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Community College Faculty Perceptions of Their Role in the Academic Achievement of Minoritized Students

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by
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Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by Erin R. Smith under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

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April 29, 2024
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Acknowledgments

"The light of God surrounds me. The love of God enfolds me. The power of God protects me. The presence of God watches over me. Wherever I am, God is. And all is well. Amen." -The Prayer of Protection

Who are we without God's grace and guidance? This has been an arduous task. This has been a task of perseverance. This has been a test of character. This has been a test of faith. This has been a task of purpose. I would like to thank my mother, Etrulia Robinson, for making me the person I am today. She instilled in me a love of learning. She taught me what it is to be your most authentic self. She gave me a reason to live when my world crumbled around me. She loved me when I was hard to love. She pushed me when I needed to be pushed. She showed me fortitude. I love you, Momme.

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"To the stars who listen—and the dreams that are answered." –Sarah J. Maas
A Court of Mist and Fury

Abstract

Community College Faculty Perceptions of Their Role in the Academic Achievement of Minoritized Students. Erin R. Smith, 2024: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice. Keywords: community college, technical college, faculty perspectives, minorities, minoritized students, achievement gap

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of community college faculty and the impact of those perceptions on the academic success of African American and Hispanic students. Within the context of the achievement gap, finding out how colleges can better serve disadvantaged students supported the aims of this study. This research strove to contribute to the literature on 2-year institutions of higher education and to provide research from the perspective of 2-year faculty. The findings of this study could contribute to faculty professional development, onboarding, and environmental changes for 2-year institutions in support of the academic success of minoritized students.

Phenomenological interviews were conducted with 8 current and former 2-year faculty who have taught at a community or technical college for at least one academic year. The data collected were explored to develop an understanding of the perspectives and pedagogical practices of 2-year faculty. All responses to the interview questions were analyzed thematically by coding and the discovery of emergent themes.

Through the results of this study, several themes emerged that were essential to understanding the perspectives and teaching practices of faculty to teach at 2-year institutions. The key factors included: (a) faculty perceived family educational background as a key indicator of success for minoritized students, (b) faculty perceived socioeconomic status as an indicator of success in minoritized students, (c) faculty acknowledged affinity groups geared towards minoritized student success as effective and beneficial, (d) institutional leadership and its support or shortcomings had a noted impact on how effective faculty could be, (e) cultural competency was consistently acknowledge by faculty as a vital part of their pedagogical practices, (f) empathy was another important aspect of faculty pedagogical practices, (g) faculty found representation important for both faculty and student success, (h) faculty acknowledge that professional development was a personal responsibility and most felt that they grew into their effectiveness as faculty, (i) faculty believed that campus culture had an impact of student academic success, (j) faculty perceived mentorship important to the success of both faculty and students. Understanding these themes could have implications for more successful academic outcomes by minoritized students and a better teaching environment for faculty. Participants noted that the definition of student success should be individualized to the student and their professional journey after completing their studies. A more student-centered, culturally competent approach to teaching has the most significant positive impact on minoritized students.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The problem that this research addressed was that African American and Hispanic students are not performing at the same level of academic achievement in college as their Caucasian counterparts. The achievement gap at the collegiate level needs to be addressed (Yu, 2017). While many dynamics impact a student's ability to do well, this study examined the impact of college faculty. The National Center for Education Statistics defines educational attainment as "the highest level of education completed" (NCES, 2021b). Beginning with a high school diploma or GED and through a master's degree or terminal degree, educational attainment is varied. Between 2000 and 2019, there has been a marked increase in attainment for Black students (from 87 to 91%), White (from 94 to 96%), and Hispanic students (from 63 to 86%), who have received completed high school (NCES, 2021a). High school completion data also includes students who finished with a GED. This data is encouraging, but the percentages dip significantly when the conversation shifts to post-secondary attainment.

From 2010 to 2020, the percentage of White individuals, ages 25 to 29, with an associate degree or higher, rose from 49% to 56% (NCES, 2021a). However, for Blacks, it was 20 to 36%, and for Hispanics, from 20 to 37%. Discussions about the achievement gap are typically restricted to secondary education, specifically elementary school. Researchers traditionally emphasized third-grade reading level, school climate, socioeconomic status, and even the educational attainment of a child's parents (Desimone & Long, 2010; Lam, 2014; Tomlinson & Jarvis, 2014; O'Malley et al., 2015). There is not a significant amount of recent research in this area, related to indicators for academic

success in students while they progress in school. Concerning the achievement gap, when a student graduates from high school, their ability to be successful in college is determined by factors such as their high school GPA, standardized test scores, and, again, their socioeconomic status (Klugman, 2012; Komarraju et al., 2013; Palardy et al., 2015; Yeh, 2015). All these measures are outside of the control of colleges and universities. In some ways, they are even outside the students' control. What can be controlled, or at least influenced, is what happens in the classroom between a student and a faculty member. This study sought to better understand the impact of faculty-student interactions through pedagogy, mentoring, bias, and campus culture. The objectives of this study were to understand how faculty define student academic success, what barriers might hinder the success of minoritized students at 2-year institutions, how the campus environment might both help and hinder minoritized students at the 2-year level and how faculty perceived their ability to impact this population of students.

Faculty interactions have proven significant in the overall student experience, particularly for first-generation college students. In their study of the faculty and students at a large, urban Hispanic-serving university, Ansari Ricci et al. (2023) found a need for better alignment between faculty pedagogy and first-generation student needs for academic success. Seventy-seven percent of the campus population at the research site was first-generation, and 65% of the students identified as Latinx (Ansari Ricci et al., 2023). The campus composition from their study is directly related to the scope of this study because nearly two-thirds of all community college students are classified as first-generation students according to a 2020 report by NASPA (Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education) and the Center for First-Generation Student Success

(Mechur Karp et al., 2020). In an article citing the findings from the NASPA report, Burroughs Pryzgoda (2023) noted that creating opportunities for community for first-generation students was a crucial step that institutions could take to encourage and support the success of first-generation students. A supportive community of peers and advocates, including faculty, allows these students to thrive and feel less isolated (Burroughs Pryzgoda, 2023). Burroughs Pryzgoda (2023) suggested that faculty create learning communities for first-generation students, be a part of orientation, and even identify themselves as first-generation in faculty-student interactions, syllabi, and email signatures.

Phenomenon of Interest

Faculty members can tremendously influence their students (Bourke et al., 2020; Parnes et al., 2020). In the relationship between faculty and students, the curriculum must be taught, concepts mastered, and knowledge tested, but a connection should be established and maintained (Lundberg, 2014; Parnes et al., 2020; Tovar, 2015). Data for college students and faculty relationships is limited, especially at the 2-year level. The more proactively students are engaged with faculty and staff, their classmates, and the curriculum, the more likely they are to learn (CCSSE, 2020). Whether a 50-minute lecture or a 2-hour lab, every faculty interaction creates an opportunity for impact (Schwartz et al., 2018). Very little data exists on the impact of these interactions between students and teachers. Students have more options than ever for a means to an education. If a student is dissatisfied with an institution, another educational option exists in reasonable proximity. Once viewed as less viable options, online courses and virtual institutions are shoring up their curriculum and accreditation to compete in today’s global

educational marketplace (Swaak, 2022, 2023). COVID-19 made access to online education critical for the survival of post-secondary institutions, but the need for expansion was already there (Perez, 2023). Brick-and-mortar institutions continue adding more online course options to allow access for more students to take courses (Swaak, 2023). Colleges and universities seek to determine and examine what factors lead to attrition, especially for African American and Hispanic students who continue to struggle (Byrd, 2020; Leath et al., 2018; Means et al., 2016; White et al., 2020). Perhaps the faculty can help solve these problems (Flynn et al., 2017; Schudde, 2019).

Background and Justification

As the dynamics of higher education continue to evolve, community and technical colleges are playing an increasingly significant role in the education of the nation's students. In 2019, according to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), there were 1,044 2-year colleges in the United States, with an aggregate enrollment of 11.8 million students (AACC, 2021b). Of the 1,044 institutions, 936 are public, 73 are independent, and 35 are tribal. The 11.8 million students are a combination of credit and non-credit. A steady decline in community college enrollment since the Great Recession from 2007 to 2009 occurred, with enrollment peaking in 2010 (Juszkiewicz, 2017). Since 2013, there has been a 9.6% drop in public 2-year enrollment (AACC, 2017). Then, to the counter, the COVID-19 pandemic markedly impacted enrollment at 2-year institutions. Many community colleges experienced a drop in enrollment from 10 to 30% in 2020 (NACE, 2020). Two-year institutions tend to be open access, meaning a student is not restricted by a specific GPA or score on standardized testing to gain admittance, which supports the appeal of these institutions during an

economic downturn and the appeal to disadvantaged student populations. “Open access means that all members of a community—not just a select few—are afforded a pathway to attain a college education” (Mullin, 2017, p. 8). Generally, students must obtain a high school diploma or equivalent to attend. Community colleges enroll a larger percentage of students with risk factors to their success than other more traditional institutions (June, 2021, 2022). Examples of risk factors for academic success are (a) postponing college enrollment, (b) having dependents, or (c) having to work while enrolled (Mullin, 2017). Community colleges serve a larger percentage of students with one or more of these risk factors than public and private 4-year institutions. According to a study from 2011 to 2012, 53% of students served by community colleges comprise five to seven risk factors that impact persistence and completion (Mullin, 2017). The risk factors significantly impact persistence and graduation rates. These institutions serve a vital role in promoting access at a more reasonable price point for anyone interested in furthering their education (Gardner, 2021; McMillen, 2021).

Faculty-student interactions are significant in developing mattering and academic success (Swanson et al., 2022). In their study, Swanson et al. (2022) found that students’ interactions with high school teachers predicted their post-secondary achievement. Further, they suggest that proactive faculty outreach and affirming words and behavior from faculty related to a student’s abilities are far more significant than student-initiated interactions with faculty (Swanson et al., 2022). Examples of proactive faculty outreach and affirmations from their study included intentionally encouraging students to participate in class discussions, providing constructive feedback, providing structured opportunities for reflection, and culturally relevant pedagogical practices (Swanson et al.,

2022). Other findings from this study related to the significance of faculty-student interactions also included the importance of academic validation and developing feelings of mattering in students; the continuation and strengthening of equitable policies and practices by institutions to promote better connections for students on campus; and the need to study these interactions longitudinally to see how relationships evolve and develop over time (Swanson et al., 2022). By addressing the discrepancy between student demographics and faculty representation, this study raises critical questions about the impact of faculty-student interactions on student outcomes, particularly for minoritized students.

An increasing percentage of the students who attend 2-year institutions are minoritized students from disadvantaged backgrounds, as well as students with children (AACC, 2021a). In the Fall of 2019, community college students represented 41% of all undergraduate students and, of that number, 53% were Hispanic and 43% were Black (AACC, 2021b). Despite those encouraging numbers, the achievement gap amongst those populations in postsecondary education continues to grow. In a 10-year study on trends in learning outcomes for community college students, Liu and Roohr (2013) found that across all disciplines, except math, the second largest predictor of a negative academic performance was to be classified as a Black or African American student. This finding supports existing data on the achievement gap for minoritized students. Within the study's findings, negative implications for Hispanic students also emerged. African American and Hispanic students at community colleges tend to take remedial or developmental courses more often than their White counterparts (Liu & Roohr, 2013). This trend in academic deficiencies for these specific minoritized community college

students helps to bring the conversation back around to the achievement gap and how institutions prioritize the academic achievement of their most vulnerable populations.

The composition of community college faculty adds another layer of complexity to the idea of an interconnected learning environment becoming a catalyst for the academic advancement of African American and Hispanic students. The community college student population is diverse; however, that same level of diversity is not reflected in the faculty and staff. This could account for minoritized students' difficulty in connecting in the classroom. In 2016, just under 75% of community college faculty and 73% of the administration identified as White (AACC, 2018). While the faculty has the most sustained interaction with the students, 63% of student services staff are generally identified as White and 15% as Black (AACC, 2018). In 2013, reportedly, minorities comprised slightly under a quarter of all instructional staff at community colleges (AACC, 2016). In 2013, 7.4% of those faculty were Black, and 5.5% were Hispanic; those were the two largest minoritized percentages, although 4.4% were labeled as "unknown" (AACC, 2016). Students need to see themselves in the faculty and the administration. Finding commonalities with someone from a different background is difficult (Brocato et al., 2021; Mahatmya et al., 2016; Tovar, 2015). Calling to question the expectations and assumptions faculty have for students who do not look like them or have a similar background supports the development of authentic engagement (Applebaum, 2019; Mahatmya et al., 2016). Faculty intentionality in building relationships with students and making their curriculum relevant to the discipline and the students themselves (Applebaum, 2019; Kennedy et al., 2022; Suarez-Grant et al., 2022).

Deficiencies in the Evidence

Overall, the literature on the achievement gap tends to be more focused on 4-year institutions rather than community or technical colleges. Aside from the Community College Research Center, the American Association of Community Colleges, sundry research publications, and the Department of Education, more community college-based research must be conducted. Regarding the actual research problem, research from the faculty perspective tends to be more limited. Many studies focus on student perceptions of faculty or student perceptions of their collegiate experience rather than on how faculty relate to their students. This study fills an important gap in the literature by shifting the focus to examine how faculty relate to their students and the impact of pedagogy on student learning outcomes. It provides a more holistic understanding of the dynamics at play in community college settings. Research on pedagogy exists, but not so much on how pedagogy impacts learning and the overall academic achievement of minoritized students (Kennedy et al., 2022; Talpade et al., 2020; Tirres, 2021). When there is literature about students and teachers, it is focused primarily on secondary education. There is much discussion on the significance of the third-grade year in academic achievement. Much of the research on the impact of teachers on students is centered around elementary and sometimes middle school students. Johnson (2015) conducted a very similar study to this one on the perceptions of teachers and the impacts of those perceptions on the academic achievement of minoritized students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. However, her research was based on K-5 elementary school teachers. Johnson's (2015) research study concluded that regardless of a student's background, any student can learn. It is just important that the school environment lends

itself to encouraging learning and academic achievement by students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Johnson, 2015). For this study, teachers and faculty have the largest and most direct impact on shaping the school environment for these populations of students (Johnson, 2015).

Audience

This research could benefit many different populations in education, policymakers, and parents. In secondary education, middle and high school teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors can benefit from this research because they prepare students to graduate high school and continue to a post-secondary institution. While only some students want to go to college, the information and level of thinking required of a college student can benefit everyone. However, this research is for colleges and universities. Even though it is a community college-focused study, the connection to faculty is the same regardless of where they teach. Many faculty instructors teach students in both areas. College administrators could find this research beneficial as they prepare and encourage professional development for faculty and in the onboarding process of new or first-time faculty.

Setting of the Study

The research sites are public community and technical colleges in the southeast of the United States. These institutions serve over 10,000 students annually on multiple full-service campuses, technology centers, noncredit courses, and online. These institutions are part of a statewide system of technical colleges. Over half of the students enrolled were full-time students. The student demographics are typical for most community colleges across the country. Most students are White and female. The next largest ethnic

group classification is “Other,” followed by Black. Generally, the institutions boast a 19:1 Student-Faculty ratio. University transfer courses tend to see the largest numbers in terms of class size.

Researcher’s Role

The researcher’s role within 2-year institutions was as an academic program director over a college access program for under-resourced and underemployed adults in manufacturing, healthcare, and personal development. The researcher has transitioned to the non-profit educational sector, supporting the re-enrollment of adult learners who have stopped out. The researcher has also served as a dean of dual enrollment and a student services coordinator. With well over a decade of experience in the 2-year technical college system, an additional role of the researcher is to add to the literature for community and technical colleges. The researcher strives to provide relevant and timely information for other practitioners to utilize to affect systemic, culturally-inclusive, and intentional change on 2-year college campuses.

Definition of Terms

Access

For this study, access refers to the right, ability, or opportunity a student has to higher education and the resources necessary to attend college and be successful. Students from underrepresented populations often need access to college preparatory programs or information to help them be more successful (Means & Pyne, 2016).

Achievement Gap

In education, the achievement gap refers to the incongruence in academic performance among differing groups of students. The achievement gap between Black

and White students tends to be the most researched and has the most commentary. However, for this study, Hispanic students were also included since the disparity for that population mirrors or is slightly worse than that of Black students (Byrd, 2020).

At-Risk

The definition of an at-risk student can vary due to grade level and academic progression. Generally, at-risk students have consistently low academic performance and may risk not completing a given educational benchmark, such as high school graduation or college completion (Hernandez, 2011).

Community College

Originally called junior colleges, community or technical colleges are 2-year post-secondary institutions where students can earn a certificate, diploma, or associate degree. These institutions were developed out of necessity after access expanded between world wars. “Localism” became a hallmark of 2-year institutions to promote educational attainment closer to home (Thelin, 2011).

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is the acquisition of resources that allow for academic, social, and economic success. Cultural capital can be generational or acquired throughout life from eternal sources, extending across social classes (White et al., 2020). For this study, cultural capital is discussed as a component of this research within the context of the achievement gap.

Equity

Equity is often discussed within the context of equality. Equality refers to giving students the same resources and treating them all equally. Equity expands on the idea by

focusing on the individual student and giving them the opportunity and the tools to be successful (Vescio, 2016).

Ethnicity

According to dictionary.com, ethnicity is "a social group that shares a common and distinctive culture, religion, or language" (Ethnicity, 2021). Ethnicity is a shared culture that helps to group similar groups of people. This is an important distinction for this study because of the use of the term "Hispanic." Research data broken down into ethnic groups, tends to use the term Hispanic to describe people of Spanish descent, to include those in Latin America.

Minoritized

The distinction between being classified as a minority and being minoritized is critical to this research. A person is not born a minority; rather, they are forced into the classification due to the systemic structures of society that maneuver their existence into a disadvantage. Being minoritized is not restricted to race or ethnicity. Minoritized populations include gender identity, sexual orientation, first-generation status, physical and/or cognitive ability, and others (Brocato et al., 2021).

Minority

This term is important for this research because of the distinctions. Minority does not have anything to do with population size. It is more about the societal repercussions of belonging to a specific ethnic or racial group. Wagley and Harris (1958) state that five specific characteristics distinguish a minority group. The characteristics are (a) unequal treatment and a sense of powerlessness over their lives, (b) specific physical or cultural traits such as skin color or language, (c) membership in the group by descent, (d) an

imposed subordination to a dominant group, and (e) a high rate of marriage within the group (Wagley & Harris, 1958).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is one's own belief in their abilities. For this study, this is an important concept to explore because of the potential impact faculty have on the academic achievement of minority students and their belief in their own ability to be successful. Yılmaz (2018) researched the relationship between self-efficacy, the fear of success, and life satisfaction. Yılmaz (2018) found a negative correlation between one's belief in themselves and a fear of achievement. By reducing the fear of success, self-efficacy is markedly increased.

Social Capital

This term is based on the economic concept that there is value, like currency, in social relationships. According to Salloum et al. (2017), social capital is a construct that refers to the resources that stem from or are within relationships. Like cultural capital, this is another established reason for the achievement gap.

Socioeconomic Status (SES)

SES is one of the top indicators of the achievement gap. According to the American Psychological Association, socioeconomic status refers to the social class of an individual or ethnic group. It is measured by an amalgamation of education level, occupation, and income (Socioeconomic Status, 2021).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of community college faculty and the impact of those perceptions on the academic success of African

American and Hispanic students. Within the context of the achievement gap, finding out how colleges can better serve disadvantaged students supports the aims of this study. Community colleges are often left out of this conversation in research, yet they serve so many of the nation's students. Not much attention has been given to faculty and how interactions in the classroom can impact a student's ability to do well. Beyond this interaction, it is the faculty themselves and their perceptions of their minority students that may also have an impact. In the limited research, building relationships with faculty has positively impacted student success and achievement (Lundberg, 2014). This research sought to expand that conversation by addressing those deficiencies in the literature, in relationship to community colleges and their faculty.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

To understand how community college faculty perceptions impact the academic achievement of minoritized students, it is important to understand the cultural background and previous academic experiences of these often marginalized, underprepared, and underrepresented student populations (Bourke et al., 2020; Flynn et al., 2017; Luster-Edward & Martin, 2019). And while faculty and post-secondary institutions cannot change those experiences, creating an environment that promotes a positive and transformative student experience is possible. It is just as important to understand the faculty's point of view and how faculty sometimes are not equipped with the strategies needed to support minoritized students (Bourke et al., 2020; Schudde, 2019). Faculty preparation for the classroom and any subsequent personal and professional development also play a role in their ability to establish a rapport with minoritized students to be a more effective educator (Bourke et al., 2020; Flynn et al., 2017; Hansen & Dawson, 2020; Malmberg, 2020). Faculty also have their own institutional barriers to overcome to provide quality instruction (Doran & Hengesteg, 2021; Hutto, 2017; Luster-Edward & Martin, 2019). Teaching does not happen in a vacuum. The impact of the ongoing global pandemic has fundamentally altered how faculty and institutions must respond to the needs of students (Henley, 2021; Pettit, 2020; Zahneis, 2022).

While research on faculty/student interactions and the academic success of minoritized students exists, there needs to be more research focused specifically on community college students and their faculty. This literature review attempts to support

the validity of this study by presenting an overview of the current and recent past literature related to African American and Hispanic students' cultural concerns (Bourke et al., 2020; Fox, 2020; Musalini, 2021; Pascarella et al., 1989; White et al., 2020), community college faculty interactions and support (Bourke et al., 2020; Flynn et al., 2017; Hutto, 2017; Peaslee, 2018; Schudde, 2019), and the unique characteristics of community colleges and how that environment serves to support minoritized students (Doran & Hengesteg, 2021; Gaxiola Serrano, 2017; Wyner, 2014), while also presenting equally unique challenges (Bailey et al., 2015).

Theoretical Framework

Operating under the assumption that intentional faculty involvement and relationships with students can positively influence the academic achievement of minoritized students, the theoretical framework for this study is based on Napoli and Wortman's (1998) model adaptation of Tinto's (1993) theory of retention and early departure. Vincent Tinto is a Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Education at Syracuse University and a theorist on early leaving and retention in higher education academic study and research. Napoli and Wortman (1998) sought to expand Tinto's model by including the psychological aspects of attrition and focusing the research subjects on community college students. Most early research and theorizing is based on 4-year residential students and faculty. But with the changing landscape of education, even in the 20th century when these landmark studies were taking place, it was important to look at education from other perspectives. Community and technical colleges were created to provide localized access to education (Thelin, 2011; Wyner, 2014). Increases in high school graduation rates, economic fluctuations, and more sophisticated financial aid

options allow more students the opportunity to attend college (Hutto, 2017; Peaslee, 2018). More and more students are choosing a 2-year school to begin their education journey, so it is important to understand academic achievement and attrition from the 2-year perspective (Bailey et al., 2015; Peaslee, 2018).

Before exploring Napoli and Wortman's (1998) perspective on Tinto's work, the work of the original theorist is explored. These seminal works establish a foundation of student transition for all researchers and practitioners in retention and student success. Adding to the work of Spady (1970), Tinto examined the reasons that students left college. Student departure is directly tied to academic achievement because students cannot complete their desired credentials if they leave the institution. Students can transfer and just because they leave one semester does not mean they will not return in subsequent semesters. Tinto (1993) clearly distinguished between leaving a specific institution and leaving the higher education system altogether. That was a key component of the discussion of academic achievement and student leaving. Another integral piece of the discussion was the idea of commitment. Tinto (1993) identified two forms of commitment that supported persistence and counteracted student departure: goal commitment and institutional commitment. Goal commitment is an attribute with which students enter institutions and alter those goals over time. But if the commitment is there, that tenacity can see them through to completion. Institutional commitment is an area where institutions can truly make an impact. Students begin their post-secondary experience with a level of institutional commitment because they chose to enroll. However, the interactions students have within an institution are where we can see that commitment grow and, hopefully, continue through to academic achievement (Schudde,

2019; Peaslee, 2018).

Tinto (1993) identified a need for affinity to counteract student attrition. In addition to an affinity to the institution, according to Tinto (1993), students also need to commit to their own personal goals to sustain their motivation to continue and complete. Tinto defined this as integration. Without academic and social integration, departure is more likely. Tinto (1993) believed that a student's departure reflected the nature of their experiences with an institution. This theoretical model was chosen for this study for these reasons. The experiences students have with faculty are a part of their overall relationship with the institution. Positive relationships and intentional interactions with faculty can support a student's academic and social integration, minimizing the likelihood of attrition and promoting academic achievement (Tinto, 1993).

Napoli and Wortman (1998) expanded on Tinto's updated findings in 1993 by adding the aspect of psychology to the discussion. Additionally, they refined Tinto's model within a community college context to center on this population of students and help add more perspective to causes of attrition in postsecondary education. They also sought to go beyond academic and social integration as root causes, effectively tying in goal and institutional commitment. Both perspectives are important to this current study because of the limited research that exists, both on community colleges and research from a faculty perspective. Napoli and Wortman (1998) identified three "psychosocial" factors impacting persistence and student departure: social support, psychological adjustment to the college transition, and overall satisfaction with the institution. These three factors evolve from entry through the end of the term, along with commitment, due to internal and external positive and negative experiences. One key difference with Napoli and

Wortman's expanded model, pertinent to community colleges and other 2-year institutions, is the focus on persistence over retention. Institutions tend to focus on retention from fall-to-fall terms. However, looking at a student's experience from the start of the fall term to the conclusion of the fall term, then looking at whether they persist from the fall term into the subsequent spring term provides a more focused assessment of their experiences and why or why not they persist. Examining the evolution of psychosocial factors and other aspects of the student experience that lead to attrition from term to term works more effectively for community college students, who are transient in nature, per the expanded model of student departure (Napoli & Wortman, 1998).

Many other perspectives on the aspects and causes of student attrition contradict or add to Tinto's findings. These are also perspectives that Napoli and Wortman studied as they developed their model. Reviewing these earlier works in the context of theory development and seminal works establishes the foundation for this research study. Munro (1981) asserted that the effects of academic integration, goal commitment, and high school academics on persistence were indirect and direct. At the same time, similar studies by Chapman and Pascarella (1983) saw that social and academic integration only indirectly affected persistence. These findings support what Napoli and Wortman discovered on the importance of the environment in social and academic integration.

A student's quality of work, social support networks, goal commitment, institutional commitment, and psychological adjustment (Munro, 1981; Napoli & Wortman, 1998) are all areas that can be positively impacted by the experiences and degree of integration (Chapman & Pascarella, 1983) students have on campus. Faculty,

specifically, have an integral role in this academic achievement and completion process. The more positive and intentional student interactions with faculty, the more favorable the outcomes are for the student (Chapman & Pascarella, 1983). Faculty-student interactions at the community college level tend to be limited to classroom interactions due to the commuter culture of most 2-year institutions. Increasing opportunities outside the classroom proves difficult for many faculty due to institutional obligations, course load, and faculty employment status (Hutto, 2017; Schudde, 2019).

Community Colleges and Technical Colleges

Wyner (2014) detailed community colleges' incredible pressure to meet student needs while staying true to overlapping and conflicting missions and values. Originally developed as extensions of public high schools, with implied "13th and 14th years," 2-year institutions were seen as a funnel or filter for 4-year institutions needing students to transfer and a place for terminal programs of study (Thelin, 2011; Wyner, 2014). Several things changed in the history of the United States between 1940 and 1960 to create a different and more urgent need for educational opportunity. Two-year public institutions met that need by combining terminal programs with 4-year transfer options and adding specialized non-credit offerings for industry professionals and people with baccalaureate and master-level credentials (Thelin, 2011). These changes met an increasingly diverse student population and allowed more minoritized students to pursue education (Thelin, 2011; Wyner, 2014). In the pursuit of being everything to everyone, those same students appear to have been lost in the shuffle (Hutto, 2017). From the influx of new populations of students looking for a place to pursue their education beyond high school to the need to make student success the primary concern, community colleges continue to evolve but

do not always keep pace with demand (Hutto, 2017; McMillen, 2021; Peaslee, 2018).

Community-based by design, community and technical colleges face the enormous task of educating and supporting over 11 million students as of 2019 (AACC, 2021b), all while trying to figure out how to support a diverse group of students in the best way. The mission of a community college is critical to the institution's success and, ultimately, the success of the students who attend (Bailey et al., 2015). Wyner (2014) identified the two most prevalent missions for 2-year institutions, which were to serve as both an "on-ramp" and an "off-ramp" for their students. Wyner (2014) noted that these institutions serve as an on-ramp to postsecondary education for graduating high school students, providing a smoother transition to advanced studies and a 4-year college or university if desired. But they also serve as an off-ramp into a career for students pursuing terminal degrees or for non-traditional students looking to enhance existing skills or develop newer ones (Wyner, 2014).

Gaxiola Serrano (2017) examined why Latina/o students enroll in community colleges, citing the increasing number of students nationally and the high number of students in California, where the study research site was located. This qualitative study aimed to better understand the reasoning behind community college enrollment for Latina/o students by examining their K-12 experiences through interviews and exploring the pathways they took to help guide practitioners in how best to support this growing population (Gaxiola Serrano, 2017). The secondary education experiences with the race of four graduate students who began their postsecondary journey at a community college revealed an educational system not designed for them to succeed academically (Gaxiola Serrano, 2017). However, with fortified resilience, the students persisted and continued

their education at the graduate level (Gaxiola Serrano, 2017). Moreover, there has been a significant rise in the number of Latina/o students enrolling in community colleges (Gaxiola Serrano, 2017). However, the achievement gap for these students remains significant despite an influx in enrollment, and only a small percentage of those who go on to a postsecondary career receive a credential (Gaxiola Serrano, 2017). Due in part to open access or open enrollment policies at 2-year colleges and traditionally lower tuition costs, many students of color choose to enroll at these institutions for the chance to continue their education (Gaxiola Serrano, 2017). Despite this more accessible educational option, Gaxiola Serrano (2017) maintained that these institutions still require scrutiny. Furthermore, Gaxiola Serrano (2017) asserted that the incongruence between higher education access and equity in degree attainment and/or transfer for minoritized students must also be examined.

Gaxiola Serrano (2017) noted that the K-12 experiences of Latina/o students are a crucial part of understanding the negative trends in their academic achievement and degree attainment. The K-12 experiences of Latina/o students are characterized by three critical deficiencies that negatively impact their postsecondary pursuits (Gaxiola Serrano, 2017). According to Gaxiola Serrano (2017), the critical deficiencies negatively impacting the postsecondary pursuits of Latina/o students are disproportionate placement in remedial courses, limited information related to going to college, and institutionalized barriers and culture that fail to encourage and support a strong sense of academic self-efficacy. These deficiencies, coupled with the experiences of the study participants, highlight the existence of systematic racism for Latinas/os as well as other underserved and minoritized students (Gaxiola Serrano, 2017). Using Critical Race Theory (CRT) as

the theoretical framework allowed Gaxiola Serrano (2017) to concentrate on the educational injustices and racist systems in place preventing Latino/a students from thriving academically and impacting their postsecondary options. Focusing on the racialized identity of Latino/a students allowed for the exploration of this population as a traditionally oppressed community (Gaxiola Serrano, 2017). CRT allowed researchers to use their own experiences through this theoretical lens as a counter-story in challenging racial oppression and incorporating social justice (Gaxiola Serrano, 2017). During the data analysis process, Gaxiola Serrano (2017) identified four themes that characterized the students' progress throughout their educational journey and the obstacles they faced. The four themes were: "(a) institutional racism, (b) exclusionary tracking for college access, (c) limited college information and (d) the prison pipeline, and low expectations and lack of encouragement and support" (Gaxiola Serrano, 2017, pp. 244–248).

Meeting the needs of full-time students versus part-time students and providing wraparound services to online and evening students exacerbates existing challenges in promoting retention and student engagement opportunities with faculty. Bailey et al. (2015) noted that the underlying problem for community colleges lies in its origins, echoing the earlier findings of Wyner (2014). They observed that community and technical colleges were created for access rather than the completion of high-quality academic programs (Bailey et al., 2015). Students have too many choices with little guidance, not guidance from academic advisors or success coaches, but the guidance of "coherent" programs of study and intentional pathways (Bailey et al., 2015).

Community College Student Success and Engagement

The literature centering on college student success is extensive. While

information specifically emphasizing the community college student experience is more limited, several themes emerged during a comprehensive review. These themes guide the development of this portion of the literature review while framing the overall importance of faculty to the success and engagement of minoritized students. The most prevalent themes that tend to emerge are the importance of college environment/campus culture (Fox, 2020; Musalini, 2021; Pascarella et al., 1989; White et al., 2020), social and academic integration (Burch et al., 2015; Mooring & Mooring, 2016; Pascarella et al., 1989), the particular impact of faculty (Byrd, 2020; Daugherty et al., 2020; Schwartz et al., 2018), and effective interventions or best practices to help combat attrition in various student populations (Byrd, 2020; Dorman et al., 2020; Hatch & Garcia, 2017; Mungo, 2017).

While the focus of this study is postsecondary, within the literature, similar scenarios in the secondary education space shed light on possible origins of the achievement gap and solutions that may be transferrable. Looking at organizational social capital in high schools, this study aimed to determine if teachers' perceptions of social relationships determine academic achievement and to what degree those perceptions are distributed equitably. Salloum et al. (2017) asserted that the inequitable dissemination of student outcomes is urgent in American education. Citing recent data, they continue by stating that the quality of education to which students have access is largely related to their zip code, the achievement gap is present as students enter school, and often schools sustain those gaps (Salloum et al., 2017). This presents a scenario where schools are responsible for mitigating that gap instead of sustaining it. There are several reasons why schools continue to sustain established gaps in achievement for minoritized students and

students of low socioeconomic status. Salloum et al. (2017) cited these five reasons: school funding, teacher quality, school segregation, quality of curriculum, and tracking.

The quality of social relations students access in school was suggested as another contributing factor (Salloum et al., 2017). Social capital is a construct based on an economic correlation (Salloum et al., 2017). The idea is that social capital works like currency, where a person's network adds value to their life and helps determine their quality of life (Salloum et al., 2017). But social capital is not just about the individual but also about organizations, communities, and nations (Salloum et al., 2017). While those of privileged backgrounds may benefit from social capital, schools are in a unique position to supplement those with more limited access (Salloum et al., 2017). Providing opportunities for increased social capital to minoritized students through schools would have to be a collective and intentional effort (Salloum et al., 2017). When there is a collective responsibility for the academic achievement of students among teachers, there is more of a positive difference than when teachers take individual responsibility (Goddard & LoGerfo, 2007; Salloum et al., 2017). This concept is looking at social capital at an organizational level. Salloum et al. (2017) sought to determine the causes and consequences of social capital at an organizational level and to what extent social capital can be measured at that level, predicted by socioeconomic status. Lastly, Salloum et al. (2017) examined whether organizational-level social capital can predict student-learning differences among school organizations.

Social capital makes a neutral contribution to academic achievement (Salloum et al., 2017). They also found that while social capital is a positive predictor of academic achievement, it is not equitably distributed. Furthermore, it may then serve to reinforce

dominant and inequitable norms (Salloum et al., 2017). Consequently, lower-achieving schools had lower levels of social capital to distribute to students already coming in with a deficit, compared to schools with more resources and more affluent peers (Salloum et al., 2017). It is a positive result that schools can take control and organize themselves to promote social capital development and equitable distribution for their students, regardless of social class (Salloum et al., 2017).

The narrative on how institutions can positively impact student success has started to shift away from purely pre-college predictors. A conceptual understanding of what barriers students overcome before they set foot on a college campus promotes change; those barriers are harder to influence because institutions cannot control them (Hutto, 2017; Schudde, 2019). One aspect of a collegiate experience that institutions can control is the overall campus environment and, more specifically, the campus culture (Bailey et al., 2015; Musalini, 2021; White et al., 2020). With minoritized students in mind, specifically Black/African American students, the benefits of attending historically or predominantly Black colleges and universities is a huge predictor of student success and integration (Pascarella et al., 1989). Admittedly, predominantly Black institutions tend to suffer limited resources, but these small limitations are compensated by a more supportive social and academic environment (Pascarella et al., 1989). Findings show that the significance of these benefits varies by sex, with Black females achieving more direct and indirect positive effects than Black males (Pascarella et al., 1989). Conversely, the influence of faculty on educational attainment tends to be stronger on Black males than Black females (Pascarella et al., 1989).

Viewing this perception through the lens of theorists and seminal works helps to

ground the validity of present and future research. Ghebreyessus et al. (2022) expanded on this concept by recognizing the benefits of an undergraduate research program at a historically Black institution. The intentional focus on research aimed to encourage more Black students to pursue careers in STEM while also developing a sense of acceptance and belonging that is often missing at other institutions (Ghebreyessus et al., 2022). These "structured" research experiences also allowed for faculty-student collaborations to support the inclusive environment further and build important relationships between students and the faculty. Programs like this blend a supportive African American experience with high academic expectations to yield integration and academic success (Ghebreyessus et al., 2022; Williams et al., 2021).

There is a culture and traditions that are unique to those schools for specific and intentional reasons (Williams et al., 2021). Williams et al. (2021) explored what replicating best practices could look like in developing "culturally-affirming" campus environments. The benefit of this concept is that it promotes a sense of belonging in any environment while allowing students to be themselves and find both acceptance and success. This research explored what it means to center the Black experience in a pedological and intentional way to create a culturally affirming environment by culturally informed practices that support the racial identities of this student population. The difference in a culturally informed environment is commitment. There must be an institutional commitment to integrate these validating practices in all aspects of the student experience to impact the college environment positively and change the culture (Williams et al., 2021). Exemplifying these practices can be done at other institutions. The development of culturally informed pedagogy and practices can be integrated at both

the 2-year and 4-year levels (Williams et al., 2021). The goal is not to turn every school into an HBCU or a Hispanic-serving institution. The goal is to create a campus environment where students can be themselves and find acceptance through culturally-affirming pedagogy (Williams et al., 2021). From there, social and academic integration can develop and positively impact academic achievement for minoritized students on other campuses (Williams et al., 2021).

For now, culturally informed campus environments are more the exception than the rule. Equipping students with the tools they need to navigate environments that are not inherently attuned to their needs is another important step in helping these students achieve integration and academic success. Minoritized populations often lack cultural and social capital but have emerged as integral to their success when navigating more homogenous environments (White et al., 2020). The research of White et al. (2020) supports this idea by taking an immersive approach to chronicling the experiences of racially minoritized, first-generation, low-socioeconomic-status students at a community college. The findings suggested that cultural capital and the development of the skills to navigate different environments helped to prevent attrition by giving students a way to better understand and "read" their new environment (White et al., 2020).

Community College Faculty and Faculty Roles

Community college faculty composition is an additional component of how the overall learning environment supports the academic achievement of African American and Hispanic students. The role of faculty and their impact is multifaceted, although it is generally accepted that engagement both inside and outside of the classroom with faculty has a positive impact on most student outcomes (Bourke et al., 2021; Flynn et al., 2017;

Hutto, 2017; Peaslee, 2018; Schudde, 2019). Understanding the importance of faculty engagement with students adds context to the established faculty composition at 2-year institutions. The community college student population is diverse; however, that same level of diversity is not reflected in the faculty and staff and exacerbates the difficulty that minoritized students have in making a connection in the classroom and with the institutional environment (Flynn et al., 2017; Luster-Edward & Martin, 2019; Malmberg, 2020). In 2016, just under 75% of community college faculty and 73% of the administration identified as White (AACC, 2018). While the faculty interacts more consistently with the students, 63% of student services staff are identified as White and 15% as Black (AACC, 2018). Cultural competency, diversity, and unconscious bias are other concepts to be considered and acknowledged when discussing the role of faculty in the academic achievement of minoritized students (Bourke et al., 2020; Doran & Hengesteg, 2021; Flynn et al., 2017; Luster-Edward & Martin, 2019; Malmberg, 2020). But what of the faculty themselves? Faculty do not teach or exist in a vacuum and have their challenges. Community college faculty navigate a complicated balance of obligations to their institutions, their students, and themselves (Hutto, 2017; Okoedion et al., 2019). Institutional leadership support, campus climate, and faculty employment status impact student achievement and faculty burnout (Doran & Hengesteg, 2021; Hutto, 2017; Okoedion et al., 2019).

What is the role of community college faculty? Ensuring sufficient student engagement (Hutto, 2017; Schudde, 2019), encouraging and supporting student self-efficacy (Peaslee, 2018), and facilitating pedagogy (Flynn et al., 2017) are just some of the roles faculty are expected to play. Schudde (2019) studied the effects of first-year

student engagement with faculty at community colleges. Schudde (2019) noted that there are several areas of opportunity for faculty engagement with students, including social and academic contact. Through these engagement opportunities, faculty had the potential to positively impact academic achievement, persistence, degree attainment, and vertical transfer (Schudde, 2019). Within this realm of opportunity, speaking with faculty about academics improved short and long-term student outcomes (Schudde, 2019). However, there are significant challenges to community college faculty engagement with students (Schudde, 2019). Schudde (2019) observed that faculty are overextended, limiting their ability to accommodate the demand for one-on-one meetings with students.

Managing institutional demands and students' needs is a balancing act for faculty, especially when the expectations for full-time and adjunct faculty differ (Hutto, 2017). Hutto (2017) explored the null hypothesis that a significant difference exists in the course retention of students taking courses with permanent faculty versus adjunct faculty. Course retention was established as a consistent measure of academic success for students because measuring retention proved challenging due to the tendency of community college students to transition in and out (Hutto, 2017). According to Hutto (2017), course retention was defined as completing a given course with a C or higher. For a student to complete a course they must attend regularly, allowing course completion to be a focused indicator of student retention and success. The study's findings were surprising, as adjunct faculty emerged with higher course retention than permanent or full-time faculty (Hutto, 2017). Permanent faculty have more support within the college than adjunct faculty; however, they also tend to have more obligations. Hutto (2017) identified faculty load, office hours, committees, student organizations, and required

departmental meetings as some of the obligations that permanent faculty members may have that adjuncts do not. Pedagogical differences and the rigor/course type also emerged as reasons for adjunct faculty to have better course retention (Hutto, 2017).

Flynn et al. (2017) identified three issues for faculty related to pedagogy. These three issues are as follows: (a) understanding the nature of pedagogy and cultural competency, (b) building community in distance courses, and (c) making their curriculum relevant. Faculty must understand the nature of pedagogy and cultural competency to support student empowerment and completion (Flynn et al., 2017). Faculty must build community in distance or online courses (Flynn et al., 2017). Faculty need to develop practical experiences for students related to their intended career path that reflect culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching (Flynn et al., 2017). Flynn et al. (2017) examined the many definitions of pedagogy, noting that community college faculty do not understand the nature of pedagogy. Many of these faculty members hold credentials in their content area of instruction but need to gain a significant knowledge of what it is to teach and instruct (Flynn et al., 2017). Understanding the nature of pedagogy and what those practices entail is significant to students' academic success and development. Otherwise, faculty adapt and modify rather than execute intentionally (Flynn et al., 2017). Proceeding this way profoundly impacts quality and effective teaching practices (Flynn et al., 2017). Then what is pedagogy? Flynn et al. (2017) cited several definitions that can be distilled into these main concepts: teaching and learning, teaching styles, curriculum, classroom management, the science of teaching, and professional and contextual knowledge. Another aspect of faculty relationship to pedagogy, as described by Flynn et al. (2017), was the importance of

cultural relevancy and cultural integrity. These two concepts are definitive in effective teaching at community colleges because of the diverse student population (Flynn et al., 2017). Having faculty members with culturally relevant curricula who can also navigate the learning environment with a culturally aware lens leads to effective teaching and developing a safe community for marginalized students (Flynn et al., 2017).

Peaslee (2018) observed that a large percentage of all college students begin their postsecondary academic careers at 2-year institutions and that they come from underserved populations. These student populations' retention, transfer, or graduation rates do not reflect their large enrollment percentage (Peaslee, 2018). Peaslee (2018) noted that faculty are uniquely positioned to support and promote self-efficacy for these students to impact attrition and student success positively. When faculty take the time to affirm their students within the learning environment, these confirmation behaviors support the development of student self-efficacy (Peaslee, 2018). Peaslee (2018) found a relationship between a change in student self-efficacy and the perception of faculty confirmation for students.

Bourke et al. (2020) took a comprehensive approach to look at the role of community college faculty and how their role intersects with cultural competency and social justice practices. One of the insights into the relationship between faculty and adult learners shared by Bourke et al. (2020) centered on what it means to teach. Teaching is a negotiated process and relationship where both the instructor and the student participate in the learning process (Bourke et al., 2020). It is mutual, and the facilitation of the learning process hinges on the faculty's ability to create engaging and empowering classroom environments (Bourke et al., 2020). Faculty must cultivate their own efficiency

strategy in their teaching practices regarding course design and delivery (Bourke et al., 2020). Bourke et al. (2020) emphasized the necessity of a social justice approach to designing and delivering courses. By utilizing a social justice approach, faculty demonstrates a commitment to treating students equitably and a willingness to be inclusive and affirming of students, with faculty and students working collaboratively to create change (Bourke et al., 2020). Bourke et al. (2020) asserted that a social justice perspective positions the classroom as the location of possibility and advocacy, providing marginalized students with a safe space for achievement. Bourke et al. (2020) identified several benefits to the social justice perspective of teaching and learning in higher education. The benefits they identified were post-economic and non-economic benefits to students and society overall. Benefits of a social justice perspective include the education of individuals, inclusion, community building, growth and personal development, dialogue, and compassion to promote student engagement through inclusionary forms of teaching (Bourke et al., 2020).

Bourke et al. (2020) noted that faculty plays a critical role in shifting the disposition and barriers of perception that impede student engagement for marginalized adult learners. By capturing the faculty perspective, Bourke et al. (2020) illuminated the barriers and concerns that these students face when entering and navigating the college environment. Perceived barriers identified in the study were situational barriers related to family, poverty, childcare, and employment (Bourke et al., 2020). Individual barriers identified were age, health, perceived lack of control, lack of confidence, and poor self-image (Bourke et al., 2020). To combat these barriers, faculty should be empathetic and reflective in their practice (Bourke et al., 2020). Faculty should be conscious of labeling

and suspend any preconceived notions because by doing so, they can create a participatory learning environment that promotes student success (Bourke et al., 2020).

Malmberg (2020) sought to understand how white community college faculty navigated racialized differences in their classrooms. The study explored how White community college faculty understood their positions and purpose in multiracial classrooms and whether whiteness had a limiting impact on the success outcomes of students of color (Malmberg, 2020). The findings from the study reflected race as a lens through which White faculty create an ongoing construct in the classroom (Malmberg, 2020). Students of color are othered, but it is an unconscious process that assigns certain characteristics to the students that are products of the past experiences of the faculty member (Malmberg, 2020). The unconscious process, according to Malmberg (2020), shows up in the academic and pedagogical development of the community college faculty as white supremacy, entitlement, white privilege, and white fragility. There is a consistent lack of educational and professional training for faculty to help them navigate unconscious bias in community college classrooms (Malmberg, 2020).

Luster-Edward and Martin (2019) explored the lack of diversity among students and faculty in higher education. Luster-Edward and Martin (2019) believed that limiting leadership behaviors, policies, and procedures contributed to the institutional disparities of minoritized students. Unfortunately, policies and professional development related to diversity, recruiting, and retaining students and faculty of color are superficial and in place to check boxes (Luster-Edward & Martin, 2019). Institutions need leadership to take intentional and actionable steps to ensure policies are developed and implemented effectively (Luster-Edward & Martin, 2019). Otherwise, the impression is a forced

approach to inclusion (Luster-Edward & Martin, 2019). Luster-Edward and Martin (2019) determined that judicious policy awareness is important for faculty and students of color to effectively close the gap or misrepresentation of diversity issues at institutions. Understanding the significance of cultural competency, diverse inclusiveness for students and faculty, and adopting transformational behaviors are essential for the survival of an institution (Luster-Edward & Martin, 2019).

Doran and Hengesteg (2021) chronicled the impact of supporting a Mexican American Studies program on faculty. The term whitestream was utilized in the study to reflect a space that does not have native ethnic or racial minority identities (Doran & Hengesteg, 2021). Ethnic studies programs help redefine the whitestream of institutions (Doran & Hengesteg, 2021). For the study, Doran and Hengesteg (2021) asserted that Mexican American Studies programs were needed for Latinx students to provide them with a counterspace to process their lived experiences in and outside the classroom. While there is a call for faculty and institutional leadership to intentionally support and develop diverse programs and policies for minoritized students, there is a personal toll on those willing to make the effort (Doran & Hengesteg, 2021). Ethnic studies programs and studies in ethics research in community colleges are small despite serving a large percentage of minoritized students (Doran & Hengesteg, 2021). Ethnic studies provide meaningful curricular experiences to students and help institutions better reflect their student populations (Doran & Hengesteg, 2021). Doran & Hengesteg (2021) noted that, for the faculty supporting these efforts, there is racial battle fatigue, emotional labor, administrative obstacles, and other barriers to the success of these programs.

Summary

Through a theoretical lens of understanding the relationship between faculty and the academic success of minoritized community college students, this review of literature sought to discover the correlation. Understanding how community college faculty perceptions impact the academic achievement of minoritized students reveals the importance of acknowledging the cultural background and previous academic experiences of often marginalized underprepared, and underrepresented student populations. While faculty and post-secondary institutions cannot change the lived experiences of the students they serve, it is essential to create an environment that promotes a positive student experience supportive of the inherent differences these students matriculate into their institution of choice. Clarifying the role of faculty and highlighting the importance of intentional pedagogical practice supports student success. Building meaningful relationships with students, in and outside the classroom, is an effective way to ensure the academic achievement of minoritized students.

Research Questions

Research Question 1

What are 2-year faculty perceptions of the cultural and educational background of minoritized students that might impact achievement?

Subquestion 1: What cultural factors do faculty believe are barriers to academic success in minoritized students?

Subquestion 2: What educational background factors do faculty believe are barriers to academic success in minoritized students?

Research Question 2

What are 2-year faculty perceptions of their knowledge and practice concerning instructional strategies that can address minoritized students' cultural and educational backgrounds to achieve academic success?

Subquestion 1: How do faculty members perceive their own knowledge about addressing their students' cultural and educational background characteristics that may impede academic success?

Subquestion 2: How do faculty members perceive their own self-efficacy to effectively carry out instructional practices that address their students' cultural and educational background characteristics that may impede academic success?

Research Question 3

What are 2-year faculty perceptions of the characteristics of community colleges that uniquely impact student achievement?

Subquestion 1: What are the community college environment characteristics that enable minoritized students to achieve academic success?

Subquestion 2: How do the community college environment characteristics enable minoritized students to succeed academically?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Aim of the Study

This qualitative study aimed to chronicle community college faculty perceptions of their role in the academic achievement of minoritized students. In establishing the achievement gap as a phenomenon of interest for context, this study sought to provide perspectives to aid in developing best practices for colleges to address this problem and better serve minoritized students. Community and technical colleges serve many of the nation's students as they begin their post-secondary careers at a 2-year institution. By centering this research on 2-year institutions and amplifying the voice of their faculty, this study aimed to explore in more detail how interactions in and outside the classroom impact a student's ability to do well.

Several themes have emerged from the existing research in these areas. The importance of a sense of belonging, strong campus environment and culture, developing culturally-affirming spaces, the need for social and academic integration, and faculty impact tend to be the most prevalent themes when examining this problem and ways to avoid attrition. In addition to these themes, the importance of this research stems from the need to add more 2-year focused research to the literature. The structure of this study created an opportunity for faculty voices to be utilized so that institutions can better support and engage the faculty as they work to improve the academic achievement of minoritized students.

Qualitative Research Approach

The qualitative research approach selected for this study was phenomenology, with a specific focus on interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). One of the most

critical components of this research was the voice of the faculty. Researchers in education document student experience as a necessity, as practitioners can lose sight of student needs. For this study, however, the faculty voice was the guiding influence throughout because there was evidence in the literature that faculty interactions with students could be the key to unlocking academic achievement in minoritized students (Parnes et al., 2020). This researcher proposed the IPA approach as the most suitable for this study because it is naturally exploratory (Alase, 2017), meaning that interpersonal skills are heavily utilized to get to the "how and why" of the research questions (Alase, 2017). Alase (2017) noted that this approach emphasizes relationship and rapport building between the researcher and the participants. The lived experiences of the interviewees are of utmost importance in interpreting the interview data (Alase, 2017). This is a participant-orientated approach that lends itself well to the desired outcomes of the study (Alase, 2017). The flexibility of the IPA allowed this study to let the participant interviews truly guide the research, yielding significant data to help answer the research questions. Developing a rapport is a major component of the IPA approach (Alase, 2017). Thus, the researcher must develop rapport with the faculty participants to ensure that the IPA approach has maximum effectiveness. Alase (2017) spoke about the internal reflection on the lived experiences of research participants being a critical component of IPA qualitative research methodology. This approach is comprehensive because the participants' lived experiences guide the research, not vice versa (Alase, 2017).

Participants

The participants were individuals, male, female, or nonbinary, who have taught in the community or technical college setting for at least one academic year or three

consecutive semesters (Fall to Fall or Spring to Spring). The reasoning behind these characteristics was to allow both homogeny and flexibility, suitable for an IPA research design (Smith et al., 2009). The criteria allowed for faculty with varied teaching experience, meaning ones who may not currently teach at the 2-year level, still to participate and have their perspectives included. Perhaps these participants had changed jobs when the interviews were conducted and no longer taught at the 2-year collegiate level but still had lived experiences to share. "The Great Resignation," as it was named during and after the COVID-19 global pandemic, allowed professionals to explore better working environments and change careers altogether (Goldberg, 2022). A career shift does not make their experiences as 2-year faculty invalid. The criteria of the participant pool were designed to yield a variety of participants in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, teaching experience, and discipline. However, these participants shared the common lived experience of teaching college students at the 2-year level for at least one year, supporting the necessary homogeneity expected in IPA studies (Smith et al., 2009). Concentrating too much on one characteristic over the other could compromise the significance of the findings (Alase, 2017; Smith et al., 2009).

In a phenomenological study, the number of participants ranges from two to 25 (Alase, 2017; Creswell, 2012). Smith et al. (2009) determined that anywhere from 3 to 10 is an appropriate range, depending on the nature of the study. IPA research requires deep analysis, which is only successful with fewer participants (Smith et al., 2009). For this research study, there were eight participants. This number was selected to allow for enough participation and contributions from the faculty while keeping the number of interviews small enough to allow for a rich interviewing and interpretive

analysis experience. A purposive concentrated focus grants quality conversations to better chronicle the phenomenon of interest. To remain consistent with the IPA research methodology, the sampling for this study was purposive, meaning the participants were hand-selected to support the creation of a homogenous pool of participants (Alase, 2017; Smith et al., 2009).

Potential participants received a letter via email inviting them to participate in the research study (Appendix C). Selecting participants through referral, opportunities, or snowballing are acceptable forms of selection for qualitative research (Creswell, 2013; Smith et al., 2009). The researcher for this study employed a combination of opportunities and snowballing. Upon acceptance, they provided informed consent to participate via written permission to proceed (Creswell, 2013). If there needed to be more participants, a snowball strategy was employed to solicit more participants from those who had already agreed to be interviewed. Due to the nature of the sampling process and the participants' lived experiences, there was no specific research site, as the participants may no longer work at a specific institution or may have changed fields altogether. The researcher's role was a former academic and student affairs staff member at two local technical colleges in the southeast area. The potential participants were current or former employees of these institutions. By utilizing the researcher's professional network, the sampling of the participants made for a deep and rich interviewing experience.

Data Collection and Instruments

To initiate the data collection process, the researcher obtained institutional review board (IRB) permissions to conduct the study, Collaborative Institutional Training

Initiative (CITI) certification, selected the participants for the study, and collected the lived experiences of the participants as 2-year faculty of minoritized students as required by the Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice procedures (Dissertation Support Services, 2019). The data collection instrument for this study was an in-depth, semi-structured interview protocol comprised of open-ended questions to understand the perspectives and pedagogy of individuals who taught as faculty at the 2-year institutional level. The interview protocol was developed by the researcher for use in the study. A thorough search of professional research studies, websites, and educational research databases did not uncover an appropriate data-gathering instrument for this study. The instrument, developed by the researcher from the standards identified in the literature review, was an interpretive phenomenological interview protocol with open-ended questions (Appendix A). The criteria identified from the literature review included the definition of minoritized individuals, characteristics of 2-year faculty, challenges faculty experience during the instruction of minoritized students, and the pedagogy of 2-year faculty and how they incorporate those elements into their instruction of minoritized students. The researcher developed an interview protocol appropriate for this study by utilizing these concepts.

In addition to the previously mentioned components of the data collection process, an advisory committee of college faculty who met the research study's criteria reviewed and validated the interview protocol. An anonymous synopsis of the advisory committee is detailed in Appendix B.

Semi-structured and in-depth interviews are designed to provide rich detail of the lived experiences of the study participants, as required by an IPA research design

(Alase, 2017; Smith et al., 2009). The interview instrument was designed to chronicle the perceptions and pedagogy of 2-year faculty and their impact on minoritized students. The purpose of this interview protocol was to describe those lived experiences in a way that allows the information shared by the participants to be uniquely their own.

The eight participants of this study, purposively selected based on their teaching experience, were invited to participate via email (Appendix C). Participants who agreed also received a statement of general consent in the email invitation. The researcher conducted interviews by video recording through the Zoom online communications platform. Interviews were deidentified and saved to a secure server.

The advisory committee reviewed the interview protocol (Appendix A) for data collection and instruments for effectiveness and validity. The interview protocol was presented to the dissertation chair for review and input. Then the interview protocol was piloted with two faculty members, not a part of the proposed pool or participants. This pilot served as an additional level of validity to give credibility to an interview protocol developed by the researcher. The pilot allowed the researcher to test the interview questions in real-time with participants like the ones desired for the study. The appropriateness of the questions and the ability to keep the interview to one hour or less were among some of the components tested during the advisory committee review and the pilot.

Procedures

The interpretative phenomenological analysis study was conducted using the following procedures. These procedures were detailed so that future researchers could

easily replicate them. The procedural steps listed below were followed in the order in which they appeared.

1. The advisory committee and the dissertation chair reviewed the interview protocol.

2. Two 2-year community/technical college faculty members not included in the final study piloted the interview protocol.

3. The researcher developed a list of potential participants based on opportunities, with the potential for snowballing as needed (Smith et al., 2009). Eight potential participants were selected based on their teaching experience at community or technical colleges in the Southeast. The potential participants must have completed at least one year (or two consecutive semesters) teaching at the 2-year collegiate level.

4. Selected potential participants received an emailed letter inviting their participation in the research study (Appendix C). Once a participant agreed, the researcher contacted each participant to arrange a day and time to conduct a Zoom interview. The interviews were scheduled at a mutually convenient time for the researcher and the participant.

5. Before the scheduled day and time, participants received an overview of how the interview would be constructed and recorded for analysis and interpretation. Interviews did not exceed one hour in length.

6. Participants received the statement of general consent for review, which they signed before the interview. The signed consent was due to the researcher before the scheduled interview day and time.

7. Interview participants were asked for permission to record. Participants who

did not consent to be recorded were not utilized in the research study. For anonymity, each study participant was identified by only a number. Participant numbers represented the order in which they were interviewed; for example, Participant 1 indicated they were the first participant to be scheduled and interviewed. Participant numbers were listed on the interview protocol and any transcripts. The identity of all participants remains with the researcher.

8. The interviews were transcribed for the analysis portion of the research study and to ensure the accuracy of any notes by the researcher during the interview process. Interview participants were emailed the transcription of their interview for approval and any edits to their statements within 10 business days of the scheduled interview.

9. The data received from the interviews were coded and analyzed for themes related to the research study's purpose through the Otter.ai transcription service and MAXQDA qualitative analysis software. The research findings were compiled and disseminated in a manner best suited for this research, per the established research questions.

Data Analysis

The data collected for this research study was organized and interpreted to illustrate the different perspectives of two-year faculty and their view of the role of faculty in the academic achievement of minoritized students. The recorded interviews were initially transcribed through Otter.ai transcription services and coded through the MAXQDA Qualitative Analysis Software tool. MAXQDA offers many import options, from text to video, articles, and audio files. Qualitative coding through MAXQDA tools allows the researcher to enhance their thematic analysis and better visualize and interpret

the data. The software has a Wordtree feature, code clouds, and concept mapping to visualize all the thematic frequencies that emerged while interpreting the participants' interviews.

As noted by Creswell et al. (2007), essential components of phenomenological analysis are to describe the lived experiences of the study participants and to determine the commonalities among the sample. Qualitative researchers report the lived experiences of the individual participants within the study and, through analysis, describe what they experienced the way they experienced it (Alase, 2017; Creswell et al., 2007). Creswell et al. (2007) outlined the process of conducting a phenomenology study to include (a) establishing the phenomenon of interest, (b) selecting the appropriate participants, (c) developing research and interview questions that build both a textual and structural description of the participants' experiences, (d) processing the interview transcripts and pinpoint meaningful statements, fragments, or quotes that provide a comprehensive interpretation of the participants' overall experiences, (e) organizing those initial findings and collapse them into themes, (f) going back through the transcripts and examine the merging theme in depth, (g) identifying the situation and the context where the themes appear, and then (h) describing the essence of the phenomenon of interest through the lens of those lived experiences.

MAXQDA software makes coding and chronicling themes a streamlined process by allowing researchers to organize data into groups, link relevant quotes together, and expand or refine the initial category system to suit shifts in the research process. System capabilities allow researchers to drag and drop codes from the established code system into highlighted segments of the transcript or highlight initial themes until categories are

established. A system supporting the above-outlined data analysis process ensures a professional research environment. Utilizing this tool during the transcription and analysis process assisted in discovering the participants' textual and structural descriptions (Creswell et al., 2007). These terms describe both the chronicling of the actual experiences of the participants and then how those experiences were used to inform other experiences.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher monitored ethical practice throughout the data collection and analysis through sustained reflection and review (Smith et al., 2009). Researchers should operate under an avoidance of harm, understanding that there are varying degrees of harm, not only physical (Smith et al., 2009). Anonymity is another way to facilitate ethical practice (Smith et al., 2009). Researchers may offer the option of reviewing interview extracts that may be utilized in the public domain (Smith et al., 2009). Participants received the statement of general consent for review, to be signed before the start of the interview process. The signed consent was due to the researcher before the scheduled interview date. It is critical to the integrity of the process that the researcher maintain informed consent through the participant selection and interview processes (Creswell, 2013; Smith et al., 2009).

The researcher obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) permissions and completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) certification to conduct the study. The selection of the participants for the study and the collection of the lived experiences of the participants as 2-year faculty of minoritized students was conducted ethically, as required by the Fischler College of Education and School of

Criminal Justice procedures (Dissertation Support Services, 2019). The researcher was obligated to ensure informed consent during the interview by asking for oral consent and offering participants the right to withdraw at any time. However, as Smith et al. (2009) noted, sometimes the right to withdraw may only extend through data collection and the initial analysis.

Participants were asked open-ended interview questions, as reflected in Appendix A. All participants were given a numerical code as a pseudonym to maintain anonymity. There were no identifying details of the participants in the final dissertation report. Any video recordings and interview transcripts were stored on a password-protected hard drive and destroyed 3 years after the study's conclusion, per the IRB process. Interviews were recorded with permission from the interview participants. If a study participant declined to be recorded or filmed, the interviewer recorded the participant's responses by hand.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was guaranteed through the data collection and analysis process with the MAXQDA Qualitative Analysis Software tool. The participant responses were audio-recorded and transcribed word for word using both Microsoft Word and a professional transcription service, Otter AI. Participants had the opportunity to review the transcripts before the data analysis process. The transcripts were imported into MAXQDA as an additional layer of confirmability. The researcher kept field notes and document memos through MAXQDA to describe information related to the interview context and any bias or themes the researcher noticed in real time during the data collection and analysis process. Documenting alongside the research process allows the

researcher to maintain a level of credibility throughout the development of the research study while keeping track of methodological aspects that further impact the research and the research process (Santos et al., 2021).

The textual documentation processes above supported the research study's transferability and dependability. Detailed, rich, and thick descriptions are a required component of this style of research (Creswell et al., 2018). MAXQDA offers several options to assist researchers in adding visual components to their studies. Unfortunately, the researcher did not utilize the Word Cloud option, Document Portrait, and the Code Matrix Browser for this study.

Potential Research Bias

The researcher for this study is a former higher education professional with over 10 years of experience at community and technical colleges. This researcher has educational credentials in College Student Affairs administration. While the researcher has never held a faculty position, the researcher has observed college faculty in an administrative position and worked alongside college faculty in student orientation, registration, and advising capacities. Because of the IPA research methodology and sampling, the participants were hand-selected to support the creation of a homogenous pool of participants (Alase, 2017; Smith et al., 2009). As such, the researcher utilized their professional network and may have a past working relationship with the participants. These connections did not impact the data collection process. The researcher did not share any comments or ideas that could have impacted the study participants' responses.

Creswell et al. (2018) noted that objectivity is essential in research. Creswell et al.

(2018) further stated that researchers initiate the inquiry process with some assumptions but must build protections against bias. Accurately collecting and representing the data aids in building these protections. Noting any thoughts, feelings, contextual observations, and other documentation through this process also helped analyze emerging biases. Utilizing the MAXQDA software also assuaged the impact of bias during the data collection and analysis process.

Limitations

Creswell et al. (2018) observed that limitations within qualitative studies show up in the methodology, whether relating to the sample size, participant recruitment, or weaknesses in the research noted by the researcher, for future implications. Noting study limitations allows the researcher to present suggestions for future research through research themes that will advance the literature, ways to avoid some of the weaknesses of the current research, or to identify new ways to apply the knowledge gained from the present study (Creswell et al., 2018). For this study, the controlled sample size of the college faculty participants may be seen as a limitation. The geographical location of the study, in the upstate region of a southeastern state, offers future researchers the opportunity to expand the study to other regions in the country or to research internationally. Expanding the study to include the perceptions of students and college staff is another way to expand upon the limitations of the present study.

By focusing on the lived experiences of the college faculty, the research assumes all participants will be honest and forthcoming in their responses. However, sensitive topics may present an opportunity for participants to be evasive. Also, it was assumed that the faculty participants were all in good standing at their respective institutions or

former faculty who left the teaching practice under positive circumstances. The researcher developed the data-gathering instrument and was subject to review and evaluation. However, the questions may not have garnered the desired responses from the participants, which could have been an additional limitation of the study.

Chapter 4: Findings

This study explored the perceptions and lived experiences of 2-year faculty on the academic success of minoritized African American and Hispanic students. The phenomenological interviews with the study participants addressed how they define student success, their perspectives on what background, cultural, and academic characteristics support and hinder academic success, how the 2-year campus environment supports and hinders academic success, and their beliefs about their abilities as faculty to meet the challenges of this student population based on how they were equipped to teach. From the faculty perspective, the research in this area is limited. Many studies examine the achievement gap from the student perspective. The goal of this study was to gain a better understanding of faculty's perceived impact on the academic success of minoritized students. Additional goals of the study were to provide faculty with a platform to share their lived experiences and best practices with implications of how faculty and 2-year institutions can support and improve the academic success of minoritized students. This researcher hopes that studies like this one and others can promote further awareness of faculty needs, especially newly hired faculty, and education for institutional decision-makers about the positive impact of culturally competent pedagogy.

The interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) interview transcripts were edited and evaluated for accuracy using the Otter.ai transcription service. Each interview participant was emailed the transcript of their interview and asked to provide corrections as necessary. Following the transcript edits, MAXQDA 24 software was used to code the interviews and to create visualizations comprised of the coded segments and emerging

themes discovered through the data analysis process. The responses to the semi-structured interview questions were analyzed through the interpretative analysis process and coded to discover emergent themes. The coding process involved the IPA steps of (a) reading and rereading the original data and checking for accuracy against the audio recordings, (b) initial recording of notes, (c) identifying emergent themes, (d) searching for connections across emergent themes, (e) moving to the next case then repeating previous steps, and (f) looking for patterns across all cases (Smith et al., 2009).

Initial structural codes were identified by organizing the data using the IPA coding method of Smith et al. (2009). The following table shows the initial structural and pattern codes developed through a second coding cycle. The patterns derived from this process were analyzed and translated into emergent themes.

The saturation point for this study was reached at eight participants. Smith et al. (2009) determined that anywhere from 3 to 10 is an appropriate range, depending on the nature of the study. IPA research requires deep analysis, which is only successful with fewer participants (Smith et al., 2009). All participants in this study had at least 4 years of experience teaching minoritized students at a 2-year institution. The total years of experience for all participants was 84.5. Participant 2 (P2) had the most years of experience, with 19. P3 has 18 years of experience. The lowest years of experience was P7 with 4 years. P1 has 14 years of experience. P4 has 5.5 years of experience. P5 has 10 years of experience. P6 has 6 years of experience. P8 has 8 years of experience teaching minoritized students at the 2-year level. The mean years of experience was 10.6; the median was 9 years. Five participants in this study were male-identified, and 3 were female-identified. Five of the participants identified as “white” or “Caucasian,” and three

study participants identified as “Black” or “African American.”

Table

Codes From Qualitative Analysis of Interviews

Initial structural codes	Pattern codes
Definition of student success	Student success is individual. What is success to one student may not be success to another student.
	Student success, as defined by faculty and as defined by the institution, may be very different, and that can be a problem for both faculty and students.
	Student success is ensuring that students achieve what they came to achieve and fully understand what they want for themselves.
Characteristics of effective 2-year faculty	Faculty characteristics that promote a safe and effective learning environment include a combination of flexibility and adaptivity, cultural competency, trustworthiness, empathy, high expectations, awareness of student barriers, and maintaining a working knowledge of campus resources.
Challenges for 2-year faculty	Faculty at 2-year institutions are often selected for their practical knowledge rather than their ability to teach.
	Faculty must maintain a balance between what is best for their students and what is asked of them as faculty.
Perceived challenges for minoritized students	Minoritized students, like many students who attend 2-year institutions, have so many obligations outside of school that prioritizing school is a struggle.
	Minoritized students come into postsecondary education with negative experiences prior that shape their current perceptions and hinder their academic success.
Perceived benefits of the 2-year collegiate environment	The 2-year campus environment offers a lot of customized support in the way of development course tracks, affinity groups, specialized faculty, and a clear college-to-career academic pathway that helps minoritized students to acclimate and be successful over time.

Research Question 1

The first research question for this study examined, "What are 2-year faculty perceptions of the cultural and educational background of minoritized students that might impact achievement?" Participants were asked what barriers they perceived impacted their cultural and educational backgrounds. Three themes emerged, as discussed in the following subsections.

Theme 1: While Faculty and Institutional Definitions of Student Success May Vary, Student Success is Individual to Each Student

Before getting to the heart of this research question, participants were asked to define student academic success based on their own ethos and professional experiences with students. The participants were very thoughtful in describing their own definitions of student success, so it was important to this researcher to include definitions from all participants. Most of the responses were similar in that the student determines what success should be for them in their educational journey and that it is the role of the faculty to help them achieve that success. P1 stated, "My old definition was for students to get what they came for. Now, my definition is when the student now understands what they should have come for, and they got that." They went on to explain that students have an idea of what they want when they start college, but once they truly learn what opportunities exist, what they want should change and evolve so that they can maximize the experience. P2 shared, "For me, student academic success is receiving a transferable credential, at a C or above, in a course, and learning the importance of how to learn in order to continue one's individualized, personalized next step." They elaborated by calling it "learning for the long haul," not solely learning for the sake of a grade but

learning for practical use throughout their lives. P3 stated, “My definition of academic success is, first of all, improvement. Has the student made gains? And is the student reaching their potential? So, I would definitely say academic success is different for every student really.” P4 said that student academic success is, “successful completion of the academic term. But then, beyond that, moving on to something better or different for them.” P5 shared, “So I think for me, if my students succeed, it feels very specific to the student. I don’t feel like there’s a metric for what success looks like for everybody.” P1 and P5 were the only participants to explicitly state that the faculty and the institution, or administrative, definitions of student academic success differ fundamentally. They both said that institutional definitions are more related to metrics and do not typically account for variables or the circumstances of students. P6 thought that student academic success is “where a student can actually engage in the real world from their [learned] skill set. So whatever skill set that they learn, they can take it and engage in the real world with it, I think that’s student success.” P7 noted, “Academic success is a little bit more than just something that can be measured by grade or GPA. What I like to see students be able to do is to be able to demonstrate the types of skills that are going to be essential to them in employment in the real world.” Lastly, P8 stated, “I define student academic success as when a student is able to achieve their ultimate goal.” They explained that the ultimate goal changes and evolves with each student’s accomplishment, from enrollment to graduation to employment.

Theme 2: The Systemic Obstacles and Barriers Minoritized Students Overcome to Get to College are So Great That They Make the Jobs of Both the Students and the Faculty That Much Harder Once They Get There

Some participants struggled with this next set of interview questions when describing cultural and educational barriers for minoritized students. Several of the white participants did not want to offend with their assumptions, while others likened some of their observations to other disadvantaged populations that they have come across in their careers so as not to generalize minoritized students. However, all participants agreed that students carry more than books in their backpacks.

P3 shared,

> I will say that what I think holds under-resourced students in general back. And not all minoritized students are under-resourced and all under-resourced students are minoritized. So, I'm going to say that fear of success in under-resourced students is a huge obstacle. And what I mean by that is, I think, when people grow up in poverty, or even, you know, rural community or in really tight urban communities, there's this sense amongst the family that you have to stay here. By 'here,' I mean at this socioeconomic level close to us. And I think that's so programmed in people. I mean, I'm not minoritized, but I—it was programmed in me.

P1 explained,

> So, I mean, you can start with the education system. If you're not born in the right district, you're already going to be short. If your district selects enough tax dollars, then your school is going to have ample resources. And it's going to be

> able to pay the best and brightest teachers. If you're born in the district that doesn't have those things, then you're going to get people who are passionate about teaching, but that's the best that they can give sometimes, and you're not going to get the best resources either. Plain and simple. So, you're gonna start off the bat behind.

They continued,

> If your parents don't have a college experience under their belt, then they're pushing of you to go to college is going to decrease. If your parents did not have to navigate the complexities of getting into a college, then you're being shortchanged of that as well. And if your parents went to school 10 years ago or more, they're using outdated information of what it's going to take to get into college. Now, you've got affirmative action gone. So, politically speaking, you've got the political landscape of your state that is completely turned against you as a minoritized student. You may not realize it, but it is.

Similarly, P2 noted,

> I think that minoritized students, and I'm including my black students. I'm including my Indian students; I'm including my Hispanic students. And the few Oriental students or Asian students that I have had. I think that the lack of understanding … Well, let me back up, a lot of times they're first gen. So, I think they fall under what I'm calling the trash compactor situation. I sometimes keep repeating in the beginning a lot of the basics. So that gets compacted in, and you don't, you know, know this stuff. So, it compacts and provides room for more information. Their brains, those minoritized students' brains, are so full of what

> it's FAFSA. How do I get financial aid? How do I get transportation?

P4 stated,

> So, I would say a lot of my students come from poverty. And I think that one of the things that I noticed over the years was their role in the family. So, say there was a hardship, right? They felt very responsible for doing … contributing to their, whatever their family is, or the people that are important to them. And sometimes that was at their own peril.

P7 noted,

> I think probably the thing that I have noticed in, in the classes that I've taught, is, because the minoritized, or minority students are in the minority, I think I've noticed that unless they have a great deal of confidence, there's a tendency to kind of not speak up and speak out, maybe they don't feel comfortable. Maybe they feel like, you know, because they're not in the majority, that their opinions are not as valued as others. So, to me, I think that really is the biggest challenge that—that those students face it, it just comes down to making them feel comfortable.

Theme 3: Despite What Baggage Minoritized Students May Carry, Faculty Have the Opportunity to Create a Safe Space in Their Classroom

A consensus among all participants was a sense of ownership of the learning environment they create in their classrooms. Faculty cannot change the pasts of their students, but they can impact the present and their futures. Understanding the student perspective was very important to all study participants. They all felt a personal responsibility to learn and evolve as instructors to suit the needs of their students while remaining consistent in the overall objectives of their courses. P5 observed,

> I'm seeing students come into my class who just carry themselves differently than my white students, or my straight students or able-bodied students, whatever, that I, you know, not with everybody obviously, but some of them just felt like, "Have you felt like you could like, be yourself and feel safe?" And with what you talked about and how you talked about it, you know. "Did you have you had space given for to you or made for you in the classroom before?" And so on, I just say like, a lot of my students haven't.

P1 stated,

> So, what I had to do was I had to start thinking about … I got all these people in this class, and they learn different ways. What's going to work? If I literally had to teach myself how to teach them in there? Because I will just fall back on the same thing. If I were in this class, how would I want to be taught? Well, I don't want to be talked down to you. That's for sure. I want someone to answer my questions. I want someone to give me resources. So, I just kept putting myself in their position. Which other teachers they were like, "Hey, I'm doing the same thing, but I'm not getting the same results." And I still say the problem is that you've forgotten what it was like to be in class. Take yourself out of a position of authority and put yourself in the position where you're having to receive and think of it from that perspective.

P5 shared,

> But I have to think about, like, how do I teach this with students who are directly affected in the room, wanting everyone to be honest, without shaming anybody, and without causing more harm for people who are already vulnerable in those

> conversations? It just requires me to become a better professor. I have to be and … and, you know, then that doesn't only affect my teaching, it also affects me as a person. And so, I feel like I would have had to think like, outside of the classroom to, you know, how am I ostracizing, without wanting to, but how am I ostracizing people from this conversation because of the topics that I'm bringing up?

Summary for Research Question 1

The faculty were asked how they defined student success and what cultural and educational barriers they perceived for minoritized students. Three themes emerged, Themes 1–3: (a) while faculty and institutional definitions of student success may vary, student success is individual to each student, (b) the systemic obstacles and barriers minoritized students overcome to get to college are so great that it makes the jobs of both the students and the faculty that much harder once they get there, and (c) despite what baggage minoritized students may carry, faculty have the opportunity to create a safe space in their classroom.

Research Question 2

The second research question explored, "What are 2-year faculty perceptions of their knowledge and practice concerning instructional strategies that can address the cultural and educational backgrounds of minoritized students to achieve academic success?" In addition to that self-assessment, participants were asked about how they were equipped to teach, if at all. They were also asked if they tailor their instructional practices to meet minoritized students' cultural and educational backgrounds. Three more themes emerged: Themes 4, 5, and 6.

Theme 4: Faculty at 2-year Institutions are Often Selected for Their Practical Knowledge Rather Than Their Ability to Teach

Only some faculty interviewed (P1, P5) mentioned having student teaching experiences before becoming college faculty. The other faculty were selected for their professional experiences and had to learn how to teach once they started. P5 said, "Yeah. Yeah, I feel like, academically, I was not equipped to teach. I was equipped with content. I took a practicum class. Practicum class was the worst taught class I've ever taken in my academic career. So that was not helpful." P6 shared that they'd worked in management and automation for several years. A classmate and future colleague asked them about teaching,

> And it was like, 4 days from there, it'd be my first class and I'm like, what? So, go into the classroom, and it just so happened, it was a night class. So, I had a more mature group. And I was standing there, and they were all just looking at me, like, "All right, so what are we gonna do?" And I'm saying, okay, so I just tried. I said y'all, this is my first day teaching. We're gonna get this together, you know, and I'm just kind of talking to them. And it lightened the air, but they were like, we got you. We got you.

They further explained that another instructor mentored them and helped them learn how to teach. P6 stated, "Every day I would go in his classroom. And he would teach me little skills, traits of what to do and how to do this. And from there, that's where I kind of got some of my teaching skills from and he helped out a whole lot." Similarly, P3 noted, "No. When I started teaching, I got a book. And they said, 'Okay, your class starts Monday.' That was how I was equipped. I think that's gotten better in terms of

professional development."

P3 stated,

> My first semester teaching. I was fresh out of my master's degree. I was teaching one class at night, I was staying home with the baby, and I was married. And so, my husband would come home, my husband at the time, he would come home, and he would take care of the baby, and I would go teach a class so I could get out of that house. And so, it was developmental reading, and I thought, well, initially, when I decided to teach the class, I was like, oh, 'we're gonna read Chaucer.' 'We're gonna read, you know, Charles Dickens.' I didn't know! I thought it was a reading class. Do you know what I mean? Like, I had no idea what developmental education was or even existed.

P3 went on to say,

> And so, I got my textbook. I go to the first class and like by the second class already had to change up my syllabus. Because I realized who I was teaching right, that these were underprepared students. So, I sort of had this, this is hard for me to admit, because I like to think that I really care and that it's genuine. And I think like at the heart of everything, it's true. But I think that first semester, I thought, I was just a Savior. You know what I mean?

Theme 5: Faculty Learned to Acknowledge Their Own Shortcomings and Seek the Professional Development Needed to be Effective Instructors

The faculty interviewed had differing experiences with the institutions they taught for regarding the availability of professional development experiences. However, they all agreed that it was incumbent upon them to seek opportunities to become better

instructors. P7 stated,

> I will say, and you know this from your own experience, I think where I work does a very good job of equipping us for that. I mean, we just had our professional development day yesterday, we had one session in particular, obviously, it was not required, we can all choose what we wanted to do. But we had a session called the "Invisible Backpack," where a very good instructor gave her thoughts on, you've got this backpack, and she pulled out bricks and small stones and feathers. And she talked about all the things that students bring to the table and how we need to be aware of those biases that we might have that might be detrimental to students, I really think the institution I work for, does a very good job of that, it really comes down to whether or not we take advantage of it.

P2 noted,

> Well, I think that I've been taught myself from the front of the classroom, the better understanding the struggles of this demographic, or this, you know, demographic, so I work for that, but because, you know, I can relate. But then, I'm not Black, not Hispanic, I might speak Spanish, but I'm not Hispanic. And I'll never be any of those other things. I can help to understand that and relate and tailor assignments and listen to the speech in Spanish. Well, that's not even in the course catalog option, and do all those things. I've learned to learn from it.

P2 further shared an opportunity to meet a student where they were while not lowering expectations,

> If I have a Hispanic student, which this situation came up 2 weeks ago, a woman, a student, Hispanic student, is in English 101, but somehow doesn't communicate

> well enough to be able to do the speech class that she's gonna be asked to do the next semester. So, somebody suggested putting her in my speech class. If she needs to, she could do her public speeches to me in Spanish. Because after all, in doing the public speaking part of public, the majority of public speaking issues, it's addressing a particular audience, not whether you have … addressing the audience through a medium, whatever language that may be, whether she's doing the speech in English, Spanish, or Chinese, or Greek or whatever. The points to be made, you know, just like if you're writing a paper, I mean, do you have a topic sentence? And did you do your outlines and your bulletins? And are you persuading me to do whatever you're trying to persuade me to do or whatever, it doesn't matter if you do in English or Spanish, the structure is the same.

Theme 6: Meeting Student Needs Does Not Have to Equate to Lowering Standards or Expectations

P7 shared,

> I don't think I'm really doing anything unique to try to address anyone's particular background, or, you know, where they're coming from. And it's almost difficult to do that, in a sense, because now you've got this issue of, you know, you, technically every student in there, whether they're a minority, or not all of them have different learning styles, different preferences, all of that. And so, I found if I try to really start tailoring what I'm doing to all of those, you know, you basically become good for nothing because if you're trying to make everybody happy, you're probably gonna not make anybody happy. So, what I try to do is use best practices that I've learned from the College and through my own reading

> and studying to—to just make the class as inclusive as I can.

Similarly, P8 stated,

> I have a general plan of instruction. And I pretty much try to stick with that whenever I go into my classroom. However, if I do see someone or see, you know, some of us that are struggling, I do make known to say, 'Hey, I'm willing, after class, to give you a little bit more one-on-one instruction to make sure that you're understanding the material.' And then when I do that one-on-one, I also ask the students, what do I need to do to make this a little bit more easier for you or to make it more transferable to you where you're picking it up a little bit better?

P4 shared,

> One of the other things we did, which I think was probably, like, a turning point for a lot of students, was when we had employability reviews, where I would sit down with them one-on-one, and we would talk about success behaviors, but part of that conversation was, you know, is there anything I can do differently to help you in the classroom? And so in some cases, you know, we would come up with a plan between that student and, that they would, if they were embarrassed to maybe say, I didn't understand, you know, that we'd have like a little, you know, a motion or, a word or something that would kind of tell me, I needed to back up and do something differently, without them feeling the focus of attention. And so, trying to kind of make a partnership between me and them for their success, you know, and sometimes they would have ideas too, for what worked for them.

Summary for Research Question 2

The faculty were asked how equipped they felt to address minoritized students' cultural and educational backgrounds. They were also asked how they were equipped and if they ever tailored their practices to meet students' needs. Themes 4–6 emerged: (a) faculty at 2-year institutions are often selected for their practical knowledge rather than their ability to teach, (b) faculty learned to acknowledge their own shortcomings and seek the professional development needed to be effective instructors, and (c) meeting student needs does not have to equate to lowering standards or expectations.

Research Question 3

This study's third and final research question was, "What are 2-year faculty perceptions of the characteristics of community colleges that uniquely impact student achievement?" The interview participants were asked what aspects of the 2-year environment help and hinder minoritized students from achieving academic success. Themes 7 and 8 emerged.

Theme 7: A Primary Challenge Within the 2-year Collegiate Environment is the Desire to Conform to Meet All Anticipated Student Needs

Overall, the participants focused on the positive aspects of the 2-year environment because of how it is designed to support students by providing convenient and affordable instruction, along with tons of resources. P8 noted,

> Because right now, I don't think, and this is just me personally. Yeah, I don't think we have anything that's really impeding or hindering the students to be successful because, to me, I think we're trying to do everything we can to make sure everybody has the same … to have the same opportunity to come in and

> actually achieve a goal, which is receiving a credential.

P7 agreed, stating,

> That it would be hard to find fault with anything that we're doing as far as a college. We're trying. I'll put it that way. Again, coming from my own perspective, maybe we're not doing as great job of that as I think we are. But it looks like we're at least making a good, honest effort at that. Think probably the biggest problem that we have here is, you know, we, sometimes I worry that we're, we put, I don't know how to say this, we put, we put so much emphasis on some of those things that I almost wonder if it makes students feel a bit uncomfortable.

However, some felt the environment is sometimes too agile in its attempts to support so many different demographics of students. P1 stated,

> It's the Burger King Model. Community colleges got a bad habit and they follow the Burger King Model. Drive Thru, get it your way and gone. There the community engagement is oftentimes not there. The student engagement is oftentimes not there. They promote students just coming in, get a class, and leave. And so, what winds up happening, especially with students of color, this is this really, really students of color. Especially my African American and Hispanic males, they're like, "Oh, if that's the case, then I'm gonna take a class from one o'clock to 2:15. And I'm gonna have work in all the hours that don't include that class."

They continued,

> "Because as long as I'm free to go to class, I'm good." Well, they haven't

> factored in time to study. They haven't factored in the time to do homework. They haven't factored in time to meet with groups, or group projects. They haven't factored in time to um, for traffic at that time in the afternoon. All this stuff they haven't taken into consideration. So, they get in the classes, and they find themselves drowning, they're struggling. They don't have enough time.

Regarding aspects of the 2-year environment that hinder the academic success of minoritized students, P5 stated,

> Administration. It's not 100% administration. So, I think, you know, I mean, that can be true for faculty and students, too. It feels so hard, like I feel like for the education system could do for you all. You know, and so, like, I feel like that's not specific to the 2-year college or college in general. But, yeah, let's just say for the metrics that we use, think to measure success, or whatever, you know, is problematic to me from the start. I feel the weight of the administrative stuff, it's, you know, faculty aren't being supported. We're having to spend a lot of time doing things because administration says we need to, and then we don't get as much time to like, okay, let me think critically about like, how do I need to phrase these questions? Or what other reading could I do?

P7 shared,

> But again, I want to be careful how I answer that, because going back to what I said before, you know, the best, I think, if we're not careful, I don't want to be one of those people that's taking credit for the success of minority students. You know, I'm going to teach the class. I'm going to do it in a way that, hopefully, hits on the things that all of our students need. But I want to be very careful how I

> answer that question. Lest I contradict what I said before, because ultimately, the best we can hope to do is remove barriers. Get the stuff out of the way that keeps them from being unsuccessful.

P7 continued,

> But I've sat in plenty of meetings and heard way too much self-congratulations, you know. All you did was fix your problem, you did not. … you got out of their way. So that you know, nobody's going to congratulate you because you stepped out of the way of a marathon runner, you didn't help them win the frickin' race, you just stepped out of the darn way so they could.

Theme 8: Having Faculty, Institutional Administrators, Affinity Groups, and Course Offerings Representative of Minoritized Students Helps to Improve Academic Achievement

P6 noted a change in recent years: institutions have become more cognizant of the importance of having minority students represented on campus, whether through events and programming, course offerings, or within the faculty themselves.

P6 shared,

> So, we did get asked to start looking at something to where we could reach to more females and African American males. And so, we had to go out and start trying to look to see, you know, what could we do? So, we hired female instructors. We got African American instructors, and I think that was the piece that kind of helped that area. Because it does show a big difference when they walk in the classroom and see they see somebody that looks like them. And the females came in and saw a female is instructor, it made them feel really

> comfortable. The African Americans came in and saw my African American instructor, plus seeing the director when they met me, too, and it just really made them comfortable. Saying, “Hey, you know, this is the area for us.”

P8 stated,

> I think you’ve probably heard of the REDACTED program, that has been a big help to help those students to achieve their goal. And we’ve noticed when they incorporated that REDACTED group, now, the African American males are actually out doing the college in all the areas of retention, and persistence. And what they did is something outside the normal, the norm of just being a regular student going to be advised. We had to give them a special care. We had to be more persistent with them, meaning, ‘Hey, I need to stay on you and make sure you’re doing your assignments, making sure you’re getting your work. I’m going to stick you with this advisor who’s going to pretty much handle you, too. If I see you dropping off, I’m going to reach out to you before you reach out to me.

P3 spoke about a minoritized colleague who leads an affinity group on campus. They stated,

> He’s probably, don’t tell anybody, but one of my favorite people at REDACTED. I just think he is amazing. He’s empathetic, he’s kind, he’s helpful. And he’s worked so hard on the REDACTED initiative. And so, you know, with the state wanting or threatening or a lot of other states refusing to fund the DEI initiatives, right? There’s a lot of fear that, you know, they won’t be able to fund REDACTED, right? And I don’t know if you know this, but I credit that initiative with the increase in success for our Black male students this past year. So, I mean,

> just that mentorship, and the opportunity to, to be with other Black males who are successful, and upwardly mobile, and, you know, smart, and all the things. So, I think, in that regard, I know that I know that that's important to the college. And really every college I worked for; I think that's been really important.

Summary for Research Question 3

The faculty were asked about the campus environment at 2-year institutions and how the characteristics of that environment both help and hinder the academic success of minoritized students. Two themes emerged, Themes 7 and 8: (a) a primary challenge within the 2-year collegiate environment is the desire to conform to meet all anticipated student needs and (b) having faculty, institutional administrators, affinity groups, and course offerings representative of minoritized students helps to improve academic achievement.

Summary

Overall, participants were exceptionally candid and vulnerable while discussing their professional practices as instructors and their own perceptions of their students. This study highlighted the complexity of the role of the faculty and how intentional, culturally competent pedagogy gets positive results. Consensus between study participants was most evident in their definitions of student success and the areas of faculty preparedness and institutional support. Participants all highlighted ownership of their own growth and development as instructors and credited their institutions with improved professional development offerings.

Participants of different races had differing levels of comfort when discussing the limitations of minoritized students. However, none of the participants felt that the

students were innately lacking because of their academic achievement. They acknowledge that these students may have endured more obstacles than the “average” or “traditional” and require additional empathy and support. The participants also agreed that lowering expectations and standards was not required for minoritized students. High expectations and the support needed to accomplish the student’s individualized goal led to success for students willing to make the effort. Passion and intentionality were fundamental patterns within all participant interviews.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview of the Study

This interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) study aimed to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of 2-year faculty and their impact on the academic success of minoritized African American and Hispanic students. The phenomenological interviews were conducted with eight former or current 2-year college faculty. The study participants addressed how they define student success, their perspectives of what background, cultural, and academic characteristics support and hinder academic success, how the 2-year campus environment supports and hinders academic success, and their beliefs about their own abilities as faculty to meet the challenges of this student population based on how they were equipped to teach.

The study's researcher hoped to add to the existing research centered on minoritized student achievement and the role that faculty can play in positively impacting those students by creating a culturally competent and supportive classroom environment. The lived experiences chronicled through the interview process were transcribed and analyzed to provide an overview of the faculty's perspectives and pedagogical practices when teaching minoritized students. There were three research questions for this study:

1. What are 2-year faculty perceptions of the cultural and educational background of minoritized students that might impact achievement?

2. What are 2-year faculty perceptions of their knowledge and practice concerning instructional strategies that can address the cultural and educational backgrounds of minoritized students to achieve academic success?

3. What are 2-year faculty perceptions of the characteristics of community

colleges that uniquely impact student achievement?

In this chapter, the researcher provides an interpretation and discussion of the findings of the study within the context of the existing literature. The chapter also includes a discussion of the implications for the practical application of some of the recommendations of the faculty, as well as implications for further research and study.

Interpretation and Context of Findings

Research Question 1

What are 2-year faculty perceptions of the cultural and educational background of minoritized students that might impact achievement? Swanson et al. (2022) noted in their research outcomes that frequent interactions with faculty and feelings of academic validation from the faculty positively impacted students' feelings of mattering and their cumulative GPA in their third year of college. Questions from the interview that centered on this research question included the faculty's definition of student success. Participants' definitions varied, but all acknowledged that student success is an individual process. Each student comes to college with a goal, whether to complete a credential or to learn a skill. The faculty concluded that student success should be defined by the student's progress and accomplishment of that goal. Some participants acknowledged that the goal may evolve. One participant stated that the student may not know what they came to college to achieve so the collegiate environment should be agile enough to allow the student to figure out their path. They also stated that the student success for the student and student success as defined by the institution may be different, which puts faculty in a difficult position.

When discussing the cultural and educational background of minoritized students

and the ways that impact their academic success, faculty noted several factors such as perceived family educational background as a key indicator of success for minoritized students, systemic educational barriers to academic success, self-efficacy, and faculty perceived socioeconomic status as an indicator of success in minoritized students. Several faculty research participants noted that their perceptions are formed by their lived experiences and may not be true of minoritized students. They also noted that a student's negative experiences in educational settings may impact their comfort in college. Some acknowledged foundational academic deficiencies that students might arrive at college with while also praising 2-year institutions for having developmental tracks to develop the skills they need to succeed. Because they were participants of different races contributing to the study, some felt uncomfortable discussing hindrances to success for minoritized students. They were very quick to say that deficiencies are not unique only to minoritized students. The faculty felt a personal responsibility to create both a challenging and culturally competent classroom environment where students could feel safe expressing themselves, contributing to class discussions, and asking for help when needed. Warren et al. (2020) noted that, despite the perceptions of their study participants, culturally responsive instruction was critical for faculty effectiveness in higher education.

Confidence in the classroom came up as another educational background factor that could impact the academic achievement of minoritized students. Some faculty noted that some of the minoritized students they've taught seemed to be afraid to succeed. They suggested that it could be a cultural barrier that stems from the belief that they should not aim too high or set themselves apart from the family unit or from where they originated.

Other faculty noted that their minoritized students possibly did not have a place within the classroom where they felt safe to share their perspectives. This might also impact the likelihood that they will seek help from faculty or other campus resources. While their study had a 4-year focus, Martin (2021) researched the "sophomore slump." In many student scenarios, the second year at a 2-year institution is considered the sophomore year, especially considering how many 2-year students transfer to 4-year schools. Martin (2021) uncovered three compound themes: trust vs. mistrust; sophomore slump: being internally or environmentally motivated; perceived barriers to sophomore success related to the students' (expectations versus the reality of the sophomore experience, the relationship between students and their advisors, and the value of the faculty-student relationship); and the impact of COV1D-19 on the motivation of sophomore students. These findings support some academic achievement and attrition concerns that 2-year students encounter.

Research Question 2

What are 2-year faculty perceptions of their knowledge and practice concerning instructional strategies that can address minoritized students' cultural and educational backgrounds to achieve academic success? Virtue (2021) noted that institutions typically focus on metrics, assessments, and outcomes rather than the pedagogical development of their faculty. Furthermore, faculty and student interactions strongly impact student success (Virtue, 2021). While two faculty participants acknowledged a student teaching experience before starting their careers, all faculty acknowledged that they were not equipped to teach. A few participants acknowledge faculty mentors as essential to developing their pedagogical practices. But those relationships were formed organically.

Scherer et al. (2020) found that coteaching had significant, lasting impacts on the instructors in their research study. They recommended that institutions implement coteaching to support the use of "student-centered pedagogy" (Scherer et al., 2020). Most of them stated that they had to change their perspectives after their first days of class. Some had a very clear idea of the direction they wanted to go and quickly had to pivot once they assessed the needs and competencies of their students.

All faculty highlighted the importance of learning from their students. Learning from the front of the classroom was a constant theme throughout the interviews. The faculty felt an enormous responsibility to become better for their students. When they spoke of becoming better, they did not just mean pedagogically; they also meant becoming better people. They wanted to be current with student issues and resources so they could refer their students in need. A few faculty noted the importance of being aware of the current climate and mood on campus, which can shift due to current events in both local and national news. Knowing what students are absorbing and feeling can allow faculty to make a meaningful impact on their performance in the classroom. The findings of Warren et al. (2020) both support and contradict the statements of this study's research participants. Their thematic analysis of participant responses suggested that instructors believe students do not value higher education and that academic advisors should have a more prominent role in the student experience (Warren et al., 2020). Furthermore, their study participants minimized the role they play in promoting student success causing the researchers to suggest the university strategize to address those perceptions as they are detrimental to the academic achievement of the minority students at those institutions (Warren et al., 2020).

While the faculty agreed that initially they were not adequately prepared to teach, they all believe they grew into their roles and confidence as instructors. They noted that professional development options at their campuses have improved steadily over the years they have taught. They also felt that they needed to seek out opportunities to find ways to develop their styles and pedagogy on their own time. Mentorship was acknowledged by a few faculty participants who shared stories of experienced faculty members who shared strategies and insights with them that they still utilize within their own practice as instructors. In turn, becoming mentors to their own students proved an effective way of impacting their minoritized students. Fernandez et al. (2022) found that examining race and utilizing critical race theory to improve faculty-student mentoring was essential. Incorporating Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students' minoritized statuses as a part of mentorship relationships was important, and these relationships can have a positive impact on a student's sense of belonging (Fernandez et al., 2022).

Research Question 3

What are 2-year faculty perceptions of the characteristics of community colleges that uniquely impact student achievement? Responses related to this topic centered around the community college as an option for all and a place where students can learn practical skills for a job. Most faculty indicated that the 2-year environment is a positive place for minoritized students, especially within the past few years pre and post-COVID-19, because of specific interventions geared toward minoritized students. Several participants spoke highly of initiatives designed for African American males at their institutions. They highlight those groups and the work of the staff and faculty who

support them as instrumental in documenting positive changes in the academic success of Black males. Ghebreyessus et al. (2022) noted a similar positive academic impact in a study on STEM students at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). They found that faculty-student research collaborations, with a supportive system reflective of the Black experience for these students, improved outcomes and retention (Ghebreyessus et al., 2022). College faculty and staff of the same or similar ethnic backgrounds as the students typically lead these affinity groups, so representation also became necessary for minoritized student success. Having faculty, staff, and administration that better reflects the student body supports the notion that the 2-year educational environment is a place where all students can be successful.

Some faculty admitted that sometimes these institutions try too hard to be everything to everybody. One faculty noted that the 2-year colleges give students too many options and don't always equip them to handle the variety of choices in course selection and scheduling their classes. The student creates a schedule for themselves that does not fit in with the rest of their life, and they become overwhelmed, leading to poor academic performance and attrition. Also, the institutions are not always equipped to serve this population despite being minoritized student institutions of choice. Wilson (2021) noted that while a large percentage of BIPOC choose to attend 2-year institutions, these campus environments are inherently exclusionary and personally damaging. Citing the act of "spirit murdering" as an exclusionary and extraction process of policy and practice, built into the very foundations of 2-year institutions as places for the freshman and sophomore years of university study removed from traditional universities and places for vocational training for labor force extraction (Wilson, 2021).

Campus culture emerged as another area where faculty noted the need for improvement. The administration sets the tone for campus culture, so it is important that the campus is a supportive environment for faculty and students. One faculty shared the story of a student being profiled on campus because of the type of car he drove. The car was stereotypically associated with a criminal element or persons of a lower caliber. But the student was a top tier student, doing very well in classes, yet he was profiled while trying to attend class. The faculty member felt helpless in that situation because they could not change the experience for the student. But they could empathize and provide the student with a better, safer environment on campus in their classroom. Turner et al. (2021) shared that institutions with a larger White population often confuse welcoming minoritized students, specific to their study Men of Color (MOC), with creating a sense of belonging for those students. The inability of institutions to move beyond welcoming and toward establishing meaningful connections with these students tends to show up in lower graduation and higher attrition rates for minoritized students at 2-year institutions (Turner et al., 2021).

Implications of Findings

Several implications for future practice emerged from the analysis of the research study participant interviews. These implications suggest how the findings from this study could be used to equip 2-year faculty in their pedagogical development to better support the academic achievement of minoritized students. The recommendations for practice from this study are geared toward 2-year faculty, but there are implications for college administrators, school counselors, student affairs staff, policymakers, and other professional educations.

A surprising overarching implication from this research study is the need for an institutional definition of student success that correlates with what students need and what faculty and staff can provide. Often, the metrics set by the administration are focused on assessments or statistics rather than student growth and development. Faculty are caught in the middle because they have their own performance metrics and expectations as employees of the institutions, but they also have a personal and professional responsibility to their students. Decision-makers at 2-year schools should establish their metrics with faculty, staff, and student input. Surveys, focus groups, and state and national data can be utilized to benchmark, but the definition of success should be unique to that institution's population. By involving stakeholders in defining success metrics and setting realistic goals, institutions can better support the diverse needs of their student populations. Navigating this shift will take time, and ensuring that students receive assistance in setting realistic goals for themselves will be paramount. This process can begin in Admissions when majors/programs are selected and should continue through the advising and registration process. Faculty can make student goals a component of the educational process so that students can see the relevance and pivot if their goals and their academic pathway start to be misaligned. Professional advisors can help students stay on track and provide insight to faculty who have students who are struggling.

The findings of this study also revealed how intentional faculty must be when teaching. Teaching is not just a job. Teaching is not something that faculty do in addition to research, as is the norm at other institutions. All the research study participants spoke about the additional time and energy they spend assisting students outside of class and

how much time they spend developing themselves as professionals. Culturally responsive professional development for faculty could be a critical tool for faculty impact on the academic achievement of minoritized students. Many of the faculty spoke about the learning curve they experienced as new faculty. That practice cannot continue. One of the characteristics that sets 2-year community and technical colleges apart from other institutions of higher education is the ability to hire experts right from the field of study. But what is the point if they are not equipping them to teach their expertise in a way that resonates meaningfully with students of diverse backgrounds?

This study and the literature support co-teaching and faculty-student mentorship relationships. Providing faculty with the support of another faculty member inside and outside the classroom is an effective way of developing newer faculty and keeping veteran faculty engaged and agile in. their pedagogical development. Administrators and department chairs can serve as mentors. Qualified administrators and staff could also co-teach specific sections relevant to their academic experience. Freshman seminars or college skills courses are often required for new students. These courses could serve as pilot courses for coteaching opportunities while allowing students to meet other leaders at the institution, seeing a more inclusive approach to the teaching and learning process.

Representation was another effective tool for reaching minoritized students, expressed by the study participants. Representation can be approached in several ways. The first way would be for institutions to look closely at their leadership, faculty, and staff demographics. The institution should reflect the population that it serves, which means that institutions will need to focus on recruiting and retaining employees of diverse backgrounds. Students can identify with and establish rapport with anyone, at any

level, on campus. These relationships start the development of a sense of belonging essential to the academic achievement of minoritized students. Affinity groups were mentioned several times in the participant interviews. Statistically, student academic achievement has improved for students participating in available affinity groups on campus. These affinity groups are typically inclusive of more than one ethnic background. These groups also tend to have programming available for all students so that the rest of the student body can learn with and from the group participants. These groups build leadership skills, promote a sense of pride, affirm identity, and often have mentorships built into the programming.

Another important distinction the faculty made during the study interviews was the importance of not intentionally or subconsciously lowering expectations for minoritized students. This concept has implications for future practice because faculty must examine their unconscious biases and ensure that those do not manifest in their instructional technique. All faculty interviewed were happy to go out of their way to assist any struggling student. But they were also adamant to refrain from making any accommodations or modifications that would decrease their courses' rigor or expectations. The study participants maintain high expectations and believe it is their job to help students meet and exceed their expectations, where possible. Having high expectations of minoritized students does not mean that faculty will be rigid in their pedagogy. Several participants mentioned adjusting their lessons, discussion topics, and assignments, where necessary, to meet the class's needs. One faculty member recalled a time when there was an incident near campus that was in the local news. Rather than jumping into his planned lesson, they opened the floor for students to discuss the incident

and how it related to them. The faculty member was able to relate the incident to a biology concept and tie that to the lesson to establish relevance for the students. Other faculty shared similar stories in other disciplines where they adjusted the class or an assignment to incorporate real world events.

Recommendations for Research

This qualitative study aimed to understand the perceptions and lived experiences of 2-year faculty and their impact on the academic success of minoritized African American and Hispanic students. The study contributed to the current literature on the achievement gap, attrition, and college completion for minoritized students. Further research is recommended utilizing students and student affairs staff as participants to replicate this study. Triangulation of each study's findings can be compared to this study for a holistic view of the college experience from all sides through the lens of minoritized student academic achievement. While the student perspective is more prevalent, comparing what students experience with what faculty, staff, and administrators think they are offering could be interesting. Widening the scope of this research with new and differing perspectives would provide a more comprehensive overview if the problem with deeper implications of practice.

A limitation of this study that could be remedied in future research would be an exclusive focus on Hispanic students. While the word 'minoritized' was utilized in this study to encompass people of color, including Hispanic students, the focus was almost exclusively on African American students. Study participants did reference their Hispanic students specifically in some of their lived experiences, but often, BIPOC tends to become Black only. Also, within that distinction, the focus narrows further to Black

males. This limitation is often unconscious and research or statistically based. It is not meant to be exclusionary in nature or intent, but it is important to provide a deeper examination of the impact of faculty on Hispanic students through the lived experiences of both faculty and those students.

Finally, further research should be conducted on the sophomore slump mentioned earlier from a 2-year perspective. If community and technical college students in their second year are positioned to graduate, transfer, or start the next level of a longer program at the 2-year level, would they not be susceptible to the sophomore slump? These students have the same number of credit hours as sophomores at 4-year institutions. They may also be experiencing the same levels of burnout that more often lead to attrition at the 2-year level. Existing research on the sophomore experience at the 4-year level could be modified and replicated at the 2-year level to see if there are implications of findings that are meaningful to this population of students. Further examination of minoritized students could lead to more implications if researchers can pinpoint the semester and/or term that the academic achievement of these students shifts downward and when interventions should be set into motion to prevent or curtail the slump.

Conclusion

Chapter 5 included a summary of findings, integration of the findings with the current literature relevant to this topic, and further interpretation of the research study findings. The researcher shared the implications of the findings, recommendations for practice, and recommendations for further research around the minoritized student academic achievement gap and 2-year faculty perspectives.

Faculty strive daily to make a difference in their classrooms by presenting relevant curricula designed to help their students accomplish whatever they want to achieve through their coursework and eventual credentials. Doing so is a challenge and a balancing act where faculty are caught between institutional expectations and the students who need them. Many of the challenges faculty face include creating a safe and culturally responsive classroom environment, maintaining high expectations while accommodating the individual needs of their students, making sure that their definition of student success supports whatever definition the student has for themselves, working towards the institutional definition of student success even when it makes their jobs more difficult, being aware of available resources to help students and keeping the curriculum relevant for an ever-changing student population.

Through the research findings, this researcher explored some of the perspectives, practices, and lived experiences of 2-year faculty. The research study included eight participants who taught or had taught minoritized students at the 2-year level for at least one academic year, although most participants had taught for much longer. The findings from this study have implications for the pedagogical practice of college faculty and the campus environment. Further implications support the need for professional development for new faculty and a focus on culturally competent teaching. The findings from this study could contribute to a better understanding of minoritized students and the support needed to ensure their academic achievement at 2-year institutions, as well as the professional development of 2-year faculty.

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Appendix A

2-Year Faculty Interview Protocol

2-year Faculty Interview Protocol

Personal and Professional Qualifying Information

1. Are you a college faculty member teaching at a community or technical college in South Carolina?

    a. If not, have you ever taught at a 2-year institution for at least one academic year or 3 consecutive semesters?

2. Have you ever had a minoritized student in one or more of your classes?
3. If so, how long have or did you teach at the 2-year level?

4. What is your gender?

5. What is/was your subject area?

RQ1: What are 2-year faculty perceptions of the cultural and educational background of minoritized students that might impact achievement?

6. How do you define academic success?
7. What cultural factors do you believe are barriers to academic success in minoritized students?
8. What educational background factors do you believe are barriers to academic success in minoritized students?

RQ2: What are 2-year faculty perceptions of their knowledge and practice concerning instructional strategies that can address the cultural and educational backgrounds of minoritized students to achieve academic success?

9. How do you perceive their own ability to address cultural and educational background characteristics of your students that may impede student academic success?
10. How do you perceive their own self-efficacy to effectively carry out instructional practices that address cultural and educational background characteristics of their students that may impede student academic success?

RQ3: What are 2-year faculty perceptions of the characteristics of community colleges that uniquely impact student achievement?

11. What are the community college environmental characteristics that prohibit minoritized students from achieving academic success?
12. How do the community college environment characteristics prohibit minoritized students from achieving academic success?
13. What are the community college environmental characteristics that enable minoritized students to achieve academic success?

14. How do the community college environment characteristics enable minoritized students to achieve academic success?

Summary Question

15. Please elaborate on any areas that you would like me to know about your experience in teaching and supporting minoritized students at the 2-year level.

Appendix B

Advisory Committee

Advisory Committee

1. Committee Member 1: Master of Science in Human Services and Organization Management and Leadership. Academic Program Director and First Year Experience faculty in South Carolina. Five plus years teaching experience at a 2-year technical college in South Carolina. Currently working as a Career Development Specialist at a 2-year technical college.
2. Committee Member 2: Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction. Adjunct Instructor in Comprehensive Studies (developmental education). Ten plus years teaching experience at a 2-year technical college in South Carolina. Currently working as a Comprehensive Studies instructor and a Faculty Development Liaison at a 2-year technical college.
3. Committee Member 3: Master of Education. Academic Connections (developmental education) Department head. Reading and First Year experience faculty in South Carolina. Seventeen plus years teaching experience at a 2-year technical college in South Carolina. Currently working as an Academic Program Director at a 2-year technical college.

Appendix C

Invitation to Participate

Invitation to Participate

Dear community/technical college faculty:

My name is Erin Smith, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Leadership program at Nova Southeastern University under the supervision of Dr. Mary Lynn Vogel. I am a program manager for a local non-profit in Greenville, South Carolina, but much of my career has been supporting students at 2-year technical colleges in the Upstate area. I am writing my applied dissertation with plans to conduct an interpretative phenomenological analysis research study to better understand the perspectives and lived experiences of 2-year faculty and their perceived impact on academic achievement in minoritized students.

You were selected as a potential participant because of your previous or current experience as a member of the faculty at a 2-year institution in South Carolina. I am asking for your voluntary participation in this research study by consenting to an interview. Interviews will be conducted in person, where possible. Otherwise, the interview will be conducted via the Zoom online communications platform at a time that is most convenient for you. The completion of this interview will not exceed more than 1 hour of your time.

Your responses during this interview are being collected to support the exploration of the relationship between community/technical college faculty and minoritized students to discover ways faculty can be more instrumental in their academic achievement and success. By analyzing the responses of faculty with similar teaching backgrounds but different lived experiences, important conclusions will be drawn directly from faculty for future implications of practice. It is my hope that this research will support the development of faculty-informed interventions that can be implemented at a college-wide level to support this population of students who have, based on existing data and literature, struggled to achieve academic success at the same level as their peers.

There are minimum risks to you associated with your participation in this research study and no compensation will be offered for your participation. Your identity will be confidential. Everything that you share will be kept confidential, and your privacy will be protected.

It is my hope that you will consent to participate, and I am grateful for your willingness to consider. The goal of this research is to create a better student experience and support faculty as they endeavor to share their wisdom through teaching. If you have any questions regarding this study or the interview protocol, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at es840@mynsu.nova.edu, or you may contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Vogel, at vogelm@nova.edu.

Any additional information necessary and your consent to participate in the study will be sent to you via email prior to your scheduled interview. Thank you for your time.

Best,

Erin R. Smith, Doctoral Candidate