition of domination and cultural experiences in research literature can improve Latinx student degree persistence "in a system that often shuts them out" (Gonzalez & Morrison, 2016, p. 92). Anguiano and Castañeda (2014) researched the level of inclusion and influence of Latinx culture on communication studies. They wanted to advance the scholarship of Critical Latina/o communication by using the critical lens of CRT and LatCrit to identify Latinx's disenfranchisement. The development of a Latina/o critical communication theory could do the following: centralize the Latinx experience, deploy decolonizing methodological approaches, acknowledge and address racism, resist literacy-colorblind language/rhetoric, and promote social justice (Anguiano & Castañeda, 2014). Hernández (2019) summarized Solórzano and Yosso's perception of CRT and LatCrit as

focusing on the intersection of multiple forms of racism and explained the importance of closing the education achievement gap. Theories like CRT and LatCrit aim to empower underrepresented groups by giving voice and value to their experiences and placing stories in historical and contemporary contexts.

Summary

Retention challenges are as significant to students as to higher learning institutions. Latinx and Black students' academic readiness was found to be a marginal factor in academic success. In a historical view of the student experience, the 21st century seems eerily similar to the 19th century. Past and present, minoritized students have had to navigate multiple campus environment components, such as the classroom, faculty-student interaction, faculty and staff of color, and few diversity initiatives proven effective. An institution's inability and inefficiency in creating a welcoming campus environment with support would cause most students to give up simply. While attending college is an anticipated event, probationary status is an unexpected event that would cause psychological components such as anxiety and self-doubt. Then, while moving in or moving through the transition stages, some students have to battle racialized social and political tensions on and off-campus. To increase persistence, academic leaders and researchers must acknowledge the critical role of cultural and social capital among these vulnerable minority groups. Latinx and Black students have similar marginalizing experiences. Researchers have more frequently correlated Latinx college students' struggle with cultural adaptation, navigating their culture and the institutions. Therefore, institutions and academic scholars must be aware of Latinx and Black students' racial and cultural lived experiences. Hence, CRT and LatCrit theory offer a lens into historical and current perspectives of minoritized student college experiences. As a result, academic leaders and faculty may better

understand how students utilize behavioral characteristics to navigate these experiences and academic recovery.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study examined junior or senior college students once on academic probation through Schlossberg's (2011) transition theory's framework while relying on CRT and LatCrit as theoretical lenses. Also, I examined the application of behavioral characteristics to improve their academic standing. Self-efficacy has been frequently noted as a predictor of success. According to Bandura (1995), an individual can know a particular course of action will produce a change, but self-doubt derails their ability to perform the activity. Students with a high level of self-efficacy persevere in creating the desired result. This qualitative study with a phenomenological approach proposed the following research questions: What are African American and Latinx students' experiences on a regional campus while on academic probation?; and What behavioral characteristics manifest among minoritized students once on academic probation to help them persist towards college graduation?

Design of the Study

This study used a narrative inquiry approach to comprehensively describe a purposively selected sample of academically struggling African American and Latinx undergraduate students. This research focused on the retention of minoritized students once on academic probation at a four-year, public, regional university by studying how behavioral characteristics manifest among minoritized students to navigate academic recovery. The narrative approach

permits a researcher to delve deeper into the interaction between participant and context, considering the historical, contextual, and political forces on participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A narrative inquiry allows for a first-person account of emotional and psychological processes during a series of events. The reports of the experiences usually unfold in chronological order, beginning to end. These events can create epiphanies, turning points that can have minor or major impacts on the storytellers' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Wang and Geale's (2015) review of narrative inquiry in the study of nursing students described three aspects of the approach as "personal and social (interaction); past, present, future (continuity); and place (situation)" (p. 196). In this study, participants will share their stories regarding navigating from a negative academic standing to a positive one. Their stories provide the text, which creates the data set for analysis.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that philosophical hermeneutics provides the interpretive understanding or meaning of the story within written text, informs narrative inquiry. Phenomenology "aims to transform lived experiences into a description of its 'essence' allowing for reflection and analysis" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 24). A narrative study as an interactive design describes phenomena as a collective meaning for several individuals' lived experiences. Contrary to "phenomenological research, understanding the essences of the experience, the narrative explores the life of an individual" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 104). A narrative research design makes this approach a suitable fit for this future study. I will examine how students make meaning of their unsuccessful academic experience through the various lenses of culture-historical, campus climate-contextual, racial issues, and politics. In narrative research, the analysis takes the form of restorying — retelling the story with a progression from

the beginning, middle, and end. The researcher focuses on specific experiences and epiphanies related to academic probation and behavior characteristics for this future case.

Therefore, the research questions investigated how an individual experienced a determined phenomenon in a prescribed context. My research questions were situated in a complex mix examining a personal experience perceived as a failure in the academic community intertwined in race-related experiences. Each participant's experience was individually analyzed as a single case before comparing patterns across subjects. Therefore, the narrative design provides conversational space for minoritized students to share their experiences, thoughts, and motivations. A hermeneutic analysis permitted a cross-case analysis of each participant's narrative identifying primary and secondary levels of themes (Miller et al., 2018). At the fundamental level, I learned what seems essential to the participant. Then at the second level, I explored the meaning of the experiences. At this point, I evaluated the description within societal, cultural, and theoretical frameworks (Smith et al., 2009). Because the design used participants' experiential lenses, reflexive thinking and writing were imperative during the analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Interview Questions

The interview questions prepared for this study attempt to capture the substance of participants' behavioral characteristics once on academic probation and their lived experience on a regional campus within a race-related context. Therefore, the questions were probing, open-ended, and influential in generating specific knowledge pertinent to the research question. The interview schedule began with non-intimidating questions that allowed the participant to become comfortable with the researcher. The 10-item questionnaire (see Appendix A) facilitated

discussion relevant to the research questions, focusing on the college environment, behavioral characteristics, and unsuccessful and successful academic achievement.

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The sample size for this study attempted to include 12 participants. However, only five participated. Participants were purposively selected to maintain the ability to represent or provide stories related to the research topic (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Participants "represent a perspective, rather than a population," and "grant access to a particular perspective on the phenomena under study" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 49). Therefore, students met the pre-selected criteria of currently enrolled full-time, at least a first-semester junior at a four-year medium, non-residential regional university. All the participants were first-generation students and under the age of 24. One student was an African American male, and four were Latinx; two males and two females. Three had below a 2.0 GPA at the end of their first semester and two after completing the first year. Students attended this college between 2017 and 2021. By spring 2021, all participants were in good academic standing. However, only two were above a cumulative GPA of 2.5 or higher as first desired for the study. The minimum classification of a junior allows enough time to pass for students to process their academic probation status emotionally and strategically. The additional advantages to the third year are that students can navigate their plan and then identify characteristics that aided them in overcoming academic failure. Students participated in the study regardless of academic major, formalized educational recovery program, pre-college grade point average, or college entrance exam scores.

Upon the Institutional Review Board's (IRB) consent by Indiana State University to conduct the study, Midwestern Regional University required a second IRB. After the approvals, the University Institutional Research and Reporting Office provided a list of possible participants

at the research site. The file contained 428 Latinx and African Americans who began college in either the fall semester of 2017 or 2018, regardless of generation status. I filtered the list to remove 203 second-generation students. The remaining 226 students were filtered to remove students below 2.0 after grades posted by December 14 for fall 2020. The desired population narrowed to 97 students. After selecting only enrolled students for the Spring 20201 semester, the list decreased to 70 for spring 2021. Of these, 60 were Latinx, and 10 were African American. The primary criteria needed to answer the research question required students' cumulative GPA below 2.0 and academic probation. The research office coded those on probation with the number one. Each cumulative GPA column was manually viewed for grades in the adjacent column with a numerical value to confirm the designation. The additional filter significantly reduced the population to 16 African American or Latinx students, currently enrolled with at least a 2.0 GPA but once on academic probation.

After identifying students, the faculty administrator emailed each student and introduced me as the principal investigator for this research project. The administrator informed the participants of the study's objectives and requested a response to the initial email if interested in more details. Not one student responded to the initial or follow-up email sent by the faculty administrator. Therefore, the director of the academic advising center was asked to contact the students on my behalf. She sent the students an email, too. Again, after no response, she phoned them. This outreach led to four yes responders. Attempting to increase the response rate, I sent 12 students a letter to their home address, provided by the Midwest Regional University's Institutional Research Office. One student responded to the mailed correspondence.

The director emailed me the names of students who verbally told her they would talk to me. I texted the student introducing myself and asked for the best time to connect to speak for

about ten minutes to introduce myself and the study. We agreed to conduct the one-hour interview and the date during the phone call and after the introduction. The initial call served to build a rapport, share professional and personal college experiences, and ensure the potential participant of confidentiality. While describing the study, I confirmed students' classification, ethnicity, first-generation status, and past and current academic standing. Once they verbally affirmed that they met the criteria, I asked if they would be interested in participating in the study. I gained a verbal agreement from each participant to meet via a secured virtual platform, Zoom, with recording capability. Four interviews were scheduled for Saturday mornings and one Saturday afternoon. I emailed each person reiterating the study's specifics and attached the approved consent form. Students were requested to read, sign, and return the document before the agreed date and time of the one-to-one video interview. After the call and within the email, I repeated the conversation was confidential and only accessible to me, and their ability to suspend their participation at any time. Pseudonyms were used to provide anonymity.

Institutional Sample

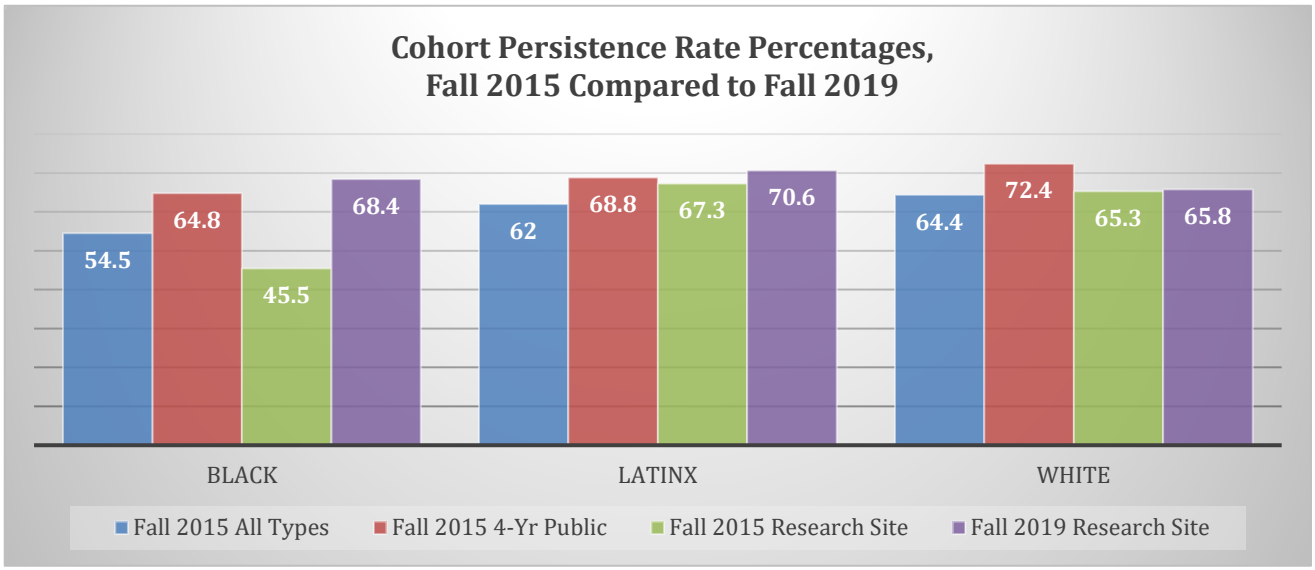
The institutional research site was a non-residential regional public university located in the Midwest. In 1968, Black students at this potential site location demanded the institution for more faculty and staff of color, financial resources, a friendlier campus environment, and a diversified curriculum. In January 2020, the regional campus received the designation of Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). The undergraduate population is nearly 4,000 students; 79% attend full-time, and 47% are diverse, including Hispanic/Latino at 26% and African American at 15%. The regional campus offers more than 70 degrees for undergraduate and graduate degrees, including online programs. Schools and divisions consist of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, School of the Arts, School of Business and Economics, School of Education, and

College of Health Sciences. The Midwest Regional University campus is part of a multi-campus system ranked as a Research 1 public research institution grounded in the liberal arts and sciences and a world leader in professional, medical, and technological education. As a system, the post-secondary institution provides education to more than 98,000 students. Even though the research site is part of a multi-campus system, the regional campus meets the Carnegie Classification category (The Carnegie Classificaication of Institutions of Higher Education, n.d.) of a four-year medium-sized, a primarily nonresidential university situated in an urban environment.

This study explored African American and Latinx students' experiences because of the negative trends in persistence and graduation rates nationally and locally. Persistance rates measure students continuing enrollment at the starting institution for each cohort comparison. Figure 1 compares the national persistence rates between the fall 2015 and 2019 cohort considering institution type and students' ethnicity.

Figure 1

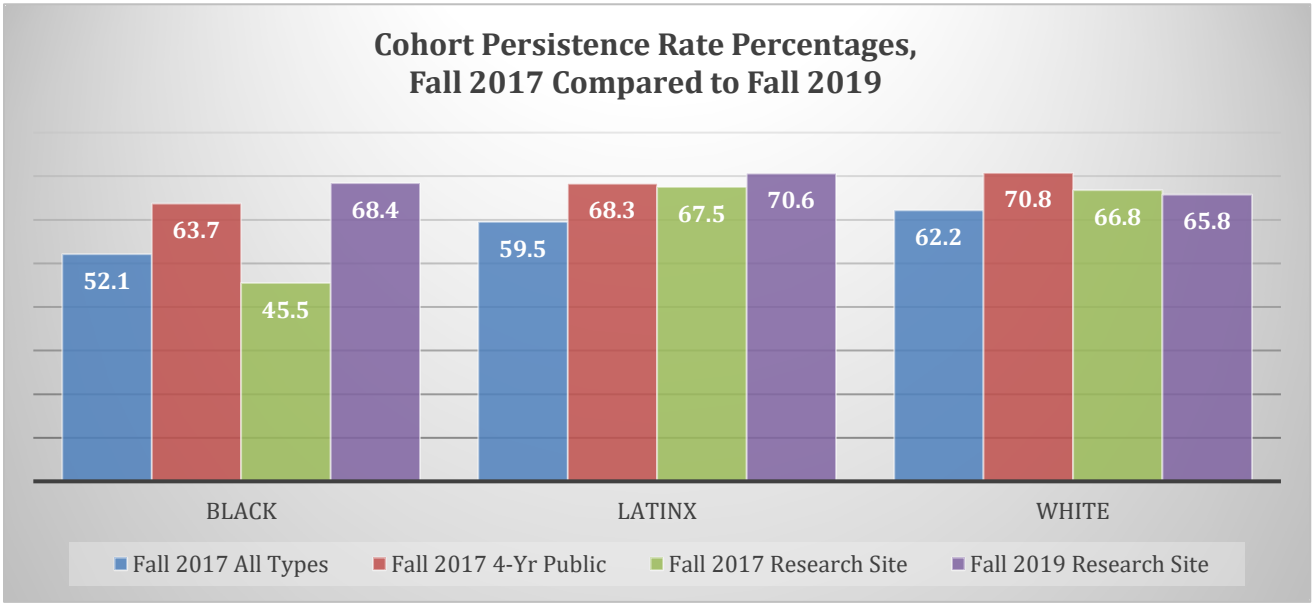
Cohort Persistence Rate Percentages for Fall 2015 Compared to Fall 2019.



The National Student Clearinghouse report (2017) provided the percentage rates for all institution types and public in the charts. Comparing the Midwest Regional University 2015 and 2017 cohorts the four year persistence rate increased for Latinx students by 3.3%. Black students had the greatest persistence gain of 22.9% (UIRR, 2021). Figure 2 compares the same characteristics for fall 2017 and 2019 cohorts.

Figure 2

Cohort Persistence Rate Percentages for Fall 2017 Compared to Fall 2019.



The persistence rates maintained similarities for Black and Latinx students for both 2015 and 2017 univeristy cohort years. However, White students' cohort persistence rates declined in 2019 and was the first year below both Black and Latinx students. According to the trends represented between the two charts Midwest Regional University surpasses persistence rates of four year public universities and other types. Therefore, these national lower persistence rates validate the need to identify how marginalized students persist to graduation and share the characteristics of their academic success strategies across institution types.

One institutional structure that influences students' persistence is the faculty structure. In 2017, in the multicampus system, total minority population of full-time, tenure, and tenure track faculty was 23.4% (Indiana University, 2019). While the regional campus (research site), part of a multi-campus system, had a 35 percent minority faculty population, the specific headcount of the demographics of minoritized faculty represented in 2019 was eight African Americans, zero Native American, five Hispanic, and 14 Asian/Pacific Islanders (UIRR, n.d.-a).

Role of the Researcher

Due to holding an established full-time administrative position at the research site, I am a partial participant. I participate to some extent in the setting. Still, I am not involved in the academic environment where the participants are situated (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010). I had no prior relationship with any of the participants. The selected narrative inquiry depended on my knowledge and my active participation in the approach. Therefore, a narrative approach's productivity depends on the researcher understanding the sensitive balance between their dual roles as observers and participants. Hence, the intersection of an administrative position within the site and social identity with the students required me to monitor and reduce bias. My visual social identity and my educational journey may position me as more an insider than an outsider (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I sought credibility with the member checking and participant feedback strategy to validate themes and findings to reduce bias.

Positionality of the Researcher

I intersect with this research on multiple levels. I graduated in the top 10 percent from Gary's prominent all-Black high school, Gary Roosevelt, which groomed academic leaders and athletic stars. During college, I identified with several diverse cultural groups: first-generation college student, a low-socioeconomic family, underserved community within a predominantly

Black city, Black female, latchkey kid, and single-parent household were my cultural groups. I attended Manchester College, located in a small town in North Manchester, Indiana, with predominately White residents. Campus enrollment had fewer than 1,000 students, including my first-year class, which increased minority and international student enrollment to 100 students. I majored in Biology. By the end of my freshman year, I was on academic probation and struggled most semesters after that. I was underprepared for freshman-level Anatomy & Physiology, Biology, Chemistry, or Math courses. I struggled with college courses and transitioning from home, and living at a predominately White institution. While attending college, I was a federal work-study student working approximately 20 hours a week during the school year. In hindsight, struggling academically and working 20 hours was not the best combination.

Three summers after my freshman year, I worked as a student recruiter for the Office of Admissions. I traveled to Illinois, Ohio, and Indiana to meet prospective students in their homes to plan for college. My collegiate experience at Manchester College ignited my desire to return to Gary, Indiana, to mentor high school students of color and share how to prepare for college and career choices. My potential bias regarding this study could stem from my current position as director of admissions and my frustration with minoritized students' low retention rates, both locally and nationally. High school systems within Lake County are considered underperforming. The Indiana State Board of Education took over one school and one district within the region. Too many students of color from these school districts arrive on campus underprepared, but with possibility, as I did 30 years ago. These students have a higher chance of being on academic probation than graduating from college. My participation in the doctoral program at Indiana State University influenced me to become a scholar-activist. I strive to

produce research that impacts policies, procedures and advances students of color academic success.

Hopefully, exploring juniors' and or seniors' experiences will explain why and how students persist through the first two or three years of academic probation to potential graduation. As a researcher, I accessed minoritized students' perspectives on their college experience at a non-residential campus in an urban community and conducted individual interviews. I bracketed my college experiences to omit my initial impressions and assumptions to engage with the participants' responses. I intended to practice reflexivity, revealing my position, worldview, perspectives, and biases in the study. Reflexivity permitted readers to understand the filters through which questions were posed and findings interpreted. As a researcher, my view on possible preferences stemmed from personal and academic experiences with faculty, the institution type, educational courses, and my parent's involvement. I navigated college without a plan and lacked support from faculty and fellow students. These interactions influenced my perseverance to complete college and how I persisted through college on academic probation.

Data Collection

In qualitative research, interviews are the most common form of data collection and the only source for this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). One-on-one interviews allowed me to engage the participant in an in-depth and meaningful conversation about their lived experience. Subsequently, the interview questions' construction, how they were asked, and my expertise influenced the data collection process. While an interview protocol guided the conversation, the participants had conversational space to unfold their experiences. The participant's willingness to share depended on how secure they felt discussing experiences along their educational journey with a semester or more on academic probation. Smith et al. (2009) emphasized the importance

of building rapport by using the semi-structured individual interview. The semi-interview style allowed me and the participants to clarify their experiences. As the researcher, I listened attentively, applied empathy, and probed when necessary to obtain rich, thick, and meaningful narratives of students' lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all the interviews took place virtually using the Zoom platform and were recorded. A second meeting was not needed. Each interview lasted between 60 and80 minutes. The interview questions were related to participants' college experiences, recovery from underachievement during a national period of racial and political unrest. The 10 questions pertained to the literature on campus environments, academic probation, and non-cognitive skills. Simultaneously, I carefully crafted the questions to avoid ambiguity, assumptions, leading, and complexity while eliciting information and opinions with detailed and descriptive data. These types of interview questions "get at the thing a person does or did, his or her behavior, actions, and activities" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 118). The interview protocol allowed me to rotate questions to bridge their responses to others in the queue and then ask follow-up questions to understand their experience fully. Students were asked to discuss their perspectives on the significance of these interactions and behavioral characteristics that operated in their college experience. Therefore, the rapport between the participant and I was essential to offer a sense of sincerity and care. This rapport was critical in this qualitative narrative design approach because of the imperativeness of extracting how participants felt and reacted to the experience of academic failure.

Data Analysis

Creswell and Creswell (2018) described the data analysis procedure as the intent to make sense out of the text, segmenting and taking apart the data, and then putting it back together.

They further identified the process as a simultaneous procedure because the researcher analyzes data from the audiotape, audio transcription, handwritten notes, and observations. Smith (2011) described the analytical process in the interpretative process as an iterative and inductive cycle. During these cycles, the researcher uses their "psychological knowledge" to move from the general of the narrative to how the participant makes meaning of the experiences and how the "analyst thinks the participant is thinking" (Smith et al., 2009, p.79). I explored these created meanings through the social lens and the theoretical context of Schlossberg's (2011) theory. Finlay (2014) described the analysis as having two levels or phases. Larkin et al. (2006) described the phases within research analysis as first and second order. The first-order analysis is also called the "abstraction stage," which is where super-ordinate themes are developed (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 103). At this level, I summarized the participant's narrative to a conceptual level. In the second-order analysis, I conceptualized the subsumption of the super-ordinate theme. Through this type of analysis, I was able to bring together a series of related topics such as "what it means for the participants to have made these claims, and to have expressed these feelings and concerns in this particular situation" (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 104). Therefore, after the participant responded to questions I asked them to describe experiences, I reiterated their statement to ensure I understood their remarks or how a situation made them feel.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained narrative inquiry to answer the research question within the interpretive framework: Schlossberg's (2011) theory and critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) in this study. These frames focused me on the story told and the language used to describe the experiences. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested reviewing each participant's "interview transcript and field notes separately while jotting down notes, comments, observation, and queries in the margins" (p. 204). In addition to adding notes, I built a

spreadsheet using Microsoft Excel with separate columns for each theory, behavioral characteristics, notes, and my interpretation of their responses. From this data set, they recommended beginning to construct categories, called coding. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested six steps for processing data: (1) think of the purpose of the study, (2) consider the epistemological framework, (3) code the data, using the analogy of trees to describe a detailed coding process, (4) see the data as a forest, look for the answers to the research question, (5) see if the "trees support the forest," (6) build axial codes, inclusive categories (p. 208). At the top of the excel tab, I listed the two research questions on the first two rows to keep the purpose of the study front and center. I put the research questions in the far left column in the framework columns and placed each interview question in a single row. I positioned participants' responses in adjacent columns with a timestamp of the recording or my interpretation. On a separate tab, I created a column for each participant. I put short phrases which described the responses to the interview questions. Then I developed ideas for themes from the expressions; for example, money was an issue.

Finlay (2014) described the analytical process as an "exploration of semantic content and language used at several levels: descriptive (taking explicit meanings at face value), linguistic (e.g., noting metaphors), and conceptual (taking a more analytic approach)" (p. 127). Following the recommendations from Creswell and Creswell (2018), I conducted the following five steps that matched my research style: (1) I transcribed the interviews and typed up field notes, (2) read or looked at all the data and recorded exploratory notes, (3) clustered the themes for coding, (4) created a summary table listing descriptions, themes, and notes which (5) represented the description and themes in a qualitative narrative. An interpretative analysis scholar, Smith et al. (2009), recommended four similar steps when interacting with the data set. Steps one and two

can blend because of the reading and re-reading in step one when the researcher notes during the first read. Notes were made in the excel spreadsheet and the notebook when reviewing the transcript and written notes from the live interview.

During step two, the researcher makes descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments of the participants' choice of keywords, phrases, or explanations and develops a "richer account of the meaning of these objects" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 89). Hence, Adwin used the term "bad taste in my mouth" to mean the negative experience lingered with him. Step three involves developing emergent themes from the transcription and the exploratory comments discovered during the first and second reading of the transcript. Finding emergent themes took multiple readings of phases and listening to the audio recording of their experience. According to Smith et al. (2009), "themes are usually expressed as phrases which speak to the psychological essence of the piece and contain enough particularity to be grounded and enough abstraction to be conceptual" (p. 92). Following the step mentioned above resulted in the development of my phrase "money was tight." While some participants did not describe their lack of money as tight, they talked about needing to work more hours to afford tuition. In step four, the researcher finds connections across emergent themes and organizes them according to the order they were captured from the data sets and how they fit together. Within the multiple tabbed excel file, one was dedicated to participant themes. This tab included the interview questions to the left and short phrases that matched all the participants. If a phase was not associated with a participant, I left the cell blank or typed "never mentioned." In addition to the interview questions, I noted experiences described either as negative or positive, including the lack of any reaction to a situation.

My research focused on how students transitioned through a personal disappointment and triumphed ultimately. The approach to the findings utilized a multi-layered approach such as narrative, hermeneutics, an interpretive framework, and drawing from three theories: critical race, LatCrit, and Schlossberg's transition. These approaches and theoretical frameworks allowed me to understand the meaning of experiences and uncover students' behavior characteristics once on academic probation. My choice of double hermeneutics was to ensure the understanding of how a student moved in, through, and out of this significant life event. Schlossberg's (2011) transition theory identified four resources: self, strategies, situation, and support, known as the "4Ss." Schiavone and Gentry (2014) believed Schlossberg's transition theory allowed researchers to "categorize individual components of the transitions and organize those components in a meaningful way" (p. 30). These multilayered approaches helped identify epiphanies and coping resources, behavioral or physical, to transition from an unanticipated event such as academic probation.

Within 24 hours of an interview, I wrote reflective memos to capture immediate thoughts and feelings of responses from shared stories. I circled words, phrases, or statements that I found interesting for further exploration. After transcribing recordings, I identified broad thematic areas during each transcript's first complete read-through to develop the domain list. While reading, I bracketed, circled, or starred initial impressions, assumptions, or observations, which created a reflexive journal. Reflective notes within my spiral journal or in the margins of the transcript served as a bracketing exercise to capture my "questions, own emotions, and descriptions of, or comments on, the language used" (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008, p. 217). This act granted me the opportunity to suspend judgments and focus on the transcript in its pure state. I must be engaged in self-awareness and critical self-reflection to achieve bias-free interpretation before

interpretative analysis (Milinki, 1999). Therefore, additional reflective notes were kept within the excel spreadsheet on each participant tab and a tab labeled questions to explore. By writing out my questions, I could focus on their response at the first reading round.

A second reading of the transcripts and notes categorized reoccurring or essential phrases into salient emergent themes, flag words, or phrases. I examined independently and thoroughly each participant's narrative to develop themes. I crossed-analyzed the data from each account. Shared experiences were counted and clustered into thematic categories. When an individual's story or theme identified varied from others,' I reviewed previous transcripts and notes to confirm the lack. For example, two of the participants referenced faith or God. Therefore, I went back to see if other participants referenced religion and found none existed.

Validity, Accuracy, and Credibility

As the researcher and the research instrument, it is essential for me to acknowledge the filters and lens brought into this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In narrative inquiry, the researcher contributes to the research by filtering students' responses with their knowledge, social, and political filters into the interpretative and meaning-making process. Researchers must document their emotional and intellectual reactions to participants' experiences. Consequently, reflexivity and participant feedback are highly recommended and essential in a qualitative narrative approach to ensure interpretive validity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; McMillian & Schumacher, 2010; Milinki, 1999; Miller et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2009). Interpretive validity is obtained when the researcher, to a "degree of accuracy, represents the inner world of the participant" (Milinki, 1999, p. 162). Reflexivity can be validated using strategies (1) self-awareness, (2) capturing the essence of the participant, (3) being accurate (4) transcends the researcher's subjectivity and cultural context (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010).

To enhance the reflexivity, I incorporated two strategies. First, I used a peer debriefer to ask probing questions to discuss and understand the knowledge acquired during the interview, identify biases, and "challenge [*me*] to provide solid evidence for the interpretations or conclusion" (Milinki, 1999, p. 161). Second, I discussed findings with the Student Advising Center director and provided interpretations from sessions to confirm if my descriptions accurately captured academic probationary students' typical barriers and participation in the Probation Workshop. She provided a copy of the workshop materials, which included a list of obstacles. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), for the reader to consider the study credible, thick, rich descriptions of participants' experiences are detailed in the findings. Therefore, to ensure the authenticity of the analysis, I followed the recommendations of various research design authors (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; McMillian & Schumacher, 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Limitations

An interpretation of a narrative study takes a complex examination. As a novice researcher, the development of themes could be broadly descriptive and resemble a phenomenological approach. The sample size for a narrative approach was minimal for generalization to other college students. Perhaps the institutional type being a regional campus with a diverse student body enrollment of 46% reduces the experiences described by minoritized students at PWIs. The number of participants produced a homogeneous group by ethnicity. There were four Latinx students, two males and two females, and only one African American male student. Other possible limitations of the findings could result from students' academic majors such as science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and health professional courses having more persistence challenges. In this study, only one student initially studied in the health

profession. Neither research questions nor the literature for this study considered a student's high school academic performance or college intention to graduate or transfer to another college. The college's omission of considering individual high school courses per their academic major or college intent possibly influenced their persistence.

Both rapport and active engagement with participants are vital within narrative research. Most of the participants were hesitant about participating in the study because they were nervous about being asked questions. Therefore, before each interview, I gave my short autoethnography of my college experience. During the discussion, at times, I sensed that respondents felt uncomfortable sharing their experiences. Still, it was not related to my role but their ethnicity. I came to this conclusion due to the hesitancy before saying Mexican or immigrant or saying "you know" when discussing race. I tried to avoid making them uncomfortable when talking about their failure or leading their response. The data collection process did not include a discussion via phone. Regardless, respondents seemed at ease talking about their experiences without the phone option.

Summary

Higher education's national conversation focuses on college completion rates and the ethnic demographic shift to greater diversity. Analysis by the National Student Clearinghouse found Latinx and Black students were less likely than White and Asian American students to earn a degree within five years (Shapiro et al., 2016). First-generation students entered college lacking academic rigor, understanding university systems, institutional literacy, and how-to self-monitor independence (White & Ali-Khan, 2013). Research studies included the roadblocks to a college degree, high school preparedness, and standardized test scores as essential factors. Minoritized and first-generation students lacked the social capital to navigate their academic

experiences and interactions with peers. Therefore, these roadblocks negatively impacted the persistence of students of color. Complicating the ability to adjust and maintain good academic standing are historical and present-day cultural experiences and racial tension. Purposeful institutional structures of dedicated offices and spaces were implemented during the 21st century. These places attempted to combat students' feelings of being a guest and unsupported on campus. However, the degree completion gap still exists among students of color.

Numerous quantitative studies measured students' experiences and identified behavioral skills related to persistence. Empirical research studies linked academic success to resilience, conscientiousness, self-efficacy, purpose, perseverance, and personality. A significant predictor of student persistence was self-efficacy. However, these studies did not focus on the students' voices, which could contextualize students' feelings and challenges. Research studies found that academic challenges slowed graduation rates for Latinx and Black college students. However, studies further identified that efficacy assisted students in gaining good academic standing. Critical race theory and LatCrit theory add context lens as tools to reach a level of adequacy for the narratives of Latinx's essence and Black students' lived experiences. These theories amplify educational barriers for students of color and how institutional systems are resisted and overcome (Taylor, 2016). LatCrit focuses on the unique perspective of the Latinx experience, such as immigration and language rights, which are different from that of the Black experience. Schlossberg's transition theory will frame the narrative approach to describe the movement into and through academic recovery while navigating the college experience.

The next chapter profiles five participants' experiences while transitioning to good academic standing. Therefore, the profile section chronicles their pre-college and non-academic experiences along with their family's involvement or impact on their interaction with college.

Then the chapter includes the first semester grades below good standing and the final grades after the interview. Their profiles revealed obstacles and success elements during their academic journey.

CHAPTER 4

STUDENT PROFILES

This chapter begins with a brief description of each participant developed by two ice-breaker questions regarding why they decided to go to college, particularly at the research site university. These questions aimed to understand minoritized students' academic and social experiences as they persisted from the first semester to academic probation to identify non-cognitive skills or experiences that supported their ability to achieve academic success. Understanding the impetus for attending college uncovered three themes among the participants: their parents' role, needing money, and social mobility. Participants' individual or family finances significantly influenced the time to degree, grade point average (GPA), and persistence. The need for cash caused four participants to work more than 25 hours a week. Three participants' parents had strong influences on their decision to attend college. Unknowingly, one participant's parents delayed their son's progress. All the participants decided to participate in college because of their parents or the ideal of social mobility. Race and politics altered one participant's thinking but silenced another. Emergent themes caused a significant impact on aspects of their college journey, such as their experiences, ability to persist and achieve good academic standing.

Using pseudonyms in the following subsections protects the anonymity of the five participants while providing a foundational understanding of their college experiences. To better

visualize the participants' demographic data with their academic progression, Table 1 provides the first semester the participants fell below a 2.0 and rose to at least a 2.0, and the GPA by the end of the study.

Table 1

Participant's Demographics and Academic Progression

Participant	Ethnicity	Fall Cohort	Major	First Semester < 2.0	GPA	First Semester ≥ 2.0	Spring 21 Cum GPA
Adwin	African American	2017	Theater	Fall 2018	1.74	Fall 2019	2.10
Isabel	Mexican American	2017	Social Work	Fall 2017	1.41	Spring 2021	2.13
Rafael	Mexican American	2017	Political Science	Spring 2018	1.57	Fall 2019	2.58
Teresa	Mexican American	2018	Pre-Nursing/ General Studies	Fall 2018	0.76	Fall 2019	2.67
Manuel	Mexican American	2018	Business	Fall 2018	1.26	Spring 2019	2.14

Rafael had competing priorities: family and money. At times, he had to decide between attending classes, taking care of family, or working. Teresa was determined to participate in college and be successful. She had a growth mindset despite declaring college would be difficult. Adwin was frustrated with the college experience, primarily due to the loss of his financial aid award. Isabel had a trifecta of experience, parents, and heritage, and she was unsure of her academic ability in the college setting. For all the participants, these situations, emotions, and beliefs shaped their college experiences.

Rafael: Fighting Priorities of Family and Money

Rafael is a third-generation Mexican American and first-generation college student with two younger siblings. His grandfather immigrated to the United States from Mexico. Rafael's parents separated in 2016 and divorced in 2017, just before Rafael started college. He majored in political science and was a senior at the time of the interview. Evidence of Rafael's competing priorities transpired when he informed me of the need to pause the conversation. At the start of Rafael's interview, he notified me of a family commitment that would interrupt our conversation. The reason for the break-in conversation amplified one of his competing priorities between attending classes and taking care of family. His little brother's dentist appointment required an adult to sign and approve treatment. Since their mother was on vacation, Rafael acted as a proxy for her. Rafael gave an example of helping his mom after the divorce. He said:

> I had to take my brothers to school a lot. And I had to make sure they got there, you know, their school started around 8:30 a.m. or something like that. And I had a class that started at 8:30 a.m. so, some days like I had to take my brothers. Otherwise, they would not have had a ride to school. So not making class reflected poorly on my grades. So that was rough.

Rafael's decision to attend college was hard to determine until he shared all the influential factors. He randomly articulated several reasons for attending college. Rafael said, "I just kind of wanted to get in college, get my schoolwork [done], and just get out to get it over." He shared, "My big motivator was getting through college to go active duty in the Marines as an officer, so that was my primary driver." After stating several reasons he attended college, he revealed that finances dominated why he chose this campus. Finally, Rafael said, "a big motivator to make me stay home…work and save money." Conversations about his academic

experiences and the decision to attend college centered around family and finances. He worked most of his college attendance, primarily full-time.

Another competing priority occurred between attending classes and working to pay his tuition bill. According to Rafael, the financial aid form combined the parents' income due to his response to specific financial-related questions, though the parents were divorced. The error caused the estimated family contribution to be significantly higher than the actual income. The calculation caused financial hardship. Based on the result, the financial aid award amount was minimal. Rafael said, "I only got like $100 to cover that [$8,000 tuition]. For the rest of that, I had to cover myself. And I just, I did not have the money." Rafael's part-time job in a beer distribution plant did not provide enough money. He described what happened to earn the cash, "so, I ended up working full-time to pay for that [tuition]." At some point, Rafael moved in with his father but had to pay $200 for rent. The tuition, rent, and living expenses caused him to move back in with his mother, who had remarried. Besides the financial hardship in the newness of his parent's divorce, he had to make tough decisions between his family and education.

These competing priorities caused a ripple effect in his academic standing. Along his educational journey, he lost interest, had poor attendance, lacked motivation, and had a "massive number of emotions" that took his focus from school. Unfortunately, he did not seek help from his parents or the University Counseling Center. Rafael decided to share challenges with the family after the situation was resolved. He believed his parents had other pressing issues, which caused him to withhold many details about academic challenges. Rafael said, "I do not share too much with family. I tell them afterward."

He completed the first semester in good standing. In his second semester freshman year, spring 2018, his grade point average fell below 2.0, causing academic probation. He struggled

for another semester financially and academically, resulting in pausing his education for the spring of 2019. Rafael admitted to not doing homework which caused him to perform poorly on the test. He did not mention academic resources for academic recovery. His enthusiasm about attending classes and being fully present was made difficult by several factors: his parents' divorce, helping to care for his brother, the move between the parent's homes, and his losing the financial aid award. To pay his tuition balance, he was forced to work 40 hours a week. To earn money to pay his tuition Rafael was forced to pause college in spring 2019.

However, he gained a college friend whom he attributes for "making him better." That relationship was a turning point in his life. The new college buddy gave him the financial support that was instrumental for him to stay enrolled. Another motivator was a professor of Political Science courses who made learning fun, which inspired him to prioritize attending class. He labeled the professor as encouraging, supportive, and thought-provoking. During the presidential election season, the political science course allowed Rafael to develop thought-provoking skills. Rafael seemed supportive of the ideology of Trump's stance on Mexican immigration, even though he claimed not to be a Republican or Democrat. His political views were formed by listening to family stories about his grandfather's path to the United States. The encounters with faculty and a supportive friend initiated the strategy to balance work and course assignments and desire to be on the Dean's List.

Manuel: I Did It For Them!

Manuel is a 21st Century Scholar and a non-traditional college student. He skipped a grade in elementary school and finished high school at 16. Manuel drove for the first time by himself on the first day of class. Manuel's interview differed the most in a conversational tone, sentence structure, inability to see his face, and early signing into the zoom session to ensure the

link worked. He preferred to participate in the discussion without his camera and talked in an informative manner, offering suggestions and what-if examples to the interview questions as if he were making recommendations to others. To encourage him to share more details of his experiences, I had to restate questions or ask him to share more. While not timid in responses, he admitted he was not fully engaged in school because he could not make his own decision about attending college. Manuel decided to attend college to "please teachers and family." He explained:

> I think honestly if I were completely [honest], I do it for the people I care about. I listened to them because I cared about them…because I honestly did not want to [go to college] too much. Because I was just like, yeah, I want to take a break. I was not passionate [about college]. I did not know what I wanted to give my life to. Because I feel like I am the sort of person, I would rather think about it, or I would rather not commit to something than regret committing to it.

Nonetheless, he started college based on convincing recommendations from family and high school counselors. Learning that he was 19 as a college junior gave a fuller understanding of the push by family and high school guidance counselors. Perhaps, beginning post-secondary education at the age of 16 was responsible for the lack of enthusiasm and direction in his first semester. The reason for choosing his college major gave evidence of being non-committal and unsure of his career direction or future. He mentioned the basis for selecting Business:

> Because that is a very generalized field, you can do a lot with a business degree. And then, if I find something I want to do, I can always either go back [to college] or take the two years after my full degree and like minor in it. So that was my thought process.

Lack of career direction, desire to attend college, and counseling services negatively impacted Manuel's first-year experiences. He ended his first semester below a 1.5 GPA. Manuel revealed, "I have my stuff going on. It is more of like mental issues than the actual capability to learn." He assessed the ability to perform better academically to adjusting to the fall season. seasonal. He believed it took a few months to readjust to school in the fall semesters, which seemed to be true since he rebounded his GPA to 2.0 by the end of Spring 2019. When the global pandemic of COVID-19 forced Spring and Fall classes to virtual learning, Manuel had double trouble causing him to struggle academically once again. His grades fell below 2.0 again by the end of Fall 2020. Overall, he sourced his academic setbacks to mental issues, not the ability to comprehend the material. Manuel said, "I do not like the feeling of failure, but you have to keep moving forward." Despite the challenges, he never stopped attending college. Unlike his peers in this study, Manuel did not have to balance academic studies with a job.

He sought help from the University Counseling Center. However, under 18 years of age, they could not provide services without his parents' consent. Manuel expressed, "I did not feel like having my parents sign that [consent form]. I was just like, whatever, it is fine." So, he delayed counseling until he was of legal age and did not need his parents' signature or them to be aware of his conversation. For reasons not evident, he did not inform his parents of the struggle of adapting to college. In addition to "mental issues" and the inability to gain counseling, Manuel felt a sense of isolation from his college peers. These factors contributed to the first year being the "hardest and stressful." After gaining access to the Counseling Center, he strategized with his Success Coach for an academic improvement plan. He attributed maintaining at least a 2.0 GPA to support gained from the Counseling Center, 21st Century Scholars Coordinator, and faculty, who gave him more time to complete assignments.

Isabel: Parents, Mexican American, and Unsure

Isabel is a Mexican American whose parents were immigrants. She earned a 21st Century Scholarship to attend college. Even though Isabel attended college directly after high school, she desired to take a gap year. Nevertheless, Isabel began college but with mixed emotions: pressured by her parents and unsure if she wanted to attend college. Isabel described the decision as "basically I went to college because of my parents." Frequently, she mentioned that their immigrant status and lack of money adversely impacted her academic experience. Isabel told the story of how her parents' citizenship status significantly influenced her application to college. She made several statements about their psychological impact on her decision. Isabel stated, "I felt pressured to go [to college] right after high school. They were tight on the whole school situation. They enforced it like 100%. So, it was no decision [for me] at all." Because she was not eager to attend college, choosing a major was difficult. Isabel had many career interests, such as becoming a veterinarian, cooking, baking, or a chef. Still, she was not passionate about any career idea. Her parents encouraged her "to find something [major/career] that gets the money." By her junior year, Isabel decided to major in Social Work because of a desire to help people, knowing she would not make much money.

Contributing to the pressure to attend college, her older sister graduated college the same year Isabel graduated high school. Then the sister went on to earn a master's degree. They lacked a close relationship. Isabel thought of her in an authoritarian parental role rather than a sibling. She never considered her sister as a role model or a supportive resource. Therefore, she navigated the admission and first-year experience like a first-generation student. Unfortunately, Isabel felt like her parents compared the sisters. She expressed:

> They were comparing me to my sister, who did well. So, when I graduated high school, she graduated college. So that kind of put pressure on me as well. And again, they always throw that we came from a low point in life. So, we want you to do so well.

Because she was not a first-generation student, this would have disqualified her technically from the study. However, as she shared her educational experiences, the journey resembled stories of first-generation students struggling to navigate college and connect with peers.

Isabel claimed that the demand and pressure from her parents affected her college experience. She revealed, "So that kind of like impacted… my success in my first year. It made it really difficult and, and it was hard that they were always like on me, like, how are your grades?" Another contributing factor to the academic decline was working her first job in her first year of college. Isabel struggled academically and socially, first as an exploratory student, then as a Social Work major. After the first semester, she earned below a 1.5-grade point average (GPA) at the end of her first semester of Fall 2017. By Spring of 2019, she dropped out to earn money to pay tuition after losing the 21stst Century Scholarship. Isabel failed to maintain a 2.5 GPA after completing 30 credit hours at the end of the first year. Isabel returned to college in the Spring of 2020 during the global pandemic to a learning format not conducive to her "learning style" and working close to 40 hours a week.

Nevertheless, by the end of the Fall 2020 semester, marginally, her GPA improved. Isabel finished the Spring 2021 semester with a 3.5 GPA. Ending the semester with higher grades raised her cumulative above 2.0. The strategy to improve her grades upon her return to college was to drop below full-time and put effort into completing successfully. Before and after her return to college, she lacked confidence in her responses to class discussion topics. She claimed not to be a "book person." On a few occasions, Isabel mentioned that "White" people in

class “sounded smarter.” She perceived their answers and contribution to the conversation as “better” than hers. Isabel saw her White classmates as more intelligent, which conveyed the impression of failing. She said, “I saw them as more confident. I thought this could be because of my ethnicity. My responses to questions could be better. Their [White students] answers sounded like they understood the subjects better.” In a soft and timid tone, Isabel described herself as unintelligent, lacking confidence, and shy. Therefore, at times she would not talk during class.

Isabel wondered if not feeling belongingness was “because of her race.” During the 2020 presidential election season, Isabel silenced her true feelings about race and politics in a political science classroom. Discussions surrounded the November Presidential election. She admitted, “Some students spoke well about a certain president [Donald Trump], and it made me kind of scared.” She did not feel safe discussing race and the political election in class because of her “Latina” heritage. Therefore, Isabel would either be “silent or sugarcoat” her words in conversations. Consequently, she “shut down and became quieter.” Isabel’s inability to speak her truth and participate in discussions became an expression of alienation imposed by her classmates. Being forced to attend college, not confident in academic discussion caused her to be unsure if she could fit into the campus environment.

Teresa: I Am Determined!

Teresa is a Mexican American with three older siblings who did not attend college. She is a 21st Century Scholar who entered college to major in Nursing. Her desire to stay close to her family drove her decision to attend the local university. All the participants were provided the interview questions before the interview, but only Teresa prepared remarks. She shared a few of her written reasons for the decision to attend college. Teresa stated:

> I knew the importance of a college education and how a college degree can get you very far in life. I also wanted to be the first one in my family to go to college and become that small percentage in the Hispanic Latino culture to go to college.

However, Teresa's family had different directives than Isabel's about post-secondary education. She vented:

> My dad did not want me to get into student debt. So, he told me just to get a job and forget about college because money was an issue for us. But, actually [I] did not listen to them. I did what was best for me. I went ahead and went to college.

Teresa approached college focused on being a role model for her older siblings and other "Latinos." She said, "I had no one to look up to. Since no one else I know of from the Latino culture, Hispanic culture went to college." Therefore, she believed "it would be more difficult" for her. Determined to go to college, she began with four factors influencing the first-semester experience: "the belief that college would be difficult… doubting" herself "… the family's "socioeconomic status… and the lack of Latinx role models." As Teresa navigated college unsuccessfully, she worked at a local grocery store to support college-related needs and personal expenses. Teresa struggled with science courses in the first year. Completing homework assignments was difficult because she "did not have money to buy a laptop." She described her first semester as "difficult because I did not have anyone to ask for advice on how to get through college. I had to struggle on my own." Teresa's grade point average was below 1.0 GPA after the first semester. Upon receiving the academic probation letter, she "felt like a failure." With the guidance of an advisor, she changed her major to General Studies. Teresa "motivated herself" and changed her trajectory towards good academic standing by the end of her third semester.

After achieving a 2.0 GPA, she announced, “I am not a failure!” She finished the Spring 2021 semester above a 3.0 GPA for a cumulative above 2.5.

Besides the academic advisors, she stated, “I do not like to ask for help,” not even from professors. However, she did lean on first-generation high school friends attending the research site with Teresa. They became her support network. As a group, they navigated the three years of college together. She detailed their supportive role in her educational journey:

> They were also just like me, Hispanic, and some were also the first to go to college. Whenever we were struggling in a class, we would take some time to set up study sessions. We were also able to relate to each other. And we were all going through similar experiences in our first few years at Midwest Regional University.

Most of her friends continue to pursue their degrees and provide her with a support network.

Adwin: Frustrated With the Whole College Thing!

Adwin is an African American first-generation student studying Theater and disgruntled about his college experience. During our initial call for introductions and to arrange a time, Adwin shared his eagerness to discuss experiences at the research site university at that moment. The tone of his voice and comments that “there is a lot to share” implied disappointment with interactions with departments and faculty. Because of his style, I noted that I might not stick to the questions in the margins of my journal. Nonetheless, the same initial questions asked of the participants started the conversation with him, “Why did you decide to attend college and particularly the research site?” He chose the study site to stay home and not accumulate a lot of college debt. The driving factor for attending college was his parents and the ideal of social mobility. Adwin commented, “It is just this whole fact that a degree opens up so many more doors for me, like having a better paying job.” He talked about his parents being from Ghana and

their influence on the college decision. He said, “They pushed me towards education saying, hey, if you get a degree, you know, you are gonna make more money.” His secondary factor was the decision to pursue a career goal of working in the theater industry.

According to Adwin, his academic challenges started shortly after arriving at campus and not finding a place to fit. He claimed the regional campus community “lacked social interaction” and integration and the academic rigor expected of a college experience caused his disconnect. Therefore, he attended classes sporadically at the start of his sophomore year, causing his grade point average to fall below 2.0. Unlike the other participants, he completed his first year in good standing. He termed his sophomore year as taking a break, even though he registered for third and fourth-semester courses. Hence, the unofficial break, not unenrolling from courses, sourced Adwin’s frustration with his college experiences. Several times, his conversation diverted back to encounters with a faculty member and the financial aid department. Faculty members were apathetic to his plight to pass classes successfully. Adwin had two weighty priorities, completing courses with grades that would bring up the average and stay enrolled in classes. He described the challenge:

> I was in a pickle. I had to pass the class, I would have [dropped], but because of my specific circumstance [SAP Appeal], I was in no position to drop the course, I had to pass, and she [faculty member] did not care!

When Adwin returned to regular attendance, he was in jeopardy of losing his financial aid award because he unsuccessfully completed his sophomore year, earning one credit hour out of 23. Therefore, his grade point average (GPA) fell below 2.0 after both the third and fourth semesters. The financial aid appeal process Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) represents a federal government monitoring process for students who receive a need-based federal grant

(PELL). According to the SAP appeal process at the research site, students "sapped" for low GPA need to achieve the minimum set program grade requirement over a particular period. If "sapped" for lack of completion rate, students' signed agreement requires them not to fail or withdraw from any classes. According to Adwin, at the end of November 2019, he was notified of the loss of financial aid. The late decision forced him to find part-time work to afford tuition. He worked close to 40 hours a week at Walmart, which caused him to juggle work and school like Rafael. Unfortunately, he could not balance the two priorities. Therefore, he remained below 2.0 after Spring 2020.

Dealing with the financial aid office's forms and not fully understanding the requirement added additional stress to his academic recovery. He shared his frustration:

> I got my GPA above the requirement, and I was like, okay, Where is my money? Oh, you must fill out another form to get the money that you know the government is giving you.
>
> And then that really made no sense to me. So, there was a huge, like, back and forth.

When discussing social and political climate during 2020, Adwin came back to his experience with the financial office, saying, "…the finance department, okay, who is making these decisions? I want to know if there is a committee. What is the demographic of this committee type of thing, and who was making these choices [who receives aid]?" Being so frustrated with the lack of financial aid to pay tuition and the SAP requirements made him question if institutional racism existed in the process. So, he decided to find out about the ethnicity of the decision-makers in the financial aid office. Examining the decision-makers, he remarked, "Who was saying who can and cannot get what? And that's something I actually did try to research." While the campus is situated in a city with mostly Black Americans, "it is [research site] still majority White people." He discovered that the office had a Black female director. Then he

wondered, “Is that one Black person actually for Black people? Or are these, you know, in other words, the token. Or just there so they can say, hey, we are diverse? But not really because we all think the same.” The dynamics of his cultural and socioeconomic layers caused him to filter his interactions through these lenses. These mixed experiences, coupled with a lack of belongingness, caused his continued struggle toward good academic standing. Nonetheless, he completed the Spring 2021 semester slightly above a 2.0 GPA.

In conclusion, most participants’ mindsets upon starting college and finance contributed to their academic setbacks. Rafael’s priorities about taking his brothers to school and paying tuition caused him to lose focus on his desire for social mobility. Before entering college, Teresa predicted that the lack of “Hispanic” role models would make college hard. However, despite the academic challenge and her father’s opposition, Teresa was determined to succeed. Isabel linked her academic failure to her parents’ pressure to attend college because of their immigrant heritage and the importance of money. Further delaying Isabel’s success was the lack of confidence in her academic ability. Adwin was frustrated with the lack of social interaction and the financial aid policy and procedure. Manuel, the youngest of the participants, started college for the sake of others. Hence, he focused on making others happy while he suffered in silence.

The three participants who started under pressure and believed that college would be difficult failed the first semester. Students’ financial status or the loss of financial aid or scholarship awards triggered the necessity to work nearly 40 hours a week. Despite adjusting to virtual classes and online learning formats, the participants stayed enrolled while struggling to reach good academic standing. By the end of May 2021, all participants reached or maintained a 2.0 GPA.

In the next chapter, the remainder of the interview questions from the protocol focused on experiences that impacted their grade point average. Participants described their reaction to academic probation. They explained how and what changes they implemented to raise their cumulative grade point average. Likewise, participants talked about relationships or support networks that contributed to their successful transition. Hence, chapter five gives voice to their personal experiences and uncovers common experiential themes.

CHAPTER 5

THEMATIC FINDINGS

This study sought to understand the experiences of African American and Latinx students once on academic probation who attended a regional university. Therefore, I proposed two questions: What are the African American and Latinx students' experiences on a regional campus on academic probation? What behavioral characteristics manifested among minoritized students once on academic probation that influenced persistence? The design of the interview protocol attempted to explore the behavioral traits displayed as they navigated academic recovery. I applied a narrative approach that allowed students to describe turning points during their educational journey.

Insights gleaned from their lived experiences that impacted their academic standing included the following themes: self-efficacy, belongingness, competing priorities, pressure to attend college, and Latinx culture. These emergent dominant themes resulted when more than one participant used a combination of phrases or concepts to explain experiences that either hindered or improved their academic success. When students talked about educational backgrounds, they shared their state of belongingness and the institutionalized resources such as faculty, faculty's pedagogy, and academic advisors, who impacted their recovery. Their self-efficacy surfaced to overcome financial hardships and academic failure. Also noted were the people in their lives that encouraged them to persist along the way. While listening and analyzing

the data, I identified common themes and untapped intuitional resources to facilitate student success.

Experiences with Institutionalized Resources

Institutionalized resources vary at each campus but consist of people, places, and things designed to enable all students to have a positive college experience regardless of ethnicity. This study defines standardized resources as faculty, academic advisors, success coaches, and individuals in educational support services. Places include the financial aid office; things include services and programs within the student affairs portfolio. Five participants included stories of faculty members, academic advisors, success coaches, and the financial aid department in their college experience and academic recovery narratives. Four participants talked about either an academic advisor or enrollment coach as a support network during academic recovery. Two of the five mentioned a faculty member by name. However, discussions with faculty did not involve their academic status or plan for recovery. Participants stated that faculty discussion revolved around navigating the COVID-19 college setting and late assignments. Therefore, omitted from the participants' narratives was the faculty's guidance to improve their grades. Only one student sought assistance from the campus University Counseling Center. Another student joined an affinity group, Brother2Brother, a college success program. The program focused on helping male students achieve academic success, develop their leadership skills, and participate in community events.

A Blessing and a Bad Taste

To comprehend how participants interacted within the campus environment during their first two years, they were asked about memorable experiences. Responses presented insight into the campus environment during their time on academic probation. Participants were given

suggested topics to speak about: faculty, student body, support networks, or classroom experiences. Faculty are symbolic figures of higher education who deposit time and knowledge, inspire curiosity, and challenge students to do their part in the learning process. Hence, most participants chose to talk about classroom experiences. Rafael and Adwin described starkly different experiences with faculty, causing one to engage more profoundly and the other less engaged in their courses. Therefore, narratives of encounters with faculty varied from constructive to destructive. These interactions claimed by the students either supported academic recovery or furthered failure. Adwin characterized faculty as beneficial—blessing and problematic—bad taste. The beneficial side "blessed" Rafael and helped him prioritize school before work or family. The problematic side caused Adwin to have a "bad taste in his mouth" and categorized his college experience as frustrating.

Rafael expressed gratitude for the support given by teachers towards situations related to late assignments and the lack of textbooks for classes. Due to the lack of financial aid received after his parents' divorce, Rafael worked more hours to pay for his education and living expenses. Rafael gave the example of waiting on a check to pay for a book and the professor's response to assignments. He detailed,

> My geology professor was understanding because I was waiting for my student aid to purchase the textbooks. In that time, two labs had passed, I was still waiting for the check to be mailed to me, and I let her know. She said, you know, just turn it in whenever you get it done. I will grade it all. And that helped me a lot.

The professors' empathy was described as a "blessing." He explained,

> My professors have been extremely sympathetic to anything that I had to go through. I have not had one instance where a teacher goes off and says tough luck. They have all

> been extremely helpful in that regard. They have all been extremely understanding. And that is something I have truly been blessed with.

Adwin described interactions starkly different with institutional structures such as faculty who appeared problematic during the global pandemic of COVID-19. The national health crisis altered millions of lives and impacted and shattered many traditional ways of doing, including educational institutions. Suddenly in March of 2020, many college professors and students were forced to teach and learn differently. During the transition to virtual classes in the spring semester of 2020, Adwin believed a professor was not empathetic about assignments. He illustrated a professor's response to a request for late work,

> When COVID happened, I specifically needed to pass this class. I asked her [professor] to accept any late work. Still, she said "no" and that she "did not care that COVID and all this other stuff was going on.' I told her literally how it affected me because it would jeopardize my financial aid for the next two semesters. She did not care because she said, "Everyone is going through COVID." This experience left a really bad taste in my mouth.

Again, Rafael gives a different account of support from faculty. He found professors even more gracious and compassionate. Furthermore, he shared an example of a professor's cooperation,

> I had COVID. I was sick for about a week and a half. I had a death in the family due to that [COVID]. And so, there was a lot there. And I would just communicate with the teachers and let them know. They were understanding for that.

Rafael recalled an encounter with a faculty member who proved beneficial and life-changing that he credited the professor with "breathing life" into his interest in attending classes. During the first year of college, Rafael disengaged in classes and lacked consistent attendance.

After taking a class with Professor P., who taught political science and history, attending classes and learning became a priority for Rafael. He is currently a senior, and he remembered without hesitation that the classes were on Tuesday and Thursday in his sophomore year. Dr. P's teaching style of engaging students in thought and conversation motivated Rafael to participate in discussions and read assignments. He described the interest shift and participation,

> Big, I had more and more political science courses to get the opportunity to take him. I took him every chance I got. And, you know, I go to every one of his classes, I mean, I only miss[ed] a handful of days, either due to work or sickness, but I mean, that was really it.

Adwin shared an example of how an instructor in the theater department represented both a blessing and a bad taste. He claimed, "We did not have the best relationship. It was a little rocky. Because we are both strong-willed people, we have different ideas." While not sharing the particulars of an incident, Adwin stated, "And we both stated our cases, very strongly with reasons for why we did stuff and what we did." However, after the incident, he sensed a difference in the relationship with the theater instructor. Adwin described the new relationship,

> It is like we are both different in a way. I am not sure if it is, either COVID and all that, time alone, or what it was. He has grown as an individual. And at the same time, I have also changed, and now we are able to work in sync. He gives me advice, in just different areas. Now, it is something I am actually really grateful for.

Rafael gave plenty of examples of benefiting from faculty interactions, which increased his interest, raised his grades, and expanded his curiosity about social and political issues. He attributed political science and history courses to the ability to discuss topics such as race and

politics. Again, this gives the example of being a blessing— a beneficial aspect of the ability for faculty to inspire. Rafael said,

> Having the professors I have had helped me, who pushed us to talk about this stuff [race and politics] and push us to get into arguments and discuss things. Obviously, be respectful, but challenge each other's views and challenge each other's beliefs and see what, like, why you follow [political parties] and why you think the way you do.

When the entire campus community pivoted to remote learning, restricting students from campus, Rafael said, "Classes sucked," a term used to describe the virtual experience. Nevertheless, he found a positive perspective, "If anything, it is [not having to drive to campus] kind of helped me." Less travel allowed him to either spend more time working or completing assignments. He detailed how professors altered course assignments,

> The teacher will issue the reading for the week and assignments. I can bang all that out in one day. Whereas in the past, they'd get through the reading and stuff like that on Monday, give the homework and assignment on Wednesday.

He found receiving the assignments and due dates for the week beneficial. Rafael stated, "I do not have to wait for anyone to tell me when I can again do it. I can get everything done as quickly as I want to get it done."

In the Spring 2021 semester, an experience with a late assignment for Professor A was drastically different from the instructor who "did not care" in his earlier example. Adwin said, "I had a call with her. And we were just talking. And you know, from the professor's perspective, she was really empathetic. She understood how hard it could be for students." Adwin believed the professor showed empathy and sympathy for his situation. She told him I had a lot of similar traits to her son. Her vulnerability gave him insight into her life. He said, "Talking about the

experience she had to go through, definitely opened up a window to see just how hard it is for teachers. They are not just like a professor slash teacher. They have their personal life, too." Adwin labeled a faculty member as being a blessing. The interaction involved a technical director within the theater department. The director was influential in securing an internship for him at a local theater center. Before the pandemic shut down indoor activities, Adwin stated, "The internship turned into a job. I kept climbing up higher and higher in the ranks in types of things, that was positive." This opportunity gave Adwin the ability to experience faculty being a "blessing."

While Manuel could not recall the instructor's name in his business major, he remembered the instructor's thoughtfulness. He described,

> [The professor] would send you an email. Every time there is an assignment due that he thinks you need to know about, he will send you an email, and he is like, okay, there is a test. Here is an email day of the test. He is very adamant about keeping up with the class.

Like Rafael, Manuel's instructor extended deadlines. He gave this example,

> There is another teacher if I need to extend the date on something. Maybe I was late by a few days because I had stuff going on. Sometimes she will just say, okay, well, I can understand because of our times in [Health Pandemic].

Isabel shared, "I do not really [ask for help] from people much." Teresa said, "I am the type of person that does not like to ask for help. Even if it is professors, I do not know [why] just makes me nervous." Researchers who study students' academic experiences believe that faculty have the most contact with students, therefore, are the most influential and approachable figures on campus. Simultaneously, faculty can appear to be noncaring and strictly about checking off items

on the syllabus. Hence, in this study, faculty seemed like a blessing when flexible and empathetic, but they left a bad taste when apathetic and inflexible.

Pedagogy Matters

At the center of this study is the academic standing of African American and Latinx students. Academic standing results from grades earned, which attempts to measure students' comprehension of the course material. To retain and demonstrate learning, the subject matter expert must first masterfully deliver content that can reach varying levels of learners. Participants' narratives emphasized that an instructor's teaching technique and engagement ability mattered in their educational journey. Rafael believed classes without thought and discussion were "busy work." Adwin did not see the benefit of college. He stated, "College is not doing anything for me. I am not learning anything. There is a really strong disconnect between the teacher and her teaching style." Rafael's description of classroom experiences resembled the methodological approach of banking education. He summarized the experience: "It [class] was never engaging enough or challenging enough to really like. It was more just repetitive rote repetition and not pushing you to think. The lack of engagement made the classes boring, particularly pre-requisite courses." The banking approach caused disengagement. Typically, students pass courses related to their major because the topic appeals to their interests. However, Adwin failed a core course relevant to his career interest. He struggled during educators' adjustment to virtual or online teaching. He described a virtual assignment:

> I had to struggle with their struggle, which caused a disconnect once again. For example, I was in geology. We are supposed to, you know, be feeling the rocks, looking at them, and doing different things with them. There is only so much you could do just looking at a screen. And with all this other stuff that makes it [learning] very, very hard.

Isabel mentioned that professors made learning difficult when classes converted to online. She revealed, “I am also a visual learner. And that makes it kind of difficult when the professors are putting everything online…I feel that [virtual learning] kind of affects the whole situation of the school.” The teaching technique by one professor of a political science course created what Freire (2018) called a co-investigator dialogical approach. This experience inspired Rafael to learn; this was evidenced by his calling himself a “political scientist.” Rafael shared his new outlook on learning, “You have to look at the factors. You must know, cause and effect of everything you have to see, you cannot just blindly follow. And the college has helped me push me to do that [ask questions].” Unaware, Rafael described problem-posing education which “breaks the vertical pattern characteristic of banking education” (Darder, 2018, p. 112).

Rafael directly credited instructors’ teaching techniques for developing his critical thinking skills. He noted,

> The professors I have had, who helped me, who pushed us to talk about this stuff, and to push us to get into arguments and discuss things and obviously be respectful, but challenge each other’s views and challenge each other’s beliefs and see what, and why you follow and why you think the way you do.

Adwin never mentioned being engaged in classes or how his perception of learning changed throughout his probation. However, he outsourced his academic problems to the faculty, not teaching anything new with unchallenging course material. Teresa and Manuel made vague references regarding interaction with faculty and their pedagogy. Still, both commented about the rigor of college courses. Teresa said, “College courses are a lot more difficult.” Manuel stated, Classes were just a lot more challenging.” Sadly, Teresa revealed,

> I was on my own, you know. I was exploratory in nursing. I was taking all these science classes, like human bio in psychology. I really, really struggled a lot in those classes. The courses were a lot more difficult than I expected.

However, Manuel, Teresa, and Isabel used phrases such as "they [faculty] were nice and supportive." Even though Teresa did not seek help from professors because they made her nervous, she stated, "What I like most about [institution] is that the professors are very dedicated to their student's success." This statement juxtaposed her previous comments. Perhaps the teaching technique, pre-college preparation, the participants' lack of social capital in postsecondary education, and working more than 25 hours compounded the difficulty of learning the course material.

Nice Having Someone

Three of the five participants mentioned an institutional structure was staff in the Student Advising Center, success coaches, and enrollment coaches. Advisors and success coaches enhanced participants' college experiences and helped them navigate academic probation. In addition to the Counseling Center staff and a Scholarship Coordinator, these individuals provided guidance, strategy, and a listening ear to the participants during the academic recovery journey. An advisor strategized with Manuel to bring his grades up, "She told me, 'okay, well, here are the things you can do from now on'." And that was nice having someone help you, "say, well, this is what you need to do next." Manuel described working with the academic advisor for scheduling assistance. He detailed,

> We make my schedule together. And if I have an issue with a class, I am comfortable asking her [Success Coach] for help. Once, I was in the wrong class because one of my

requirements was different. I messaged her. I was like, I do not think I am supposed to be in this class, or I am unsure. And we just fixed it up the next day. It was just that easy.

Adwin noted that a success coach provided him with an outlet to talk and a strategy to improve his grades. The success coach learned about his high school experiences and social activities. She realized a void was created by campus life and not being academically challenged. Hence, the recommendation to join the Brother2Brother program and additional courses as a strategy to increase his grades. Teresa believed having the success coach was nice because she recommended a change in major. Teresa was admitted into the Exploratory Nursing program at the time of admission. Since Teresa was academically unsuccessful, the Exploratory Nursing program was no longer a viable option. The advisor suggested to her "to get into General Studies until I figured out what I wanted to be. Until I was ready to declare a major." Teresa credited the raised grade point average to changing the academic major recommended by an academic advisor. She said, "My GPA, my sophomore year was much better compared to my freshman year. I ended up changing my major and going into General Studies. I took a variety of classes and learned a lot from each one."

Isabel's expression and voice illuminated with the mention of the director of the Student Advising Center. She said, "I am always talking about the director of academic advising, you know, Ms. V., literally, I am always like, oh, call her, she will guide you where you need to go." Isabel did not share any specific details about her academic achievement with an academic advisor or a success coach. Nevertheless, Isabel's enthusiasm and referral to see the director suggested that Ms. V. was a resource that made a memorable impression. Perhaps Isabel obtained guidance, strategy, and a listening ear supporting the theme that it is nice having someone due to her enthusiasm towards Ms. V.

In addition to the academic advisor, Manuel sought help from the Counseling Center staff and the 21st Century Scholar coordinator. He did not talk about why he sought help from the counseling staff or the nature of his conversation. However, he commented that the Counseling Center gave him extra motivation. Manuel said, “I remember one of them was very helpful. Like she was, great to talk to. And it was just a good time. It was a great and very relaxing situation.” The scholar coordinator sent him emails about events and resources. Manuel felt the coordinator was “very interactive.” He seemed the most appreciative of having these individuals to help him adjust to college.

A success coach in the Student Advising Center identified that the lack of involvement contributed to Adwin’s academic struggle. She recognized the absence of “stimuli” described as social interaction with peers and gaining new knowledge that made him lethargic about his schoolwork. They realized Adwin needed to find activities to keep him busy. With so much time to get things done, he confessed, “I put things off. Then before I know, it is too late.” Hence, the success coach recommended he join the Brother2Brother program and add more classes to his spring 2020 schedule totaling 18 hours. As an accountability measure, he met weekly with the success coach. He said, “I literally showed her my grades to give me more incentive to do well.” His success coach encouraged, supported, and celebrated successes. Hence having her was nice. Starting spring 2020, Adwin felt better about his educational experiences because of increased credit hours, social life on campus, and working part-time. Disappointedly, he shared, “COVID hit [March 2020] and threw me back into isolation and struggling with instructors not familiar with online learning or teaching.” The success coaches’ analysis seemed accurate since he swung back to isolation during the stay-at-home order in April 2020. At this point, he continued to struggle academically, and his enthusiasm dwindled.

Efficacy

During conversations searching for participants' behavioral characteristics, three dominant themes emerged: efficacy, belongingness, and community. Three of the participants related a perceived capability to overcome academic challenges that improved their grades. Participants' initial entry into college and reaction to the academic probation notification presented their level of efficacy and correlated with their length of time on probation and college persistence. The lack of belongingness did not associate with one student's efficacy. However, the lack significantly factored into the academic probation status. A community of friends and acquaintances influenced participants' belief in their ability to persist in their college education.

I Cannot. I Can

Within the first or second year, all participants struggled to maintain good academic standing. Participants transitioned from believing they could not, regardless of being pressured by family to attend; not having access to professional counseling services; choosing between work, family, or school; lacking social activities; or missing parents' endorsement. Most participants faced the reality that they needed to tap into their ability to improve their grades. Teresa and Rafael's academic probation notification prompted them to transform their thought process to raise the cumulative GPA. Teresa remembered saying, "Even though I am struggling, I really must do my best. I cannot let my struggles stop me from keeping up with my grades and doing better." Even though she mentioned her confidence was shaken, Tersesa still a believed that academic recovery was attainable.

Rafael believed he could overcome academic probation. Rafael realized, "I needed just to do the work and get my ass in gear! The work is not hard. This [behavior and attitude] needs to change like this cannot go on." Rafael had many positive self-talk moments. He said to himself,

"Okay, I know I am not a fan of this [school], but there are things in life that I am not always going to like doing. That does not mean we cannot do that. This [previous comments] was big for me." Also, he said, "times are tough, but they will get better, I will persevere… I am going to do bigger things in my life." Rafael reflected on the mental processing of personal and academic struggles. He detailed,

> In the last four years of my college experience, I have had a massive number of emotions. A lot of things have happened. And I have learned not to [I cannot] act on them, but to process them, think about them, and then act logically. I looked for what would benefit me the most.

Manuel attributed his low grades to "mental issues" or "blocks" in the fall semesters. These "issues" caused him internal conflict. But the "I cannot" actually kept him going. He said, "I wanted to quit after my first semester, but I stuck in there. I was like, all right; I will try. I did not want just to quit and not try." He acknowledged, "My fall semester grades are always lower because it's hard to adjust being back in school. However, in the springtime, I have more eagerness to improve. So, I pushed myself to have the drive both semesters." Manuel said, "I do not like the feeling of failure. If you fail something, it is very hard to put it behind you. But, in school, you have to put it behind you if you want to keep going forward."

Adwin believed teaching styles and the lack of faculty support negatively impacted his grades. However, Adwin acknowledged the shared responsibility, "I kind of pinned more of the blame on myself, but I know there is work to be done." Therefore, Adwin moved from "I cannot" to "I can," convincing himself to change his attitude towards the assignments and professors. Even though Isabel lacked confidence in being academically successful, her connection to the idea of "I cannot" to "I can" was in the phrase, "I will jump back." Isabel did

not believe the low grades were permanent. She said, “It is just where I am right now.” Despite the positive-sided mindset, she “panicked” and took a year off due to the academic probation standing.

Getting It in Gear!

Determined to overcome academic probation, Rafael’s statement, “… needed [to] get my ass in gear!” seemed to be the perspective of other participants. They needed to adjust—get in gear, to resolve the issue of failing grades. Rafael and Teresa made better time management decisions. They planned to spend more time studying. Rafael revealed how he turned his grades around while working full-time. He detailed getting in gear, “During downtimes, I would work on homework and read chapters. I got audiobooks so I could listen as I worked. On breaks, I would post messages on the discussion board or do assignments.” Juggling the demands of work and coursework was difficult. He said, “Going to school and being a full-time employee; it got rough sometimes. I just thought to [sic] my head; it’s what I had to do.” He tried to “dive in” and get a handle on his assignments and maximize as much time as possible. Other changes included going to classes and doing the homework assignments. Teresa gave an example of managing time which benefited her progress. She stated, “I left unscheduled time to provide flexibility. This really helped me because it prevented me from setting myself up for failure and cramming too much into my schedule.” A strategy to complete assignments and make school a priority benefited Rafael and Teresa.

Teresa’s gear shifted when she decided to change her major from Pre-Nursing to General Studies after consultation with a success coach for academic recovery. These adjustments brought back Teresa’s confidence. She expressed, “I do not feel like a failure, no more. I believe I started to believe in myself that I can do it and like nothing’s impossible.” She explained why

there was a difference, “In my sophomore year, I changed my major. I took a variety of non-science-related courses. I got engaged with the people in the class and the course material.” She believed adjusting her major increased engagement and increased her understanding of class material while building her confidence academically and socially. Teresa acknowledged, “I was more involved with the student body. Also [involved in] the courses than ever before. I was more engaged with the people in the classes and with the course material.” Rafael made a mental shift towards academic recovery. He said, “I needed to be competitive with myself.” Therefore, he shared how he applied an “athletic mentality of goal setting,” which helped him set a state record in powerlifting for deadlifts. To reach this state position, he had to establish micro-goals then macro goals. Thinking of the future, Rafael believed, “I know I am going to do bigger things in my life. My life is not going to be dedicated to this beer warehouse.” Making shifts in thought and strategy, Rafael and Teresa made the Dean’s List and achieved good academic standing.

Adwin started looking towards the future, too. He said, “I know many more doors would open with a degree and have a better paying job.” Therefore, to finish college, Adwin decided to improve his grades to obtain good academic standing. He claimed, “A mental block makes it very hard for me to do the work.” The mental block developed from the disconnect with his professors, lack of belongingness, and frustration with the financial aid office. Adwin returned to attending classes regularly in what would have been his junior year. Isabel returned to college in March 2020 as a part-time student, which was part of her strategy for raising her GPA and paying for classes without a scholarship. By taking two classes, the raising of her grades requires additional semesters to reach a 2.0 GPA. As a result of getting in gear, she stated, “I started doing homework and reading assignments. I actually like school now. I am considering adding another course next semester. But the focus is increasing my GPA.” By her junior year, she

found her passion in the social work field. She considered furthering her education to obtain a master's degree in Social Work. The participants' mental gear shift demonstrated a level of efficacy that guided and timed their persistence.

Credit to God and Myself

Moments of Adwin and Rafael's conversations about overcoming probation alluded to a spiritual efficacy concept. The believed faith in God would allow them to overcome challenges and to regain good academic standing. Adwin said, "Excluding God, I would have to credit myself." Similarly, Rafael commented, "Faith in myself and God." They shared how their church affiliation or religion influenced their academic recovery and faced challenges during the past two years. Rafael told a personal story of his introduction to religion. He shared,

> My parents were not big on going to church. My dad had a traumatic experience as a kid with the church. His father was a devout Christian and would go away on mission trips for a long time. So, essentially my dad grew up without a father, and that messed my dad up. My mom introduced us to it [religion] and leaned us towards it. I was never big on it. In my junior year of college, I took a Christian History course.

According to Rafael, the course covered how religion changed throughout history. The course influenced him to reflect again on his spiritual walk. He explained, "I had dived back into it and studied things [the Bible]. I started to believe that this is only temporary, and it is okay not to dwell on terrible things. That helps me keep my head on straight." Having the temporary perspective allowed him not to believe that challenges would continue to exist.

Rafael shared "that the current state of the world with COVID and the social and racial tensions were not permanent. Do not let these external factors shape your faith and shape your outlook on life." Multiple factors in his junior year could have derailed his academic recovery.

Rafael and his family members had COVID, the death of a family member due to COVID, quarantine, loss of wages, and school assignments and due dates. Instead of going into a depressive state, he believed: “Things will get better, times are tough, but they will get better, I will preserve. Nothing lasts forever; that is true for hardships and the good times. So, do not keep yourself in one mindset.” Rafael referred to a Bible scripture, 2 Corinthians 4:18, that encourages the reader to fix our eyes not on what is seen because it is considered temporary but fix their eyes on the unseen.

Adwin joined a local church with a theater ministry to fill his schedule. The membership provided him with an extra level of activity. Adwin said, “this was staying active.” To increase his engagement in the church and activity level, he joined a young adult group. The explanation for joining the group was, “Being around those people, they spoke positive things back to me, like encouragement.” These new church friends inspired him to believe in the power of a college degree and faith in God. The senior adults talked to Adwin about college. They asked, “What happened when I did not go to school? Or say things like this happened to me when I did not go to school. Or they helped me navigate school when I returned.” The church members’ act of encouragement and positive words was an example of Romans 15:5, which inspired the reader to give endurance and encouragement to others. Rafael and Adwin’s evolving faith provided positive perspectives and motivation to address their academic challenges. They were the only two participants to reference God or religion. Four participants mentioned how others influenced their persistence. These champions imparted words of encouragement and displayed action that encouraged and supported the participants to endure and continue their college journey.

Kept My Head on Straight

Words are powerful, meaning they can destroy and produce. Most of the participants had people in their realm who spoke in defining terms that motivated them to overcome academic challenges. For example, Isabel's friends said, "Just imagine in a few years from now, you know, you're gonna be in a good place in life." This comment made Isabel think of the future and the benefit of completing her degree. Rafael's girlfriend "pushed" him every day, spoke encouraging words such as, "You can get through this," and asked questions about assignments, task lists, and due dates. He appreciated the friend's efforts and positivity. Rafael explained, "These words, she helped me keep my head on straight." Rafael confessed that he leaned on her for emotional support.

Adwin had the most profound and impactful words of encouragement from church members, community leaders, and a friend's dad. Words of inspiration to finish college were given to Adwin by two older Black men. Adwin described one as an older man in his 70s and owner of a performing arts company. The owner of the company told him,

> Finish school. Stay strong, get the degree. Because in this country, you already have two strikes against you. One, you are Black; you are a man. So not having a degree gives you the third strike. Let us say if you're not discriminated against because of your color or being a male, not having the degree will definitely be the tilting factor.

The second man was the father of a high school friend. During a brief encounter, Adwin shared his college experience with the father and told him, "I am taking time off from school." The father replied,

> Hey, if those four years of school are considered suffering, then suffer. Go through that suffering in order to reap what is at the end of it because all it is going to do is improve your life in some way, shape, or form.

The two older Black men's perspectives resonated with Adwin, causing him to return to school and attend classes. He believed their words to be accurate because they echoed his parents' comments about education.

Another determining factor for how participants experienced college and navigated academic probation was their friends and acquaintances. Isabel credited her significant other and friends for helping her through school. Her friends provided emotional support. When she was "upset, sad all the time, just down," she said, "Basically their presence gave me motivation." Mostly, she reached out to the boyfriend. Isabel said, "My boyfriend helps me with my assignments and all that. To him, it is also important to go to school. Since his parents were also immigrants, he understands where my parents are coming from. He pushes me." Isabel's boyfriend, a college graduate with immigrant parents, related to her educational and individual experiences and motivated her to stay in college.

Rafael's girlfriend offered him the listening ear and emotional support through personal, academic, and health challenges. He shared how his girlfriend supported him when life felt like "everything was falling apart," especially when he had COVID symptoms. Rafael continued, "I could not work and was stuck in the basement. I was alone in that whole thing. She FaceTimed me every day and just talked. Other people were busy." Rafael's newfound college friend and girlfriend influenced his persistence. He ecstatically expressed that the new friend paid a portion of his tuition bill. This new best friend supported him emotionally and financially and became a

motivator. The friend's ability to "dial-in" [focus] and obtain good grades pushed Rafael. Rafael shared,

> It pushed me to think I am gonna do as good as him, I want to get on the Dean's List, I want to do this. I want everything that he is doing. Meeting him was a big turning point in terms of my school and my career, all that stuff.

After the generous financial gift, Rafael told himself, "I need to get this checked." He accomplished the goal of making the Dean's List and intended to graduate in December 2021.

Teresa's high school friends provided memorable moments in college even when faced with challenging coursework or failing grades. She shared, "My friends, for example, served as an aid in my academic success. I planned study sessions with my friends. We helped each other out on class material, questions, and studied for quizzes and exams." Then Adwin's statement of having a community supports and nicely concludes the concept of encouraging acts. He said, "The main thing is just having supportive people around you." These individuals, whether college friends or significant others, served as a success factor for academic recovery. Another observation about these supporters was that they shared cultural similarities with the participants.

Strong Disconnect

The lack of belongingness severely hampered Adwin's and Isabel's academic experience. In Adwin's first semester, there was a "strong disconnect" and disappointment forming. He expected a thriving campus and student body upon arriving at college,

> Where can I get involved? The campus does not have too much going on. So, there is a strong disconnect for me. How can I be a part of the student body if there is no student body because everyone just goes to class then home? So that was like a very negative thing.

Like Adwin, Manuel desired to interact with the student body. He described the reason for his feeling of isolation, “I would just drive to college and then drive home. It just felt a little bit lonelier. I felt like people [student body] at college had groups they belonged to like friends they had known, and I did not have anyone.” Manuel talked about feeling lonely in college because he started there at 17 years old. Therefore, his friends were still in high school, so he would speak with them when they got home. Adwin talked about his high school experience and compared his social and theatrical experiences to college. Adwin explained, “In high school, I was heavily involved in my thespian troops. So, going to this college was an underwhelming experience.” Adwin believed his “disconnect” from college derived from the lack of social interaction and needing more from the university’s theater program. Again, he compared high school activities to college. He mentioned,

> When I compared my high school to freshman year of college, the main thing that was missing was student involvement or activity. Because in high school, I was a part of about seven different clubs, played sports, and stuff like that, and my grades were good. Versus, at college, everything is underwhelming. Even just having five classes like the workload is not much. I do not have enough stimuli actually to want to care to do anything. And that was an issue!

The lack of activity or “stimuli,” as Adwin named the non-events, caused him to lose momentum by his sophomore year. The lost energy caused him to stop attending registered classes for both the third and fourth semesters. In the fifth semester, returning from the gap year, he scheduled seven classes and joined the Brother2Brother program. The brother program allowed him to network with other men of color. Adwin reported the benefit of being connected with the student body. He said, “I had A grades across the board. Everything was going great till COVID

occurred. One grade dropped down to B, two of those to C, and I ended up getting an F in Speech class."

Isabel's reflected on loneliness and the disconnect from the student body. She hesitantly replied,

> I honestly do not know if it's because of my ethnicity, but I always felt left out [student body]. Because most of the people that I interacted with were White. And I always felt like they were the smart ones. I felt uncomfortable and difficult to fit in. I could not be myself.

After taking a year off, she returned in the spring of 2020. In the fall of 2020, Isabel took a political science class. She described why it was uncomfortable to be herself: "Hard to be in that class, especially with everything going on, like the president and then the argument." The discussion regarding the topic of politics and race limited her participation. Isabel revealed, "I felt like I was going to be attacked. I kept quiet on certain things and certain names; I was afraid to say them out loud. It kind of made me quieter about my opinions." She wondered what classmates thought when they saw her image or her name on the screen in-person or virtually. She asked herself, "Do they know that I am Hispanic? Are they judging me off the bat because of their opinions?" The discussion about race and politics caused her emotional turmoil and feeling unsafe, which impacted her education and classmates. Her inability to share deprived them of considering a different perspective.

Rafael told of the "pushback" from other "Mexican Americans" and Hispanic students. He commented, "We were discussing illegal immigration. I was voicing my opinion on it. Rafael agreed with the Republican Party's 2020 stance on illegal immigration." Therefore, one of his Hispanic classmates said, "How can you say that about me? What, are you xenophobic to

Mexicans?" Rafael contributed traditional conservative ideologies to his grandfather, a first-generation American. He explained the reasons for his remarks, "His [grandfather's] views rubbed off on my dad and rubbed off on me." Even though Rafael's political perspective differed from other Hispanic classmates and friends, he shared his viewpoints, unlike Isabel. Regardless, this variance did not restrict his participation and conversations in class as it did with Isabel.

Rafael and Teresa had experiences that made them feel included in students either by new or old friends. Teresa attended college with some of her Hispanic classmates from high school, who provided a sense of belonging. She described their similarities and community,

> They were just like me, Hispanic, and some were the first to go to college. I remember, whenever we were struggling in a class, we would take some time to set up a study session.

After regaining good academic standing, Teresa became more engaged with her classmates and class discussions. Like Isabel, Teresa did not feel "smart" around her peers. After raising her GPA, she felt a part of the student body, more intelligent, and participated in classroom discussions. By Manuel's junior year, the Counseling Center was available and a resource to help with his feeling of isolation and adjusting to college. Adwin's membership in Brother2Brother helped him begin to form a connection within the student body. Rafael's best friend's action of giving money toward Rafael's outstanding tuition confirmed that someone wanted him in the student body.

Money Was Tight

Substantial research validates that a significant contributor to college persistence is the lack of finance regardless of academic standing. Therefore, when the need for money intersected with other hindering factors, most students stopped attending college. Many participants

identified their socioeconomic status as a contributing factor that hindered or slowed their ability to move to good standing. They shared either financial hardship or their family's situation. They positioned finances as a focal point in their college experience by sharing their financial difficulties or family.

Isabel and Teresa shared how their parents' immigrant status and money influenced their college experiences. Isabel shared, "My parents are immigrants, so money was tight with them. They were tight on the whole school situation. They wanted me to go to school to find a job that makes money." Isabel started her first job in the first year of college, working about 30 hours a week. Unable to balance work and school, Isabel said, "I did not have time for homework as much. So, yeah, that made it difficult." She detailed what happened after failing to meet the 21st Century Scholarship renewal eligibility, which required a 2.5 minimum grade point average and the completion of 15 credit hours each semester. Isabel explained, "I messed up; that kind of went away. Okay, now it is coming out of my pocket. I panicked. I took a year off [from college]."

Teresa, a 21st Century Scholar, retained her scholarship to pay tuition. However, she still worked about 35 hours a week and admitted, "It [working that many hours] can get stressful. Sometimes I would have to deal with work and then homework in school." According to Teresa, "money was an issue" for her family. Access to technology further challenged her academics. She said,

> I did not even own a laptop because I did not have the money to buy one. I struggled to do the homework and my courses. And it was a real struggle my freshman year. And all those factors impacted my GPA, and not in a good way.

Rafael's parents' divorce caused an additional financial strain because it increased the family's estimated contribution to his education. Rafael reflected,

> I did not have the money to do that [pay his tuition bill]. I was not working full-time. I had Mondays and Wednesdays off to do schoolwork. After that, I was like, okay, I need to make more money to pay for school. I ended up working full-time, 40 hours a week.

Working enabled him to pay his tuition, "eat, clean, and take care of my health. Rafael had a car accident that required "money to pay for the car repairs and insurance." He stated, "I needed to keep full-time. I had a lot of stuff I had to work through. It would not have been good [not to work full-time]. I was deciding whether to pay for gas or go to school, or do I buy myself food?" After a car accident, Rafael had another financial setback in his sophomore year. He had a balance over $600 that prevented future registration. Rafael shared,

> I was going through all sorts of like scenarios. I was like, how can I do this? My dad just got a new house so I could not ask him. My mom, I never really asked my mom for much of anything.

Rafael considered ways to pay the remaining balance. He said, "I was looking at taking personal loans out. I never had a credit card… I decided I was taking a semester off. I told my advisor; I would just work and save the money." He returned one semester later.

Adwin's decision to attend a local university factored in money. He said, "I could just stay home, and I would be saving a lot of money, and not be, drive myself into student debt." Losing his financial aid eligibility was a moment of discontent and sharp disregard towards the staff in the office of financial aid. To regain his award amount, he needed to complete some credit hours successfully. Nevertheless, passing classes required him to register for courses that he needed financial aid to pay. Without financial assistance, he had to self-pay. The final

decision not to award his financial aid occurred in November at the end of the semester. Consequently, he had to find a job. He reflected,

> I have to pay for school somehow. I decided to start working at Walmart, and I worked late, very long hours, 40-50 hours a week. My grades definitely, some grades suffered the letter grade, but I had to, you know, do what I had to do. Working and the back-and-forth thing for like a year. It was a whole mess.

After working a year, Adwin quit because the hours conflicted with his school schedule, and finals were approaching. Unfortunately, he did not earn high enough grades to reach good academic standing.

Rafael's narrative centered around the importance of or the lack of money. His decision to attend a local college was influenced by having enough money to support his living expenses. Four of the participants worked to support their education and living expenses. Two students came from immigrant families who struggled financially. Three participants started college as 21st Century Scholars, meaning their families' income with household members met a particular threshold to receive up to 100 percent of tuition paid. After continued failing grades, one student lost the scholarship for the remainder of her school career. Rafael and Adwin's financial aid complications caused them to work more hours or work at all, respectively. The other participants worked 30–40 hours a week except for Manuel, who did not work. These students' neediness to pay living and educational expenses stretched the degree completion time frame.

Untapped Resources

A vital resource missing from their stories was the Academic Probation Workshop. The workshop was created to improve academically struggling students' college experience. In a conversation, the director of the Academic Advising Center shared elements of a workshop the

university implemented to guide students back to good academic standing. The workshop covered several topics: understanding the role of an academic advisor, the meaning of being on academic probation, the reasons students struggle academically, the semester strategy to improve the GPA, and campus resources (see Appendix B). The director discussed the six barriers to success and then emailed the list: “Students typically have two or more barriers such as poor study skills, poor time management, not enough time, family conflicts, text anxiety/test-taking or part-time or full-time work hours.” She believed that one of the six barriers coupled with a minor barrier such as lack of goals caused lower grades. Omitted from her list was a lack of belonging and faculty interaction. Research supports these additional reasons as to why college students failed in their academics. The director shared components of the recovery plan, “After the larger workshop and smaller group sessions, success coach appointments were scheduled as a check-in on students’ progress.”

After attempting less than 30 credit hours, all students in this study received a probation letter (see Appendix C), which instructed them to attend the Probation Workshop. Even though students were required to participate, only one of the five participants participated in the workshop. Rafael was the only participant who did not meet or talk with a success coach or academic advisor during his academic recovery. Nevertheless, they each shared the moment they received the academic probation letter. When Rafael received the letter, he had a moment of realization.

> Oh, no, I need to change something! I was like, I never seen anything that low. I was like, that is unacceptable. I thought my whole future is based on what I do here. Why would I just throw it (education) away like that?

Teresa felt devastated by the academic setback. She explained, “I felt like a failure. The letter served me a reality check. And I was like, I have to do better with my grades.” Isabel and Adwin lacked concern about the academic probation notification. Most impactful for Isabel was losing the 21st Century Scholarship. Isabel shared, “I did not panic. Because I am like, oh, I am a freshman. I will jump back up, you know. I was like; it is whatever right now. I did not think much of it (academic probation).” Isabel admitted to not making any effort to improve her grades. Unfortunately, she did not grasp the seriousness of the notification for two semesters. She said, “Even the semester after that first year, I still kind of did not try my best.” Therefore, Isabel spent five semesters on academic probation. Adwin had the same sentiment and length of time on probation akin to Isabel. He believed, “I am not too worried about it because I know my grades are gonna get back up there.” Hence, Adwin spent the subsequent four semesters on academic probation. Manuel did not remember being on academic probation or receiving a letter. Nevertheless, his failing grades did not surprise him. He said, “My fall grades are always lower because it is hard to adjust to being back in school.” After the first time on probation, he remained in good academic standing for one year. Manuel’s summer grades fell below 2.0, placing him back on academic probation but only for one semester.

Additionally, the participants’ narratives omitted their utilization of tutoring services, writing center, math lab, Supplemental Instruction, or the Student Support Center. The specific focus of the Student Support Center, which operates under the Federal TRIO program, is geared to support economically disadvantaged students. Only one student mentioned obtaining assistance from the 21st Century Scholar’s coordinator; three participants could access a resource. The Student Support Center and the Scholar’s office are resources that appeared to go underutilized by the academically struggling students.

Summary

Students' psychological perspectives framed how they approached the concept of college, their lived experiences on campus, and how they navigated academic recovery. Upon entering college, two students gave statements that supported their low level of efficacy. They doubted their academic ability due to their Latinx heritage. These two students described themselves as failures. Three of the participants reached academic probation by their first semester in college. The other two participants completed one year before encountering academic challenges.

Eventually, all the students declared the ability to achieve academic success by getting in gear and changing their mindset. Three of the participants shared stories of how friends supported and motivated them during the academic recovery timeframe. Two participants' engagement with a local church increased their efficacy belief. They believed in God, and their faith in scriptures allowed them to react to their financial troubles, academic failure, and COVID-19 as temporary.

Students talked about memorable experiences and interactions with faculty, student body, support networks, or classroom experiences during their first two years in hopes of understanding their lived experiences within the campus environment on probation. One participant's experience seemed stressful due to the lack of empathy from faculty and lack of participation in the classroom. Three of the participants felt isolated and apart from the student body. Their need to work limited their opportunities for social engagement on campus. However, for three participants, the lack of social activities and COVID-19's impact on the education community severely hampered their sense of being a part of the student body. Four of the students commented on the increased lack of belonging with remote classes.

Professors' pedagogy either enhanced the course experience or disengaged students. One student felt unsafe in the classroom. Most participants found it "nice" to have success coaches and academic advisors listen and strategize a degree plan. Unfortunately, too many standardized support services went underutilized, designed to improve their academic experiences and shorten academic probation. Most students had to work or increase their work hours to afford the annual tuition. Earning enough money to support educational and living expenses delayed four of the five participant's persistence. Regardless of the challenges experienced by the participants, they all reached good academic standing by May 2021.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to understand how students once on academic probation persist to good standing. Therefore, this chapter summarizes the findings sought to answer two research questions and then connect them to the theoretical frameworks. Participants identified barriers, goals, self-perseverance, and support networks that guided them through academic recovery. Elements of their stories included socioeconomics, lack of belongingness, and interactions among faculty factored into their persistence. These findings led to implications and future research for strategic retention and academic recovery initiatives for African American and Latinx students.

Silenced by Oppression

This section interprets their narratives through the lens of Freire's Pedagogy fo the Oppressed (1981), delving into why the participants landed on probation and the length of time in recovery extended beyond academics. Afterward, I paralleled their experiences with Schlossberg's (2011) transition theory which does not consider race and ethnicity. Nevertheless, how they navigated the college academics and environment tightly coupled with their cultures. Therefore, academic probation was layered with life events, loneliness, microaggressions, ethnic and cultural perceptions, and psychological perspectives. Consistent across the empirical literature are the following causes of failure: academic major, personal motivation, study habits,

self-efficacy, belongingness, and faculty interaction. However, the undercurrent of race and ethnicity and pedagogical practices magnified the participants' academic struggle. Before starting college, Isabel and Teresa questioned their ability to be successful because of their Mexican immigrant heritage. Unspoken, their psychological perspective was influenced by the ideology of dehumanization instituted by the dominant class.

The first research question, what are the experiences of minoritized students once on academic probation considered the role of race and politics. These four Latinx students and one African American navigated academic recovery among a polarized political season with contentious race relations between 2017 and 2020. I gained a deeper understanding of their psychological perspective by interpreting their experiences through the lens of Freire's (1968/2005) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. I initially thought the perspective was a mental block caused by their lack of confidence in themselves. In fact, the psychological perspective resulted from a culture of domination that emerged in their responses to race and politically related questions.

Teresa, Manuel, and Adwin shared they did not talk about race, social justice issues, or politics with friends or classmates. Isabel took a political science class, and the discussion about race, politics, and favorable comments about President Donald J. Trump caused her emotional turmoil and feeling unsafe. As a shield, she either sat silent or sugarcoated her responses, impacting her self-efficacy, social interaction, and learning environments. Teresa's statement, "I did not state my opinion or anything at all," led me to believe that no political comments or conversations occurred. However, she was still uneasy sharing her experiences. Hence, I interpreted that the classroom climates were racially insensitive, which caused cultural stresses exhibited by their silenced voices.

I assessed that participants were reluctant to talk about their individual opinions and lived experiences as minoritized students with their peers, which starkly differed from the increased literature on student activism on college campuses during the past six years. Even though the institution was designated a Hispanic Serving Institution in 2018 because at least 25 percent of students were classified as Hispanic and the total enrollment encompassed 48% underrepresented students, I interpreted that students feared reprisal and did not want to be alienated from their White counterparts. Darder (2018) referred to this emotional attachment as a dependency when "the oppressed internalize the attitudes and ways of the oppressor, the more estranged we become from self, from one another, and the world" (p. 97). A source of evidence for this discovery occurred on several occasions; Isabel referred to White peers as being smarter when she compared their responses to hers. Teresa acknowledged that college would be challenging because of the lack of Latinx role models in her community.

Adwin and Rafael did not incur probation until after their classroom experiences with the banking education pedagogical approach during their first year. Hence, a key finding was participants' psychological perspective and how their start to college influenced their response to college-level work in the first semester. I found this to be true in this study with these examples: Teresa and Isabel doubted their academic ability due to their Latinx heritage. These two students described themselves as failures and not confident of their ability to succeed. Isabel and Manuel did not want to attend college directly after high school. They felt pressured to do so by their parents. Isabel's father pushed her to attend college by "constantly" reminding her of the family's immigrant and economic status. Teresa's father wanted her to work and not go to college. Unknowingly, her father reinforced the perception that Mexicans were workers, not leaders or change agents, perpetuating "self-depreciation" onhis daughter. Self-depreciation is

another form of oppression formed when the oppressed internalize deprecating opinions of the oppressor, such as “they are good for nothing, know nothing, and are incapable of learning anything” (Freire, 2018, p. 63). Nevertheless, Teresa persisted in liberating herself by gaining formal education. She was determined to cease the cycle of oppression and become a role model for her family and community.

Racial Theoretical Frameworks

This study applied the theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory and LatCrit theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 1995). During the election season of 2017 and 2020 and the 45th Presidential term, the racial climate was tense for marginalized communities, particularly Mexican immigrants. College students of all ethnicities gained a greater understanding of either their privilege or marginality. The interview protocol looked to capture participants’ college academic and social experiences through a cultural lens. Participants shared how peers and a student service department made them feel marginalized. I sensed I lacked enough rapport with the students of Mexican descent to share their experiences fully and openly. The Latinx participants’ response to how the political climate affected their college experience, specifically as students of color, was that they did not talk about politics with their friends. The social and racial rhetoric made four of the students disengaged in political conversations. This lack of engagement severely affected one students’ classroom experiences.

LatCrit

LatCrit (Darder, 2018) attempts to address and give voice to how society constrains and oppresses the Latinx community and other ignored issues such as language, immigration, and culture. At the same time, the theory underscores how the Latinx community balances the double conscious concept in which a marginalized individual attempts to live in two distinct cultural

identities that oppose each another (Du Bois, 1903/2007). Isabel and Teresa experienced cultural stress in the classroom and silenced their voices. Isabel and Teresa both shared their parents' Mexican and immigrant status. Isabel began college at the start of Donald Trump's presidency in 2017, which was the resurgence of strong racial tension in the United States. During Donald Trump's presidential candidacy announcement, he described undocumented immigrants and Mexican people as criminals, rapists, invaders, and drug dealers. Throughout the fall semester of 2020, Isabel took a political science-type course. Discussions included the November Presidential election and comments of the former president, Donald Trump. She did not feel safe discussing race and the political elections in class because of her "Latina" heritage because student seemed found of President Trump. Therefore, Isabel would either be "silent or sugarcoat," her words and conversation. This act enforced a culture of silence defined as "a form of dehumanization predicated by social and material structures of domination" and "an extension of the phenomenon of alienation" (Darder, 2018, p. 120). Isabel's inability to speak her truth and participate in discussions became an expression of alienation by self and peers. She remained silent and fearful the entire 2020 fall semester.

Teresa shared a similar experience of being silent during the presidential election season. She was concerned about how others would view her or their responses. Therefore, Teresa's concern led me to believe that political comments or conversations took place but was reluctant to share them with me. Gomez and Perez Huber (2019) studied DACA and undocumented students' college experience during a Trump era. Several participants described similar fear and shock and how Trump's anti-immigrant discourse fueled some White Americans' hate speech and microaggressions. Rafael's experience with racial conversations in the political sciences courses differed from Isabel and Teresa's. He was confident and pushed back on ideologies,

descriptions, and characterizations of Hispanics and Mexicans during the election season and in classes. However, he admitted agreeing with Trump's policy and stance on illegal immigration. Manuel shared that he and his friends did not talk about politics, and everyone treated him well.

Critical Race Theory

In this study, the critical race theory lens was displayed in Adwin's perspective of institutional structures that maintained oppression and inequalities and exploited people of color. While discussing social and political climates during 2020, Adwin returned to his experience with the financial office, saying, "…the finance department, okay, who is making these decisions? I want to know if there is a committee. What is the demographic of this committee type of thing, and who was making these choices [who receives aid]?" Being so frustrated with the lack of financial aid to pay tuition and the SAP requirements made him question if institutional racism existed in the process. Adwin believed that the difficulty of the financial process was designed to keep people of color begging for money. So, he decided to find out about the ethnicity of the leadership in the office of financial aid. Searching for the decision-maker's demographics, he remarked, "Who was saying who can and cannot get what? And that's something I actually did try to research." While the campus situates in a city with the highest number of Black Americans in the region, it is [research site] still majority White people. Adwin's response to being disqualified from receiving financial aid exemplifies a first-generation college student's lack of academic and social capital.

Adwin's search uncovered that the director of the Office of Financial Aid was a Black female. Then he wondered, "Is that one Black person actually for Black people? Or are these, you know, in other words, the token. Or just there so they can say, hey, we are diverse? But not really because we all think the same." He described Freire's (1968/2005) *Pedagogy of the*

Oppressed concept: The "oppressed/oppressor duality," without verbalizing the terminology (p. 33). When the oppressed unconsciously internalize and show behaviors of the oppressor, they create an oppression duality. Adwin wondered, "If you are claiming to be this? Are you really for this group of people? Because your actions can easily argue against anything that you say. Because actions speak louder than words." This comment was an example of the duality concept. The dynamics of his cultural and socioeconomic layers caused him to filter his interactions through these lenses. Like the three participants, Adwin did not talk with college or non-college friends about race and politics.

Most participants were not attuned to the political and racial debates, and the campus environment did not mirror the societal racial climate. Mwangi et al. (2018) studied the campus racial climate within the United States. The researchers found more campus activism, engagement, and dialogue between White and Black students. Mwangi et al. and Lu and Newton's (2019) study on campus climate starkly differed from the current participants. In fact, four participants were reluctant to talk about their individual opinions and lived experiences as minoritized students with their peers on campus. However, Lu and Newton (2019) found that Black students attending an emerging HSI felt uncomfortable having racial conversations and "processed a fair amount of neglect, racism, and microaggressions" (p. 85). Hence, this led me to believe that Isabel and Teresa experienced microaggressions, possibly in the classroom. Due to their first-generation status, I perceived a lack of social capital and confidence to share Mexican and immigrant people's lived experiences and contributions with their peers.

The following section examined academic setbacks through the lens of Schlossberg's (2011) Transition theory factors of situation, self, support, and strategy. Their journey uncovered critical findings regarding how they faced the challenge and gained good standing. These

discoveries provided implications and recommendations to senior academic leadership and student affairs professionals regarding the transition's impact on students' educational experiences.

Schlossberg's Transition Theory

In this section, participants' lived experiences paralleled Schlossberg's (2011) Transition theory and unfolded the findings of the research questions. Therefore, this model provided structure and contextualized participants' adaptation to and movement through the transition from academic failure to recovery. Schlossberg named four resources or critical factors for persevering events. She called the elements the 4Ss: situation, self, supports, and strategies. The situation factor of the theory is an event that is either anticipated, unanticipated, or non-event. Encompassing the self-factor is an individual's demographic characteristics and psychological resources without the consideration of marginalized communities. The support factor includes intimate relationships, family, friends, and institutional communities. Finally, the strategy factor examines how students manage the transition. While translating their experiences through the lens of Schlossberg's theory, I identified and described behavioral characteristics manifestation while attempting good academic standing. In this study, attending college and academic probation represented the situation, the unexpected event. Self-symbolized as their perceived belief of the capability to attend college or academically recover. Support resources appeared as encouragement from friends and communities. Recommendations from success coaches and the change in approach to course work reflected participants' strategy techniques.

The Situation

The identification of the situation was pre-determined by the research question. How do students once on academic probation navigate to good standing? However, I acknowledge that

many lived experiences by the participants cumulated and created the central situation—academic probation— an unexpected event. Most participants' lived experiences during the transition from high school to college impacted their academic probation status. The status influenced participants' initial lack of self-efficacy, sense of belonging, Mexican heritage, immigrant parents, parental persuasion, and caring for family members. Various researchers cited identical factors for students' failing grades and some of these were identified by participants in this study (Garcia, 2010; Hsieh et al., 2007; Murphy & Murphy, 2018; Tovar & Simon, 2006; Willans & Seary, 2018; Zajacova et al., 2005). Participants' narratives described financial hardship, competing family responsibilities, poor attendance patterns, lack of social interaction, low academic self-efficacy, and isolation.

While the transition to college was anticipated, the event was a stressor for Isabel, Teresa, and Manuel. Isabel and Manuel did not want to attend college directly from high school. Teresa believed college would be hard and doubted her ability to succeed due to the lack of role models. Adwin felt socially disconnected from his college peers. Rafael was conflicted between caring for his brothers or attending classes. Isabel and Teresa alluded that their Mexican heritage might be a hindrance to their ability to succeed. Tovar and Simo (2006) found that a precursor for failing grades was caring for a family. They suggested that first-generation and minority students struggle to balance academic and family responsibilities, which my findings supported regarding Rafael's struggle to navigate or balance conflicting priorities. Rafael said that going to class or taking his brothers to school was "rough," and the decision caused him to fail courses. Rafael admitted that not doing homework or attending classes caused him to perform poorly on tests. His enthusiasm about attending classes and being fully present was made difficult by his parent's divorce and caring for his brothers.

Manuel and Isabel's situation of academic failure resulted from the lack of desire to attend college directly after high school. Hence, they had to navigate the first semester while grappling with emotional detachment and challenging academic work. Adwin's experience with the lack of belongingness was unlike Manuel and Isabel's. A sense of belonging stalled his academic progress. Teresa expected college to be difficult and desired a role model before the first day of classes. This mindset positioned her to be skeptical of her ability to succeed, enforcing low self-efficacy. Adwin expected to have more social and intellectual engagement during his college experience. As a result, he stopped attending classes but did not officially withdraw. Non-attendance due to the lack of belongingness was the major contributor to his low grades. Strayhorn's (2008b) research explained and supported Adwin's need to feel a sense of community among peers. The quantitative analysis found that Black men who became acquainted or socialized with ethnically diverse peers were more likely to report higher levels of belonging with the campus community. Strayhorn et al.'s (2015) study, continued by Museus et al. (2015), found "that culturally engaging environments' significantly influenced Black students' sense of belonging" (p. 469). The Brother2Brother program supported the cultural engagement for Adwin and Black men.

Participants' reasons for low academic performance were multi-faceted and complex and extended beyond their pre-college academics. At first glance, an assumption occurred that academic failure causation is unpreparedness for college-level work. On the contrary, in this study, Manuel graduated high school at the age of 16, and two students came from high schools that were not considered under-resourced. Nevertheless, these participants from various local schools failed to maintain good standing. Of the commonly reported causes of failure such as academic major, personal motivation, study habits, self-efficacy, belongingness, and faculty

interaction, these participants listed two or more by either the second or third semester (Isik et al., 2018; Komarraju et al., 2010; Means & Pyne, 2017; Pérez, 2017; Saunders-Scott et al., 2018; Strayhorn, 2008a; Strayhorn, 2008b; Strayhorn & Johnson, 2014; Tinto, 2017). Regardless of the precursors and probation status, students improved their grades with support, set goals, and self-understanding.

The Self-Factor

In this study, the students' psychological perspective timed the students' recovery. Hence, when self-motivated to turn around their poor academic performance, Rafael and Teresa improved their GPA in fewer semesters than the others. Adwin, Isabel, and Manuel had coping difficulties that included the feeling of isolation. At the same time, Isabel and Manuel had to come to terms with being in college mentally. Isabel and Adwin ignored the significance of the probation status and took more than three semesters to gain good standing. Even though Manuel did not remember the probation designation, he understood the need to earn higher grades to remain in college. The mindset of the participants to change their trajectory was an intrinsic motivator to move through the transition to recovery. This group proved that overcoming academic failure required a personal commitment with the belief that improvement was achievable.

Schlossberg's self-factor, in turn, self-efficacy for this study, was a principal element in the ability of Rafael, Teresa, Isabel, and Manuel to persist. Once each person committed themselves to move out of probation in their timeframe, they began to make necessary adjustments. Isabel and Manuel started college under the influence of family and friends, so attending college was not their choice. Evident by their grades, they did not put much effort into their coursework. Nevertheless, a shift occurred in their confidence and perseverance when they

wanted to be in college and successful. These actions implied that transitions trigger when self-motivation couples with the belief to accomplish a goal. Hwang et al.'s (2014) research supported this finding. They labeled the psychological variable as determination. Hsieh et al. (2007) named two psychological attributes that focus students on success: self-efficacy and goal orientation.

Ethnically diverse participants in the Hwang et al. (2014) study reported a strong motivation to improve their GPA. The reason pushed them to persevere despite difficulties and obstacles. At the same time, Han et al. (2017) determined that "first-year college students' academic self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and academic motivation" correlated with their success. A plethora of research supports their findings that a sense of belonging impacts retention and academic self-efficacy improves grades (Garcia, 2010; Han, et al., 2017, p. 1120; Willans & Seary, 2018; Vuong et al., 2010). In this study, the common thread and start to students' success was their commitment to a goal(s). Whatever the objective, they determined to reach the goal and then applied efficacy. According to the recovery timeline for Isabel, Manuel, and Adwin, their academic improvement began even without belongingness.

Goal Mindedness

Most of the participants' self-factor was focused on the social mobility concept and connected to that goal. They each talked about how the degree would elevate their professional or financial status. Participants understood the possible negative monetary consequence of halting their educational journey. Rafael, Teresa, Isabel, and Adwin mentioned that a sense of commitment to earn their degree motivated them to persist. Hwang et al. (2014) found similar themes in their study of nine ethnically diverse college students; they found that students achieved when they "set clear career goals" (p. 81). Phinney and Hass (2003) found that minority

students who could cope with academic stress and had a sense of commitment to getting an education kept focused on completing college. Their participants referenced “their determination to complete college as a basis for their handling of a problem” (Phinney & Hass, 2003, p. 723). Hwang et al. (2014) found that when participants set a career goal, they were encouraged to overcome difficulties to reach their desired future. Adwin and Rafael repeatedly mentioned how earning a degree would increase their income potential and were their primary reason for persistence. Besides the career goals for social mobility, tAdwin and Rafael added goals. Rafael desired to be on the Dean’s List like his college friend. Adwin’s goal was to earn back the ability to receive financial aid to graduate college. Isabel wished to complete a social work degree to help people like herself. Teresa wanted to be a role model. Manuel’s persistence did not link to a specific career goal except for the desire to finish college. Manuel was most focused on the self-factor to overcome the mental setback experienced each fall. Teresa was more focused on clearing the academic probation status and being a role model for her family and ethnic community. These actions implied that when participants gave their goal meaning or worth beyond the designation, i.e., degree or financial aid, they were motivated to transition to a strategy stage.

The participants in this study altered their attitude from I cannot to I can and moved to academic recovery at a self-realization pace. Therefore, I did not identify a specific semester that the realization sets in for students. As noted in this study, students recovered between the first and fourth semesters after their GPA fell below 2.0. According to their narratives, their significance to recovery was their ability to connect to a goal, become determined, and believe in their academic efficacy. For example, Teresa’s confidence rose when she understood the subject matter of her courses. Teresa’s belief in her academic ability addressed her micro-situation of

low self-efficacy. I noted from the interviews that self-efficacy and strategy tightly couple when students were purposeful about succeeding.

The Support

According to Patton et al. (2016), six support resources are intimate relationships, family units, networks of friends, communities, organizations, and affinity groups. Strayhorn (2008b) found that support from faculty/staff was a vital component to a Black male's sense of belonging. Adwin cited several incidents where he did not feel supported by faculty or staff. Hence, he felt a "strong disconnect" from the campus community. Three participants mentioned their success coach or academic advisor as a supporter. Participants did not refer to faculty as co-authors of any educational plans or development of goals. The advisor's role typically included helping students navigate through environments of higher education. At times, success coaches and the counseling center became accountability partners, provided guidance on adjustments academically or socially, or offered emotional support. Wang et al. (2015) suggested that to achieve success, probationary students must receive "social and emotional support" (p. 91). Manuel commented that sometimes, it is "nice to have someone" in your corner and willing to make schedule changes at a moment's notice. Upon evaluating their stories, I recognized that success coaches provided support and a structured recovery plan for the struggling students. In contrast, faculty went mostly unnamed as contributors to their academic recovery.

The participants named people instrumental in motivating them to continue college, such as significant others, friends, church community, and success coaches. Azmitia et al. (2018) found a similar list and grouped the supporters by type, emotional or supportive. Friends from home gave emotional support to help participants overcome challenges. University peers and staff gave developmental support. Luedke (2017) reported that staff and administrators of color

authentically support students due to commonalities in either ethnicity or educational experiences. Barbatis (2010) also found that external college community members' influences contribute to students' success. Participants' parental stories of support diverged from the literature about Latinx families, particularly immigrants. Ceja (2004) found Chicana's parents were aspirational and developed a sense of resiliency in their children. Then Cross et al. (2019) found that "parental educational expectations were positively associated with adolescent academic self-efficacy" (p. 483). Flores (2018) learned Latinx parents sought to raise strong Latinas by equipping them with strategies to navigate personal, social, and academic environments.

Participants in this study did not name their parents as a support network. Therefore, I asked them directly about their parent's involvement in their educational experience and academic recovery. Most replied they did not share much about their challenge with them. Four of the five participants each said, "I do not like asking for help." Most students shared their academic struggles after being placed on probation or having decided to stop attending college. Adwin mentioned his parents encouraged him to take a break. Isabel's parents reminded her of their struggles as immigrants without a degree. She did not consider their statements supportive. Rafael believed his parents had other pressing issues. Teresa's father attempted to discourage her college attendance. As a result, findings from participants' narratives suggested that friends, non-college friends, and success coaches were most influential in participants' academic recovery. All the participants referenced the emotional support and encouragement that each type of friend supporter showed. Isabel and Adwin's non-college friends shared a cultural lens of college's importance and successful completion. The cultural perspective resonated the most with them,

making Isabel appreciate her parents' push to attend college and Adwin's understanding of a Black man's plight without a degree.

Most participants' mindset upon starting college, family commitments, and finance contributed to their academic setbacks. Their transition to academic recovery closely followed Schlossberg's (2011) Transition theory. Their situation was multi-leveled. However, this study focused on the unexpected event of Academic probation. Nevertheless, students had to address the multiple levels to navigate to good standing. After deciding to improve their grades to accomplish their intended goal, they applied psychological traits of the self-factor, such as self-efficacy and determination, to the situation. For three students, the first strategy they used to resolve the academic issue was to stop attending or "take a break," as they described the withdrawal. To academically recover, students had to execute two strategies. A success coach designed one, and the second was self-prescribed. Hence, they attended class, connected with resources, and changed their mindset about college. The support factor influenced students' transition in and through the self and strategy stages to academic success. The network of external college friends typically within their cultural community strongly contributed to the participants' success.

The Strategy

When participants moved to the strategy stage, they were forced to address the micro-situations that contributed to their academic struggle. For example, Rafael made attending class and completing assignments a priority. He would listen to textbooks on audio while working and complete tasks during lunch or dinner breaks. Despite working until 11 p.m., he would go home and finish assignments due by midnight. Three of the participants credited their success coaches and academic advisors for helping them build a recovery plan. Isabel's plan included taking a

semester off from college to earn money and refocus. Upon her return, she decreased her credit hour load to part-time. Attending college now was on her terms and not her parents'. This change in attitude addressed her micro-situation of not wanting to go to college. Adwin added classes taking 18 credit hours in one semester instead of decreasing his course load. Then he joined the Brother2Brother program for social interaction as recommended by his success coach. Teresa changed her academic major from Nursing to General Studies. Manuel believed access to the Counseling Center was key to his success. Unfortunately, due to HIPAA, he was not able to access the Counseling Center.

The strategy implemented varied among participants and was geared toward the situation which influenced the academic failure. Success coaches recommended changing majors, increasing credit hour loads, adjusting course schedules, and helping when students encountered barriers. While Isabel did not reference specific interactions with a success coach, I believe one was involved because she took part in the Academic Probation workshop. Other adjustments shared by the participants seemed rudimentary, such as Rafael's response, "I went to class and did the homework." Adwin said, "I attended classes regularly," too. Adwin joined the Brother2Brother program to belong and interact with peers. Strayhorn et al. (2015) examined the sense of belonging among Black males in the context of My Brother's Keeper (MBK). They found that MBK members provided a sense of belonging and guidance in their transition to and through college. This recommended strategy by the success coaches proved a positive influence on Adwin's recovery.

One of the interview questions asked of participants was about the steps taken towards academic recovery. Regardless of a plan, not one referenced spending more time in educational resource spaces such as the library, Writing and Math Centers. While extended deadlines by

Faculty may have correlated to better grades on the assignment, not one participant referred to a professor as a strategic support mechanism while overcoming academic probation. Therefore, I directly asked them to tell me about changes in their routines to obtain good academic standing. They did not describe university places, people, or programs. Instead, participants mentioned using a planner, attending classes, taking a year off from school, or going to church. Teresa was the only participant who shared that she changed her major, studied with friends, and managed her time better, including more study time. Consequently, she only spent two semesters on probation. Teresa was the only participant below a 1.0 at the end of her first semester or during the years. By the end of the spring 2021 semester, she had the highest GPA of all the students.

Implications

Retention and graduation rates become critical for institutions as the student demographic shifts to more students of color who typically are less likely to graduate. Hence, emphasizing listening to students' college experiences is imperative to the survival of the academe. The narratives and sequences of cumulative grades of my participants suggested that admissions and recruitment offices, retention initiatives, and multicultural, academic, and student affairs offices focus efforts on the first six weeks of a student's semester. Mitigating the loss of students, a post-secondary institution could create intense first-semester programs for college peers, advisors, family, and friends. Noting that this study lacks generalizability by design, I recommend non-regional campuses create residential-type social programs for students' influencers—family and friends—such as family and friends' weekends. I found in this study that supporters, particularly non-collegiate friends, strongly influenced college persistence. Farrington's (2018) study of educational resilience explored family dynamics. He found that regardless of the parent's education level, families can value education and inspire resiliency. Flores (2018) found that

parents focused on raising “Chicas fuertes/strong girls” (p. 329). In this current study, Latinx families either encouraged their children to attend college or find a full-time job after high school to help with family expenses. Participants in this study attended the local university to stay close to family and save money. Four participants mentioned not sharing their academic struggle with their parents but with their non-collegiate friends. Regardless of the level of engagement, blending parents and friends into the first six weeks of college seems beneficial to the students’ persistence.

Gershenfeld et al. (2016) found that the first-semester GPA in underrepresented students predicted their graduation timeline. They called GPAs below 2.0 a high-risk zone where students leave college or take beyond the five years to graduate. Tovar and Simon (2006) found more Latinx students on probation after the first semester than their non-Latinx peers. They could not “effectively transition between” school and external responsibilities (Tovar & Simon, 2006, p. 550). Their finding agreed with the small sample of students in this current study. Three participants stopped attending but returned, and all extended their graduation dates beyond five years. Most participants did not seek guidance from academic support services, faculty, or advisors during the first semester. This same lack of initiative continued during the first semester on academic probation. Three participants superficially believed they could improve their grades when notified of the probation status. The participants shared similar comments made by Adwin. He said, “I am not worried about it [grades] because I know my grades will get better.” Therefore, I recommend implementing an invasive initiative for first-generation students during the first six weeks of classes.

Academic Affairs will continue to see an increased number of students prolong their time on probation or graduation dates. Therefore, the implication, particularly for Academic Affairs,

is the possible attrition of these students. Academic Affairs should institute policy and practice that rewards attendance or sanctions non-attendance to the probation workshop. Students must be held accountable for non-attendance. As participants shared their journey to recovery, not one student mentioned the required Academic Probation Workshop. Even though Isabel attended the workshop, this was not on her list as a resource for obtaining a 2.0 GPA. Attendance at the workshop was not enforced. Students' alternative for not attending the seminar was a meeting with the advisor. According to the director of advising, a templated conversation or official tracking of non-attendees was impossible because of decentralized advising. Consequently, Academic Advisors need formal training in counseling, student development theories, and unconscious bias training. Tovar and Simon (2006) concluded that students needed "support, more and clearer goal-directedness (p. 559)." Hence, students need the support and strategy delivered by the Academic Probation workshop. Students continued enrolling in courses possibly without receiving strategies to overcome barriers discussed in the workshop.

Cultural Competency

Institutions must make structural and systematic changes to make cultural competency a central experience for all students instead of a peripheral one. By creating diverse learning communities, all students can build relationships, belongingness, and understanding of academic content. Because undergraduate education frames college students' learning, faculty could enrich the curriculum with diversity which socializes students through interaction and dialogue. According to Comeaux et al. (2021), the college classroom gives all students the "first opportunity to interact meaningfully across racial and ethnic lines" (p. 465). Hence, higher education must consider how to balance a curriculum rich with critical pedagogy as an approach that builds students' "ability to recognize and criticize dominating theories and evaluate them in

their social context" (Maboloc, 2020, p. 1). Therefore, I recommend pedagogically linking diversity to a college curriculum that includes understanding and valuing racial equity.

Student Affairs and Academic Affairs can partner to provide diverse extracurricular experiences that transform an entire campus culture. Therefore, structural and program implementation would include ethnic faculty diversification, microaggression identification, and diversity training. Then focus faculty mentor training on the phenomenology and existentialism of minoritized students. The Provost and senior academic leaders must lead the charge of creating and sustaining a culturally competent community that expands beyond textbooks, assignments, and student collaboration but stands in front of the class. Faculty of color bring a diversity of thought and experiences to the classroom environment for all students.

Influence of COVID-19

Suddenly, in March 2020, the state went into a shutdown for months and slowly resumed in the Fall of 2020. University faculty were forced to adopt and adapt to new technology to teach remotely—this learning curve for some created or amplified voids in students' college experiences. Students from underserved populations seemed to need more technological support. Hence post-secondary institutions and K12 schools loaned laptop computers and Wi-Fi hotspots or made access points on college campuses. At the same time, participants commented that they struggled with the faculty's struggle to operate video conferencing software and other technology required for classes. Participants shared that going to college during the pandemic made them feel more isolated from their peers and faculty. They mentioned that some assignments lacked pre and post discussions. Returning to in-person classes and on-campus activities can reduce isolation and provide computers and Wi-Fi for all students. Perhaps traditional four-year institutions should consider balancing their schedule of classes with modality options.

In the small sample size of this study, three participants' grades increased after fall 2019—one stopped attending. By the Fall of 2020, three students reached 2.0, with one returning. All of the participants took classes remotely in Fall 2020 and the majority of courses in Spring 2021. A possible factor for improved grades by Spring 2021 was the opportunity to replace their travel time to campus with studying. However, educators must "pay attention to the substantive aspect of learning, which is human empowerment" and an expansion of marginalized students' freedom from oppression (Maboloc, 2020, p. 2). Maboloc (2020) recommended with the use of technology that faculty focus on the students' ability to think analytically and critically and shape their values in online classes.

While this study cannot generalize about a first-generation and minoritized population of students, post-secondary institutions should consider if COVID-19 educational practices become established policies in future years. Institutions recognized the hardship on students' ability to learn during a national health crisis. Therefore, Academic Leadership implemented lenient grading pathways and revised course withdrawal policies. Students and faculty were encouraged to utilize the pass/fail option instead of an F grade due to incomplete or late assignments or failed tests after March 20, 2020. Also available was the option of withdrawing with a grade of W after the ninth week of the semester. These grading practices possibly negatively shielded or positively guarded students from academic probation. After the ninth week, institutions should consider the benefit of the continued practice of multiple learning modalities and the withdrawal policy.

Recommendations

This study's narrative approach supplements quantitative research regarding minoritized students on academic probation. Participants' stories gave voice and reasoning for overcoming

their academic challenges with external support despite barriers and college experiences. Therefore the following recommendations provide strategies to offset the known barriers that first-generation students encountered during the transition to college. I focused these suggestions on the institution and the organizational structures aimed explicitly at student success.

Academic Affairs Revolutionary Leadership

Darder (2018) stated that revolutionary leaders come to know the oppressed, "objective situation and their awareness of their situation" through authentic dialogue focused on "the question of societal transformation in community with the [oppressed] people" (p. 137). In the revolutionary process, leaders are solely responsible for the coordination and direction of change. University and academic leaders must revisit and uphold mission statements that use cultural diversity, social justice, transformation, and valuing individuals. Therefore, designated Minority and Hispanic Serving Institutions' leaders should recognize the need to reform and incorporate curriculum balanced with cultural scholarship. According to Dickeson (2010), education liberates college graduates and changes their world view "of races, genders, and cultures other than their own" (p. 45). The ability to institute change takes courageous leadership and the willingness to "invest political capital in meaningful reform" (Dickeson, 2010, p. 30). Hence, diversity content should exist within academic courses (Chang, 2002; Cross et al., 2019; Ford, 2011; Hurtado, 2007; Nelson Laird et al., 2009). When leaders are knowledgeable of marginalized communities, they can empower Whites to preempt microaggression tendencies. Then future students like Isabel and Teresa will not sit in semester-long courses in fear of being attacked when discussing race, ethnicity, and politics.

Faculty Revolutionary Partners

Since these conversations took place in a classroom setting, faculty must understand and identify acts of microaggression, and then creatively and skillfully balance free speech while creating a sense of belonging and a safe environment. These are moments for faculty to address racial inequality as scholars rather than requiring students to be exposed to learning from fictional political discourse. The teaching technique proved beneficial for one participant and problematic for three others from the participants' narratives of their academic journey. Most concerning was Isabel's classroom experience which seemed to reinforce a colonization practice of alienation, dehumanization, and a culture of silence. As a "principal-agent of institutional action whose classroom experiences shape and influence students' perceptions and interaction," the political science professor failed to address inequities and create an inclusive learning environment for all students (Tinto, 1994, p. 423). Hence, professors should be revolutionary partners with marginalized students by "naming the world" through critical dialogue.

According to Freire (2005), "to exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it" (p. 88). All students in the political science course lacked the skill set or the knowledge of how to disagree constructively. The national political divide created a barrier in students' ability to conduct inclusivity-type discussions. Perhaps faculty can implement the methodology of conscientização, considered a "liberatory which introduces women and men to a critical form of thinking about their world" to bridge the cultural gap (Darder, 2018, p. 127). Darder (2018) believed a successful educational or political action program includes a cultural invasion and respect for particular views of the world held by the people. Regardless of the professor's intention or awareness, in Isabel's case, "institutional oppression occurred by omission" (Rivers,

2020, p. 4). According to the participants' narrative, faculty have a significant and influential position in students' academic journey.

Williamson et al. (2014) suggested that faculty include a form of advising in the classroom, which can create "a strong partnership between faculty and student services to provide support, information, and career direction" (p. 20). Support, information, and career direction paralleled the participants' narratives in this study as a distraction or a contributor to success. Hart-Baldridge (2020) recognized advising activities that seemed beneficial to student success. Two findings directly support students' narratives, advising for the future and helping students navigate systems—the discussions about the future tie their career goals into their academic work. Together, faculty and students could create a plan and produce an image of their future. Faculty are best positioned to enrich students' understanding of the direct link between the curriculum and their career aspirations. When students supported by faculty navigate university systems, they feel supported and empowered to persist. The additional benefit to the student is the gained sense of belonging among the campus community.

For Academic Advising

The academy must remember that entering first-time college students have already spent four years in high school under regulated conditions. Higher education professionals should consider that choice and to the freedom of choosing may overwhelm traditional-aged college students. High school students' transition involves a complex mix of anxiety due to an unfamiliar environment, content level of courses, lack of belonging, and deregulation. Therefore, a proactive approach could include scheduled and strategic check-ins in weeks one, three, and six. The research showed that three participants in this study began week one with anxiety and low self-efficacy. By week three, students may have encountered homework assignments or the

first quiz or test, which influences the next few weeks of college. At week six, students had their first exam or mid-term exam and assessed their ability to succeed. Evident by participants' fall semester grades at less than 1.5, they were severely struggling in multiple classes within the first six weeks.

During check-in dates, systematically trained faculty and advisors could build conversations around finding perceived barriers or internal or external needs, overcoming challenges, and supporting self-efficacy. If this type of interaction is not appropriate or feasible for faculty, consider retention coach roles to balance the caseload of professional advisors. Simmons and Smith (2020) proposed peer success coaches, upper-class students with the trained ability to help navigate non-academic factors that impede the academic journey. The researchers called this type of mentorship an innovative life coaching intervention. I recommend that the peer mentors be of similar ethnic backgrounds in the case of this study. When students can share their experiences with other underrepresented students, it allows open conversation about their struggle without feeling judged, as Teresa and Isabel felt. Regardless of who, academic advisors or faculty, low grades in the first semester warrant an intrusive and structured practice of communicating with first-generation and minoritized students within the first six weeks.

For Student Affairs

Evident by this small sample, student affairs offices should consider a proactive approach within a first-generation student's first six weeks of classes similar to Academic Advisors. This study found that external supporters significantly influenced students' return to college or their persistence. Barbatis's (2010) analysis of factors that contributed to persistence among ethnically diverse students corroborated this finding regarding supporters' intervention in students' success. The research study site is a non-residential campus, which does not host traditional

residential activities that bring friends and family to the campus. The research site and other non-residential campuses lack the opportunity to connect students' two worlds. Therefore, I recommend creating programming for social interactions between family and significant others within the student's college experience. Hence, the office of student activities could create activities on-campus for family and friends.

An idea to enhance academic and social interactions and belongingness among peers universities can consider a student group opt-out strategy for example students admitted into a science major would have to opt-out of participating in the Science club. In practice, within the transition from Admissions to Academic Affairs, a student is linked to Student Affairs by an assignment to a club or organization closely matched to either students' career interests or academic programs. Three participants described their sense of being as isolated, lonely, and strongly disconnected. Therefore, intrusive partnerships can forge supportive academic and social relationships.

Three other offices under Student Affairs identified in participants' stories likely influence future students' success: Career Services, Student Support Services, and the University Counseling Center. Several of the participants referenced the degree as leverage to social mobility, which motivated them to persist. Hence the Career Services department could create early-career interest programming for incoming studentssince, traditionally, students interact with Career Services in their junior or senior years with targeted career interests. Then Student Support Services could couple with Admissions to recruit first-generation students proactively by developing collaborative programming during the newly admitted stage. This idea could foster a sense of belonging. Perhaps, the counseling center could study and identify behavioral traits that could represent warning signs of emotionally distressed first-time students since

Manuel identified early his need for mental health counseling. Isabel shared feeling forced to attend college and held a strong desire to take a break from school.

Further Research

This study could be expanded or dissected into more minor focuses. Future scholars could directly search for non-academic barriers students encounter internally and externally while attending college. Researchers should directly ask probationary students to name factors that are causing them to struggle instead of identifying factors within their narratives. Another factor to discover is what action the student or the faculty took when the student failed their first assignment or consistently earned low grades.

Researchers could further an asset study by focusing on students' programs or academic resources during their academic recovery. In this study, an Academic Probation Workshop was available, but only one student participated. She never mentioned the program as a resource and took the longest to gain good standing. The other four participants achieved good standing without participating. So, directly ask students to describe how they improved their grades. When discussing a sensitive topic such as low grades, make interview questions shorter and more direct. For example, avoid asking questions like, "Tell me about changes in your relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles when on academic probation to good standing." Instead, ask: What changes did you make to improve your grades?

I suggest focusing on the institution type and correlating findings to such. For example, the research site resides in a highly diverse region, an emerging Minority-Serving and Hispanic Serving Institution designee, and a regional campus within a system institution. To increase the population pool and enrich the findings, analyze minoritized students on probation across each campus within a multi-campus institution system school and compare attributes that foster

success. Researchers could then identify what role Critical Race Theory played in how colleges educate first-generation, low-income, and diverse students.

Another opportunity lies in the theoretical framework. In conjunction with CRT or alone, the researcher could explore the role of self-authorship in a student's ability to recover academically. During the student development theory course, I learned Baxter Magolda defined four phases in a student's journey to self-authorship as "the internal capacity to define one's beliefs, identity, and social relations" (Patton et al., 2016, p. 365). However, Perez (2019) recognized that psychological development "needs to reenvision the journey toward self-authorship in a manner that is conscious of identity and power" after analyzing 22 empirical articles on the subject (p. 70). She studied the application of race, racism, and systems of oppression in the researcher's examination of the development of self-authorship in participants. Students transition into colleges and universities, adjusting to the higher demand for their intellectual ability and growing their self-authorship. The path to self-authorship is a non-linear process. However, students in the current study labored in the crossroads stage and seemed to become successful when they became the author of their own lives—going to college on their terms. However, as diversity increases in college campuses applying the self-authorship theory needs a balanced blend of theoretical lenses such as CRT, LatCrit, and other social identity theories.

Conclusion

This study deviated from the deficit conversation regarding why minoritized students fail. Instead, I focused on an asset study to discover how they navigated from probationary to good standing. The research questions sought to understand factors and experiences of the minoritized student college experience. Therefore, I asked two research questions: What are African

American and Latinx students' experiences on a regional campus while on academic probation? What behavioral characteristics manifest among minoritized students once on academic probation to help them persist towards college graduation?

I admit the answers to these questions on the surface seemed simplistic based upon the students' responses. Through interpretative analysis, students transformed and merged their collegiate and non-academic worlds while overcoming oppressive acts evident by their silence or sugar-coated responses and lack of self-efficacy. Their general responses to the first research question revealed five factors that affected students' transition to college and recovery: culture, situation, self, support, and strategy. Participants' narratives described the complexity of their lives, how personal and academic factors intersected and pulled them away at times from their goals. Academic challenges seem spiked by being the first in their family to attend college, having a lack of ethnic role models, and experiencing lack of integration into the study body. Two students described classroom climates as racially insensitive, but not the campus community.

Students exhibited the following behavioral characteristics that enabled them to achieve success: goal orientation, self-efficacy, and support. The goal was the potential of earning a livable wage which factored in their persistence. All participants became successful after becoming determined, bolstering self-efficacy during a state of oppression, and being supported by family and friends. These findings proposed implications and recommendations for academic affairs, student affairs, senior campus administrators, and academic leaders.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

General Questions

1. Why did you choose this university?
2. Why did you decide to attend college?

Campus Environment

3. How would you describe your most memorable experiences or interactions with faculty, student body, support networks, or classroom experiences during your first two years?
4. How does the political climate during the past five years affect you and your college experience, specifically as a student of color?

Academic Experience/Behavioral Characteristics

5. Describe on-campus and off-campus experiences that impacted your grade point average in your freshman year?
6. Describe on-campus and off-campus experiences that impacted your grade point average in your sophomore year?
7. How did you feel, and what did you do the moment you found out about being on academic probation?
8. Tell me about changes in your relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles when on academic probation to good standing.
9. Tell me about internal characteristics, skills, or motivation that influenced you to turn your grades around?
10. Talk about on-campus or off-campus experiences or support networks that contributed to the rise of your grade point average.

APPENDIX B: PROBATIONARY WORKSHOP AGENDA

The following agenda provides the content of the workshop. Which, according to the slide titles, informs students of the activities that contributed to their failure. Nevertheless, provide academic resources and strategies for recovery.

I. Slide 0-Introduction: Student Advising Center

A. What is SAC?
B. Services SAC offers-The Student Advising Center provides academic information and services to exploratory students, but we serve as general advisors for all undergraduate students. We offer clarification of degree requirements, registration and academic program assistance. We serve as an advising resource for faculty and staff. We also conduct RISE Workshop and FLAGS (Early Warning System).
C. We also provide support to Exploratory CHHS students and freshman and sophomore students on academic probation.
D. Reason you are here is because you have been identified as being on Academic Probation. Our job is to help you become successful, before things get out of hand. Our goal is to help you improve your GPA to progress toward graduation. Know that we are here to help you before you get to a point where you approach academic dismissal. Again this workshop is designed to help you.

II. Academic Advising

A. What is academic advising?
B. Importance of academic advising (i.e. self-advising, on track)
C. You were given a colored piece of paper, please write down any questions you have about anything you have heard today and we will answer them. Also, to get credit for attending we will have you sign a probation agreement and fill out an evaluation.
E. Move on to **Slide 1-Workshop Goals**

III. Slide 2-What is Academic Probation? What does it mean to be on academic probation?

A. Read Slide

IV. Slide 3-How did I get on Probation?

A. Discuss the various way they may have gotten on Probation.
B. Read Slide
C. Ask the audience how many of them had 2 or more of these problems?
D. Importance of asking for help-Who has issues asking for help? Who is my advisor(distribute advisor contact list)
E. Know your strengths and weaknesses
F. Utilizing resources-Where do you go for help? (Go over campus resources sheet)
G. Consequences of academic dismissals
H. Reinstatement process-We conduct Reinstatement Workshops

V. Slide 4- Semester Strategy
A. Give students mock transcript
B. Ask them to answer questions as a group
C. If time allows, have students discuss issues out loud

VI. Slide 5-Campus Resources
A. This is how you begin to fight your bad habits by being proactive and becoming knowledgeable of the services available to you.

VII. Slide 6-IUN Resources
A. **Read Slide**-Refer to handout

VIII. Slide 7-Presentations
A. Financial Aid-Cindy Sabo **(10:20a, 3:20p)**
B. Student Support Services **(10:30a, 3:30p)**
C. Career Services **(10:40a, 3:40p)**
D. Ask if the audience has any questions about our presenters

IX. Slide 8- How to Improve your GPA-Next Steps
A. Read Slide
B. Advisor contact list-Refer to the handout

IX. Slide 9- Questions
A. Evaluations
B. There will be another meeting in smaller groups to check up on your progress this semester. FLAG Notifications will start next week, so check your IUN Emails and Student Center Grades.

X. Slide 10- Extinguish the Excuses
A. Give students a worksheet and ask them to bring it with them to their next meeting

APPENDIX C: PROBATION LETTER TEMPLATE

The following academic probation letter was sent to first-year students with zero to 30 credits. The second letter was sent to sophomore students. Students received this letter at the end of either the first or second semester. The letter recognizes the student's attempt and the consequences for failure, offers support and a strategy.

DATE

Dear First Name,

We are writing to you today to encourage greater success in your academic journey at IU Northwest. Knowing that the semester did not go as you planned, we have initiated a process to help boost your confidence, raise your GPA and inspire degree completion. As part of this process, we have placed you on academic probation. This means that we are looking to improve your GPA next term, or you will face stricter probation requirements or potential dismissal from campus. You may also face changes to financial aid related to making satisfactory progress (SAP) towards your degree.

We understand that you may feel discouraged about this. However, some of our most important life lessons are learned at times of great personal challenge.

The question is, how do we bounce back? We believe you recover by connecting with supportive people who can help and guide you with tools for success. We are providing you with a Success Coach this semester who can help you move through this period of a challenge at no

cost to you. They can help you with everything from time and money management to study skills and test-taking strategies. Many Midwest Regional University students have had success using these services.

Your individual Success Coach will be assigned by the Student Advising Center Staff. Your Success Coach can be reached at: (219) 980-6804, advisenw@iun.edu, or Hawthorn Hall 300.

You will receive additional information from the Midwest Regional University Advising Center regarding a probation workshop you should attend. Then, watch for a call, email, or text from your Success Coach the first week of February, or feel free to reach out to them. Set a time to meet with your coach learn about how they can help you get back on track for success.

In addition, an advising hold will be placed on your record. In order to remove the advising hold, you must meet with your Success Coach to make an academic plan for moving forward successfully.

There are many resources available to you at Midwest Regional University to help you have a successful semester, and we urge you to take advantage of these. Some resources include:

- Dean of Students, Savannah Center 223, tylerb@iun.edu, 219-981-5660
- Career Services, Moraine Student Center 101, 219-980-6650
- Tutoring assistance – find out more at http://www.iun.edu/student-advising/faq/index.htm
- Resource Centers also include the Writing Center, Math Assistance Center, Student Support Services, Academic Success and Achievement Programs, and more – you can learn about them at http://www.iun.edu/student-affairs/

We wish you all the best in your current semester and look forward to celebrating your future success.

Sincerely,

Midwest Regional University Probation Letter Template – sophomore students (30-60 credits)

DATE

Dear First Name,

We are writing to you today to encourage greater success in your academic journey at Midwest Regional University. Knowing that the semester did not go as you planned, we have initiated a process to help boost your confidence, raise your GPA and inspire degree completion. As part of this process, we have placed you on academic probation. This means that we are looking for improvement in your GPA next term, or you will face stricter probation requirements or potential dismissal from campus. You may also face changes to financial aid, related to making satisfactory progress (SAP) towards your degree.

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- Resource Centers also include the Writing Center, Math Assistance Center, Student Support Services, Academic Success and Achievement Programs, and more – you can learn about them at http://www.iun.edu/student-affairs/

We wish you all the best in your current semester and look forward to celebrating your future success.

Sincerely,