

AN INVESTIGATION OF HOPE IN SECOND-YEAR MALE COLLEGE STUDENTS
DURING ACADEMIC RECOVERY

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

There is an increase of students placed on academic probation after their first year of college yet continue to their second year, with a larger percentage of this population identified as male. Men are also falling behind in graduation rates, and this gap is significantly wider for men of color. This study utilizes Bean & Eaton's (2000, 2001) psychological model of retention and Carl Snyder's (2002) hope theory to explore the experience of men on academic probation during their second year of college. The study used an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design involving quantitative data from an administered survey, followed by student interviews discussing their experiences. The investigation aimed to discover if the three variables attributed to Bean & Eaton's model, academic locus of control, coping skills and self-efficacy influence hopeful thinking, while also exploring narrative student experience for better understanding of this experience. Themes in the literature discuss the challenges surrounding the second year of college, factors that influence students to fall on academic probation, male difficulty surrounding healthy coping strategies, and the importance of several psycho-social variables that impact student persistence. The results indicated a statistically significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Additionally, students expressed their second year in recovery as a transitional process with emphasis on feelings of directionless, loss of motivation, coping skills, the importance of peer relationships and support networks, and the impact of COVID-19 on their learning experience. Academic recovery in the second year is a process that takes longer than one semester, requires institutional support, intentional self-reflection, and the gift of time. Implications for future support include peer programming, student success courses, hands-on major exploration, and policy review.

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grow my mind independent of any man, find a supportive partner, and love my family above all else - I love you.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM

U.S. higher education is shaped by three philosophical beliefs, the Jeffersonian ideals of limited government, freedom of expression and limited federal control; the belief in capitalism and market competition in the way of students, faculty, social mobility and funding which assumes that “diversity and high quality are best achieved through competition rather than centralized planning” (Eckel & King, 2003, p. iii). However, higher education was founded as an elite, White, male only activity which excluded individuals based on sex, religion, race/ethnicity, and social class. In efforts to make higher education accessible for equitable competition with moral underpinnings, has led to policy changes stratifying the post-secondary environment. Stratification is the expansion of higher education increasing lower-income and minoritized student enrollment which has flooded lower-selective institutions and community colleges while solidifying highly selective hierarchies (Roksa et al., 2007). With graduation gaps between minoritized and lower socio-economic people persisting, accountability agendas were implemented in 2008, which encouraged states to take a more proactive role with postsecondary institutions by reviewing time-to-degree efforts. As of February 2020, there were 29 states in which policies tied state funding to graduation rates (Fain, 2020). While there are significant increases in racial and economic diversity within postsecondary environments, the stratification of access is unequal among institutions. Additionally, the increase in diverse populations is not associated to improved graduation outcomes (Astin & Oseguera, 2004; Posselt et al., 2012; Roksa et al., 2007). The systemic issues that exist within the current state of higher education in readiness, access, and graduation rates are symptoms of our larger social network and political environment.

Higher education degrees are important for a technology-oriented society where the economy needs educated skill sets (Seidman, 2012; Tierney, 2000). College graduates are more economically secure, have a better quality of life (physically and mentally), and reach higher levels of income. These ripple effects impact not only individuals but their families and communities (Hagedorn, 2012; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Seidman, 2005; Seidman, 2012).

Increasing access to the public good of higher education is beneficial to everyone—public interests converge when more Americans across racial/ethnic groups earn college degrees and assume societal roles that enhance global competitiveness, decrease crime and poverty, and help the U.S. enact its espoused democratic ideals (Harper et al., 2009, p. 410).

Bourdieu (1986) utilized economic theory to explain how structural constraints and unequal access to resources based on class, gender, and race negatively impacts individuals. Social capital, for example, is the ability to navigate systems which provide educational benefits and positive outcomes in which to carry on *generationally*. Intersectionality asserts the idea that human beings encounter multiple experiences and realities, and our identities are positioned within context of institutional structures and power (Crenshaw, 2015). For minoritized individuals, social/cultural capital and intersectionality highlight the difficult nature of peoples' realities. They also are essential in defining human value, while redefining higher education's perspective on equity. Education is a cornerstone of our societal framework, but a system embedded with questions about the worthiness of minoritized people as educated citizens and legitimate members in higher education due to the shifting socio-political landscape (Harper et al., 2009).

Though enrollment numbers of students of color and lower socio-economic backgrounds have increased due to a *massification* of access because of the rise of for-profit institutions and community colleges, the diversity in the four-year institutional population is still unbalanced. For example, as of 2020, Black students only make up 12 percent of the postsecondary population,

Hispanic students represent 20 percent while 56 percent are White (NCES, 2020). At private institutions, the disproportion is even wider, 64 percent of students are White, while Black and Hispanic students make up 13 percent each (NCES, 2020). Native Americans represent the lowest percentage in the population. In addition, one-third of all college students identify as first-generation, (Cataldi, Bennett, & Chen, 2018). However, first-generation college students are disproportionately overrepresented in students of color, lower socio-economic status and gender groups making the disparities and impact on access and graduation significant for this group (Lohfink & Paulsen, 2005).

As Tinto (1975) and others have argued, students' social and academic engagement are key in predicting graduation. Engagement in those behaviors during the first year are crucial to long-term success. Yet, 20 percent of students end up on academic probation after their first year in college and only 15 percent of students with low GPAs (2.25 or lower) persist to their second year (Adelman, 2006; Schudde & Scott-Clayton, 2016; Tovar & Simon, 2010). It is estimated that 25 percent of students depart after their first year, while an additional 6 to 8 percent of students drop out by the end of their second year, many of these first-generation students (Adelman, 2006; Ishitani, 2006; Skyfactor, 2017). Adelman (2006) found that 20 percent of incoming second-year students were not meeting satisfactory academic progress and 1 in 6 had 'low' GPA's (2.25 or lower). Kennedy & Upcraft (2010) conclude that "poor academic performance is one of the major academic issues sophomores face in determining whether to stay at their current college, transfer to a different college, or drop out altogether" (p.35). This means second-year students are resilient enough to return in the face of many barriers such as the implications of satisfactory academic progress on financial aid, institutional requirements to remediate their standing, and potential barriers that disproportionately affect certain populations,

all on top of the developmental milestones that coincide within this year (Schreiner, 2012). Themes in the literature speak to the second year as a time when students experience crises involving social, academic, and personal identity and in return they may not be able to process their thoughts and feelings associated with confusion of identity, major, career, and purpose in life (Kennedy & Upcraft, 2010). When you lay that experience underneath one of academic challenge, it can create additional anxieties and stressors – barriers that ultimately affect long-term success.

According to a recent study from the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), male students who attend bachelor granting institutions are 6 percent more likely to drop out of college and the graduation gaps within the population are staggering. Currently, Black men are graduating at 34 percent within four years, American Indian men at 35 percent, Hispanic men at 50 percent, and White men at 61 percent for first-time students at four-year institutions (NCES, 2018; NCES, 2019). Men are more likely to be placed on academic probation and disqualified from an institution (Mathies et al., 2006).

Thinking beyond the obvious GPA markers and demographic characteristics typically evaluated to predict academic success, practitioner-scholars should consider other underlying factors contributing to graduation disparity so they may support students with more targeted intervention strategies while keeping in context the unequal balance of barriers and challenge students enter college with in the first place. Understanding the quality of students' experiences, behavior, level of engagement in educationally purposeful activities, academic learning outcomes, and personal development offers clues into the *capabilities* and dimensions in which students operate (Kinzie, 2012). The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) encourages institutions to consider *engaged inclusivity*. “Engaged inclusivity

transforms the dialogue on inclusion from general acceptance and tolerance of difference to active institutional transformation, based on the belief that the richness of our culture is because of our diversity and a recognition of our common humanity” (AAC&U, 2019). In order to make *engaged inclusivity* a reality the factors surrounding student persistence and retention must be evaluated within a more relevant framework; in fact, better understanding the student experience and the decision to persist allows institutions who are committed to equity a framework for addressing the systemic barriers that exist. In this case, exploring academic probation through the lens of *recovery* with a population falling behind in completion integrates a more asset-based worldview and will potentially uncover factors or barriers that could be rectified in order to offer a more inclusive and equitable approach in closing this gap.

1.2 DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

This section is meant to clarify key terms throughout this dissertation.

Men/Male: Men or male is used to recognize people who identify as male; acknowledging that gender identity and expression exists on a spectrum.

Academic Probation: Academic probation is a term that usually is a process and/or an academic standing which designates a student at risk for being dismissed from an institution due to the inability to maintain a GPA over a 2.0/4.0 (at some institutions the GPA may be different). The U.S. Department of Education maintains the GPA of 2.0 as a qualifier for students’ eligibility for federal student financial aid.

Discontinued/Disqualified: This term is sometimes used interchangeably to describe the process and standing for students who are dismissed by the university for failing to meet GPA requirements.

First-Generation: According to Higher Education Act of (1998), the term first-generation college student means— “(A) An individual both of whose parents did not complete a baccalaureate degree; Or (B) In the case of any individual who regularly resided with and received support from only one parent, an individual whose only such parent did not complete a baccalaureate degree.”

1.3 PURPOSE STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study utilized Bean & Eaton’s (2000, 2001) psychological model of retention and Carl Snyder’s (2002) hope theory to explore the experience of men on academic probation during their second year of college. The study utilized an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design involving quantitative data from an administered survey, followed by student interviews discussing their experiences. This investigation aims to discover if academic locus of control, coping skills and self-efficacy influence hopeful thinking, while also exploring narrative student experience for better understanding. The reason for collecting both sets of data is to offer a deeper understanding of student experience and discover potential variables in which institutions may influence in order to decrease the graduation gap. This research adds to the literature base on academic probation and recovery, second-year student experience, and male academic struggle in college.

Research Questions

1. How do locus of control, coping skills, self-efficacy, influence hopeful thinking?
2. How do students describe the process of academic recovery? Do any themes explain the results from the initial phase of the study?
 - a) What are the experiences of men of color and White men in academic recovery?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Student retention has been studied for years, with the emphasis mostly on the first year of college rather than the understudied second year. While there is a foundation of second-year literature to reference, it is limited in depth leaving an opportunity to build the second-year knowledge base more holistically. Further, there is almost no research on the recovery process, or the impact of this within the second year of college. Academic recovery adds additional layers of challenge to these transitional experiences for second years, especially during a global pandemic which has caused additional barriers and challenges for students worldwide. Discovering and appreciating that experience on a deeper level may offer practitioners insight in which to build interventions or programming to facilitate a stronger more effective recovery process, or even better, interventions prior to academic probation in the first place.

There are few studies that exist on men and academic probation, the majority focuses on emotional coping behavior. Focusing on the success of male students is important because they are dropping out of college at higher rates than women. The struggle to complete for men of color is drastic and pervasive throughout the K-16 education system. The depth of understanding the psychological phenomena that occurs for these students and its' potential connection to the narrative experience of academic struggle, are crucial in understanding the academic recovery process in second-year college men. This study's goal is to comprehend multiple complex experiences and perspectives through a variety of frames of understanding, requiring an approach to analyzing the problem through multiple methods. The results can inform potential practices in supporting this population if institutions desire to live up to their goals of lifelong learning, empathy, humanity, equality, and true competitive spirit in its journey towards social enlightenment.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 ACCESS & GRADUATION

Rooted in the increasingly tight linkage between educational attainment and economic success within the global economy, the external pressure on higher education to increase numbers of college graduates has been building for decades (Humphreys, 2012). Prior to 1970 access to Higher education remained mostly unchanged despite efforts to increase enrollment of women and minorities in traditional post-secondary institutions as well as the increase in women's and Historically Black Universities and Colleges (HCBU), until a multitude of reforms in the way of affirmative action occurred during the 1970s such as several reauthorizations of The Higher Education Act of 1965, Title IX (1972), and eventually, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, all aimed at improving access for disadvantaged groups to post-secondary environments (Roska et al., 2007). In the landmark case, *University of California v. Bakke* (1978), the supreme court decided postsecondary institutions could consider race as a factor to achieve a diverse student body, noting that remedying past discrimination was not a legitimate goal of affirmative action instead the economic benefits were. In several cases that followed, *Hopwood v. University of Texas* (1996), *Gratz v. Bollinger* and *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003), the struggle with issues of diversity, access, and American meritocracy within the postsecondary landscape was evident and these legal decisions emphasized the importance of diverse student bodies in remedying access but yet made no claim in deciding what students should have access to.

In 2008, amendments were made to the Higher Education Opportunity Act, which simplified the federal aid application, required campuses to develop campus safety plans, mandated articulation agreements to four-year institutions for community colleges, set nursing

school capacities, and offered opportunities for student loan debt and public service (Pinhel, 2008). According to Madaus, Kowitt, & Lalor (2012), The HEA of 2008 not only addressed affordability, but increased requirements for accountability, provided support for minority-serving colleges, funding new technology and facilities, in addition to expanding “smaller policies to help low-income students attend and succeed in college” (p.36). These policy adjustments encouraged states to take a more proactive role with postsecondary institutions in order to remediate the inequities and graduation gap. This is now known as the ‘The Completion Agenda’(Fain, 2016). These reforms focus efforts to collect more and ‘better’ data about students’ educational progress toward degrees, enact new policies that incentivize increased graduation rates and improve the efficiency of degree production, while tying funding to increased completion rates (Humphreys, 2012). The goal essentially is to increase the number of students graduating due to the overwhelming social benefits of people graduating with higher level degrees, but again, offering no direct pathway to achieve it.

The importance of academic persistence and retention of college students is not a new phenomenon. Retention efforts are well established on campuses throughout the country since retention is used as a key indicator of institutional effectiveness, yet there are many unresolved issues. Retention and graduation rates vary between types of institutions due to various factors including but not limited to admission criteria, financial resources, institutional mission, and size. Though enrollment numbers of students of color and lower socio-economic backgrounds have increased as noted earlier, there are consistent graduation gaps between gender and race/ethnicity at four-year institutions, even wider at community colleges. The 6-year graduation rate, used as the base rate to establish overall success, was 60 percent for first-time, full-time undergraduate students who began at 4-year institutions and slightly higher when removing for-profit colleges

from this metric (Bledsoe, 2018; Kirp, 2019; NCES, 2019). Students who identify as Asian graduate at higher rates than any other racial group at 74 percent with White students following behind at 64 percent. African American and Native American students graduate at 35 and 34 percent respectively (NCES, 2019). Students who identify as male graduate at lower rates in every demographic category, with African American men the least likely group to graduate. While the graduation gap between students of differing racial backgrounds persist, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HCBU's) and Women's Colleges have higher persistence rates and have shown unique characteristics in being able to maintain high persistence and completion rates (NCES, 2019; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Seidman, 2012).

2.2 ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

It is important to note that one theory of retention/departure dominates most practices institutions and researchers utilize which is Tinto's *Theory of Student Departure* (1975, 1987, 1993). While there now exists a variety of epistemological perspectives that offer practitioners different lenses in which to think about student retention and persistence, institutions and traditional support programs still utilize this framework informing institutional retention practices. Tinto theorized students enter college with unique characteristics with set intentions, commitments, backgrounds, personal attributes, skills, financial resources, dispositions, and various pre-college variables. Each variable can influence student departure, but it is the commitment to the goal of college and the institution which gains full entry to the college experience, leading to graduation (Tinto, 1993). Tinto argued that "integration" academically and socially in college is the most important factor in student retention. He argued that the social and academic systems work interdependently and influence each other while the subculture of an

institution and a student's interaction in that subculture can vary. Tinto (1993) acknowledges that persistence can occur without both social and academic engagement, but that some degree of "membership" is necessary for continued persistence. Tinto recognizes that the quality of interactions between the individual and the institution impacts student agency but necessitates students become members of the institutional culture. He argues that students may fail due to their inability to become "integrated" into the subculture system of the institution despite the many communities that exist (Tinto, 1993). Many scholars test, analyze, and apply Tinto's concept of academic and social engagement, finding that the concept continuously reveals itself as key in student retention and persistence.

Though Tinto is the most utilized and referenced retention theorist (Barefoot, 2004) there are many critiques to Tinto's theory. It is criticized for its lack of complexity and understanding various racial and ethnic groups, adult populations, and commuter students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Many researchers take issue with the concept of "integration" as another form of cultural assimilation by requiring a student to shed one identity and become the institutions' definition of "normal" (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Rendón, et al., 2000; Tierney, 1992, 2000). Moreover, the theory originally studied retention prior to the time minoritized people began to be more prevalent within the postsecondary population. Despite the fact Tinto's intention was to create an institutional model of retention, Melguizo (2011) critiques "...it somehow assumes a small and static world and fails to capture the economic, social, political, technological, and global forces" at play (p. 400). For minoritized students, dual socialization is the only way students of color live in a bicultural reality, noting that the experience between two worlds does not occur naturally (Rendón et al., 2000; Rodgers & Summers, 2008).

Institutions focus the majority of their efforts on academic and social engagement efforts, reasoning they can influence those variables because these two key components are proven contributors to student success. Tovar (2013) describes engagement as the amount of time and effort that students place in educationally beneficial practices that promote their learning and development. Engagement also refers to the efforts that *institutions* place in investing and in promoting these activities to effect student success (Kuh et al., 2010).

Highly involved students devote considerable energy to studying, working on campus, participating actively in student organizations, and interacting frequently with faculty members and student peers. Conversely, uninvolved students often neglect studies, spend little time on campus, abstain from extracurricular activities and have little contact with their faculty and peers (Rendón, 1994, p.43).

Astin (1984) explains that involvement occurs on a continuum; student learning is directly proportional to the amount and quality of involvement in those programs; and lastly, the effectiveness of policies and programs promoted by institutions will be assessed by their capacity to positively impact student engagement. Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) found that academic and social engagement by a student positively affects retention regardless of student demographics and precollege characteristics. If a student is engaged, they are also more likely to meet academic outcomes (Astin, 1984, 1993; Friedlander, 1980; Ory & Braskamp, 1988; Parker & Schmidt, 1982; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

The college classroom is a great example of converging both learning and social life. Tinto (2000, 2007) claims that the college classroom is the most important environment in which to incorporate both social and academic engagement activities. The more students are involved in shared learning experiences with their peers they are more likely to invest in their own learning (Tinto et al., 1993). For first generation students, Rendón (1994) discovered that the act of *validation* supported students in their academic and social engagement.

It appears that nontraditional students do not perceive involvement as them taking the initiative. They perceive it when someone takes an active role in assisting them. The role of the institution in fostering validation is active- it involves faculty, counselors, coaches, and administrators actively reaching out to students or designing activities that promote active learning and interpersonal growth among students, faculty, and staff (Rendón,1994, p.43).

Tinto (2000) recognizes the importance of validation outside of the classroom, but argues that learning communities within classrooms, with the right conditions, encourage students to seek out and make contact with faculty outside the classroom emphasizing the need for pedagogical training methods where validation can occur. Furthermore, students are influenced in settings which share a variety of perspectives from diverse faculty members and peers, highlighting the need for collaborative learning in the classroom setting where students have a voice. Darling-Hammond (1996) argues that students have a right to experience a true multicultural education because it "gives students access to social understanding by actually participating in a pluralistic community by talking and making decisions with one another and coming to understand multiple perspectives" (Darling-Hammond, 1996, p. 6). Profoundly, exposure to diverse perspectives in the classroom positively impacts students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds (Berger, 2000; García, 2019; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1996; Tinto, 2000). The results of such diverse and enriching examples lead students to take responsibility and deep interest in their own education (Darling-Hammond, 1996).

2.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENT PERSISTENCE

Pre-College Characteristics on Retention

There is a large body of literature correlating degree attainment and persistence to a student's background, described as "school grades, gender, ethnicity, parental income and education, and standardized test scores" (Astin & Oseguera, 2012, p.119). The K-16 system is

directly connected to postsecondary education success. Standardized test scores and high school GPA's are indicators of degree attainment, though test scores have been found to be more predictive for White students than other minority groups (Fleming & Garcia, 1998). The fact that high school GPAs are the biggest indicators of how successful students will be in college (Ishitani, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), highlights the issue that many high schools do not serve students equally in education or college preparedness. Students may enter college underprepared by no fault of their own. Adelman (2006) points out that students from the lowest socioeconomic status typically attend high schools that are less likely to offer any Math course above Algebra two, which impacts students being academically prepared for STEM fields. This is important because students who are underserved in academics, time management, and studying techniques are disadvantaged when they get to college and will be more likely to struggle.

Parental education and income are also shown to affect college completion directly and indirectly (Astin 1993b; Astin & Osguera, 2005; Attewell et al., 2012). First-generation students are at highest risk for non-completion due to the likelihood of entering college academically underprepared, have family commitments and responsibilities, are more likely to work, experience financial strain, poor study skills, and struggle with personal identity (Bledsoe, 2018; Humphreys, 2012; Kuh et al., 2005; Orbe, 2008; Melguizo, 2014; Pascarelli & Terenzini, 2005). Ishitani (2006) indicates that first-generation students are 8.5 times more likely to drop out of college and more likely to delay postsecondary entry, begin at a 2-year institution, and attend part-time or discontinuously (Chen, 2005).

First-generation students lack higher education social and cultural capital which is the knowledge and understanding what it means to be in college (Tello & Lonn, 2017). This

translates to a lack of knowledge in navigating and understanding the impact of college on their life and how to access retention resources. Bourdieu (1973) argues that the laws of educational markets guide how educational institutions are structured. These hierarchies are created in a manner that mirrors existing social classes. Astin (1993) contends that students from wealthier backgrounds are more prepared and trained for academic environments found in higher education. In essence, there is an upper-class educational expectation in postsecondary environments that leave lower-socio-economic students less prepared to navigate college leaving students experiencing a non-linear approach to college adjustment (Jalomo, 1995). This perspective also asserts idea that educational systems have an extremely important role in optimizing social and cultural capital within students in order for them accumulate greater capital later in life due to the overwhelming benefits of a college degree. “To this end, the critical role of the institution cannot be overstated, yet is often diminished in retention and involvement studies” (Rendón et al., 2000, p.137).

Psychosocial Variables on Retention

Some of the more recent studies focus on the impact of cognitive or psychosocial factors on their role in student persistence have been studied on the areas of self-efficacy, locus of control, and coping skills when dealing with challenges. Self-efficacy and locus control are both psychological processes where people believe they have control over their lives. Self-efficacy is defined by a person’s belief in their own capabilities and a product of multiple factors including conceptions of their own intellectual and social abilities as well as perceptions of their success and failures (Bandura, 1989, 1994, 1997; Bean & Eaton, 2000, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Self-efficacy is related to a person’s agency and their ability to make decisions on their own. Self-efficacy thought patterns can be either self-aiding or hindering (Bandura, 1989).

“Human behavior is regulated by forethought embodying cognized goals, and personal goal setting is influenced by self-appraisal of capabilities. The stronger their perceived self-efficacy, the higher the goals people set for themselves and the firmer their commitment to them” (Bandura, 1989, p.1179). According to Bandura (1989) cognitive beliefs directly affect a person’s motivation regarding the amount of effort they exert in situations or challenges. If self-efficacy beliefs are low-responsive, depression or anxiety usually follow (Bandura, 1975, 1989). Self-efficacy is also used studied in the context of learning and has been correlated in several studies to academic performance in college. For example, the higher the self-efficacy the more likely a student persists (Multon et al., 1991). Self-efficacy effects the choices a student makes and how a) much effort is put in the face of difficult situations and b) internalized thought patterns from campus experiences (Rodgers & Summers, 2008).

Locus of control is one of the most studied psychological variables in human behavior and is influenced by Bandura’s social learning theory. Rotter (1966) states humans can interpret events as being either a result of one’s own actions or external factors.

...internal versus external control refers to the degree to which persons expect that a reinforcement or an outcome of their behavior is contingent on their own behavior or personal characteristics versus the degree to which persons expect that the reinforcement or outcome is a function of chance, luck, or fate, is under the control of powerful others, or is simply unpredictable (Rotter, 1990, p.484).

Locus of control has been found to be a significant variable in the academic success of college students. Onwuegbuzie & Daley (1998) found that locus of control was the best predictor of successful study skills in college students and higher self-esteem and internal locus of control are both characteristics of low-SES minoritized students who succeeded in high school (Finn & Rock, 1997). “In this case locus of control was shown to be a determinant of success when other

predictors of attrition such as ethnicity, non-traditional family structure, lack of parent education, and low income were present” (Gifford et al. , 2006, p. 20). Carden et al. (2004) explain,

Because internally oriented individuals perceive a connection between their behavior and its consequences, they may tend to have more control over their academic experience than externally oriented individuals. Internally oriented students may then procrastinate less, experience less test anxiety, and achieve higher academically than externally oriented students (p. 581).

This finding is consistent in many additional studies (Pascarella & Ternezini, 2005; Sisney et al., 2000; Weiner, 1980;).

Sense of Belonging & Campus Climates

The culture of a campus can significantly impact students experiences and success in college. Kuh and Whitt (1988) define culture as,

the collective, mutually shaping patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that guide the behavior of individuals and groups in an institute of higher education and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off campus (p. 12–13).

Sense of belonging is a student's personal perceptions of genuineness in social relationships or feeling unpressured by "normative" behaviors and traditions surrounding them (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Tovar, 2013). Students assess their fit through multiple dimensions reflected by student-faculty relationships, student-peer relationships, and student-classroom interactions (Rendón, 1994; Tovar & Simon, 2010). Tovar (2013) states that sense of belonging is inextricably linked to college student retention and critical in retaining students, especially for students of color. Strayhorn (2012) suggests that feelings of belonging are "context-dependent, such that sense of belonging in a particular context (e.g., department, classroom) has the greatest influence on outcomes (e.g., adjustment, achievement) in that area" (p. 20). Confirming that the classroom as Tinto (2017) points out, is the center of students' college academic experiences and influences the psychosocial experiences within the classroom and that of college.

The impact of institutional racial climate and its' impact on academic and social lives of students is heavily studied (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado & Carter,1997; Johnson et al., 2013; Museus & Quaye, 2009; Solóranzo et al., 2000; Steele,1997). These studies point to an important contextual element, for students living in an environment where racial aggressions occur in and outside the classroom impact students of color's sense of belonging. Moreover, there are many studies that focus specifically on how students perceive the organizational function on a campus which has direct and indirect effects on belonging and other factors (Berger, 2000). The organizational system of the institution begins with the admissions process, financial aid, student services, and other offices that directly connect with students. Further the academic subsystem can be incongruent with student populations and the expectations held by faculty. Faculty view and interact with students who have different levels of cultural capital, assuming students have higher socioeconomic student behavior. This in turn can affect a student's belief in "fitting in" or their sense of belonging in a classroom or at an institution (Berger, 2000.)

Steele (1996) postulated one reason for disparities within academics is due to stereotype threat. Stereotype threat is when a member of a minoritized group is exposed to the threat of the stereotype, such as women in science cannot be successful or African American students are not high achievers. In an interview with Anna Kramer for *The Brown Daily Herald* in 2016, Claude Steele stated, "When a student faces stereotype threat, the anxiety created by that negative assumption increases cognitive stress". This threat is related to a student's self-efficacy. Solóranzo et al. (2000) found that when Black students experience racial micro-aggressions, they began to alienate themselves from academic and social spaces in which those aggressions occur. Given that students from minoritized groups exist within two cultures as noted earlier, the

constant stress to “assimilate” in a world where a student may feel unwanted or question their abilities can impact persistence (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Johnson et al., 2013; Rendón et al., 2000; Rodgers & Summers, 2008; Solórzano et al., 2000). Even for Tinto (1993) who stresses the student-campus relationship, supports campus climate as crucial in student experience.

2.4 STUDENTS ON PROBATION & MALE ACADEMIC STRUGGLE

Most colleges have an academic standard and process to follow when a student does not meet certain GPA requirements, in most cases when a student fails to attain a 2.0. Different institutions practice different policy, but in most cases, students are offered “second chances” in order to redeem themselves. This opportunity involves students completing a set of requirements or steps requiring help seeking. If a student is unable to meet these standards, students are discontinued from the university. There is no clear answer for why a student falls on probation, for some students it may be a single factor and for others multiple. Students on probation have been found to possess a few common characteristics including poor academic preparation (Earl, 1988; Tinto, 1993); low motivation (Abelman & Molina, 2001; Tinto, 1993); poor time management (Earl, 1988; Thombs, 1995; Tinto, 1993); and poor study skills (Astin, 1993; Thombs, 1995). Cohen & Brawer (2002) found that students on probation also possessed an external locus of control frequently blaming outside forces or situations for their dilemmas.

Many students are on probation despite their background circumstances. It does not go unnoticed that first-generation students make up a greater proportion of students who struggle academically (Melguizo, 2011). “Lower-income first-generation students are not only disadvantaged by their parents' lack of experience with information about college, but also by

other social and economic characteristics that constrain their educational opportunities” (Martin Lohfink & Paulson, 2005, p.418). The factors that impact first-generation academic persistence are poor academic preparation prior to college (regardless of high school grades), poor time management, poor study skills, and financial constraints. Students with these backgrounds persist at lower rates than general population students, attend college less than full-time or on a lower academic load (12 units), work at higher rates and more hours, more likely to live with family and commute, and spend more time in the classroom than socializing on campus (Tovar & Simon, 2010). First-generation students are also at higher risk for departure in their second year of college (Ishitani, 2006).

In Young et al. (2015), they note that “students on academic probation were shown to have lower social skills, weaker social networks, less definite goals and to be less trusting, less ethical, and more anxious than students in good standing” (p. 223). As Barouch-Gilbert (2016) investigates, a plethora of negative socio-emotional consequences such as feelings of embarrassment, humiliation, shame, depression, loneliness, and anxiety can occur. Students who fall on academic probation typically do not perceive reality accurately. They can suffer from irrational thinking and have a difficult time controlling priorities (Young et al., 2015). These students also tend to utilize black and white thinking, also known as a fixed mindset (Dweck, 2007). This can impact negative self-talk, effective time management strategies, and priority setting. Students who struggle academically may have difficulties accepting personal imperfection or worse, letting it define their college identity especially for students who feel a high sense of perfectionism or intense pressure framed by family expectation (Young et al., 2015). Therefore, with an already stressed student, negative self-talk leads students to believe that their current identity is unfit or incongruent with that of college.

Students who identify as male are not graduating from college at equal rates compared to their female-identified peers. Fewer men compared to women are enrolled in college (43% vs. 57%) and fewer men persist to graduation within six-years (57% vs 63%) (NCES, 2018). When broken down further, Black men graduate at 34 percent compared to other groups; American Indian at 35 percent, Hispanic men at 50 percent, and White men at 61 percent (NCES, 2019). The University of Richmond in 2006 found that men were four times more likely to be on academic probation than women (Schaller, 2010). Hood (1992) and Hamman (2018) found that Black male attrition was tied to academic dismissal rather than the voluntary decision to drop out suggesting this population continue to push through despite struggle. Lindo et al. (2010) discovered being placed on academic probation after the first year reduces the likelihood of graduation; but, being placed on probation *doubled the rate of departure in college men*. The evidence is enough to acknowledge that men are struggling in college, but why?

One factor for consideration is the psychological difficulties that occur for men within the “traditional” college lifecycle. Olmstead et al. (2016) found that 27 percent of first-year male students meet the clinical cut-off score for depression and 1 in 4 men report higher levels of emotional distress. Early distress in college has a direct negative relationship with those reporting issues in adjusting to college (Olmstead et al., 2016). Caparo (2004) argues men in the first year of college experience an intense developmental separation from “boyhood” which often involves feelings of anxiety, followed by intense grieving. Conley et al. (2020) found this pattern consistent with prior literature on college men engaging in problematic coping behaviors when dealing with transition and stress (Ackermann & Morrow, 2007; Park & Levenson, 2002; Tamres et al., 2002; Zimmermann & Iwansku, 2014). For example, Gold et al. (2000) found men were more likely to engage in self-destructive behaviors through alcohol abuse and further,

Caparo (2004) suggests violent outbursts and anger is a symptom exacerbated by alcohol and drug use. Lyman (1987) argues men need emotional connection, but college men in particular, avoid relationship-oriented coping skills to manage their emotions since intimacy can be considered shameful or “feminine”. This theory claims men are less likely to ask for help and engage in positive coping skills which are either a) unknown to them or b) dismissed based on societal pressure for “manhood”. Bandura (1989) would argue that asking for help would be considered vulnerable or a ‘risk’ behavior, therefore for a student with low self-efficacy might engage in more anxiety driven activities. Schreiner (2012) states that a student with strong coping skills and support systems who perceives changes and challenges as necessary to move forward will experience less traumatic stress reactions than those who lack coping skills and support. It could be argued based on the evidence, that college men lack coping skills and face increasing social pressure in the journey into “manhood” which coincides with college, impacting their abilities to adjust when faced with stressors.

2.5 THE SECOND YEAR: CHALLENGES, PURPOSES & IDENTITY

First year academic performance is strongly correlated to persistence to the second year and overall degree attainment (Nora & Crisp, 2012; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Terenzini & Wright, 1987; Titus, 2004;), which makes the first year the most researched year within the college environment. Ishitani (2016) found that gender, race, financial aid, and first-year college GPA all impacted first-year persistence with financial aid significantly effecting persistence to a student’s second fall semester. Students are at higher risk for attrition during the second year if their first-year GPA was below a 2.0 at the end of their first year (Ishitani & Desjardins, 2002).

the magnitude of the effect of the first-year GPA was more than doubled for the second year. Every one-point increase in the GPA was associated with decreasing the odds of

dropout by 20% in the first year. Every one-point increase in the first-year GPA was also associated with reducing the likelihood of leaving college during the second year by 44.6% (Ishitani, 2016, p. 278).

Adelman (2006) found that 20 percent of incoming second years were not meeting satisfactory academic progress and 1 in 6 had 'low' GPAs. "Poor academic performance is one of the major academic issues sophomores face in determining whether to stay at their current college, transfer to a different college, or drop out altogether" (Kennedy & Upcraft, 2010, p.35). Theory and research on the second year of college is less developed, but generally notes its own set of challenges in academics, finances, relationships, and decline in institutional support (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006; Schaller, 2010; Tobolowsky, 2008). Students who are struggling academically are interesting because they are resilient enough to return in the face of many barriers such as the financial implications of satisfactory academic progress, institutional requirements, and degree progression, on top of the developmental milestones that coincide within this experience (Schreiner, 2018).

Developmentally, themes in the literature speak to the second year as a time when students experience crises involving social, academic, and personal identity in return they may not be able to process their thoughts and feelings associated with confusion of identity, major, career, and other important purposes (Kennedy & Upcraft, 2010). Moving beyond adolescence individuals develop tools to make choices and respond to the expectations of others in relationships; therefore, the majority of sophomores are in a stage of "focused exploration" where students are seeking meaning and direction in life (Schaller, 2005). Schreiner & Young (2017) found that 21% of sophomores are still unsure of their major by the end of their second year. This developmental transition in the second year also seems to focus on the questions of

“Who am I?” (Schaller, 2010). Schreiner (2012, 2018) has found in her research that significant transitional thinking occurs in the second year around issues of purpose and identity.

Transitions as opposed to adjustment, are periods of time that require significant change as a person moves out of one role, routine, or relationship and into another (Goodman et al., 2006). Schreiner (2012) utilizes Schlossberg’s (1989) transition theory to explain these complexities,

Transition begins with an event or nonevent that is perceived as significant by the student: something occurs that was either anticipated or unexpected, or a significant event that was expected to happen does not. As a result, relationships, roles, life routines, and ways of seeing the world begin to change. The impact of such inherently stressful changes depends on the ratio of the student’s assets and liabilities at the time, as well as whether there are single or multiple changes occurring simultaneously. A student with a strong repertoire of coping skills and a significant support system who perceives the changes as a necessary part of a positive new future will experience a less traumatic stress reaction than will a student who lacks adequate coping skills and sufficient support (p.3).

Schlossberg (1989) argued that when students experience shifts or transitions, they can feel marginalized or that they do not matter. For a student to navigate the process more smoothly, students “take stock” (Schlossberg, 2008). “Taking stock” is when students assess the transition by considering the timing of the transition, trigger(s) to the transition, previous experiences with change and difficulty, and whether a student is experiencing concurrent stress (Anderson et al., 2012). This is important context because for students who are underserved or minoritized it’s hard to assess the amount of stress both as a trigger to and from the recovery experience. For college students in general the transition and adjustments that occur throughout the lifecycle require an element of risk or vulnerability.

The second year of college is found to be a year of transition, a transition which heightens stress due to documented issues of academic challenge and disengagement, career and

major indecision, development and identity confusion, and dissatisfaction with college (Kennedy & Upcraft, 2010; Keup et al. , 2010; Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000; Schreiner et al. 2012; Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007; Young et al., 2015). However, there are significant external and institutional barriers that affect student’s engagement and success during their second year of college. Schreiner (2018) notes,

a) the campus run-around and a lack of attention to service excellence that particularly impacts sophomores; b) difficulty connecting to faculty in meaningful ways; c) inadequate academic advising to address meaning and purpose, which is the major developmental issues of the sophomore year; d) campus systems and policies that hinder thriving among marginalized students, as well as among sophomores in general and e) the removal of almost all forms of campus support from the first year (p.11).

Tobolowsky (2008) argues that educators and practitioners should be interested in the sophomore year because it is “the year in which students make many of the decisions that help them succeed in subsequent years, such as clarifying their sense of purpose, making major declarations, and narrowing their career options” (p.60). Schaller (2010) states that increasing academic self-efficacy, student involvement, engagement, and satisfaction; supporting students in major, career and life purpose decisions; engaging in meaningful relationships with faculty and staff; and attending to financial and academic concerns should be the pillars of a second-year experience for students. One-way of building self-efficacy and positive mindset is through self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2007). This model treats the student as a knower by (a) validating the student as knower, (b) situating learning in the student experience, and (c) viewing knowledge as co-constructed. “In the sophomore year, students need encouragement to engage in new activities that continue to expand their knowledge of self, the world, and self-in-the-world” (Schaller, 2018, p. 27). Schaller (2018) suggests that reflection is a key learning tool that can take many forms: journaling, mind-mapping, mindfulness, artistic expressions, and reflective sharing.

This approach sits well with Rendón's (1994) validation theory, finding that the act of validation builds self-confidence and sense of belonging in students, most impactfully with first-generation students. Barouch-Gilbert (2016) found that words of affirmation from friends, family, and the institution helped students on probation feel more secure and less embarrassed. Schreiner (2010, 2018) describes the concept of thriving as "being intellectually, socially, and psychologically engaged in the college experience – a goal that leads to persistence but is more holistic and far-reaching than whether the student survives to cross the stage at graduation" (Schreiner, 2018, p.12). Schreiner (2010, 2018) illustrates thriving students as engaged in the learning process, able to manage their time and commitments, connect in healthy ways, show appreciation and gratitude for others, are committed to enriching their community, and are optimistic about their future. "With this definition of student success in mind, *thriving* then becomes the desired outcome of the sophomore-year experience" (Schreiner, 2018).

2.6 MODELS FOR ACADEMIC RECOVERY

Over the last 60 years many scholars have proposed many theories and models and frameworks to explain student retention. These theories are founded in sociological, organizational, economic, and psychological theory. Consistent themes include individual and institutional factors that play a role in student persistence, and the discussion surrounding student persistence and departure which is traditionally viewed from Tinto's (1975,1993) institutional departure perspective, an ethnocentric western perspective on student experience, emphasizing student responsibility in engaging academically and socially. Institutions seem to fixate on the ideas of academic and social engagement and factors that influence these tenants for student

success without exploring other factors that smaller subsets of the populations may need of attention in order to create a ‘resilient’ student (or a graduating one).

Fletcher & Sarkar (2013) state that the psychological process of recovery and having resiliency are different concepts. Recovery is characterized as a temporary state. It is triggered by a period of low functioning followed by gradual restoration to a healthy level of functioning, whereas resiliency is often described as the ability to maintain normal levels of functioning. For example, a person experiencing grief demonstrates a recovery pattern; perhaps via depression or anxiety and difficulty completing daily tasks, while a more resilient person may function without these lows (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). The dictionary defines ‘recovery’ as a return to a normal state of health or the action of regaining possession or control of something lost or stolen (Oxford Languages, n.d.). One could argue that academic recovery is indeed a recovery process, healing the grief from a low point in order to return to a healthier functioning level. This is not to suggest that we have yet defined what ‘normal health levels of functioning’ are, or what that might be in context within student development theory. C.R. Snyder’s hope theory and Bean & Eaton’s psychological model of retention offer a theory and framework in which to conceptualize a struggling student’s experience in order to better understand a students’ experience and provide a more informed and culturally relevant definition of recovery and resilience.

Bean & Eaton’s Psychological Model of Student Retention as Framework

Psychological student retention theory is influenced by Tinto’s departure theory (1975, 1993) but Bean (1982) and Eaton and Bean’s (1995) approach/avoidance model are two attempts to integrate psychological theory into retention theory. In the (1995) model, Eaton & Bean suggest that students experience maladaptive coping strategies to deal with a variety of stressors

negatively impacting motivation and success in college. They argue that when a student sees a transition as an opportunity, students are more likely to use “approaching” coping skills, such as seeking out information and assistance, engage with support system and invest efforts. The opposite, ‘avoidance’ coping mechanisms are used when students refuse help or avoid situations, use alcohol or drugs, sleep or other activities for escape. Bean & Eaton (2000) built upon this original framework to reframe this concept within a psychological model of retention. Bean & Eaton (2000, 2001) break down their model into a cyclical paradigm which internal and external factors reinforces or challenges students’ perceptions of self and the institution, influencing cognitive-emotional behavior. For example, students enter college with many different characteristics, beliefs, coping strategies, motivations, and skills. Students then experience a variety of academic and social environments and interactions. How students handle those interactions (both positive and negative) are broken into three separate areas a) self-efficacy (Bandura 1986, 1998) b) coping process; approach/avoidance skills (Eaton & Bean, 1995) and c) locus of control (Rotter, 1966).

Once a student begins college, they begin interacting with the institution and its representatives in bureaucratic, academic and social realms while continuing to interaction with people outside of the institution -which is an important distinction in understanding stress or influence on student decision making (Bean & Eaton, 2001). A student experiences administrative and academic functions of a system like registration, housing, advising, financial aid, and interactions with faculty, advisors, librarians, tutors, and other students. All of these interactions are academic and social in nature and do not magically result in academic and social engagement (Bean & Eaton, 2001). Bean & Eaton (2000, 2001) argue students experience

emotional reaction to their environments which motivate them to engage in adaptive strategies to handle these things (Bean & Eaton, 2001).

As noted earlier, Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory is a tenant within this framework. When a person believes they are capable they gain self-confidence; therefore, if self-efficacy increases – academic and social engagement increase (Bean & Eaton, 2000, 2001). Coping behavior is a person's ability to cope with stress and adapt the ability to engage academically and socially is an outcome of the utilization of coping strategies (Bean & Eaton, 1995, 2000, 2001). While coping and recovery are often discussed in relation to resilience, they are all different constructs and coping skills are closely related to resilience, which is characterized as a level of healthy living when faced with significant stress or adversity (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). Finally, the third tenant of the framework is the focus on locus of control. When a student has a higher internal locus of control students' motivation to study and socialize is high. Bean & Eaton (2000, 2001) recognize that the experience a student has is not linear – it is circular and reciprocal. According to Bean and Eaton (2000), when students are academically and socially integrated, they form positive attitudes about the institution which influences their intent to persist, and ultimately, their actual persistence

However, in this model it is not only the consequences of students' interactions with others on campus, but it is also their interactions with others off campus that can shape their sense of belonging (Bean & Eaton, 2000, 2001; Schaller, 2010). If interactions support students' self-efficacy, increase their confidence, motivation, and internal attributions of control, and reduce their stress levels, academic and social engagement are more likely- leading to a likelihood of persistence. In Johnson et al.'s (2014) study used Bean & Eaton's (2000) model which illustrated how campus environments, including racial climate experience, contributed to

psychological experience for students of color at Primarily White Institutions (PWI's). The researchers found this model useful in demonstrating how racial and ethnic diversity is beneficial to White student experiences and for overall persistence at institutions. Rodgers & Summers (2008) found that the Bean & Eaton (2000) model explained the psychological processes of self-efficacy, motivation, and coping related to African American students establishing a sense of biculturalism, a duality necessary for many minoritized students, both in and outside of the college community.

Charalambous (2019) utilized a mixed-method study approach in testing Bean and Eaton's model of student retention, finding that both academic and social self-efficacy are important factors in facilitating first- and second-year success. Bean & Eaton (2000) argue that their model in particular works well for students who struggle academically. Their belief is that students achieve lower GPA's because of issues of motivation, belief in self, environmental stress, lack of healthy coping skills (utilizing avoidance techniques), and a feeling that their grades are out of their control. These factors combined make this framework worthy of consideration.

Snyder's Hope Theory

Hope theory is rooted from positive psychology and is a way of thinking, with feelings playing an important but complimentary role. Snyder (2002) describes hope theory as anchored in goal setting and attainment. It emphasizes the concept of hope in human's context of doing, success, and capacity to achieve goals (Jevne & Edey, 2003). A goal can be visual images, properties, or verbal descriptions (Snyder, 2002). There are two types of goals in hope theory. The first is a positive or an 'approaching' goal such as earning better grades, sustaining a present goal, or furthering of a goal in which someone has made progress. The second is the

foreshadowing of a negative goal outcome, which in its strongest form reflects stopping something before it happens – in the case of academic probation, students may think “I do not want to be disqualified from the university” so they set a goal of not doing so (or leaning into their predictions).

Hope theory is broken into two parts pathways thinking and agentic thinking (Snyder et al., 1992; Snyder et al., 1995; Snyder, 2002). Pathways thinking is a way of thinking and constructing solutions based on past, present and future representations of experiences. Snyder (2002) suggests that pathways thinking is about linking our present to the imagined future or goal. Agentic thinking is “the perceived capacity of one’s pathways to reach the desired goal” (Snyder, 2002, p.252). Snyder has found that high-hope people embrace self-talk agency phrases as, “I can do this,” and “I am not going to be stopped” (Snyder et al., 2000). Problems in particular, can be seen as barriers to meet goals. For some, these “problems” can be deflating which impacts both pathway and agentic thinking. For students to be successful in the academic domain, it requires individuals to generate multiple pathways to overcome challenges. Essentially hopeful thinking is the process in which to think about solutions to a challenge or to achieve a goal, and the belief in which the outcome desired can be achieved (Seirup & Rose, 2011; Snyder, 1995). Agency and pathway components of hope are positively related, and *both are needed for hopeful thinking* (Seirup & Rose, 2011; Snyder et al, 1995; Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 2002).

Profoundly, many studies find correlation between hopeful thinking (pathway thinking & agentic thinking) and self-efficacy (Snyder 1995, 2002). Since self-efficacy is centered on the self-belief that one can perform behaviors agentic thinking mirrors this concept. According to Feldman & Kubota (2015) explain self-efficacy is largely agnostic regarding whether an action

will lead to a goal outcome, where-as hopeful thinking is more specific, the belief that goals are not only achievable, but the plan in which to achieve them is. The ability to build hopeful thinking begins in childhood. A child's ability to build trust in other people guide their abilities in how to trust and understand the cause and effect of relationships (Snyder, 1989,1994,1996, 200b). Snyder's literature argues that children learn how to trust and cope from their parents. This argument indicates that hopeful thinking is learned, and the majority research that currently exists focus on teaching hopeful thinking to adolescents and adults. Hopeful thinking has been associated with many levels of differing success (Snyder et al., 2002; Seirup & Rose, 2011; Marques, Gallagher, & Lopez, 2017) including but limited to mental and physical well-being (Carson et al., 1988; Dufrane & LeClair, 1984; Snyder, 1995; Yarcheski et al., 1994) and notably in academic achievement (Chang, 1988; Ciarrochi et al., 2007; Curry et al., 1997; Irving et al., 1998; Leeson et al., 2008; Snyder et al., 2002; Seirup & Rose, 2011).

Students who were more hopeful were more likely to “engage in self-regulatory behaviors and internalize strategies to obtain their goals of academic success” (Seirup & Rose, 2011, p.5). High-hope students also are more likely to engage in positive coping, such as approaching the problems and self-advocacy versus avoidance and passivity in addition to being more likely to graduate (Eaton & Bean, 1995; Snyder et al., 2002). Chang (1998) and Snyder et al. (2002) both utilized the Adult Hope Scale (AHS) with college students. Both studies discovered more positive outcomes with high-hope students. Chang (1998) tested the Adult Hope Scale (AHS) and Tobin et al.'s (1989) Coping Strategy Inventory (CSI) and found students who reported higher hopeful thinking coped better with stressful academic situations and reported higher problem-solving abilities. Snyder et al. (2002) argue that teaching hopeful thinking on top of metacognitive skills and self-regulated learning strategies can be successful in

more than just the academic domain and could have profound effects on personal lives and mental health. It is also recommended that faculty and teachers have an important role in modeling, creating reinforcement, and encouragement in the pursuit of academic goals (McDermott & Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 1999; Snyder et al., 2002).

Critiques of Psychological Theory

Psychological theory is influenced by historical, sociopolitical, and cultural factors during the times in which the research was conducted. It is important to acknowledge that these theories emphasize individualism and relational capacities in overcoming stress, which is Western-centric. Bean & Eaton's (2000) model and Snyder's (1995) model address two different ways of looking at an individual's cognitive processing. Tong et. al. (2010) found that Snyder's Adult Hope Scale (1992) was found to be relevant for situations in which people had control over but found it to be irrelevant when dealing with trauma in a cultural context. Both models under consideration have been tested with a variety of racial and cultural backgrounds but are limited in its' cultural understanding of cognitive thinking within these limits. It is also important to note that testing these theories in this study will not be entirely exhaustive nor conclusionary, as it does not include important socio-economic variables and inequities that the research tells us affects this population. However, extensive research has been conducted on various world-wide cultures regarding concepts of self-efficacy, secure attachments, social support, social justice, and economic development and these concepts are found relevant despite these cultural differences but ask researchers to consider additional research within cultural contexts (Johnson-Powell & Yamamoto, 1997; Unger, 2004).

Fletcher & Sarkar (2013) describe resiliency as a construct with two core principles: adversity (stress) and positive adaption (coping skills/ways of thinking) seen in both

psychological models above. Luthar et al. (2000) state that the adversity is typically viewed as a negative life experience or trauma that is known to be statistically associated with long term negative impact, such as domestic violence or homelessness or in this case academic struggle; however, adversity could also be seen as adjustment to daily stressors that do not create negative life impacts such as a new marriage, new job promotion, or the utilization of new or complex problem solving skills which would necessitate success in appropriate adjustment skills (Fletcher & Sakar, 2013). Essentially, what one aims to see is a person showing ‘competence’ in the area of recovery or resilience if the desired outcome is related to an aspect of internal well-being (Masten & Oradović, 2006).

Unger (2004) argues that using certain coping skills are culturally, socially, and environmentally informed. There is an overwhelming number of studies highlighting the importance of coping skills and handling adversity (Clauss-Ehlers, 2008; Leipold & Greve, 2009; Sinclair & Wallston, 2004; Tugade et al., 2004;). This literature also discusses the importance of self-efficacy and self-talk, which is why considering Bean & Eaton’s (2000) model which centers on the use of coping skills and self-efficacy paired with Snyder’s (1992, 2000) theory of hopeful thinking related to internal well-being, match well with what this study aims to find about this population.

Resilience and recovery are comprised of multiple factors; behaviors, styles, assets (or capital) which positively influences an individual’s life (Canobell-Sills et al., 2006). Unger (2008) known for his culturally relevant work defines resilience as the following,

In the context of exposure to significant adversity, whether psychological, environmental, or both, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being, and a condition of the individual’s family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways (p. 225).

Utilizing this definition of resilience for the case of academically male struggling students, defines the goal of this study to deeply understand the idea of academic resilience and recovery within a cultural frame. Re-defined with this population in mind, academic resilience comes to mean the capacity of students to navigate themselves to beneficial resources, applying positive healthy coping skills, and ability to deeply connect to their families, campus and home communities, and culture in which to enrich their lives. Ultimately understanding academic recovery and resilience across student demographic and within a variety of cultures provides a potential contribution for a more “heterogeneous definition” of these constructs, making it possible “to identify hidden and socially marginalized coping strategies which many come to the notice of those who typically define resiliency from a Eurocentric and middle-class perspective” (Unger, 2012, p. 387).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 POSITIONALITY

It is important that the positionality (relational power) and the reflexivity of the researcher is considered critical in qualitative research (Steinberg & Cannella, 2012). I am a White female, not only differing in gender identity but in some cases race, from the population being studied. I am both a staff and faculty member at the institution in which the study is being conducted and my professional role is within the sphere of academic recovery. My professional goal is to help students navigate institutional process and personal challenges to build student agency in decision making surrounding persistence and goal setting. It would not be uncommon I may know a potential survey or interview respondent personally due to my role as both staff and faculty member. There is a power differential that exists not only between me and the participant, but also as teacher and student. It is important to note that no potential participant is a current student in any course I am teaching while I conduct this research.

My gender, race, as well as socioeconomic background place me in an outsider position. Looking in and reflecting on these intersections require me to be considerate to not only any power dynamics within the environment, but the cultural and social differences as well. In many ways I am also an insider. I have experience working one-on-one with this population for over 10 years, additionally, I also struggled the first two years in college facing similar issues that many students experience. My background is in counseling which offers experience interviewing and relationship building to gather information of the insider experiences. The insider knowledge of the institution, student population and experiences allow me to naturally build relationships with the participants during the interview phase but as an outsider to ask more meaningful questions specific to the population under consideration. I admit, I am not wholly unbiased in the

research effort. As Probst & Berenson (2014) note, “Reflexivity is generally understood as awareness of the influence of the research process affects the researcher” (p.814). I am aware of the emotional pull in supporting students and the optimistic perceptions of what their subjective experience is both professionally and personally, which informs my opinions and approaches in executing the methods. It is likely I may offer advice or resources at the conclusion of the interview process.

3.2 EPISTEMOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE & MIXED METHODS APPROACH

This study is best viewed from a pragmatic lens which Tashakkori & Teddlie (2015) recommend as an excellent framework for mixed methods approaches. “Pragmatism is not committed to any one system of philosophy or reality, there are many ways of seeing and knowing problems allowing for a duality” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2015, p. 24). This approach respects and listens to others but also modifies our belief systems into useable knowledge for social justice (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2015). Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) state that a pragmatic approach argues that our thoughts, experiences, feelings, emotions, languages, institutions, and cultures are real (constructivist/transformative). It also agrees that objective realities exist (postpositivist); *reality*, therefore, is subjective, intersubjective, and objective thus multiple perspectives in understanding human behavior is needed. “In these ways, a mixed methods way of thinking actively engages us with difference and diversity in service of both better understanding and greater equity of voice “(Greene, 2008 p.20). Berliner (2002) noted that,

...doing science and implementing scientific findings are so difficult in education because humans in schools are embedded in complex and changing network of social interaction. The participants in those networks have variable power to affect each other from day to day, and the ordinary events of life...[which] limits the generalizability of educational findings. (p.19).

Mixed method/pragmatic approaches support the essential need for triangulating data and utilizing multiple techniques in achieving it. Understanding quantitative results expanded by qualitative data, may clarify why a student persists (or not), how a low-hope student experiences recovery (or not), what social factors impact student persistence (or not), and how students utilize coping skills (or not) (Farquhar, 2011). In exploring the complexities of not only the second-year male experience but a student who has already experienced struggle on their way to graduation, asks the researcher to consider this dynamic experience within multiple ‘ways of knowing’.

Definition of Mixed Methods Research & Explanatory Sequential Design

Johnson et al. (2007) explains mixed-methods inquiry as “an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research” (p. 128). According to Johnson et al. (2007) mixed methods research (a) partners with the philosophy of pragmatism; (b) follows the logic of mixed methods research (including the logic imported from qualitative or quantitative research); (c) relies on qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, and analysis; and (d) “is cognizant, appreciative, and inclusive of local and broader sociopolitical realities, resources, and needs” (Johnson et al., 2007, p.129). Creswell & Plano Clark (2018) advise researchers to organize the procedures of multiple methods within a specific research design logic to conduct the study. For a sequential mixed method design, as will be used in this study, researchers first collect quantitative data, analyze the results, and use those results to create or build their second qualitative phase. “The overall intent of this design is to have qualitative data help explain in more details the initial quantitative results; thus, it is important to tie together or to connect the quantitative results to the qualitative data collection” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 222).

The rationale for choosing mixed-methods is two-fold. First, quantitative data on its own can be inconclusive in deriving meaning, especially with a population as complex as struggling students. The literature tells us there are multiple reasons for struggle and multiple ways of experiencing it. Quantitative methods allow the researcher to test the usability of certain instruments with this particular population and determine any connections between the variables and its potential impact on student persistence. For example, Bean & Eaton's (2000,2001) model is underutilized in retention literature despite the connection to three important factors previously shown to influence persistence: self-efficacy, coping skills, and locus of control. In particular, it is the emphasis on coping skills that warrants this model for consideration. The research shows that college-aged men lack emotional coping skills and knowing that coping with transition within the first two years of college is fundamental in persistence, necessitates these variables be tested within this student group. Snyder's (1992, 2000) hope theory is rarely used in the field of education but the psychological components pair nicely with the theory put forth by Bean and Eaton. Hopeful thinking requires a person to tackle problems and find solutions – a key component in life and academic sustainability. Essentially, I aimed to see if the three key variables in Bean & Eaton's model relate to hopeful thinking and how those students describe their experiences hopefully leads to a deeper understanding of student resiliency experiences.

3.3 SETTING & OVERVIEW OF STUDY

This study explored the concept of hope and persistence in second-year college men who are experiencing academic recovery who attend a low-selective, public, four-year institution that serves about 13,000 undergraduate students. The institution is a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) with a demographic breakdown of 47 percent Hispanic/Latinx, 27 percent Caucasian, 9

percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 5 percent Multiracial, 3 percent African American, 1 percent Native American and 54 percent of graduating students are first in their families to go to college. Additionally, 60 percent of students identify as female while 40 percent identify as male. The institution reports 78.8 percent first year retention for the Fall 2018 incoming cohort (79 percent for Pell recipients), a four-year graduation rate of 23.3 percent for the Fall 2016 incoming cohort (18 percent for Pell recipients), and a 57.1 percent 6-year graduation rate for the Fall 2016 incoming cohort (56.8 percent for Pell recipients). The diversity represented here allows for a culturally meaningful representation of experiences within this population.

Astin (1985) created a theory of talent development emphasizing the institution's role in promoting student learning and success. Kinzie (2012) states, "This view of student success recognizes that every student can learn under the right conditions; therefore, the institution must organize its resources and create conditions for teaching and learning to optimize success," (p. xx). If we recognize that students are not one-size fit all, and that institutions must embrace the need to reflect, recognize, and respond (Chickering, 2006) to the diverse talents and needs of the population -- we may be able to influence and drive 'thriving' students. Based on the current literature there are many reasons for why students may struggle academically; however, knowing the psychological mindset and capabilities of students may direct efforts in supporting student motivation and persistence decisions, as well as understanding what leads to academic success or failure. For students to thrive academically requires more than academically remediating students, it requires understanding their motivations and needs. Instead of attempting to gather data on why students leave, Sriram & Vetter (2012) suggest scholars should begin to understand why students stay in order to have more meaningful approaches towards student retention. The primary purpose of the first phase is to evaluate these concepts through the variables locus of

control, coping, and self-efficacy on hopeful thinking within this population, look for trends in enrollment, followed by a deeper qualitative phase employing a semi-structured interview and coding process to understand academic recovery.

3.4 PHASE ONE: QUANTITATIVE METHODS

Creswell & Plano Clark (2018) advise researchers to organize the procedures of mixed methods within a specific research design logic to conduct the study. For a sequential mixed method design, as was used in this study, researchers first collect quantitative data, analyze the results, and use those results to create or build their second qualitative phase. “The overall intent of this design is to have qualitative data help explain in more detail the initial quantitative results; thus, it is important to tie together or to connect the quantitative results to the qualitative data collection” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 222). That means the data in this study are not operating in isolation and the second phase is built from the first; the phase in which the researcher explores potential meaning of the quantitative data and instrument usability to inform the investigation of experience.

Self-identified male students who were enrolled in the Fall 2020 semester and either a) are currently on academic probation or b) received two or more No Credit (NC) grades in Spring 2020 (due to policy changes for automatic non-punitive grades from the forced move to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic), were contacted for participation in the study. The sample size was 134 students. Students were incentivized to participate for a chance to win 1 of 4 \$25.00 gift cards for their participation and completion of the study. Through a university survey system (Qualtrics), students were emailed an individual link tied to their student ID# to participate in a cross-sectional survey utilizing previously tested instruments, during the first

week of the Spring 2021 semester which began at the end of January. The recruitment plan included email reminders and personal invitations. Student ID# 's were used only to ensure integrity in the data and to ensure participant integrity as an identifier to track persistence. The instruments used within the survey are Snyder's (1991; 2002) Adult Hope Scale (AHS) (Appendix B), Curtis & Trice's (2013) Academic Locus of Control Scale - Revised (ALC-R) (Appendix C), Tobin et al.'s (1989) Coping Strategies Inventory Short Form (CSI-SF) (Appendix D), and Sherer & Maddux's (1982) Self-efficacy Scale (SES) (Appendix E). All instruments have several studies supporting both validity and internal consistency in their use.

The Adult Hope Scale (AHS) (Snyder et al., 1991) is a 12-item inventory which aims to tap into hopeful thinking in adults on a 4-point Likert continuum, though recent studies have used an 8-point Likert continuum to diversify responses. The AHS ranges from 8 to 32 on a 4-point scale, and 64 with the 8-point scale. This study will use the 4-point scale. Four questions are agency thinking, four reflect pathways and four are distracter questions. Some studies show a high correlation with similar psychological processes such as optimism and self-esteem. Cronbach's alpha ranged from .74 to .84 which addresses the internal consistency of the instrument as reliable. The survey for this study will include eight questions (agentic thinking and pathway thinking questions).

Curtis & Trice's Academic Locus of Control for College Students (ALC-R) (2013) was designed with Rotter's (1966) locus of control theory at the heart of its design. Trice (1985) created the instrument for college students to capture the internalization and externalization of academic behaviors. The revised instrument was originally created as 28-item instrument (now 21) in a true/false format with the items clustered into four categories 1) hopelessness 2) distractibility 3) poor attitude and 4) impaired planning. Due to the internal consistency issues

with the instrument, lower-mid calculations for Cronbach's alpha and length of the survey – this study utilized 9 specific questions from each of the four categories which have shown strong factor correlation.

The Coping Strategies Inventory – Short Form (CSI-SF) is a shortened version of the original Coping Strategies Inventory (CSI) (Tobin et al., 1989) which was developed to categorize coping responses based on individual feedback. The instrument utilizes a 2x2 matrix to quantify the strategy being used, such as assessing if one utilizes approaching related actions to stress. The CSI was originally a 78-item questionnaire with a 4-point Likert scale, then shortened to a 15-item questionnaire on a 5-point Likert scale for the short form. The short form utilizes four sub-scales 1) problem-focused engagement 2) problem-focused disengagement 3) emotion-focused engagement and 4) emotional focused disengagement (Addison et al., 2007). Cronbach's alpha ranges from .58 to .72 showing consistent reliability; however, one subscale, emotional focused disengagement was found to be on the lower end of reliability while the others were much higher. The survey used all 15 questions on the 5-point scale.

The Self-Efficacy scale (SES) was created from Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1977) which asserts that efficacy is a situational or specific belief in oneself. Sherer et al.'s (1992) goal was to develop an instrument that was not tied to any specific situation because clients enter therapy with different levels of efficacy (as with new college students). They reasoned that a general scale would help the therapist tailor to the client's needs. In this case, how the institution tailors support for students. The instrument utilizes two sub scales 1) general self-efficacy and 2) social-self efficacy. The instrument has been highly correlated to measures of locus of control and Cronbach's alpha was found to be .86 for the general self-efficacy and .71 for social self-efficacy. There is a total of 22 questions on the instrument, utilizing a 4-point Likert scale. This

survey utilized an adapted measure of 10 questions encompassing the general self-efficacy portion only on a 4-point Likert scale (Schwarzer et al., 1995).

The survey was available for two weeks. The data were analyzed through descriptive methods. First, the data was reviewed for frequencies and means to explain each individual variable outcome. The data was disaggregated by demographic (e.g., race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, first-generation) to explore for differences or similarities in the data. Additionally, the independent variables of locus of control, coping, and self-efficacy was tested against the dependent variable, hopeful thinking, to look for correlation. According to Creswell (2010), correlation is a statistical test to explore the relationship between two more variables. The method can be done by examining the data sets for correlation that results in r , how close two variables are to 1. Correlation only establishes a relationship, not causation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study aims to consider the relationship between the variables as a first step. Once the data is analyzed, themed questions can be framed from the results to inform the second phase of the study.

3.5 PHASE TWO: QUALITATIVE METHODS

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked if they would be willing to meet for an interview to discuss their experience. Students who expressed interest in meeting for an interview were personally invited by the researcher to meet for an interview to discuss their experience via email. An invitation also went out to the survey respondents inviting them personally to meet for an interview based on their availability and willingness to meet utilizing convenience sampling. The questions in the interview were informed from the results of phase I utilizing a semi-structured format. The interviews were an hour-long interview to discuss their

experience in academic recovery. Each interview was recorded (with student consent) via a web teleconferencing app (Zoom) due to current COVID limitations.

Merriam & Tisdell (2016) describe semi-structured interviews as a technique in which questions are a mix of structured and less-structured guided by a list of issues to be explored. “This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to the new ideas on the topic” (p.111). This method was approached from the “romantic” or “emotive” perspective (Roulston, 2010). This method requires the interviewer to establish rapport and empathic connection with the interviewee. This approach requires the researcher to be aware of his or her own subjectivities, interview style, and makes no claim to being objective (Roulston, 2010). Some participants interviewed may be students in which the researcher is already connected with through classes or advising. Therefore, this perspective is a more genuine approach in data investigation. Once completed, the recorded interviews were transcribed with the help of Zoom’s automatic transcription service. With the transcripts, the researcher ran through three cycles of coding. The first cycle will *follow in vivo* coding followed by a second cycle of *pattern coding*. *In vivo* coding is useful when trying to understand culture and worldview. The primary goal of *in vivo* methods “provide a crucial check on whether you have grasped what is significant” to the participant (Saldaña, 2009, p.75). In an effort to appreciate student voice, *in vivo* coding helps frame the interpretations of terms or meaning participants use rather than what is derived from academic disciplines. The second and third cycles of coding follow a *pattern* coding process which identify emergent themes, configuration or explanations. *Pattern* coding pulls together material into a more meaningful units of analysis and groups summaries into smaller sets, themes, or constructs (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the final analysis both quantitative and qualitative data are reviewed and analyzed through multiple

lenses and frames for understanding student experience, ultimately to determine if anything can be derived to best inform future approaches to working with this population.

3.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are several limitations to the study. The first limitation is the COVID-19 pandemic that currently harms the United States, the location in which the study is conducted, and this population mentally, physically, socially, and financially which is widely documented. It does not go unnoticed that this study was conducted in an unprecedented situation (virtually) with disproportionate impacts on several student groups that exist within the larger population. Additionally, the population is a smaller population than predicted (N) as many students did not return for the Fall 2020 semester due to the online learning planned for the 2020-2021 academic year. This population also tends to disengage or can be hesitant to discuss personal challenges that can be overwhelming and discouraging to them personally, noted by my professional experience. There was potential for a low survey response rate (institutional surveys typically have a baseline of 20% response rate) as well as a smaller interview group than planned.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

4.1 QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

The survey was administered between January-February 2021. The survey was emailed through a survey software tool (Qualtrics) to 134 potential respondents. To engage potential respondents the researcher sent four different reminder emails with an incentive to win 1 of 4 \$25 visa gift cards to increase the response rate for the survey.

About the Respondents

As noted earlier, typical survey response rate for the university is about 20 percent. The survey administered had approximately 26 responses (18 percent response rate); however, only 19 responses were usable for data analysis, which is about 14 percent of the target audience. The respondent population was 42 percent Hispanic/Latino, 21 percent White/Caucasian, 15.7 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 10.5 percent Two or More Races, 5 percent Black/African American, 5 percent Native Hawaiian. Eighty-four percent of the survey respondents had parents who attended some college making this sub-population slightly overrepresented in the survey data; however, an interesting note is that 31 percent of that 84 percent reported that it was their mothers who was the identified parent who had college experience versus their father which had none. The breakdown of major was 36 percent of students in Arts, Humanities, and Social Science majors, 26 percent Science and Engineering majors, 24 percent in Business majors, 10 percent undeclared, and > 1 percent Education, Human Services, and Health Science. 100 percent of all respondents were enrolled for the Spring 2021 semester. This is important context because the heart of this study is to understand why a student persists despite academic challenges (adding a global pandemic into the mix as well). The GPA of participants are not reported in this study due to the inflation of grades from institutional policy changes in response

to the COVID-19 pandemic, where grades of F were automatically changed to non-punitive grades of No Credit (NC) in multiple, sequential semesters.

COVID-19 has disproportionately harmed low-income communities of color, young adults' ability to keep consistent employment, and young adults sky-rocketing mental health concerns. In a recent study (Jones et. al, 2021) on mental health in college, more “than half of students (56.8%) reported their ability to do schoolwork decreased as a result of the pandemic, of whom (73.4%) identified their mental state as a reason for this decrease” (n.p.). Additionally, 81.1% of students reported that they (54.1%) and/or someone else in their household (68.9%) lost income as a result of the pandemic.” In Son et al. (2020)'s study, 71% of college students indicated increased stress and anxiety due to COVID-19 which included fear and worry about their own health and that of their loved ones, difficulty concentrating, poor sleep habits, decreased socialization, and increased concerns on academic performance. Nearly half of students in the study reported their weekly household expenses increased (Jones et al., 2021). According to a recent survey by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 12.5% of 20- to 24-year-olds were unemployed in September 2020, compared to last September's 6.3% unemployment rate of the same age group (Guzman, 2020). Nearly 60 percent of college students surveyed experienced basic needs insecurity sometime in Spring 2020 (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2020). COVID-19 is also occurring while a flourish of horrific scenes has flooded social media sparking intense activism in the Black Lives Matter movement (and others) addressing inequities in areas of education, healthcare, and criminal justice all while many students are struggling to make ends meet. This context is important in understanding potential trauma and the complexities around this study and this specific population. The effects of the pandemic are real, and undoubtedly impacted student responses in this study. Considering 100% of all respondents returned for the

Spring 2021 semester, there is a lot we don't know about who left and why – but, the responses of those who stayed tell us a story about where these students are psychologically despite these circumstances.

In order to evaluate the survey results descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, variance, and correlations are all used to explain the data and any potential relationship that exist between variables. A pre-analysis was conducted of the data to ensure completeness and accuracy of entries such as any results with missing responses or non-completion. The quantitative analysis was conducted to look at each individual variable first based on their respective instruments before analyzing any potential relationship with the dependent variable (hope) and independent variables (academic locus of control, coping strategies, and self-efficacy).

Academic Locus of Control (ALC) Scale Results

The revised version of the Academic Locus of Control Scale (ALC-R) was administered in the first part of the survey. The scale is an assessment of an individual's locus of control from an academic behavior-oriented lens, assessing motivation for academic skills from an internalized and/or externalized orientation. Students were asked to report if the statement was either true or false for them. If a statement was true, it was rated a score of '0' and if it was rated false it was given a score of '1'. The higher the score the more externalized a student's locus of control. The highest score possible for students on this revised scale was '11' with the lowest being '0'. The mean score for survey respondents was 3.94, indicating that as a group, male second-year students had a more internalized locus of control; however, both the standard deviation and variance for the total score was high indicating a potential consistency and reliability issue mirroring what Curtis

& Trice (2013) found when testing the scale with other general student populations. The ALC results for mean results can be viewed in Table 1.

Table 1

Academic Locus of Control Mean Results by Question

ALC- Questions	Mean
I have largely determined my own career goals.	.21
There has been at least one instance where social activity impaired my academic performance.	.16
I consider myself highly motivated to achieve success in life.	.32
Doing work on time is always important to me.	.21
I feel I will someday make a real contribution to the world if I work hard at it.	.32
I would like to graduate from college, but there are more important things in my life.	.53
Studying every day is important.	.37
I never feel really hopeless-there is always something I can do to improve my situation.	.36
I plan well and stick to my plans.	.42
I am a good writer.	.42
I would never allow social activities to affect my studies.	.63
ALC – 11 Total	3.94

Students reported higher externalized behavior in questions like, “I would never allow social activities to affect my studies”, “I would like to graduate from college, but there are more important things in my life”, “I plan well and stick to my plans”, and “I am a good writer”.

Notably, question two not associated to any sub-factor, had the lowest mean score of .16 indicating most students acknowledged “there has been at least one instance where social activity

impaired my performance.” Students reported being internally motivated when it came to “doing work on time” and “determining their own career goals”. White/Caucasian men and Multiracial men were found to be 1-2.5 points above the overall mean score of 3.94 ($M = 4.75$; $M = 6.5$), indicating a *potentially* higher externalized orientation for these groups. Based on individual responses, it appears that male students who potentially had a ‘poor attitude’ towards school were easily distracted and suffered from poor planning skills.

Coping Strategies- Short Form Results

The second instrument utilized was the Coping Strategies Inventory-Short Form (CSI-SF) which is comprised of 14 questions used to assess an individual’s engagement and disengagement behaviors when dealing with stress or challenges. The CSI-SF includes four sub factors and two summary sub-scales assessing engagement and disengagement coping behavior. The sub-scales were: Scale (1) Problem-Focused Engagement; Scale (2) Problem-Focused Disengagement, Scale (3) Emotion-Focused Engagement, and Scale (4) Emotion-Focused Disengagement. Participants were asked how often they engaged in behaviors on a scale of 1-5, with *never* scoring ‘1’ to *always* scoring ‘5’. Students reported that they were less likely to talk about their problems with friends or family or seek them out for support, they were also less likely to “let their feelings out” ($M = 2.52$), more likely to spend time alone ($M = 3.42$) and more likely to avoid problems all together on the question ($M = 3.21$). Overwhelmingly high was the score on questions “I tend to blame myself” ($M = 3.2$) and “I tend to criticize myself” ($M = 4.0$) indicating a tendency towards negative self-talk and self-blame. Students reported a higher problem-focused engagement score, holding a positive outlook in situations noted with the higher score on the question “I look for the silver lining or try to look on the bright side of things” ($M = 3.84$) and “I step back from the situation and try to put things in perspective” ($M =$

3.42). Table 2 represents each question, the mean response, standard deviation and sub-scale associated.

Table 2

CSI-SF Scale Descriptive Results by Question

Question	Mean	SD	Sub-Scale
I make a plan of action and follow it	3.31	1.0	2
I look for the silver lining or try to look on the bright side of things	3.84	1.16	2
I try to spend time alone	3.42	1.3	4
I hope the problem will take care of itself	3.21	1.18	3
I try to talk about it with a friend or family	2.31	0.94	1
I try to put the problem out of my mind	2.89	1.1	3
I tackle the problem head on	3.10	1.0	2
I step back from the situation and try to put things into perspective	3.42	1.07	2
I tend to blame myself	3.21	1.2	4
I let my feelings out to reduce the stress	2.52	1.46	1
I hope for a miracle	2.10	0.99	3
I ask a close friend or relative that I respect for help or advice	2.52	1.4	1
I try not to think about the problem	2.42	1.16	3
I tend to criticize myself	4.05	1.07	4

There is no overall score for the CSI-SF, scores are broken into (two) scores for total disengagement behaviors and total engagement behaviors seen in Table 3. The mean scoring ranged from 1-5 on both disengagement and engagement behavior scales. Participants scored higher on *disengagement* coping behaviors with a mean score of 3.48 and in the middle range with *engagement* coping behaviors with a mean score of 2.57. Students reported more likely to engage in problem-focused disengagement ($M = 3.42$) and emotion-focused disengagement ($m=3.56$) behaviors and least likely to engage in problem-focused engagement behaviors ($M = 2.45$).

Table 3*CSI-CF Descriptive Statistics of Scales & Subscales*

Scale and Sub-Scale Measure	Mean	SD	Variance
Problem-Focused Engagement (PFE; 1)	2.45	1.28	1.64
Problem-Focused Disengagement (PFD;2)	3.42	1.10	1.21
Emotion-Focused Engagement (EFE;3)	2.65	1.17	1.37
Emotion-Focused Disengagement (EFD; 4)	3.56	1.22	1.49
Disengagement (D) (1-5)	3.48	1.15	1.32
Engagement (E) (1-5)	2.57	1.22	1.48

Table 4 shows the subscale relationships using Pearson’s correlation with 95% confidence intervals for the internal sub-scales within the CSI-SF scale. This was done to test for any relationship or influence on individual scales. While no internal factor correlations were found to be statistically significant, Problem-Focused Engagement and Problem-Focused Disengagement did have a strong relationship, indicating if you utilized disengaging behaviors, you were less likely to use engaging behaviors when addressing problems and solutions.

Table 4*CSI-SF Correlation of Scales and Subscales*

Sub-Scales	PFE	PFD	EFE	EFD
Problem-Focused Engagement (PFE; 1)	1.0	.24 <i>p</i> =.07	.02 <i>p</i> =.86	.07 <i>p</i> =.58
Problem-Focused Disengagement (PFD; 2)		1.0	.16 <i>p</i> =.14	.12 <i>p</i> =.36
Emotion-Focused Engagement (EFE; 3)			1.0	.16 <i>p</i> =.15
Emotion-Focused Disengagement (EFD; 4)				1.0

Self-Efficacy Scale (SES)

The SES scale was revised and administered with 6 questions that had high factor correlation (Sherer et al., 1992). The sub-scale of social self-efficacy was removed from

administration of the scale as the focus of the study was on an individual’s self-confidence and experiences of self, as well as for time constraints to encourage survey completion. Participants were asked to review each question and respond with how true a statement was for them. The score of ‘4’ represented *definitely true* while the score of ‘1’ represented a response of *definitely false*. The higher the score the higher the individuals’ self-efficacy. The highest possible score was 24 and the lowest possible score was 6. The overall score was in the middle to high range of scores, indicating a positive association to self but not overtly confident or extremely high in self-efficacy ($M = 16.8$). The highest reported score was the belief in being able to handle problems ($M = 3.05$) and the lowest confidence in sticking to and accomplishing goals ($M = 2.36$). There was a fairly big variance indicating a significant spread of scores, which is likely due to the small population and low response rate. The descriptive scores of mean, variance, and standard deviation are reported for each question in Table 5.

Table 5

SES Scale Descriptive Results by Question

Question	Mean	SD
If someone opposes me, I can find means and ways to get what I want.	2.68	0.74
It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.	2.36	0.68
I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.	2.94	0.77
Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.	2.78	0.78
I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.	3.05	0.91
No matter what comes my way I'm usually able to handle it.	3.00	0.74
Total (6-24)	16.8	3.84

While there were no *major* differences noted by race/ethnicity in the CSI-SF results there were, however, strong differences seen in the SES scale results. Students who identified as

Multiracial had a significantly lower SES score than all other demographic groups. Again, important to note that survey response was low, and the findings could be skewed by the low *n*.

These differences are noted in Table 6 below.

Table 6

SES Scale Mean Results by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Mean SES Score (6-24)
Hispanic/Latino	18
White/Caucasian	16.5
Asian/Pacific Islander	18.25
Black/African American	16
Multiracial (Two or More Identities)	11

Adult Hope Scale (AHS)

The Adult Hope Scale (AHS), the dependent variable for the main research question, was administered which included all 8 questions. Each question required respondents to decide how true or false a statement was with *definitely true* earning a score of ‘4’ and *definitely false* earning a score of ‘1’. The highest possible score is a total of 32, with the lowest score being an 8. The total hope scale includes two subscales 1) Agentic Thinking (A) and 2) Pathways thinking (P) both with their own individual scores (16 as the highest score for each subscale). Participants reported a mean score of 24.4 for the overall hope score and mean scores of 11.6 for Agentic Thinking and 13.1 for Pathways Thinking. Indicating a positive outcome for students showing higher hope thinking. The descriptive results can be found in Table 7.

Table 7*Adult Hope Scale (AHS) Results by Question*

Question	Mean	SD	Subscale (A/P)
I can think of many ways to get out of a jam.	3.31	0.74	P
I energetically pursue my goals.	2.78	0.78	A
There are lots of ways around any problem.	3.36	0.49	P
I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are important to me.	3.27	1.01	P
Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem.	3.21	0.91	P
My past experiences have prepared me well for my future.	3.21	0.85	A
I've been pretty successful in life.	2.8	0.93	A
I meet the goals I set for myself.	2.73	0.93	A
Total Scale Score (8-32):	24.4	5.54	
Agency Subscale (A) Score:	11.6		
Pathways Subscale (P) Score:	13.1		

Students scored highest on pathways thinking questions “There are a lot of ways around any problem” ($M = 3.36$) and “I can think of many ways to get out of a jam” ($M=3.31$) indicating a higher strategic thinking process. The lowest scores were on agentic thinking questions surrounding goals “I meet the goals I set for myself” ($M=2.73$) and “I energetically pursue my goals” ($M=2.78$) indicating a potential disconnect in confidence and motivation. Similar to the results on the SES scale, strong differences based on race/ethnicity were identified in the AHS results. Students who identified as Multiracial had a significantly lower hope score ($M = 15.5$) than all other demographic groups. Again, important to note that survey response was low, and the findings could be skewed by the low n . These differences are noted in Table 8 below.

Table 8*AHS Mean Results by Race/Ethnicity*

Race/Ethnicity	Mean AHS Score (8-32)
Hispanic/Latino	25.87
White/Caucasian	24
Asian/Pacific Islander	24.75
Black/African American	32
Multiracial (Two or More Identities)	15.5

Hope as the Dependent Variable

To answer the initial research question of how the variables of self-efficacy, academic locus of control, and coping strategies influence hopeful thinking a linear regression analysis was completed to discover if any relationship between the three variables associated with Bean & Eaton’s Psychological Model of Retention (2000) and hopeful thinking existed. To assess hopeful thinking, the study utilized Snyder’s psychological Hope theory and the Adult Hope Scale (1992) scale to assess this cognitive process. All variables were shown to have a *statistically significant relationship* with hopeful thinking as noted in Table 9.

Table 9*Hope Scale as Dependent Variable with Independent Variable Correlations*

	Self-Efficacy Scale (SES)	Academic Locus of Control (ALC)	Coping Strategies Inventory Short Form (CSI-SF)
Hope Scale	.832** P= <.0001	-.74** p =.0002	.469** p = .004

Note: Pearson’s Correlation at 95% confidence intervals.

The relationship between hope and self-efficacy indicated a statistically significant positive correlation ($r = .832, p = <.0001$) indicating students who had higher self-efficacy scores also had higher hopeful thinking scores. This is shown to be the strongest relationship of all three

variables and mirrors several studies on the high correlation between the SES and AHS in other studies (Feldman & Kubota, 2015). The next *significant* relationship is that of hope and academic locus of control ($r = -.74, p = .0002$). Higher hope thinking students reported a more internalized orientation and lower hope students report a more externalized orientation ($r = -.74$) suggesting higher hope students are more internally motivated to complete their work or meet academic goals. Lastly, there was a *significant* relationship between students who utilized more engagement type behaviors such as seeking help or approaching problems and with higher hope thinking ($r = .469$). Since all students who responded to the survey had persisted to Spring 2021, it appears that locus of control, coping strategies, self-efficacy, and hopeful thinking all appear to be valid psychological variables that present for students that persist. Based on the quantitative data, Bean & Eaton's (2000;2001) model may be an effective model in which to consider this population's engagement. Snyder's hope theory as its own variable is not enough to understand academically struggling students without additional context. Therefore, additional research and understanding was needed from the qualitative phase to uncover additional details, barriers, opportunities, and successes throughout students' experiences.

4.2 QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Five students opted-in to interview from the survey and scheduled interview times; however, only three students followed through to meet for one-on-one interviews to discuss their experiences. Students were incentivized for the interview for a \$15 gift card to a local restaurant and agreed to meet via a web conferencing app (Zoom) which was recorded and provided a transcript of the conversation. The interview was conducted using semi-structured questions and each interview lasted about 45 minutes to 1 hour. The questions were informed based on the

results of the first phase with an emphasis understanding coping skill behavior, strategic thinking patterns, and motivation.

About the Interviewees

Three students who identify as male who began college in Fall 2019 and currently enrolled in Spring 2021 were interviewed for this study. Each student has been given an alias for anonymity. Additional information on each participant is detailed below in Table 10.

Table 10

Interviewed Student Details

Student	Race/Ethnicity	Current GPA*	First Semester with Non-Passing Grade	Current Major
“Adrian”	Multiracial	1.59	Fall 2019	Business
“Michael”	White/Caucasian	2.32	Fall 2019	Environmental Science
“James”	Asian/Pacific Islander	2.05	Fall 2019	Undeclared

Note: GPA with inflation due to the benefit of grades of ‘NC’.

Qualitative Themes

The data analysis conducted required four rounds of coding and analysis of each interview transcript. The first phase used *in vivo* coding followed by three rounds of *pattern* coding. Despite the small group who was interviewed, there were many similarities and consistencies in the interviews which allowed for a more complex and richer understanding in these areas. Five larger themes emerged within each interview; these themes continuously revealed themselves in each conversation. These themes were (1) feelings of directionless, (2) social engagement, (3) coping behaviors, (4) COVID-19, and (5) support networks.

Feelings of Directionless

One significant theme that emerged from the interviews were feelings of lack of purpose or direction. All three students indicated that outside factors or people influenced their decision to go to college, indicating an externalized orientation in their attendance to attend college to begin with, most notably under the direction of their parents. Adrian said, “I’m doing what most people are doing” and “people go to college because it’s the most stable” noting “I would have done whatever my parents said”. Michael described himself “as a decent student” who not that interested in school but had “very supportive parents that kind of like guided me into this whole process like I wasn’t alone.” James stated the reason he was in college was “mostly because my parents were like really pushing for it, I like in high school I like never really thought about like what I really wanted to do later in life. And like I mean I don't know... I feel like it's just a pretty normal thing for like parents to push their kids to go to college, you know and so kind of just pushed me to go.”

While all three indicated that college was the natural next step, Adrian stated “I was never one to have like a set direction, or like where I should go. If that was the case, I would be more interested in college... I haven’t wanted to do much after high school.” Michael admitted that he really didn’t know what he wanted to do in college and admitted to not thinking about the future, “I’m not really thinking about the end, I’m thinking about like putting myself into a position to get to the end easier, because like I feel like I’ve not been doing well in my life in school and I’m trying to start differently this semester [Spring 2021].” Adrian also stated that he didn’t know if he wanted to be in college but argued “I think college should be more than a place you go.” When Michael was asked why he thought he struggled so much or others in a similar situation he responded, “I would say, like not laziness just a lot of my male peers lack

engagement... I don't know what the reason is just like maybe not really know like our path, like our set path like, what we need to like works towards ... I really didn't know. So it was kind of a different feeling and it wasn't really knowing what I was working towards." These feelings of being lost or unsure of the direction continued in each conversation surrounding the topic of their majors. Adrian indicated being unhappy in his major indicating that his "father would rather me like do the stock market or something", Michael changed his major three times before settling on his current one after getting advice, and James remains undeclared admitting not having spent time exploring his interests, "I should probably just like take the time and sit down and like go through the options [majors] and see what I'm interested in I just haven't really done that." When asked if he felt like a major would help him be more interested in school he said "absolutely".

The impact of too much freedom and not enough structure seemed to make these feelings of directionless worse, but yet both freedom and structure were valued. Adrian said he liked structure but when he was in college "he hasn't really been exposed to any". Michael indicated that there was a struggle in transitioning from high school to college especially regarding the level of responsibility you need to have as a student "it's all up to you... the new sense of freedom is an interesting thing... no one is going to tell you to really do the things that you're supposed to be doing". Adrian reflected that "I have noticed that I do enjoy being forced to do something rather than needing to do it myself." James said,

Personally, I think it's just like right out of high school you're not living with your parents you're on your own and you're just trying to like learn how to like figure stuff out, I guess, and like just being on your own. Like you're away from home so you're just trying to figure out everything for yourself and, like, for me, personally it's, not that I don't want my parents help, it's like you know, I'd rather figure it out on my own, but I know that they're there if I need help.

Much of what is described above mirrors Molly Schaller's (2005) work on exploring second-year students. She argues that students within the first two years of college move through different developmental stages of random exploration, focused exploration, tentative choices, and commitment. Each student described their first-year experience very much as random explorers navigating a terrain without much sense of direction. Schaller (2005) describes random exploring as a type of student who is not in touch "with an internal voice or in active reflection about decisions, their movement through the college experience can seem 'undirected'" (p.18). These feelings and behaviors are evident in how students described their first year of college and lack of direction or as Michael put it, lack of knowing his path. The students interviewed also seemed to be transitioning into more focused exploration, something Schaller finds common during the second year. "In focused exploration, students began to express a level of frustration with their current relationships, with themselves, or with their academic experience... students want to have a sense of a future career and life direction" in this stage (p.18-19).

Social Engagement

Belonging came up indirectly through conversations about their peers and the power of social engagement into fitting into the college environment. The most talked about topic was that of peer relationships and that being a sole factor in engaging (as well as disengaging) in college. All three students described mostly fond memories of their first semester in college. Adrian admits "I miss the experience of what I was doing even though, like what I was doing is probably not like the best for like, me, you know health wise." James explained that his first semester was a time that build his social network,

It was super fun like, the beginning was super tough just because I didn't know anyone, but like I feel like it helped me realize a lot about myself and like because in high school, I always kind of like I never really have like a set friend group and when I got to college it happened so it's pretty cool; but, no... yeah just super fun times had with my friends.

Both Michael and James explain the impact that peer relationships had on their academics.

Michael says, “With different people there are different results, like a lot of friends, you know we’d like rise together academically and there were other friends, where we would act lower.”

James hinted at similar themes as well,

I started meeting some friends just through class and stuff and then I don't know I really enjoyed it...I just found a lot of surf friends and like a lot of stuff to do and then COVID hit. I was doing alright but slacking a bit... but, it was cool because we could just meet up and do our homework together...

Adrian described himself as someone who “preferred to stay home” and didn’t connect with people deeply because “everyone has a hobby focus” and he felt that he didn’t. He also described not sharing interests with other students in the dorms indicating that “it’s weird everyone down with drugs even though I never saw them taken by anyone.” Adrian admitted, “There was a tutor I liked to be around, he had a good energy. Some people are nice to talk to but as for a person I could sit down in chill with, that’s not something I did.”

Adrian also described this disconnect to his peers mostly related to his racial identity. He indicated a distrust in diversity work on campus, felt there “was too much antiracism” work and he questioned if peers practiced it. “I feel like their prejudice naturally to like things that I can’t recognize. And I couldn’t recognize who they were underneath their shades of color...” feeling that he “was not as Latino as he should be” which created “a weird language state” because he didn’t speak Spanish and was bothered by this. Adrian explained,

in high school they don’t tell you what you’re doing is wrong... like the wrongness of mistreating minorities...hell it’s weird that that you need college to remind you of a lot more and it hangs over your head.

He stated that it was his first time in such a diverse environment but reasoned “it’s not like everyone has a shared background, but they definitely had a shared sense of identity already”.

Adrian admitted he struggled mentally with this barrier “I’ve always wanted to like get to know people, but I’m not going to like go up to someone else and have a conversation”.

Social Engagement is one of the most important factors in student persistence according to Tinto (1975) and one of the key factors in persistence noted in the literature review. Much of what is explained above connects to Bean & Eaton’s (2000) psychological model. Students are influenced based on how interactions occur within and outside of the academic environment, ultimately impacting persistence. For these students the ability to interact socially encouraged them to participate academically in-person and virtually. It does not go unnoticed the importance of the peer relationship related to campus climate by Adrian. The explanation of his own experience, peer acceptance or rather non-acceptance, and micro-aggressive behavior by peers deeply influenced his motivation in academic and social domains. Rogers & Summers (2008) found Bean & Eaton’s model was relevant in capturing institutional racial climate and the stress it places on students of color to live in a dualistic reality. For Adrian, dualism doesn’t exist. Johnson et al. (2014) note that campus environments contributes to the psychological experiences of students of color, and this finding is similar for Adrian. His negative experiences with peers in the dorms and in classes effected his mental state and motivations to be in college.

Coping Behaviors

Eaton & Bean’s (1995) theory on coping behavior explains that students utilize different types of coping mechanisms, approaching or avoidance techniques when dealing with stressors.

They explain,

The concepts of approach and avoidance describe the behaviors that an individual uses to manage stressors within an environment. Approach is viewed as primarily an active response to stress whereas avoidance is viewed as more passive. While the two sets of behavior have contrasting definitions, they should not be viewed as ends of a continuum (Eaton & Bean, 1995, p. 690).

Knowing that coping exists on a continuum, explains the inconsistent use of certain types of mechanisms by these students. Each student had a negative perception of the type of student that they were prior to college and during their college experience. James referred to himself as a “lazy” student over four times in our interview. Michael admitted that up until recently he just “did what he needed to get by” and had a low interest and motivation towards school, while Adrian described himself as someone who “had glory days in high school” and no longer felt that type of “energy”. Both James and Adrian described overthinking about their challenges and problems multiple times in each interview, indicating that they kept negative thoughts inside without expressing them outwardly. All three students mentioned “avoiding” problems as their go-to tactic in the past, which Eaton & Bean (1995) categorize as avoidance behaviors. Adrian and James both described engaging in extreme behaviors when handling stress. Adrian stated feeling either “very relaxed or hyper stressed about it” and James stated the following experience this year when handling stress,

Like I used to lash out when I couldn't really deal with my stress. So, like I don't know I don't think my mom thought I had like anger issues or something and like I mean I didn't have anger issues... I'd say it's just I didn't know how to deal with stress, or like stuff like that. So, I'm just a lazy student, there are times when I handle problems really well, but then there's other times, where I can like... not freak out ...but hesitate almost. Yeah... overthinking things a lot, but I also can handle things pretty well. One of my biggest problems is just like coping with stress because like I really don't know what to do... like honestly, I freak out sometimes like I don't know... I lose it sometimes – it's kind of weird, now that I'm here [back near school] and surfing it's like a way to relieve stress and working out, I mean I could have done that [back home] but my friends are here.

All three students described experiencing both moments of high and low motivation throughout their academic experience. James explains,

I don't know I just don't really have the motivation for school, and it's like often on and off for me, sometimes, because sometimes... I will realize like, ‘Oh, I need to do good in school’ so like I can graduate you know, and then eventually find a good job and stuff; but, like a lot of times I just don't think about that... I feel like if I just thought about that

all the time and then maybe school would be more of a priority to me...I just need to do a better job at like changing [things] or like making a change for myself, you know.

While Adrian presented with low affect and acknowledged the presence of “a poor mental state” and often gave vague answers, he repeated more than three times how he usually “avoids problems” and struggled with the effects of the lack of sleep, “I resist sleeping just to stay awake more, and like I don’t sleep... I sleep during the day and like stay awake at night...it’s weird”.

On the other hand Michael has adjusted his way of handling stress since Fall 2020,

I have been approaching problems better by attacking them. Like faster than literally just putting it off... I used to put it off when things started to get more complicated and worse...but... for an example this semester I was having an issue in my XXX class and we have groups for people... and in my group, no one seemed interested in like doing anything. One person already dropped, and I like I sent them emails like, ‘Hey, like let’s get like a group chat going like let’s talk about this writing group project’, but yet it took a while to get back to me, so I emailed the teacher, you know just try to figure out how to get it resolved as quickly as possible...I try to use that stress almost like kind of a drive like I used to kind of like use any stressed feelings and I just look into the syllabus just to find out like what I need to know what like make a plan so I’m less stressed.

James also expressed a desire to change his approach to handling stress both mentally and academically. He stated that exercise and reconnecting with his friends after his move out-of-state due to COVID-19 (and back again) improved his overall well-being. He states,

I used to work out a lot like at the end of high school and then, when I got to college, I surfed a lot so like I’d say that was like just as good of a workout... yeah, I still worked out too but then when COVID hit like I didn’t work out like at all and I think that, like now that I’m back down here like surfing and then one of my roommates is like hitting the gym like every day and everything. So I’ve been trying to like get back in shape. So, like I don’t know... I think being down here is like just a lot better for me just mentally at least.

James also describes his desire on wanting to change his habits as a student.

I’m trying to change... I’m trying to just get into a routine more because I’ve never been a guy like that wakes up and does like the same thing every day, or like gets into a routine you know, like I’ve always just been like go with the flow kind of do whatever you like... I also want to like stay structured so that I know, like there are things I have to do

before you know, like have fun and stuff. I'm also trying to start making like a list of things I should do throughout the day and then crossing it off because there is so much to remember... I feel like making a list is like the first step in the right direction.

Michael and James' use of internal reflection to use more strategic ways of thinking about challenges, is exercising a more hopeful thinking pattern – that the changes made could equate to a goal of sustaining and passing classes. Two of the three men admitted to keeping their grades and academic struggle hidden from their parents. Adrian stated that he has kept how his classes are going from his parents because he felt “shame” and “embarrassment” for the state he was in. Barouch-Gilbert (2016) found this to be common in students on academic probation; students on probation tend to be more depressed, anxious, and feel more shame than their peers. When asked why he didn't want to talk to them about his struggles he explains,

Parents are still carrying their children no matter what happens... it's just I don't want to be such a hindrance if that makes sense. You feel like a burden kinda just because you get older, you know you are needed to do more just for the sake of caring for your family, because that's how it's done.

Impact of COVID-19

Adrian echoed what all three students had to say about the impact of COVID-19 on their college experience, “it's been a struggle”. All three students were living in residential housing when COVID hit, a shift to online learning began and an eventual requirement to move out in Spring 2020. All students described the initial reaction as joyous followed by panic and a rush to move out. While Adrian and Michael state that while they were unhappy about the move home it ended up being for the best. Adrian explains,

Last year did cut off, which was very a very sad and awkward situation for me right there since I was at the dorms when everything was happening, and I had to move. It managed to like to save me some money just because there's rent coming in, and I didn't have enough money to pay for it. It wasn't something I wanted probably, but I know it

did help, though just because what I was heading towards at the end of the year, except I wish it would have ended more proper that would have helped more.

Michael contextualizes his lack of motivation after the switch to online learning as “just kind of lackadaisical, kind of lazy in a way, I should have kept up more, but it was just like a big opportunity for me to fall behind.” James explained a similar experience, “in the span of like a week it went from, like, the best time of my life to like, I don't know I wouldn't say worst time my life like just going back to [home state] was kind of a downer...Not a fan of online school at all.” Michael and James both explained that going to classes helped with engagement. James said,

I'd rather just get up and go to class and be there. The difference between rolling out of bed, and then walking or driving to the class between like opening your laptop it's just like it's insane... like the motivation like the level, the differences if you want to call it that...just once COVID hit, my motivation dropped.

Michael echoed similar experiences, “When I got to go to class like my first semester, it was really nice because you and you're getting there you're getting your engagement in, but for me it's just hard for me to stay engaged on a computer. You have to be constantly checking your email and checking in its non-stop.” Adrian also said thought his first semester was pretty good and felt he actually tried, but COVID hit “I'm pretty like sad about that since that's like the direction I'm in right now ... feeling sad most of the time.” Michael wanted to make sure he emphasized in our interview, that “engagement might have been the most difficult thing, like finding the motivation to like you know really dive into your academics on the computer in online learning, it's just not the same.” The remarks of all three students mirror much of the current research on the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health and motivation of college students (Guzman, 2020; Son et al., 2020).

Support Networks

The influence of parents throughout each conversation echoed as one of the key relationships in determining confidence in college success. For example, Michael described his parents as “a little bit like they’re kind of my mentors like helping me in my path”. James described his parents as “super supportive” and his uncle that lived locally, a key in his support network. As mentioned earlier, all students described their relationships with their peers as central in the social fabric of their academic lives and their development in college. Adrian stated that “the energy” people gave off was important in developing relationships though he was struggling to engage in them. James reflected that during the Fall semester he was working full-time back in home state and that peer relationships helped keep him engaged,

I was [going to school] and working full time in construction and that was hard so, I don’t know I just wanted to get back to my friends who went to school here. I didn’t have anyone to talk about my assignments or anything, or just school in general. Both the friends I’m living with now go to XX and it’s just like I don’t know back home it’s so depressing there all year, and it’s sunny here all the time... I’m just happier here, I can do better here.

Two students had taken a course for students on academic probation and one student indicated that this course was key in helping him reprioritize his desire for college. The course, which is a 1-unit success course for students who are struggling academically and/or are on academic probation, is utilized as an intrusive curricular intervention where students are pre-enrolled. Students earn a grade in order to recover their GPA’s faster while normalizing the experience of struggle in a peer-supported environment. The course is structured around important topics such as self-talk and growth mindset, time management, sleep and wellness, cultural and familial validation, personal strengths, major exploration, and academic planning. Michael explained,

You know, I had to take like an academic probation class, and I think a big thing they like, help with, is the motivation part of it. For me just kind of going to the class and just seeing kind of like just what the pure concrete details are like if you don't like do this again... you just can't afford to have another semester like you've been doing. So that just kind of like resonated with me like made realize like okay like I gotta make some changes then you know, of course through the class like I had like a lot of reflection which, like kind of like started a conversation with myself. That was like a big thing that helped with the motivation I have currently.

Student reflection and its' impact on internal motivation was evident with all three students in the interviews. James engaged in reflection knowing he was trying to figure things out and wanted to stay in college while Adrian reflected that "I am probably doing myself a disservice by attending college because I could be spending more time on making money or something." Both Michael and James expressed a desire to turn things around. Michael said last semester he began to think about the impacts of a college degree on his life, in part due to the course he was enrolled in, "I was just thinking, 'Oh is this something I want to do? Do I want to get a degree or am I wasting my time here? I was just trying to think what I was capable of and I had to like kind of come to a conclusion that this was something I want to go towards.'" This internalized reflection and decision-making process is what Baxter Magolda (2007) calls self-authorship, which is defined as someone's internal capacity to define one's beliefs, identity and social relationships on their terms, while Snyder (2000) would state this would be motivation towards setting a perceived goal; yet, both are true in Michael and James' case.

4.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It is evident that the sample was smaller due to the impact of the pandemic on enrollment for this population as enrollment was lower in Fall 2020 due the continuance for online learning. Additionally, the response rate could have been low for many reasons, such as students not returning for classes in Spring 2021, so they were not checking their emails, not interested, or

were buried by email communications from the university. Additionally, there are many socio-economic factors that are affecting students that are unknown to the researcher as the study was conducted during a peak COVID-19 case surge and high fatality rate in many communities. The survey response rate was smaller than the typical 20% baseline, but because 100% of students who responded were enrolled in Spring 2021, it offered a richer understanding of potential variables that influence students' decisions to stay in college despite all these factors.

The results are encouraging and offer insight into the experiences of recovery and resilience, but also of second year male student development in general. The results highlight that this group is worth further study across multiple universities to increase potential response rate on these instruments. Since this population is known to utilize avoidance techniques – having more opportunity to capture data at a larger scale, across multiple institutions, could help verify the limited results seen here. It may be also interesting to attempt interviews or focus groups (in-person) with a male interviewer (or male person of color) to see if there any differences in what students are willing to share based on gender positionality or even in-person non-verbal language cues that a zoom call could not provide (e.g. body language cues, better reading of facial expressions). Additional understanding from a sociological or economic theory could help richen understanding of the psychological data since hope theory on its own is not enough to explain academic recovery. Further, additional study is needed on students who identify as Multiracial (two or more racial/ethnic identities). There is little research on students with Multiracial identities in the college environment and due to the small number of experiences seen here, a larger approach to understanding these experiences could better inform universities on how to support this intersectional identity within a larger student development context.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

5.1 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to understand the psychological processing for second-year men in academic recovery. Bean & Eaton (2000,2001) provided a framework in which to consider psychological understanding of student retention, with a specific population in mind. Snyder's Hope Theory (2000) provided one view of how someone processes challenges and approaches goals. The first research question posed in this study was how do locus of control, coping skills, self-efficacy, influence hopeful thinking? The second research question was how do students describe the process of academic recovery? Do any themes explain the results from the initial phase of the study? With a sub-question of what are the experiences of men of color and White men in academic recovery? To answer the first question: locus of control, coping behavior, and self-efficacy were found to be all statistically significant with hopeful thinking. But to understand the significance of this it is key to understand each variable on its own. Respondents reported a relaxed internalized locus of control when it came to school habits, a comfortability and affinity for more disengaging behavior patterns which included negative self-talk and not expressing emotions or feelings during stressful periods, a moderate self-efficacy towards their abilities but not confident in being able to follow through, and a movement towards more hopeful thinking pattern about problems. The quantitative findings indicate that Bean & Eaton's (2000,2001) model of retention successfully explains one-dimension of why students persist. From this perspective, if a student utilizes healthy ways of coping, utilizes internal reflection to assess motivation, and believe in themselves they will likely continue in college. Hope theory though not initially designed for college students, has been used to test its validity, is not reliable on its own for understanding of recovery. Both theories tell us very important

cognitive patterns of recovery, but more goes into recovery than one-dimensional psychological understanding – though it is extremely important and relevant. For example, if a student was struggling with housing or food insecurity which impacted their coping skills or hopeful thinking – these theories would not tell us that, but those insecurities are valid, concerning, and barriers to success in college. Additionally, Snyder's (2000) theory, does not consider the cultural or environmental components that go about informing psychological patterns to begin with – nor does it address the barriers which can prevent internal well-being.

Qualitative findings helped richen the understanding of the quantitative data with significant overlap in themes with psychological variables. Several themes connected to Bean & Eaton's (2000,2001) model and Synder's (2000) hope theory are evident throughout the student narratives. But since recovery is not one-dimensional and this study utilizes a pragmatic approach, other ways of framing students' experiences should be considered through multiple theories like Schlossberg's (1989) transition theory or Bourdieu's (1986) theory of understanding social and cultural capital. Transition theory would showcase the *taking stock* process of students in recovery as the move through this developmental phase; certainly these students are trying new things, failing and learning as they grow. Additionally, when considering capital, one thing these students needed to foster was, *navigational capital*. Students often described not knowing where to go, how to do college, or understand what was expected from them at various points in their academic careers. *Navigational capital* is a term I have defined to mean the process in which students build skills in navigating environments, relationships, challenges, and institutional processes but also the ability in which to navigate and to *culturally relevant* wellness resources. There is no argument that motivation, coping, and support sustained these students

through this period – but when *navigational capital* is built, it appears to connect students to a stronger thriving experience.

Motivation in Transition

When we consider the motivation of students in recovery, this study found that students expressed a below average externalization of academic behavior – indicating a *more internalized drive towards school*. This is a common finding in the literature - students who have a more internalized motivation are more likely to persist. In both the quantitative data and the qualitative data social experience was found to be extremely important. Peer relationships often drove how students felt about college, not necessarily the classes themselves. The qualitative data highlighted a shift in the locus of control but that it was still very much what we may call, *motivation in transition* with students trying out new techniques and strategies to focus better on school. This is also an element of hopeful thinking as well as transition theory. Two of the interviewees indicated recent changes in behavior perpetuated by what they had learned up to this point. Students described a shift from what used to be disinterest or externalized behavior, to a desire to be more internalized towards college. This might suggest that if a student is not yet ready to make a change or able to identify what needs to be changed, they may not have matured to a more internalized view of how to handle academic demands. This would require more internal self-reflection (Baxter Magolda, 2007) as well as building *navigational capital* to address this.

All three students did not consider themselves great students in high school, with little desire to go to college but the decision to go was mostly external pressure by society and/or parents. Siriam and Vetter (2012) argue that knowing the psychological mindset of a student early in the their college experience determines their later choices. The ‘why go to college’ is a significant

part of the first-year experience but it doesn't appear that much internal reflection had occurred at the time, with one student describing "when things clicked" was due to the help of an academic probation class and forced reflection, a class designed to build *navigational capital*.

Overall, this ambivalence regarding how to handle situations showed up in the theme of directionless which seemed to make motivation worse. All three students reported a feeling of starting college with "no path" or aren't really aware of what they were working toward, or a major of interest and even "frozen" when handling stressful situations. This theme of lack of direction is one of the most common themes in the second year, Schaller (2005) calls this phenomenon wandering exploration.

Coping Through Transition

It was evident students were also still *coping through transition* in learning to handle stress and challenge, especially as related to learning online. Overall students reported a higher level of disengagement behavior such as avoiding problems, negative self-talk (blaming and criticizing), and not reaching out to talk about their problems with trusted friends and family members. These disengaging behaviors were specifically mentioned by students (without prompt) throughout the interview process with students describing their struggle by blaming themselves and two of the three admitting to not talking to anyone including their parents about struggling in college.

Adrian indicated that this was mainly due to feelings of shame and embarrassment. James talked about how his family didn't talk about stress or kept things inside, indicating some internal reflection on his own handling of stress appeared to be with what he witnessed at home from his own father. This highlighted an important clarification that the quantitative data could not tell us, *coping skills are taught*. They are socially, culturally, and environmentally formed (Unger, 2008). If these coping skills are not related to an aspect of internal well-being, they might be

considered maladaptive. It is evident from the literature that men in college don't necessarily cope well with transition, this study reinforces this suggestion, and the idea warrants further psycho-social inquiry.

Two of the three interviewees described a change this year in how they began approaching problems and stress by taking more responsibility in their academics. For example, Michael said that he couldn't solely blame his struggle on COVID "it was partly a lot of my own doing... like reading into emails I needed to in a timely manner [from my teachers]." Michael and James both offered specific examples on how they were strategizing school related stress by utilizing to-do lists, priority setting, and connecting with faculty. The quantitative results suggested that healthy coping was also in-progress, it seemed that while the score was higher for disengaged coping behaviors, that students were starting to utilize more positive engaging coping behaviors. As Eaton & Bean (1995) state in their foundational theory, coping is a spectrum and it does not work within extremes. Michael stated he was starting to attack problems head on, and James indicated the need for exercise and mental/physical wellness to be in the right state of mind to tackle school.

Just as there was a shift in motivational orientation and coping strategies, the overall student group reported that while they had confidence in tackling problems, they didn't feel they had consistency following through. This finding was evident in all four instruments, students with poor attitudes towards school had impaired planning techniques and on the SES scale students reported the lowest confident score in sticking to and accomplishing their goals. On the AHS scale students scored higher on pathways thinking, which is strategizing multiple solutions and pathways but lower on agentic thinking, the belief that they can do it. Perhaps this indicates a trial-and-error type of approach to problems that are no longer working, but the high scores on

negative self-talk on the CSI-SF indicates an internal belief system that questions their abilities. Without the skills (or modeling) to process those feelings or be present with them, and fear of being vulnerable, this potentially highlights male students tend to avoid external problems but internal ones as well. For example, in the interviews, James admitted to seeking mental health support in the past to deal with anger related to what he called ‘stress’ but he said he stopped going because “I didn’t get anything from it”. Adrian also visibly presenting with low affect and admitting a feeling of sadness and hopelessness, told the researcher he had no interest in seeking counseling or support despite his struggles with mental health “because it won’t help” and “I don’t really know what I would talk about.”

Peers Make Transition Worth It (Or Not)

It was evident that peer relationships had an incredibly powerful impact on the perceived success of the first year in college, regardless of their grades. Peer relationships were attributed to both healthy engagement in college (classes, studying, socialization, emotional benefits) but also a source of stress both from a campus climate perspective, distractibility, and the impact that COVID-19 had in their learning experience. While sense of belonging was not assessed quantitatively, it was evident that feeling connected to college for this group was driven by peers. This could be because of how they reported not thinking of themselves as students or learners – so their drive to connect was through peer relationships. Though Adrian said he was experiencing financial insecurity, he seemed to say that it made it easier to disconnect from college because his relationships with his peers were not positive.

Support and acceptance seem to be overwhelming in helping students build confidence. Social relationships were extremely important in connecting students with the desire to be in college. Parents and extended family support were extremely important to all students, but each

student expressed different types of relationships with their parents despite their role in directing their sons to go to college. This might be best explained as the most single influencing link to helping students not only transition into college but sustaining it. The two students who expressed more difficult relationships with their parents were from homes where parents did not graduate from college, minoritized, and expressed desire in pleasing their parents but wanting to also break away. This desire for independence and personal identity is well-documented in second-year literature (Schreiner, 2018). Peer relationships were also important in returning and maintaining an interest in college, despite one student moving out of state, and another out of the city, they reported keeping connected to their friend group. Additionally, two students had taken an academic probation class in either their first or second year of college and stated the act of deep reflection and processing their motivation helped to increase it. It also provided a place to network with peers experiencing similar struggles.

It's clear that Bean & Eaton's use of locus of control, coping skills, and self-efficacy as variables within their framework make it a viable option in considering student behavior, but not exhaustive. It appears locus of control is directly related to motivation, coping strategies are related to motivation, self-efficacy is related to motivation, but the motivation to stay is rooted in hope. All of these independent variables clearly influenced hopeful thinking outcomes. While no students used the term "hope" it was their way of thinking about challenges, how they perceive their capabilities in handling problems, and figuring out solutions that equated to higher hope results. It was clear in my interviews that academic recovery wasn't just one semester, nor could it be explained for only one psychological perspective, there are multiple ways of understanding the experience. Students in academic recovery and *chose* to stay, are more hopeful, they are transitioning *to, through, and towards* a bigger goal. They also are more hopeful when they have

built *navigational capital*. Therefore, the goal of the second year is not only what Laurie Schreiner calls “thriving” but building capital in how to navigate. If we only look at recovery from a thriving perspective, we may miss the important gaps and barriers that exist for some students and not others.

Cognitive and intellectual development is not linear. Recovery is not linear. It is clear that while we may associate academic recovery as a specific point in time, students are still overcoming many barriers, trying strategies out – the only problem is, if they use the wrong one and it doesn’t work out again, they risk not being able to return to campus. They are still experimenting with what works but changing course since the experiments of the first year (and even third semester) didn’t work. The first year could be seen as experimental because for the students interviewed, all expressed so many new experiences that impacted their struggle: too much freedom, diverse peer groups, living away from home, financial insecurity, and making their own decisions (even if they were not the best ones). They made mistakes, all of them owning it – but most of them are unsure of where to go next, but hopeful they can figure it out with the proper support network and internal reflection in place even if it meant college was or was not the answer.

It appears students overall aren’t overly confident in their abilities to handle challenges, but as a group aren’t generally depressed and willing to quit either. This indicates a desire for more. It is evident in the data they have a belief in their capabilities they are just unsure of what the “more” is. They are evolving, learning, and changing the way they think about college and how (or if) to complete it. Recovery in the second year is a longer developmental phase which emphasizes the themes seen in the literature regarding the second-year experience in particular like purpose, meaning, identity and major indecision. But it is the lack of coping skills that may

set men apart from other students. It's clear that this developmental experience was pre-dated by a lack of internal motivation to go to college in the first place, so it appears they may be figuring it out later. But it is the hope of something better that keeps them here in the first place. A belief that there are ways out of problems, a better way of handling challenges and situations, and a belief that they have the capacity to do it (while challenging themselves to actually follow through). Earlier the definition of recovery was posed as a short-term process with resiliency as an overall longer experience, this study asserts that GPA recovery might be short-term but academic resiliency in particular is a pre-cursor to personal resiliency which is a longer developmental process.

5.2 CREATING HOPEFUL, THRIVING, NAVIGATIONAL SAAVY STUDENTS

James stated in his interview, "I'd rather thrive than just survive." So how does an institution create an environment where students can thrive and recover during their second year? Schreiner (2018) states,

Sophomores who are thriving are investing effort in their academic work and in the process of selecting a major that interests them and brings out their best. They experience a sense of meaning and purpose to their lives that provides directions they engage in their classes, become involved in campus and community life, form healthy relationships, and make a difference in the world around them. This vision of a thriving sophomore then informs all programs and services that are designed to meet sophomores' needs; every aspect of the second-year experience is thus evaluated through that lens (p.12).

Informed by the literature and the results of this study a few recommendations for this population could be helpful in cultivating more engaging and thriving students as they experience academic recovery. Tovar and Simon (2006) state that academic and student programming must consider students' background, financial insecurity, commuting concerns, and personal challenges. To support the trajectory through academic recovery and towards a thriving resiliency, practitioners should consider four areas of program consideration:

1. academic recovery *specific* related peer support,
2. development of success courses,
3. hands on major exploration, and
4. reviewing academic policy and implementation.

Peer Support Programs

Evident throughout this study was the power of social relationships on belonging and its influence on academic motivation. Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) point that there is a consistent body of literature indicating the importance of peer relationships in cognitive and intellectual development in college. Astin (1993) found “the student’s peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years” (p. 398). Utilizing the power of the peer relationship can be utilized through current programming like peer tutoring or mentoring but having peer programs specifically targeted for students who struggle paired with a student of similar background and experience. For students of color, Paredes-Collins (2012) recommends small groups of first-year students led by older students of color who can share success stories in order to build arenas of mentorship. Since first-generation students are more likely to leave college and/or struggle (Pascarella et al., 2004) targeting programs for this group would also be effective. These students tend to possess different types of cultural and social capital than other traditional students; therefore, targeting programs with an emphasis on cultural validation, financial support, and navigational capital are important. Additionally, facilitating programming for students how to balance family life expectations with academic life early in a student’s career could be beneficial for this group.

Peer programming groups about the social construction of “manhood” could create positive associations to gender and healthy coping skills. Men of color groups offer spaces and opportunities to cultivate a shared identity and discuss issues of race within the college environment. Another important aspect of peer programming should include diversity

curriculums and opportunities to engage with peers on these topics, as campus climate in particular has significant and negative effects on minoritized student retention (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). “Some formal components of the peer environment appear capable of counterbalancing or compensating for the negative influences of a peer environment that is perceived as unwelcoming, or even hostile, to students of color” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Steele (1997, 1999) recommends integrated living-learning communities, ethnic-racial student organizations and learning spaces. The United States continues to become a more multiracial society and creating spaces for students of multiple identities to co-exist together in a learning and living environment creates a culture of inclusion and acceptance that is not yet discussed in the literature. Multiracial students in this study in both quantitative and qualitative data appear to be struggling, additional research is needed in this area. However, the concern reinforces the need for a diverse, multicultural education in and outside the classroom with active discussion and reflection amongst peers which could reinforce or help inform university driven strategic initiatives. Schreiner (2018) calls this the importance of cultivating a sense of community on campus which inspires a thriving campus. A sense of community has four elements: a) *membership*, or a sense of belonging on campus; b) *ownership*, or a sense of voice and contribution on campus; c) *relationship*, or positive emotional connections to others on campus; and d) *partnership* or working interdependently with others toward mutually desired goals (Schreiner, 2013).

Student Success Courses

Success courses came up as an opportunity to engage students with peers in a classroom setting. Student success courses are commonly seen through the perception of first-year experience courses and seminars. However, there is a growing base of literature on student

success courses for students on probation as well as other holistic student success curricula. Success courses have shown to increase persistence at institutions (Bowering et al., 2017; Bledsoe, 2018; Hope, 2010; McGrath & Burd, 2012; Renzulli, 2015; Snyers & DeWitte, 2018). An academic recovery course could act as an opportunity to navigate an institutions' culture regarding probation/struggle especially if the curriculum focused on theoretical approaches seen within hope theory, which emphasizes goal setting, empowerment, self-regulation, and pathway making. Additionally, it is clear that deep reflection and self-assessment is important for not only students who are struggling, but in particular within the second year of college.

According to Schaller (2010) self-reflection in the sophomore year is a prime time for students to evaluate past choices, examine belief systems, acknowledge personal strengths, and identify values. She goes on to state that “reflection is pre-requisite for success in the decision-making process” (Schaller, 2010, p.78). Success courses can be beneficial for students on probation, but also powerful sophomore-year courses that allow for an opportunity to develop skills in purpose, meaning and identity. Critical thinking is extremely important for students in this developmental stage as they are assessing and experimenting with different pathways for success, and different methods to increase motivation (Evenbeck & Hamilton, 2010; Hope, 2010;). Success courses can integrate the values of lifelong learning, peer relationships and belonging, academic planning, study skills and time management, internal motivation development, combined with lived experiences which can create a more dynamic and meaningful learning experience. Evenbeck & Hamilton (2010) argue that curriculum intentionally designed for sophomores is critical and adapting successes of first-year experience courses towards the second year can be significant and critical for wandering students.

Hands-On Major Exploration

It is clear that all three students either struggled or are struggling in their major decision, indicating that if they felt more secure in the major it may have helped with the effect of feeling lost or directionless. Instead of considering students undeclared, one might consider utilizing the language of *exploring* students. Undeclared indicates a permanent state of inaction while the word exploring, indicates a series of actions in order to excavate, all of which these students desired. Gordon (2010) states that few students enter with a major and graduate with same one they started with. This has to do with the amount of pressure put on selecting a major, mainly because a) sequencing of courses is incredibly structured like in STEM or health areas and b) pressure to choose a field with a specific career (e.g. societal, parental). However, many students do not feel like they have enough time to explore and the decision to choose one's major is so important – they connect it to their identity. This decision is one of the biggest ones they make because it creates a trajectory for not only the subject matter they will learn about, but peers and faculty interactions, as well as potential career outcomes. It is clear the students need more intensive academic advising around major. The literature on the topic emphasis over and over the need for sophomore-specific academic advising (Ennis-McMillan, 2011; Schaller, 2005; Schaller, 2010; Schreiner, 2018).

Outside of advising, offering students more opportunities to “try majors out” such as interdisciplinary oriented classes designed for first- and second-year students, or the utilization of pre-majors with introductory courses discussing these topics could help. For example, an institution may consider a yearlong blended course that incorporates both English and Biology or History and Statistics. This not only allows students to try multiple topics within one course but allows students to work intersubjectively utilizing critical thinking skills making them more

likely to become more well-rounded learners. High-Impact Practices or (HIPS) such as service-learning experiences can be highly beneficial in creating hands-on learning experiences for students (Kuh et al., 2005). In the case of students who are struggling academically the idea of integrating service-learning concepts within an academic field of interest or embedded in a success course “to try things out” may help engage students more within the classroom and major setting.

Reviewing Educational and Academic Policy

The concepts of recovery and resilience within this study’s context asked for a deeper understanding of individual developmental outcomes; however, “resilience” researchers believe resilience development is mostly dependent on the social determinants surrounding a person. Secombe (2002), for example, argues for an understanding of resilience as a quality of the social environment as much as the individual,

The widely held view of resiliency as an individual disposition, family trait, or community phenomenon is insufficient . . . resiliency cannot be understood or improved in significant ways by merely focusing on these individual-level factors. Instead careful attention must be paid to the structural deficiencies in our society and to the social policies that families need in order to become stronger, more competent, and better functioning in adverse situations (p.385).

One of those structural deficiencies is in how we think about education as both K-12 and postsecondary (meant for competitive entry and competitive completion). Because policy can think of these groups as separate, it forfeits responsibility in creating greater pathways from high schools to community colleges, vocational programs, and four-year institutions. Venezia & Kirst (2005) argue that most policy and program attention is focused “on postsecondary admission, not on postsecondary preparation or success” (p. 285). While this has started to change over the years with programs like, LEAP (Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership Program), there needs to be a tighter linkage from K-12 to postsecondary if our society really values higher

education completion. If we look at postsecondary education as part of a K-16 model it would require K-12 and postsecondary to not just collaborate but work together in preparing students for college.

The high-school-to-college transition is particularly challenging for students (e.g. first-generation college goers) who rely almost completely on in-school resources to help them prepare. Within our research agenda, we view admissions and placement standards and institutional arrangements as policies that communicate signals, meaning, and expected behavior to students and secondary schools (Verenzia & Kirst, 2005, p.288).

These signals can get students to college but don't help them succeed. Additionally, levels of support can be inconsistent during the first year of college, and mostly drops off during the second year of college causing students to tread water. "Success or failure in the sophomore year does not rest solely in the student's individual performance. Environmental and contextual factors can play a significant role in supporting and scaffolding student success in the second year of college" (Gahagan, 2018, p.85-86). It is clear from the qualitative feedback – that once they get here, they have no idea what to do, or what they should do, or how to do it. If our education system was a K-16 model, high schools and postsecondary institutions might engage in a warm transfer where college is talked about more than an economic benefit. This would require communities, school districts, institutions, to work together for a common goal; and it is evident that the transition into college is really a two-year process for many students. If we want to be intentional of moving students through and out, we need to be intentional about moving them in over a span of time, meeting students where they are and intentionally designing programs and policy supporting this transition keeping in consideration the social factors that can impede their success (e.g. housing, financial, and food insecurity).

One policy consideration is increasing funding for lower-income students. Baker-Smith et al. (2020) found that out of 330,000 college students within the last five years reported

housing insecurity rates from 46 percent to 60 percent at public two-year colleges, and from 35 percent to 48 percent at four-year colleges and universities. “These students were struggling to pay their rent and utilities while their colleges were open, not closed, and while their classes were in session” (Goldrick-Rab, 2020). For lower-income students, the federal government could double the amount offered to Pell-grant recipients. Housing is expensive, and frequently students are not offered enough funding to cover living expenses. Increasing the Pell grant, “will close the affordability gap for lower-income students, leading more of them to enroll and persist” (Levine, 2021, n.p.). Further, even changing the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards based on level would be significant. For example, if a first-year student withdrew their first semester due to medical leave and returned in their second spring and met a 2.0 GPA or above they still would not meet SAP since they only completed 50 percent of attempted classes, leaving them immediately on warning at some institutions, and at others, a complete loss of financial aid. Students who are at-most need financially are at most risk to lose aid. Since the most well-paying jobs require a college degree or higher, we are essentially creating additional barriers to reach that goal.

How institutions write policy also reflect values of equity and opportunity and *how* that policy is implemented reflects an institution’s perception of that group. Gaghan (2018) states “As educators, our beliefs about student success and what we value shape our actions and can be formalized into the policies that are enacted on campus. Likewise, these policies designed to guide student life and behavior can subsequently encourage or discourage student success” (p.86). Kinzie & Kuh (2017) argue that the real problem is how initiatives, policies, and programs are implemented. They state the problem as “a group of discrete, disconnected programs, or crafting solutions before developing a clear sense of the contextualized problem.

What is needed is a framework that recognizes and systematically maps the range of approaches about what to do and illustrates how this must occur”. (Kinzie & Kuh, 2017, p. 23). This argues that institutions must first explore the success data surrounding second years and the implications on students experience and retention; two, evaluate which policies are affecting second year success; and three, create a framework in which to support students (Gahagan, 2018). Maybe one could start with looking at academic probation policy in how it’s written and implemented as a starting point. For example, the term academic probation indicates criminal wrong-doing. The power of language and how we describe academic progress needs to shift. Consider what this term means to students who are of color in which the justice system disproportionately affects, students who have been through the justice or foster care system– or witnessed family go through this system. Beyond language, how we write the policy and the expectations which we set require students of all backgrounds to maintain one standard of academic achievement. As mentioned earlier in this paper, policy is frequently written in academia so students meet one definition of student, middle-class white student, who should “know” how to do these things. Policy should be considered for accountability but for equity and empathy as well. As an institution of learning, why do we punish failure when it’s a part of the learning process?

5.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is clear that “failure” is an essential part of learning, “that given the chance to reflect upon academic adversity and take appropriate action, students can learn and grow in impressive ways” (Gannon, 2020). Students who are struggling academically are unique, because they are in middle of challenges and setbacks. It’s easy to acknowledge someone’s existence when they are down or not meeting an expectation by utilizing a policy that tells someone “you aren’t good enough” though they certainly are in process. Students are punished for “not knowing” or not

being fully formed in the ways institutions expect, ways that unfortunately speak to only one group. The system of higher education expects that students are ready for a level of academic rigor and academic responsibility that may not have been taught to them. This is not to say there shouldn't be academic expectations or warnings – many students appreciate the “wake-up call” as Michael put it earlier. But no human being is fully formed, and learning is always a process in becoming more than who we are in this moment. We should stop thinking of new students as completely developed individuals who know how to do college, which is a privileged way of expecting students to succeed, and instead, create better experiences and spaces for students to develop, fail, feel accepted, reflect and learn while creating better pathways for success. Our obsession with the idea that a college degree derives happiness has manipulated the expectation of what the college experience is and should be – a developmental time in which to become an enriched ‘citizen’ and human being. If we want students to build academic resilience, then one of the main learning outcomes of college should be directly related to an individual's internal well-being. A college environment that encourages students to occupy all spaces on campus no matter their background where structure and support are available to them, allows for a more inclusive definition about what college can mean, *a utopia of potential*. Thinking of postsecondary education as an extension of high school, becomes less about the singular economic benefits and more about supporting the development of critical, empathetic, community-oriented, life-long learners.

Perhaps institutions are like sophomores, still trying to find their meaning and purpose, striving for a community in which all members seek to feel like they belong, overwhelmed with strategic indecision in the right way to support students. In those ways their characteristics align. For men, the crisis is real but rooted in much larger complexities than this study could provide. It

could be safe to assume that men struggle with talking about their emotions and handling of stress. It could be safe to assume that male students may not be social-emotionally developed as their female peers, and this delay that has been on display in the research. But what we know from a persistence perspective is that men have the potential to succeed in college with the right support, conditions, and self-reflective opportunities to be authentically who they are as individuals. When we reflect on Unger's (2008) definition of resiliency below, it allows us to consider this definition in the framework of recovery and resiliency in the second year of college:

In the context of exposure to significant adversity, whether psychological, environmental, or both, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being, and a condition of the individual's family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways (p. 225).

We are in the "business" of education - we should be morally obligated to educate and support students in their navigation to health-sustaining resources or in our case, academic ones, including the ability to experience feelings of wellness, and be a part of a larger community and culture by providing opportunities. We are obligated to not just churn out degrees like we are a machine, we are obligated to teach, inform, challenge, and empower students to build confidence in their own intellect but also break down barriers that prevent students from accessing these pools of wellness. If we do this, it can lead to a more resilient and democratic society and higher education becomes just that – a higher education.

Our society needs independent scholars, innovative thinkers, creative explorers and teachers. We also need to do better when it comes to issues related to gender identity and social expectations around those identities, especially when it comes to socialization and coping behavior. Perhaps this study ends with a hopeful tone, that it is possible to create pathways for

students, that failure is a part of the academic experience, and empowering individual agency regardless if it includes college in the equation or not. More often, students will choose to continue because of the community and opportunity it provides – if we do it the right way. Perhaps Snyder (2000) said it best when talking about goals, that when we adopt a goal that isn't ours, we should stop and assess our decisions in taking ownership of that goal. "We gain control of this process whenever we can shut off automatic, unaware, and mindless decisions and replace them with a greater consciousness" (p.213). Institutions could stop being automatic and mindless, pause and assess the decisions that have been made and who they impact, and move forward in how to support these students with empathy, equity, care, and acute awareness because our students are craving the opportunity to thrive – if we let them.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



California State University
SAN MARCOS

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB)

California State University San Marcos San Marcos, CA 92096-0001
Tel: 760.750.4029. Fax: 760.750.3150 irb@csusm.edu www.csusm.edu/irb

DATE: November 19, 2020

TO: Ashley Gragido
FROM: California State University, San Marcos Institutional Review Board

PROJECT TITLE: [1531110-3] Hope in Academic Recovery: A Study of an Academic Probation Student Success Course

REFERENCE #:
SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: November 19,
2020 EXPIRATION DATE: N/A
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

This letter certifies that the above referenced project was reviewed and APPROVED by the CSUSM Institutional Review Board (IRB) in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Federal Regulations on Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46), including its relevant subparts. Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If applicable, all approved forms and materials (consent forms, information forms, flyers etc.) have been uploaded to IRBNet under "Board" documents. Only approved consent forms may be used to obtain participant consent.

Modifications to Research Protocol

Changes to this protocol (procedures, populations, locations, personnel, etc.) must be submitted and approved by the IRB prior to implementation using the "Minor Modification" application form available on IRBNet.

Unanticipated Outcomes/Events

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this committee. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed. All

NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to thiscommittee.

Continuing Review

Continuing reviews for limited/expedited protocols are no longer required as part of the IRB process, per the partial early implementation of the federal Common Rule policy retroactive from July 19th, 2018. Should any changes to your study occur, please submit a minor modification using the application form available on IRBNet. If this is a full review, please submit a continuing review at least 30 days before the annual expiration date.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at CSUSM by calling (760) 750-4029 or by email to irb@csusm.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

Wishing you well with your

research, CSUSM IRB

APPENDIX B: ADULT HOPE SCALE (AHS)

Question	Subscale (A/P)
I can think of many ways to get out of a jam.	P
I energetically pursue my goals.	A
There are lots of ways around any problem.	P
I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are important to me.	P
Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem.	P
My past experiences have prepared me well for my future.	A
I've been pretty successful in life.	A
I meet the goals I set for myself.	A

Scale: 1-4

APPENDIX C: ACADEMIC LOCUS OF CONTROL – REVISED (ALC-R)

ALC- Questions

I have largely determined my own career goals.

There has been at least one instance where social activity impaired my academic performance.

I consider myself highly motivated to achieve success in life.

Doing work on time is always important to me.

I feel I will someday make a real contribution to the world if I work hard at it.

I would like to graduate from college, but there are more important things in my life.

Studying every day is important.

I never feel really hopeless-there is always something I can do to improve my situation.

I plan well and stick to my plans.

I am a good writer.

I would never allow social activities to affect my studies.

SCALE: 0-1

APPENDIX D: COPING STRATEGIES INVENTORY-SHORT FORM (CSI-SF)

Question	Factor
I make a plan of action and follow it	2
I look for the silver lining or try to look on the bright side of things	2
I try to spend time alone	4
I hope the problem will take care of itself	3
I try to talk about it with a friend or family	1
I try to put the problem out of my mind	3
I tackle the problem head on	2
I step back from the situation and try to put things into perspective	2
I tend to blame myself	4
I let my feelings out to reduce the stress	1
I hope for a miracle	3
I ask a close friend or relative that I respect for help or advice	1
I try not to think about the problem	3
I tend to criticize myself	4

Scale:1-5

APPENDIX E: SELF EFFICACY SCALE (SES)

Question

If someone opposes me, I can find means and ways to get what I want.

It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.

I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.

Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.

I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.

No matter what comes my way I'm usually able to handle it.

Scale: 1-4