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Faculty and Staff Mentors' Experiences Supporting Academic Success with At-Risk Undergraduates

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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Francis Ellison Howard

EdS, Walden University, 2015

MLIS, San José State University, 2003

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Differences in student persistence remain between at-risk students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and those less challenged in college. There is a need to understand the perceptions of faculty and other professionals whose primary role does not focus on mentoring but who serve as mentors to low income and minority students, in order to understand how they construct their experiences as mentors as well as what promotes and impedes their success with the students they mentor. This basic qualitative study addressed the reflections of such mentors who have mentored at-risk students for at least two years at a public university that serves a broad population, with the aim of increasing understanding of such faculty and professional staff's perceptions regarding mentoring as well as their mentoring practices. Astin's theory of student involvement, Tinto's theory of student departure, Goleman's work on emotional and social intelligence, and Daloz's approach to mentoring contributed to a conceptual framework that informed the semistructured interviews with eleven mentors obtained via purposeful sampling. Data were hand coded and analyzed using inductive and comparative analysis of the emergent themes. Findings illuminated the interviewees' perceived reality of mentoring, effective practices, reasons for mentoring, and their perceptions of obstacles to student persistence. Additional findings related to interviewees' self-reflections as practitioners of mentoring: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. The findings may contribute to positive social change if considered by current and potential mentors, administrators, and others seeking to improve mentoring practices and academic persistence of low income, at-risk students.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my children: Francis, Mahnaz, Jasmin, and Krysti who patiently waited for me to finish this journey in my life. I would also like to dedicate this to my grandchildren, especially Mahnaz and Amir who questioned why Grandpa was up so late studying and writing on so many nights. Their innocence gave me a type of support that I cherish as I reflect on their many requests for me to read them a bedtime story.

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Lastly, I also want to especially thank my chiropractor, Dr. Sophie Blanchard, who challenged and encouraged me to finish this journey.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds often attend schools in poor, urban areas fraught with crime and lacking in the resources necessary to prepare them to attend institutions of higher education. Students who transition out of these neighborhoods and into college are often the first in their families to do so and frequently come from cultures that are underrepresented in higher education, such as Latinas/os and Blacks (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014; Salmi & Bassett, 2014). The shortage of resources available to these students, combined with the lack of role models within their family who have previously attended college, puts these students at risk once they enter higher education (Gershenfeld et al., 2016; Wilbur & Roscigno, 2016). Recent studies have examined the positive influence of mentors on at-risk students (Castellanos et al., 2016; Huerta & Fishman, 2014). In this study, I focused on the mentoring relationship between at-risk students and faculty and professional staff mentors. Data gathered from interviews with mentors could provide mentors and college administrators with strategies for keeping at-risk students motivated and on track towards graduation; thus, improving retention rates at urban institutions of higher education.

In this chapter, I introduce and provide the background for this study and discuss the problem it addressed including the gap and need for research in this area. I define the purpose, list the research questions, and discuss the conceptual framework that has guided this process. I explain the nature of the study, provide definitions of relevant terms, and define the assumptions, scope, delimitations, limitations, and significance of

this research. Finally, I conclude the chapter with this study's implications for social change.

Background

Arana et al. (2011) explored the effect of the university environment on student persistence. Arana et al. conducted a qualitative research study to determine the factors associated with persistence among Latinas/os undergraduate students at a private Hispanic-serving institution. Thirty-three participants were involved in the study: 16 were current students, 11 did not persist until graduation, and six had graduated. The data collection process included combinations of phone and in-person interviews and focus groups. Findings indicated that stress related to family and work and nonsupportive faculty and staff were significant contributors to nonpersistence. Several participants cited their interactions with supportive faculty as a major influence on their persistence (Arana et al., 2011).

In a qualitative study involving 12 Latino males enrolled at an urban community college, Ingram and Gonzalez-Matthews (2013) also investigated factors that affected persistence. The researchers used focus groups as their method of data collection. Three of the eight themes that emerged were directly related to the college environment: lack of on-campus involvement, the need for support and services, and a desire for faculty interaction. All the students in the study spoke of the need for an increase in their interactions with faculty (Ingram & Gonzalez-Matthews, 2013).

Harper (2012) provided support for the importance of student engagement and its relationship to undergraduate retention and graduation. Harper (2012) conducted a large

qualitative study across 42 campuses involving 219 Black male undergraduates who achieved academic success. Data collection consisted of student interviews of which 56.7% of the participants came from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The students reported active engagement through involvement in student organizations, relationships with faculty and administrators outside of class time, and participation in a variety of educational experiences including service learning, research programs, study abroad, and internships.

Espinoza (2011) discussed the challenges that at-risk students encounter when pursuing a degree in higher education. Espinoza interviewed first-generation college students and found that their success was dependent on developing strong relationships with their instructors. Espinoza cited social and financial challenges as well as difficulty transitioning from high school to college as the obstacles at-risk students encountered. Espinoza created a framework of pivotal educational moments designed to help educators develop positive relationships with low income, minority, and first-generation college students. In addition, Espinoza emphasized the importance of the timing of coaching in a student's academic path and the importance of early intervention in the form of increased student-faculty interactions for multiple purposes including advising, assessing student progress and performance, and providing students with necessary referrals.

Astin (2016) also addressed the challenges of at-risk students, citing that two of five underprepared students take remedial courses with three of the five coming from underrepresented minority groups. Further, Astin noted that college and university admissions policies make it difficult for first-generation, underrepresented minorities, and

students from low socioeconomic backgrounds to enter these institutions. These challenges relegate the majority of these students to community colleges, which deprives them of the resources necessary for academic success available at more selective higher education institutions.

McLean (2012) outlined strategies for successful mentoring and coaching relationships. McLean designed a comprehensive handbook based upon a theoretical foundation from the disciplines of psychology and adult development. McLean presented an in-depth look at self-understanding and cultivating the attributes necessary that lead to mastery as a coach. McLean covered the reflective practices necessary to achieve mastery including strengthening presence, empathy building, deepening range of feelings, cultivating a somatic awareness, and the courage to challenge. McLean developed a coaching methodology for creating change that included five stages, taking the coach from establishing coaching contact through concluding coaching engagement.

At a major urban university in California, Barrera (2014), a Mexican American studies professor, established a mentoring program for first generation Latino undergraduates. In the initial year of the program, Barrera enlisted a graduate student as a mentor to the undergraduates in Barrera's mentoring program. To better understand the obstacles students encountered, Barrera created a getting-to-know-you type of questionnaire that students took at the beginning of the semester. The information gathered identified the students' outside responsibilities that could potentially affect their ability to succeed academically.

Although research exists on the effect of mentoring in higher education, the literature regarding the mentoring of first generation students, underrepresented minorities, and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds by faculty and staff needs to be continually reexamined to be current and of use. This basic qualitative study addressed the gap in research regarding faculty and staff mentoring of at-risk students to achieve academic success and the experiences and observations of these mentors. A deeper understanding of the experiences of faculty and professional staff mentors and their perceived influence on the emotional development, social development, and academic success of their mentees augments the existing literature. The findings of this study do not only provide information for current or potential mentors and administrators concerned with the graduation and retention of at-risk higher education students but may also demonstrate the potential benefits mentoring provides this population.

Problem Statement

Mentoring in higher education can be the difference between an at-risk student persisting towards graduation or leaving the university (Cavazos, 2016; Santos & Reigadas, 2004). Student engagement is critical to undergraduate retention and graduation (Astin, 1993, 1999). Despite significant findings regarding the effectiveness of student involvement in faculty-student interactions (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), the opportunity for students to benefit from these encounters is largely consigned to smaller, private institutions of higher education (Astin, 1993, 2016). However, a large difference in enrollment in selective institutions remains between students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and underrepresented minority

populations and those from higher income brackets and White students (Hearn & Rosinger, 2014).

Although enrollment rates in higher education continue to rise, there is still a disparity in enrollment based on family income. In 2015, according to the U.S. Census Bureau statistics, only 58% of students from the lowest income quintile directly enrolled in college after graduation from high school (Ma et al., 2016). This figure is nearly 25% lower than the 82% enrollment rates of students from the highest income bracket in the same year (Ma et al., 2016). In 2016, 13% of White youths ages 20-24 were neither in school nor worked, with Asians of the same age range at 12%. Numbers were significantly higher for Native Americans/Alaskan Natives at 31%, Blacks at 26%, and Latinas/os at 20%. With the exception of Asian and Pacific Islanders, the percentage of youths neither in school nor working was higher for youths from low income families (McFarland et al., 2018, p. 245).

In 2015, persistence rates of college students in the United States also varied by race and ethnicity with 84.2% of Asian students returning for a second year of college followed by White students at 79.2%. The persistence rate for Latinas/os students was 72.5%, and Black student persistence was 66.9% (National Student Clearinghouse, 2017). Although there were some fluctuations in figures for 2017, the trends for persistence rates based on race and ethnicity remained relatively similar with 85.3% of Asian students returning for a second year, White students at 78.6%, Latinas/os students at 70.7%, and Black students at 67% (National Student Clearinghouse, 2018). Based on race and ethnicity, graduation rates for the 2008 cohort that graduated 6 years later

revealed that graduation rates were 71% Asians, 63% Whites, 54% Latinas/os, and 41% for Blacks and American Indians/Alaskan Natives (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017). These statistics highlight the need for underrepresented minorities to remain in college once they have overcome obstacles such as being first in their family to attend college or coming from a low-income family without the means to financially support their effort to attend college.

Developing a connection with faculty in the form of coaching contributes to students' sense of belonging and their will to persist (Bettinger & Baker, 2014). Bettinger and Baker (2014) conducted a random experiment on the effect of coaching across 17 institutions of higher education. Studying the success of a for-profit coaching firm, InsideTrak, at these institutions indicated that retention and graduation rates were higher in those groups who received coaching versus those who did not. Bettinger and Baker also found that retention rates increased between 9% and 12% for first-year college students who received coaching.

Reddick (2011) discovered that students whose cultural identities and backgrounds were shared by their mentor found it easier to relate to their mentors and disclose feelings of insecurity. Reddick conducted a qualitative study with 10 Black faculty members from two institutions of higher education in the United States. The focus of the study was on the faculties' experiences mentoring Black undergraduates, how they made meaning of their experiences, and the challenges they encountered in mentoring students. Reddick found that their shared cultural background enriched the mentoring experience and provided a basis for trust sometimes lacking with White faculty. A theme

that emerged from Reddick's interviews was that these faculty members shared a cultural identity with their mentees and a common experience of being an underrepresented minority at a predominantly White institution (PWI).

Similarly, Barrera (2014) reported efforts to create a mentoring program to support Latino students at a large, urban institution of higher education where an encounter with a faculty member seemed to diminish Latina/o students as being unprepared for college by possessing "street smarts" but not "academic smarts." Barrera's program was established to help first generation and Latina/o students receive support by creating a sense of community within the Mexican American Studies Program. In this program, Latina/o graduate students mentored undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory course on Mexican American studies with the goal of increasing student engagement and retention.

The majority of the research findings indicated a need for continuing examination regarding how to improve the persistence of at-risk minority and first generation students at institutions with missions to educate these groups. Specifically, the question of how faculty and professionals who support at-risk students through mentoring and coaching to persist through graduation necessitates further study. The need to understand faculty and mentoring professionals' efforts and discover what promotes and impedes their success with the students they mentor is paramount.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of faculty and professional staff mentors and coaches to gain insight into the perceived influence of

their mentoring on at-risk students' persistence toward graduation at an urban, public 4-year university. This study may be useful to mentors and coaches as they strategize to support at-risk students in their development and as these students work and strive toward earning their degrees.

I conducted a basic qualitative inquiry using semistructured interviews to address a gap in the knowledge of mentoring experiences of faculty and professional staff who work with at-risk students in their pursuit of academic success at a 4-year urban institution of higher education. I used an interview guide with open-ended questions to interview faculty and professional staff who have mentored this population. I analyzed the data using manual coding.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do faculty and professional staff who mentor and coach undergraduate students who are at risk of failing to persist to graduation perceive their work?

RQ2: How do faculty and professional staff who mentor and coach undergraduate students who are at risk of failing describe their influence on these students' development and persistence to graduation?

RQ3: How do faculty and professional staff who mentor undergraduate students who are at risk describe the role of their mentoring relationship on the development of social or emotional competency in themselves and their mentees?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study combined Astin's (1993, 1999) theory of student involvement, Tinto's (2012a, 2012b) theory of student departure and framework

for institutional action to enhance student retention, Goleman's (2006a, 2006b, 2007) research on emotional and social intelligence, Bar-On's (2007) model of emotional intelligence, Daloz's (1999) approach to mentoring, and Parks's (2011) model of a mentoring environment.

Although the labeling of Astin's (1993, 1999) theory implies a focus on the student, it applies to both student and faculty involvement, the degree of their involvement, and the effect of this involvement on academic success. Aligned with Astin's work, Tinto (2012a, 2012b) investigated the effects of the educational and social settings at the college level and their relationship to student attrition and retention.

Goleman (2006a) discussed the features of social and emotional literacy as including emotional social awareness, the ability to manage emotions, productive use of emotions, understanding emotions, and handling relationships. Although his reports focused on programs devoted to teaching social and emotional learning to children, the implications for education regardless of age is implied. The children taught social and emotional literacy improved academically in both scores and performance (Goleman, 2006a). Where emotional intelligence is involved with the self, social intelligence focuses on the ability to function effectively in social situations. Social literacy skills, including social awareness and relationship management, are key to working in a collaborative environment such as the classroom. Goleman (2006b) discussed the convergence of motivation and focus resulting in increased cognitive performance, and the importance of being challenged without being overwhelmed as stress leads to decreased academic performance (Goleman, 2006b). Therefore, the implications for mentors requires them to

be aware of their mentees' level of stress and provide the support necessary to ensure that learning is not impeded. With his background in development theory, Daloz's (1999) approach to mentoring casts the mentor as a guide on the mentee's journey and emphasizes improving their educational experience. And while Parks's (2011) model focuses on emerging adults in a complex world and the guiding role that mentors and a mentoring community can play, its potential to affect at-risk undergraduate students requires further exploration.

This conceptual framework was designed to cover key elements in the exploration of coaching and mentoring at-risk students in higher education. There is a clear connection between Astin's (1993, 1999) work on student involvement and Tinto's (2012a, 2012b) investigation into the college environment and its effect on student attrition because they both hinge on the importance of student engagement as a means to improve student retention. Goleman's (2006a, 2006b, 2007) and Bar-On's (2007) research on social and emotional intelligence increases awareness of the effect of these intelligences on student development, which also affects student behavior, decision-making, and, ultimately, retention or attrition. Parks's (2011) holistic approach to mentoring the emerging adult focuses on the significance of the mentoring environment and invites the mentor to guide students to ask the big questions. Thus, the mentor considers all aspects of the environment that can affect mentees—economics, politics, faith, and the challenges of the changing world in which they live—providing a comprehensive framework for the mentor's methodology.

Daloz (1999) offered a unique look at the adult learner with a focus not on the knowledge obtained by the learner, but on the transformation that occurs as the learner acquires knowledge. Daloz considered the role of mentor as a guide, helping the mentee gain perspective with a focus not simply on the tasks that need to be accomplished, but on how those tasks fit into the larger picture, therefore giving those tasks their meaning. The unique perspectives of Parks (2011) and Daloz (1999) on the role of the mentor and the mentor's influence on guiding mentees to achieve their goals are directly applicable to the population of at-risk student mentees in this current study who are aiming to improve their lives through achieving a higher education.

The conceptual framework for this study lent itself to the investigation of three major themes that affect academic success for at-risk students: involvement, development, and engagement through mentoring. These broad categories can be broken down further into challenges and opportunities inherent in each area. The conceptual framework also helped clarify the research problem and research questions developed to produce the interview guide. Because the goal of a basic qualitative approach is "to uncover and interpret" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 25), this approach aligned with my goal to explore faculty and professional staff experiences as mentors of at-risk students and the conceptual framework, research problem, and research questions.

Nature of the Study

The research design for this study was supported by the themes discussed in the conceptual framework, which subsequently determined the questions I asked (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I gathered data through semistructured interviews. Data analysis included

the identification of reoccurring patterns or themes from the data collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The focus of this study was the perceived effect of mentoring by faculty and professional staff on the academic success of at-risk students in urban, public 4-year institutions of higher education. Therefore, the questions in my interview guide were designed to elicit responses that would speak to this practice and its perceived influence on student engagement, involvement, and development.

I recruited 11 participants, including faculty and professional staff who had engaged with at-risk students in the capacity of a mentor or coach in a 4-year urban institution of higher education in California. I targeted mentors at a single institution. I conducted interviews and analyzed the data manually, coded the data, and determined themes. I addressed issues of trustworthiness, including peer reviews of findings, confirmability by participants, and data triangulation.

Definitions

Accelerated learning programs: Programs offered at the high school level to help students become academically prepared for college while earning college credits (Latino et al., 2018).

At-risk students: First generation students and underprepared students as well as students from underrepresented minorities (Astin, 2016; Gershenfeld et al., 2016) and students whose family income places them in the category of low socioeconomic status, which places them at risk for completing a degree in higher education (Reardon et al., 2012).

Coaching: Feedback given that is objective and constructive to assist someone in understanding what is successful or needs improvement and to inspire to fulfill their potential (Greenberg & Klingensmith, 2015).

Emerging adults: Individuals between the approximate ages of 18 to 25 who are in the process of exploration and personal development—emotionally, socially, and intellectually—to move from dependence to independence and become adults willing to take responsibility for themselves and others (Parks, 2011).

Emotional intelligence: The capability to perceive correctly and to evaluate and express emotion; the skills to access or produce emotions that enable thinking. The ability to comprehend emotion and emotional understanding as well as to control emotions to encourage emotional and intellectual development (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

First-generation college students: Students who are the first in their family to attend a college, university, or other form of postsecondary education (Wilbur & Roscigno, 2016).

Mentee: An individual guided by a mentor who works to help them develop in various ways including socially, intellectually, and psychologically through career advancement and in the development of their leadership potential (Johnson, 2016).

Mentor: A person who works one-on-one with a mentee as a guide in a relationship that could last for years, sharing their experience and helping the mentee to network and understand their environment to help them succeed (Daloz, 1999; McLean, 2012).

Social capital: Resources deeply rooted in social connections between parties. (Postelnicu & Hermes, 2018).

Social intelligence: Social awareness of others including empathy combined with the ability to apply that understanding in social interactions effectively (Goleman, 2007).

Student engagement: The time and energy students dedicate to activities connected to the desired outcomes of education and how institutions encourage students to take part in these activities (Kuh, 2009).

Student involvement: The physical and psychological effort a student dedicates to their educational experience (Astin, 1999).

Student persistence: The act of a student progressing in higher education through the attainment of a degree (Tinto, 2012a).

Student retention: The rate at which an institution maintains and graduates students (Tinto, 2012a).

Underrepresented minority students: Disproportionately low representation of students attending college from certain racial and ethnic backgrounds, particularly Black, Latino, and Native Americans (Astin, 2016; Gershenfeld et al., 2016).

Assumptions

There were four assumptions for this study. The first assumption was that mentors perceive that they have a positive influence on the success of at-risk students or they would not otherwise engage in the practice of mentoring. Some of the research indicates that mentored at-risk students are more engaged in the college experience and achieve academic success (Bettinger & Baker, 2014; Espinoza (2011). The second assumption

was that the interviewees would provide relevant and genuine responses based on a guarantee of confidentiality. The third assumption was that social and emotional competence plays a role in the mentoring relationship. As the literature supports the benefits of social and emotional competence in navigating through life and relationships (Goleman, 2006a, 2006b, 2007), it is assumed that mentoring relationships can be analyzed through this conceptual lens. The fourth assumption was that mentors believe they are meeting a need by engaging in the mentoring of at-risk students. This assumption is based on research related to interventions and the influence of shared culture on building relationships (Albers & Frederick, 2013; Arana et al., 2011; Espinoza, 2011; Ingram & Gonzalez-Matthews, 2013).

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study included the perceptions of faculty and professional staff mentors and their experiences working with at-risk students at a large, urban, public 4-year institution of higher education whose intent is to support these students in persisting to graduation. I chose to open participation to all mentors, regardless of their culture, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or title of their positions on campus provided they have engaged in a general practice of mentoring at-risk students in such settings for a minimum of 2 years as culturally responsive programs. As there is a widening gap between the rich and the middle and lower classes, and those most severely impacted by obstacles to achieving a degree in higher education are the at-risk populations. Therefore, all faculty and staff who mentor, regardless of their culture, ethnicity, socioeconomic

status or title needed to be able to mentor at-risk populations in order to provide equal access to education for all.

The study's boundaries were based on and guided by the research questions for this study. The participants were limited to faculty and staff who had mentored at-risk students in an urban institution of higher education in Northern California. Second, the focus was limited to the mentors' perceptions of their influence on the development of students and their perceived influence regarding student persistence towards academic success. Lastly, I explored the perceived role that emotional and social competence plays in the mentoring relationship. The data gathered was analyzed through a conceptual lens focused on the theories of student involvement (Astin, 1993, 1999), student departure (Tinto, 2012a, 2012b), research on emotional and social intelligence (Bar-On, 2007; Goleman, 2006a, 2006b, 2007), and on the mentoring research of leaders in the field (Daloz, 1999; Parks, 2011).

Limitations

One limitation of this study was its sample size. I collected data from the interviews of 11 faculty and professional staff mentors of at-risk students in one urban institution of higher education until data saturation had been achieved; therefore, I was unable to generalize my findings beyond these individuals and their specific institutional contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). If time constraints were not a factor, an ideal study would have involved multiple sites and a larger, specifically diverse pool of interviewees.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), ethical practice originates from the researcher's ethics and values. To avoid bias related to experiences with and observations

of mentoring relationships, I took measures to allow the responses I received during the interview process to unfold organically without making assumptions as to whether the experiences of the participants were similar or dissimilar from my own. Although trying to understand the mentoring relationships of faculty and professional staff mentors in the development of their mentees is important, I only focused on the perspectives of 11 faculty and professional staff mentors regarding their relationships with their mentees. I used a full reflective inventory to support my efforts to avoid bias.

Significance

An analysis of how faculty and professional staff mentors make sense of their mentoring practices and relationships with at-risk students can be beneficial in understanding the academic success and persistence of these students in higher education. Having a better knowledge of the mentoring relationships between faculty and professional staff mentors, their engagement with student mentees, and whether the mentoring relationships have an effect on student development and academic success can influence administrative practice and policy as well as advance the effective practices shared by faculty and professional staff mentors regarding their interactions with mentees. With faculty and staff mentors who are firmly embedded in the academic and social lives of at-risk students and engaging in best mentoring practices, the promise of retention and academic success for at-risk students can be enhanced. This presents an opportunity for faculty and staff to learn from the experience and make a contribution to student academic success. Social change is then reflected in the transformation of at-risk students through the guidance of mentors into successful graduates and future catalysts

for change. Once these graduates enter the workforce, their education and their life and university experiences can provide the foundation for them to rise above future challenges. The knowledge that they have achieved their academic goals can empower them to inspire future generations of at-risk students to believe in the possibility of positive transformation in their own lives.

Summary

Research studies have indicated that at-risk students in higher education continue to face obstacles with graduation rates significantly lower than more affluent students from backgrounds of greater privilege. In this study, I focused on the perceptions of faculty and professional staff regarding their practices and experiences engaging at-risk student mentees. The findings from this research may offer valuable insights into useful practices for faculty and professional staff mentors in large, urban institutions of higher education.

In this chapter, I presented the background of the study, the research problem to be addressed, and the purpose of the study. I introduced the research questions and conceptual framework that guided this research. I concluded the chapter by discussing the nature of the study, assumptions, limitations, scope and delimitations, significance, and social change implications. In Chapter 2, I review the relevant literature used to support my research including an in-depth discussion of the theories and ideas behind the conceptual framework and current research on at-risk students, student engagement, student persistence, and the relationship between mentors and mentees.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Despite research that indicates that at-risk students from underrepresented minorities, low socioeconomic backgrounds, and first-generation status benefit from enrollment in selective institutions of higher education, at-risk students tend to choose large, public institutions as their higher education destination (Furquim & Glasener, 2017; Hearn & Rosinger, 2014; Reardon et al., 2012). Many of these students believe they do not belong in college or find the obstacles to higher education overwhelming (Lehmann, 2007; Tinto, 2012b; Winkle-Wagner, 2009). Once in college, at-risk students are significantly less likely to persist to graduation than their peers (Click et al., 2017; Tinto, 2012b). Numerous interventions have proven to be effective, especially when implemented in a student's first year or at critical moments in a student's college experience (Astin, 2016; Dweck et al., 2014; Espinoza, 2011; Linares & Muñoz, 2011). Positive faculty-student interactions in the form of mentoring can change the trajectory of a student's path, validating their presence in higher education, affirming their ability to succeed, and setting them on a course to improve their future (Daloz, 1999; Espinoza, 2011; Johnson, 2016; Parks, 2011). In this chapter, I discuss the literature relevant to the focus of this study. I review factors that impact an at-risk student's pursuit of a degree in higher education. This includes the type of institution they attend, their socioeconomic status, their position as an underrepresented minority, and their standing as a first-generation college student. Additionally, I review the retention and graduation rates of this population in relation to their peers. I address pertinent findings regarding the relationship between faculty, professional staff, and peer mentors to student engagement,

persistence, and academic success. I discuss the literature concerning the influence of mentoring on mentors and mentees. Lastly, I address the effects of mentoring on student development of social and emotional competency.

Literature Search Strategy

My search efforts included access to public and private university online databases as well as Google Scholar for relevant research published within the past 5 years, other pertinent studies, and seminal authors' work. I also searched for books from a university library catalog borrowing program, Link+, which is a consortium of academic and public libraries. Book searches in the library catalog produced relevant print and e-books.

To begin the search process, I focused on educational databases including Education Research Complete, Education Fulltext, and ERIC. Next, I used databases relevant to the humanities: Sage Journals, Science Direct, Humanities Fulltext, JSTOR Journals and Books, PsycINFO, Social Sciences Fulltext, and SocINDEX. Additionally, I searched multidisciplinary databases such as Academic Search Complete and OmniFile Full Text Mega. I searched the Dissertations and Theses database at Walden University, the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Humanities and Social Sciences Collection at a university in Northern California, and Google Scholar for dissertations, books, and peer-reviewed studies on scholarly research conducted on mentoring in higher education.

I derived the key search terms used in the search process from the research questions developed for this study. I applied all search terms in the general databases, the education databases, and the humanities and social sciences databases. Results varied

based on the combination of search terms used. Search terms and phrases used were *mentors, mentoring, mentoring in education, faculty mentors, professional staff mentors, peer mentors, urban, public institution, higher education, low socioeconomic status, undergraduate students, underrepresented students, minority students, first generation students, at-risk students, persistence, graduation, retention, academic success, student involvement, student engagement, emotional intelligence, emotional competency, social intelligence,* and *social competency.*

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework provided a structure to ground my study and to support decision making throughout the research process. As stated in Chapter 1, this framework was a combination of Astin's (1993, 1999) theory of student involvement, Tinto's (2012a, 2012b) theory of student retention and framework for institutional action to enhance student retention, and Bar-On's (2007) model of emotional intelligence. The framework was also influenced by Goleman's (2006a, 2006b, 2007) research on emotional and social intelligence, Daloz's (1999) approach to mentoring, and Parks's (2011) model of a mentoring environment.

Key Concepts Defined

Astin (1999) defined his theory of student involvement as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 518). Involvement is active and implies a behavioral component: the actions of the student are external and observable versus thinking and feeling, which are internal (Astin 1999). Astin (1999) conceded a similarity between motivation and involvement but emphasized

that the latter is observable and measurable, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and is the behavioral representation of the former. Tinto (2012a) also connected motivation and involvement. Tinto (2012a) noted that if a student is unable to receive needed advice during their first year of school or when changing majors, this can decrease enthusiasm, increase the student's chances of leaving school, or extend the time it takes for the student to graduate and earn a degree (Tinto, 2012a).

Tinto (2012b) developed a sociological, longitudinal model of institutional departure from higher education which sought to illuminate how individual students with differing characteristics choose to voluntarily depart their institution before degree completion after experiencing numerous social and academic interactions within that specific institution. Tinto's (2012b) model does not disregard individual choice but contends that regardless of a student's individual characteristics, the social and academic environment of the institution plays a role in the decision to depart that institution. Tinto (2012b) further claimed that this model could contribute to change and decision making on the institutional level as it can be used to question the institutional environment and determine how to improve an institution's student retention rates.

Goleman (2006b) developed a model into an emotional competence framework with two components: personal competence and social competence. Personal competence includes self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation, while social competence includes empathy and social skills (Goleman, 2006b, pp. 26-27). Goleman (2006b) expanded on the idea of the individual's emotional intelligence by researching how individuals interact or connect with and influence one another through social intelligence

(Goleman, 2007). Goleman (2007) compared self-awareness, an emotional intelligence, to social awareness, an aspect of social intelligence that includes the social skills of listening, the ability to empathize with and understand nonverbal communications, and the skills to apply cognitive thinking to social situations. Goleman (2007) also compared the emotional intelligence of self-management to the social intelligence of relationship management in which a person possesses the ability to synchronize themselves and others in a group situation, present themselves well in social situations, possess the powers of persuasion, and show the ability to feel an emotional response to another person in need.

Bechara et al. (2007) defined emotional intelligence as a "multifactorial cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies that influence our ability to cope with daily demands and challenges effectively" (p. 274). Bar-On (2007) developed the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory scales, which include five areas of emotional competence. The first scale labeled intrapersonal assesses five unique competencies having to do with the self, including acceptance, awareness, assertiveness, self-reliance, and self-actualization. The second scale focuses on the interpersonal and measures three competencies related to interactions with others and includes the ability to empathize, demonstrate social responsibility, and develop positive relationships. Stress management is the focus of the third scale, and it assesses the ability to handle emotions successfully. The fourth scale, adaptability, includes the three measures of the abilities to see things as they are, be flexible, and solve problems. The last scale, general mood, assesses optimism and happiness (Bar-On, 2007, p. 4).

Daloz (1999) provided guiding principles for mentors based on his understanding of adult developmental theory and personal experience as a mentor. Daloz stated that a mentor's main responsibility is to create trust, which can be done through listening and "asking questions that move the student's reflections onto a level where the meanings are made" (p. 122). Next, the mentor needs to make a quick evaluation of the student's trajectory. This can be accomplished by looking for signs of growth, such as moving away from dualistic thinking to seeing the complexities in life. Daloz also noted that the mentor must allow the student their voice, which helps them have a clearer understanding of their position. Once trust has been formed, the mentor should consider introducing conflict to help the student learn to look at an issue from differing perspectives. Finally, the mentor needs to recognize the student's growth, focusing on their progress. Throughout the process, the mentor should be aware of the status of the mentor-mentee relationship to monitor the shifting dynamics and the capacity for positive transformation in both the mentor and the mentee (Daloz, 1999).

Parks (2011) challenged developmental theories that describe the transition into a maturing adult as occurring in three stages wherein meaning-making transitions from adolescence to adulthood from the conventional to a higher order theory of consciousness to a final state in which the adult can comprehend and accept both belief and inconsistency. Parks claimed that emerging adults or 20-somethings, aged approximately 18 to 32, constituted a fourth step in the developmental process. Parks noted that emerging adults rely on mentors for guidance of their meaning-making during their development as they move from faith based on the authority of others to inner faith.

Additionally, Parks (2011) observed that there are five gifts mentors provide to their mentees. The first, recognition, is critical as emerging adults develop through recognition of their mentors who occupy a different sphere than that of their parents; thus, bringing attention to their accomplishments in a larger setting. Second, the support provided by the mentor can take many forms including advocacy, acting as a resource, a shield, a source of comfort, and even healing. Next, the mentor must challenge the mentee at critical moments to further their growth. Parks stated that both mentor and mentee could be challenged in the relationship and benefit from it as they form new ways of understanding. Fourth, a good mentor will provide the emerging adult mentee with inspiration, which Parks believes can make a profound difference when mentees become cynical, face challenges, or feel discouraged. Lastly, a good mentor is accountable and can separate their own dreams from that of their mentee, allowing the mentee to follow their own vision.

Primary Work of the Key Researchers

Astin (1999) believed existing pedagogical theories did not easily translate into measurable student outcomes. Astin (1999) found that subject-matter theory or content theory, when applied in higher education, resulted in favoring the lecture approach to education; thus, limiting academic success to those students who excelled under this approach. Astin (1999) noted that resource theory supports the notion that having an abundance of high-quality resources will then produce a high-quality education. Astin (1999) stated that top students and professors recruited by an institution of higher education as well as costly facilities on the campus would all be considered as resources.

Astin (1999) believed problems arose when follow-up on these investments was lacking. For example, administration should not assume during the recruitment phase that top faculty members will have the ability to interact positively and successfully with students. Additionally, they should conduct follow-ups to ensure that students are taking advantage of facilities rich in resources. Lastly, Astin (1999) found that individualized (eclectic) theory, which supports individualized attention to students, requires considerable time and expense if it was to be applied to each student in higher education. Astin (1999) also looked at development theories and divided them into two distinct groups: those that looked at student development as occurring in a set of hierarchical stages, such as Kohlberg (1971) and Perry (1970) and those that took a multidimensional approach, such as Chickering (1969). Astin (1999) believed that these developmental theories focused on outcomes, whereas this theory of student involvement was more focused on student behavior or action, which was believed more easily measured.

Astin (1993) built on previous research to increase the understanding of the effect of the college experience on undergraduate students. Astin (1993) conducted a longitudinal study of students entering institutions of higher education in the fall of 1985. Data included responses to questionnaires gathered by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program and test results from SAT or ACT scores. In the early 1960s, Astin (1993) introduced a model to analyze student outcomes that included three important elements: inputs, environment, and outcomes. Astin (1993) referred to this as the I-E-O model. This model has been utilized to determine how various influences in the college environment affect students. Inputs refer to what the student brings to the institution at

the beginning of their college career. The environment includes everything the student is exposed to once on campus including people, their college courses, programs, and policies. Outcomes reflect the characteristics of the student after being exposed to the college environment. Astin (1993) measured the change in students by comparing outcomes to inputs. The majority of the outcome data for his study came from a follow-up questionnaire sent through the mail in 1989 and 1990 to the first-year students who entered college in 1985.

Astin (1993) identified 192 environmental measures with the potential to effect student outcomes. Astin (1993) included institutional characteristics, curricular measures, faculty environment, and peer environment under the umbrella of "between-institution measures" (p. 70) as they were present and accessible to the students when entering college. This differentiated these from individual involvement measures since student involvement varies by student and is dependent upon the choices they make. Astin (1993) divided the involvement measures into two categories: those known upon entering the institution, and those that occurred after entry. Astin (1993) identified 57 measures of student involvement after entry into college, placing them into five categories: academics, faculty, peers, work, and other.

Astin (1993) found that student-faculty interactions had positive correlations in many areas reported by students including student satisfaction, intellectual and personal growth, and behavioral and career outcomes. Astin (1993) concluded, "Variations in student-faculty contact within any given institutional environment can also have important positive implications for student development" (Astin, 1993, p. 384); however,

peers were identified in the study as the most influential factor influencing the growth of the undergraduate student. Astin (1993) hypothesized that involvement with peers who are fellow students versus involvement with nonstudents would keep learners focused on student-centered priorities including "studying, learning, intellectual development, and the pursuit of careers that require undergraduate and postgraduate degrees" (Astin, 1993, p. 403). Tinto (2012a) also cited the importance of academic support through study groups with peers and participation in learning communities, especially for academically underprepared students. Tinto (2012a) found that these students were considerably more active in a variety of activities such as classroom work and events in and out of class with their faculty and peers.

Astin's (1993) fourth category, involvement with work, produced both positive and negative results. Working off campus, either in a part-time or full-time job, was detrimental to educational attainment, whereas part-time employment on campus produced positive results. On-campus employment was positively associated with degree completion, personal growth, and opportunities for further involvement with peers and in on-campus activities. Astin (1993) grouped a number of activities under other types of involvement including watching television, commuting, attending religious services, volunteering, getting married, going to counseling, and drinking alcohol. In reference to academic retention, alcohol consumption lowered student Grade Point Averages (GPAs), but it was positively related to attainment of an undergraduate degree, which Astin (1993) attributed to students socializing with peers while drinking and strengthening their involvement at social gatherings or within sororities and fraternities.

Tinto (2012b) developed his model drawing from the work of social anthropologist Van Gennep on rites of passage and Durkheim's (1951) theory of suicide. Tinto stated that prior to the development of his theory, most models of departure were psychological models focused on ability and disposition, which neglected the role the institution played in student departure. Van Gennep viewed life as a series of stages or transitions that are marked by events or ceremonies that help the individual pass from one stage to the next, such as birth, marriage and death (Van Gennep, 1960, p. 3). Van Gennep identified three stages in this process: separation, transition, and incorporation (Van Gennep, 1960, p. 11). Applied to the student experience, separation can occur when leaving the family home to attend college, transitioning from the role of a high school student, or when experiencing other forms of separation from past relationships. Transition requires that the student moves into a new role as a college student at an institution where they must then learn what is expected of them to succeed in their new environment. Tinto (2012b) cautioned that students might be unaware of what is required of them to transition into college life successfully, stating that the stages do not necessarily occur sequentially and may overlap or be repeated. Stress resulting from the transition can lead to an early departure from college. Institutions with programs designed for first-year students demonstrate an understanding that students in this transitional stage benefit from institutional support. The final stage in Van Gennep's process is incorporation and involves being accepted into the new role and deemed competent to fulfill that role.

To better understand the process of incorporation, Tinto (2012b) turned to Durkheim's theory of suicide. Durkheim identified three forms of suicide which he called egoistical (Durkheim, 1951, p. 152), altruistic (p. 217) and anomic (p. 241). In developing his model, Tinto (2012b) drew comparisons between the manifestations of egoistical suicide and voluntary student departure from higher education. Tinto (2012b) stated that egoistical suicide occurs when individuals cannot assimilate or establish their membership in a community. Durkheim stated that being a member of a family is a strong defense against suicide (p. 202). Tinto (2012b) hypothesized that those institutions of higher education that create an environment conducive to the social and intellectual integration of its students would have lower rates of student departure than those that do not. Tinto (2012b) noted that students might not be fully integrated into the college community and be either more socially or intellectually active. Tinto (2012b) cautioned that the lack of integration into either the social or academic system could influence student departure, especially for students who do not live on campus or attend school full-time.

Cornell et al. (2013) conducted a study on the perceived prevalence of teasing and bullying from a sample of ninth-grade students and their teachers across 276 schools. They examined the effect that perceived victimization had on dropout rates. Findings showed that schools with lower levels of perceived bullying had a dropout rate of slightly over 5%, whereas schools with higher levels had dropout rates of over 10%. Tinto (2012b) argued that when "the academic and social systems of the institution are weak the countervailing external demands may seriously undermine the individual's ability to

persist to degree completion" (Tinto, 2012b, p. 109). Tinto (2012b) further observed that students of color could face additional challenges to integration on large campuses. However, ethnically diverse institutions provide opportunities for students to connect and form smaller supportive communities that make social integration possible. Regarding student involvement and incorporation, Tinto (2012b) stressed that to achieve retention, students must perceive themselves as belonging to at least one campus community where they can discover their value or create meaning through their connection and participation within that group.

According to Tinto (2012b), a student's disposition is also a factor in determining departure. Tinto (2012b) cited expectations and motivations, which can be assessed by intentions, goals, or commitments to be among the determinants of student persistence or departure from higher education. Tinto's (2012b) model of student departure is both longitudinal and interactional. It attempts to explain how characteristically different students' interactions within the school's academic and social structures, as well as their interactions within their communities, compel these students to drop out before completing their degrees (Tinto, 2012b).

Expectations of all stakeholders play a role in student retention. This includes the expectations of the student, the instructors, and the institution itself. Expectations must be clear, concise, and high to contribute to student retention. Daloz (1999) cited the importance of "close personal attention, clear expectations, specific assignments, short and achievable tasks, and predigested material" (p. 211), particularly for students who display anxiety. According to Tinto (2012a), support can be academic or social, and in

some cases, financial, for the student to remain in college. It is also critical that assessment and feedback are frequent. This allows all stakeholders to adjust their behaviors accordingly to ensure that students remain in good academic standing. This is especially important for first-year students when early intervention has a stronger chance of preventing departure. Lastly, like Astin (1993), Tinto (2012a) stressed the importance of student involvement.

In the 1980s, Bar-On (2000) began working on an instrument to measure emotional intelligence. By 1997, the instrument called the Emotional Quotient Inventory was published and recognized as a psychometric measure of emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 2000). However, Bar-On (2000) believed it to be more accurate to describe it as "a self-report measure of emotionally and socially competent behavior that provides an estimate of one's emotional and social intelligence" (Bar-On, 2000, p. 364). Bar-On's (2000) instrument measures key components of emotional intelligence: self-regard, interpersonal relationship, impulse control, problem solving, emotional self-awareness, flexibility, reality testing, stress tolerance, assertiveness, and empathy. Additional measures include optimism, self-actualization, happiness, independence, and social responsibility (Bar-On, 2000, p. 381), all of which make it easier for an individual to achieve emotional and social intelligence. Based on his findings, Bar-On (2000) stated that these factors significantly correspond with high emotional and social intelligence and that they enable an individual to manage everyday responsibilities and stress successfully.

Goleman (2006a) claimed that there are several models of emotional intelligence, with three at the forefront. First, Mayer and Salovey (1997) created a theory of emotional

intelligence that could be scientifically defended. Second, Bar-On (2007) advanced the field of research on emotional intelligence and developed an emotional intelligence model that is rooted in the study of well-being. Third, Goleman (2006b) created a model of emotional intelligence focused on organizational leadership and performance at work. Goleman's (2006b) emotional competence framework model is divided into two areas: personal and social competence. According to Goleman (2006b), self-awareness, the first measure of personal competence, includes "emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence" (p. 26). Daloz (1999) also acknowledged the importance of self-awareness and the mentor's role in helping a mentee increase their self-awareness by holding up a mirror. Daloz explained that development of the mentee occurs when they build their capacity to see themselves from various perspectives and look at themselves objectively and begin to consider their place in the world.

For Goleman (2006b), self-regulation, the second indicator of personal competence is measured by "self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, and innovation" (Goleman, 2006b, p. 26), while measures of motivation, the third aspect of personal competence, includes "achievement drive, commitment, initiative, and optimism" (Goleman, 2006b, p. 27). Within the aspects of social competence, Goleman (2006b) noted that "understanding others, developing others, service orientation, leveraging diversity, and political awareness" (Goleman, 2006b, p. 27) are measures of empathy. Lastly, Goleman (2006b) stated that the aspect of social skills contains "influence, communication, conflict management, leadership, change catalyst, building bonds, collaboration and cooperation, and team capabilities" (Goleman,

2006b, p. 27). In total, Goleman's (2006b) emotional competence framework consists of 25 competencies under five areas of personal and social competence listed above: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Goleman (2006b) stated that it is unnecessary for an individual to score high in all competencies, but in order to strive for excellence, an individual should build strength in at least six competencies spread across the five areas.

Bar-On (2000) acknowledged the close relationship between emotional and social intelligence, citing overlapping concepts related to both intelligences and Goleman (2007) concurred. Goleman (2007) described emotions engaged in a dance with "social interactions" operating as "modulators" (Goleman, 2007, p. 5) and claimed that, according to social neuroscience, "our brain's very design makes it *sociable*" (Goleman, 2007, p. 4). Goleman (2007) asserted that the social brain is affected by repeated experiences that affect it physiologically. Thus, being repeatedly hurt or nurtured by a person who is significant in one's life has the potential to either damage or improve that person, regardless of age. Goleman (2007) referred to the brain's circuitry as having two modes, the low and high roads. Goleman (2007) stated that the amygdala of the brain is responsible for the low road, working automatically at a subconscious level, allowing an individual to respond quickly in situations. The amygdala works to decipher the facial expressions of others and is very sensitive to fear, operating as a warning system that scans the environment for emotional events or possible threats (Goleman, 2007). The high road works more slowly, involving messages sent to the brain's prefrontal cortex which contains intent, or the ability to reflect on experiences. Thus, a person in a state of

fear or anxiety is using the low road, or the amygdala to function and is not capable of thinking clearly. Goleman (2007) stated that performing well in school cannot occur when the student is under stress and that "the biology of anxiety casts us out of that zone for excellence" (p. 268).

Daloz (1999) concurred with Goleman (2007) and stated that "when we feel safe, we can trust our growing edge more fully" (p. 127). Daloz recommended providing students who are anxious with the needed structure and assistance to overcome this condition. Goleman (2007) stated that the optimal state for learning occurs when the prefrontal cortex is engaged, "where motivation and focus peak, at the intersection of a task's difficulty and our ability to match its demand" (Goleman, 2007, p. 270). Goleman (2007) also noted that the "hippocampus, near the amygdala in the midbrain, is our central organ for learning" (Goleman, 2007, p. 273). While new information is temporarily stored in the prefrontal cortex, the hippocampus is responsible for converting the information in the working memory into long-term memory or learning. Emotional distress, therefore, triggers cortisol to attack the neurons in the hippocampus, which can severely impact learning.

Goleman (2007) argued for a rethinking of social intelligence from the traditional stance of viewing it as an extension of general intelligence and cognitive ability. Goleman (2007) reiterated that although social intelligence includes high road abilities, such as social cognition, it also needs to include "low road functions like synchrony and attunement, social intuition and empathic concern, and arguably, the impulse for compassion" (Goleman, 2007, p. 333). Goleman (2007) noted that "evolutionary theorists

argue that social intelligence was the primordial talent of the human brain . . . and that what we now think of as ‘intelligence’ piggybacked on neural systems used for getting along in a complex group” (Goleman, 2007, p. 334). Goleman (2007) further argued that these abilities lay the groundwork necessary for a social life with minimal difficulties and cannot be measured on written tests as these skills are nonverbal.

Goleman (2007) stated that tests such as the Facial Action Coding System (FACS) for reading microexpressions and the Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity (PONS) and would be better measures for testing social intelligence. FACS was designed to measure muscular changes in the face and is broken down into 28 facial units of action (Ekman & Friesen, 1976). Since introducing FACS, numerous researchers have used the system to conduct research on emotions and facial expressions. In a study conducted on the differences between smiles of enjoyment and smiles of nonenjoyment, researchers found that there are physical differences apparent between the two types of smiles and the facial muscles engaged. The researchers noted that smiles of enjoyment involve activity of the muscles surrounding the eyes, versus nonenjoyment smiles which do not engage those muscles. In a study conducted by Frank et al. (2005, p. 234-235), a group of participants was observed while watching a film in private. Participants were also observed in social interactions. Regardless of whether participants were observed alone or engaged in conversation, observers identified and related more positively to smiles of enjoyment, versus smiles of nonenjoyment. The researchers concluded that a smile of enjoyment can be distinguished by the movement of the outer portion of the muscles surrounding the eyes (p. 235).

PONS was a test developed to determine an individual's ability to analyze nonverbal cues of the face, body and vocal tones (Rosenthal et al., 1979, p. 3). Participants watch a 45-minute black-and-white film in which a woman acts out 20 scenes. They are then given a 220-item test to interpret the scenes they have viewed. The PONS test measures the participant's ability to be sensitive to nonverbal cues, in other words, their social awareness or social intelligence is measured and may be used as an indicator of their ability to apply that understanding in social interactions effectively (Goleman, 2007).

Daloz (1999) urged those in postsecondary education to reexamine their views of their relationship with students, seeing themselves as a guide on the student's journey. Daloz used storytelling, whether retelling tales from mythology or presenting a scenario from his work as a mentor and believed that this helps a person understand and find meaning in life and its events, transforms our idea of what is possible, and provides direction for the future. Daloz discussed three different cases of adult student mentees, using theories from three major adult developmental theorists, applying a different theory to each case, and indicating at which stage a particular mentee appeared to be in their development. Daloz believed that the theories of Levinson, Kegan, and Perry offer distinctive maps or frameworks, and like maps offer different options and routes on the journey of adult development. Daloz claimed that each of these theories is a unique guide and that theorists choose to develop certain aspects in specific areas and disregard others, but that they can provide opportunities for growth and development.

In 1969, Levinson began a study of 40 men, aged 35 to 45, across four occupations and from a variety of social classes. The participants included both workers and executives from two companies. The men were either currently married or had been married at least one time. Levinson's method of research took the form of interviews. From the interviews, Levinson studied the biographies created to develop his theory of adult development. He determined that man's life is divided into stages with periods of transition between each. Childhood and adolescence occur between 0–17 years of age, then the individual transitions into early adulthood from 17–22. From 22–40, man moves from entering the adult world, transitioning around age 30 and settling down between the ages of 33–40. From 40–45, the mid-life transition occurs. Man then enters middle adulthood around the age of 45, transitions at 50, and culminates middle adulthood around aged 60. Between ages 60–65, he enters late adulthood. Levinson discusses the role of the mentor in the broadest sense in a man's life. He stated the mentor can counsel, guide, and most importantly, support "the Dream" (Levinson, 1978, p. 98). Levinson considered the mentor to be temporary, as the young man grows and the relationship becomes one of peers and internalizes what he has learned into who he is becoming as his own man.

Kegan (1982) stated that in order to understand another individual, they have to know where they are in their evolution. Kegan's (1994) theory of adult development includes five stages or levels of consciousness. Kegan (1994) stated that an individual has the potential to achieve all five levels provided they have a strong support system, an education geared towards supporting transformation, and the ability and willingness to

continue growing throughout their lifetime. Children are at the first level of consciousness through the age of 6. They act on impulse and cannot differentiate between fantasy and reality. The second level occurs between the ages of 7–10 and children display the ability to organize objects into durable categories. They are focused on their needs, understand parental expectations, but cannot subordinate their desires to that of their parents. Individuals at the third order of consciousness are traditionalists and lack self-esteem, because their self-worth is tied to how others perceive them. Kegan (1994) stated that some adolescents graduate from high school and prepare for college, yet are still operating at the second level of consciousness. This can place heavy demands on the student, as college instructors may expect them to be self-directed learners, which is associated with the fourth level of consciousness and the ability to self-author. Kegan (1994) stated that few people reach the fifth level of the self-transforming with the ability to change as life itself changes.

Perry's (1970) theory of adult development includes nine stages or positions of development from *basic duality* in position one, in which the individual sees the world as black and white, good or bad to position nine in which the individual is capable of *developing commitments.* Perry developed this scheme based on a study he conducted on college students from 1954 to 1963. Based upon his work, Perry recommended that educators share their personal struggles, way of thinking, and style of commitment with their students. Perry also recommended that educators recognize the contributions of the student as a future colleague, thus confirming their role in the community (p. 213).

Parks (2011) acknowledged the difficulty of faculty sustaining several one-on-one relationships with mentees, which has been the traditional model since the 1970s. Rather, Parks presented a strong case for mentoring communities in which "a new, more adequate imagination of life and work can be explored, created, and anchored in a sense of *we*" (p. 175). Before Parks, Bona et al. (1995) described the advantages of co-mentoring as the "formation of a learning environment in which the leadership team models mutual support and challenge among each other" (p. 175). According to Bona et al., observation of successful modeling creates an opportunity for the students to form "comparable relationships" (p. 175), strengthening the mentoring community, as all members are engaged in the process.

According to Parks (2011), a network of belonging exists within mentoring communities. Parks stated that a mentoring community has the ability "to reassure and to encourage the development of inner-dependence, honoring both the potential and the vulnerability of the emerging adult" (p. 177). Parks recommended that mentoring communities resurrect the practice of hearth, table, and commons–citing the inclusive environment these practices create. Besides the network of belonging, big questions, and worthy dreams, Parks also posited that mentoring communities allow for "encounters with otherness, vital habits of mind" and "access to images (content) and practices" (p. 176). Parks stated that transformation could occur in the emerging adult through encounters with otherness. Parks cited an example of a middle-class Black student who believed that anyone could succeed if they just tried. This student was put in the position to work with a boy from the inner city and came to change his attitude, realizing that the

young boy did not have the same benefits or encouragement that he had experienced growing up and that those impoverished circumstances made the young boy's reality quite different than his own. Parks described vital habits of mind as an initiation into the practices of "dialogue, critical thought, connective-systemic-holistic thought, and a contemplative mind" (pp. 185-189). Parks stated that good mentors could create opportunities for students to engage in these practices. Lastly, Parks posited that images are significant in the development of faith in emerging adults including those that demonstrate "truth, transformation, positive images of self and of others, and images of interrelatedness" (p. 192).

Key Statements and Definitions Inherent in the Framework

Tinto (2012a) stated that four conditions contribute to student retention: expectations, support, assessment and feedback, and involvement (Tinto, 2012a, p. 7). Tinto (2012a) recognized the relationship between student behavior and the institution. Tinto (2012a) stated that "students are more likely to succeed in institutions that assess their performance and provide frequent feedback in ways that enable students, faculty, and staff alike to adjust their behaviors to better promote student success" (Tinto, 2012a, p. 7). Tinto (2012a) further stated that academic support is essential during the student's first year in higher education because the student is more "responsive to institutional intervention" (Tinto, 2012a, p. 25) at this early stage in their higher education experience.

Astin (1999) argued that student time is the most valuable institutional resource as it relates to his student involvement theory. Astin (1999) further stated that policies and administrative decisions could have a significant impact on the student's time and level

of involvement. Astin (1999) urged faculty and administrators to consider the effectiveness of policies and practices on their capacity to improve student participation.

Bar-On (2007) stated that emotional and social intelligence is to be cognizant of "the feelings and needs of others, and to be able to establish and maintain cooperative, constructive and mutually satisfying relationships" (Bar-On, 2007. p. 2). Bar-On (2007) provided examples of numerous studies concerning emotional and social intelligence and its positive effect on both physical and psychological health, social interaction, performance at school and in the workplace, self-actualization, and subjective well-being. Bar-On (2007) concluded that by cultivating emotional and social intelligence in children, it is possible to build and improve communities, organizations, and society.

Goleman (2007) stated that the social environment of the classroom, a group environment, can have serious implications for learning. According to Goleman (2007), a positive environment allows newly formed brain cells to mature within a month, but still requires four additional months for them "to fully link to other neurons" (Goleman, 2007, p. 274). The emotional tone of an individual in a leadership position, be it a teacher, doctor, or supervisor, can influence the role of those in lesser positions as followers. Thus, the teacher as a leader can impact learning. The mood of the instructor can sway that of the students as they follow the teacher's lead and mirror their mood. Students need a secure base from which to operate, and the instructor can provide this; thus, promoting growth and allowing the student to "focus on the work at hand, achieve goals, and see obstacles as challenges, not threats" (Goleman, 2007, p. 277). Goleman (2007) cited the research on the impact of teaching style on learning, a study conducted by Hamre and

Pianta (2005) involving 910 at-risk children in first grade. The results indicated that the children did best when the teacher managed the classroom well, was attentive and responsive to the student's needs, and established a positive classroom that was welcoming and respectful (Goleman, 2007).

Daloz (1999) cautioned that it is the mentor's role first to "listen to the dreams" (p. 23) of their students. Daloz stated that a connection exists between development and direction. Daloz further argued that if education is effective when students grow through intellectual development rather than just the acquisition of knowledge, it is therefore important that the engagement of emotions also needs to part of the student's learning process (Daloz, 1999).

Parks (2011) spoke of the importance of emerging adults being in an environment in which they feel safe and engaged. In such an environment they could ask the big questions—questions of meaning, purpose, and faith—and pursue dreams that were worthy. Parks stated that "a worthy Dream coalesces a relationship between self and world that recognizes the reality and needs of the world and honors the authentic potential of the emerging adult in practical and purposeful terms, yielding a sense of meaningful aspiration" (p. 190). Parks also noted the importance of faith and defined it as something more than a religious belief: A process of looking for and finding meaning in all aspects of experiences.

Utilization of the Concepts in Previous Research and Benefits to the Current Study

Fischer (2007) analyzed the results from the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen, which included the data from 4,000 students. With a focus on student

engagement, Fischer found that all students, regardless of racial or ethnic background, experienced higher rates of satisfaction with a school as well as retention if they had significant academic connections with faculty and participated in social networks that included faculty, staff, and peers.

Regarding student involvement and retention, Astin (1993) found that degree completion was a direct result of living in a campus residence hall. Further, Astin (1993) reported that of all the measures in his study hours spent studying or doing homework (a measure of academic involvement) was found to be positively connected to most academic outcomes including retention and the pursuit of a graduate degree. The data provided by Fischer (2007) and Astin (1993) regarding the benefits of student engagement through connections with faculty members, academic involvement, and on-campus student housing guided the process of creating relevant interview questions for the faculty and professional staff mentors in my study.

Data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) analyzed by Cruce et al. (2006) and Kuh et al. (2008) concluded that engagement had a stronger effect on grades and retention for students with lower ability and students of color as compared with White students. They concluded that engagement benefitted the underprepared student, including those with lower academic abilities. Thomas et al. (2017) findings confirm the need for intervention geared toward supporting emotional regulation to counteract cognitive test anxiety and avoidance coping strategies. Goleman (2007), Tinto (2012b), and Daloz (1999) all emphasized the importance of a stress-free environment for student academic success. Further, Schneider et al. (1981) found that effective advising

requires having optimistic expectations for students; therefore, determining the role that expectations play in the mentoring process was also included in my research. I used this information in the construction of interview questions for the faculty and professional staff mentors involved in this study.

Goleman (2006a) posited that the teaching of emotional intelligence in schools could make a significant difference in children's lives regardless of the circumstances into which they were born, providing them with skills for a better life. Lewallen et al. (2015) support these findings and cited the results of education and health expert deliberations that resulted in the development of a model to improve child development and academic achievement called whole school, whole community, whole child. The experts reported the importance of a positive social and emotional school climate and its effect on student engagement and academic performance (Lewallen et al., 2015). A study by Brouzos et al. (2014) provided additional support for Goleman's assertions. In this study involving 99 11- to 13-year-old school children, Brouzos et al. (2014) used the Bar-On EQ-i:YV scale measuring 60 items of emotional intelligence through a self-reporting assessment and found a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and academic achievement. As I examined the perceived influence of mentors on at-risk mentees, it was important to understand the difference that emotional intelligence could have on student academic success for both for the mentor and the mentee.

Goleman (2007) stated that the last portions of the brain to achieve maturity are those areas responsible for empathy and control of emotional impulses. Thus, adults under the age of 25 can successfully change negative behaviors with courses in social and

emotional learning that target anger management and conflict or address empathy and self-control. Konrath et al. (2011) researched millennials and found that there was a 48% decrease in empathic concern in versus students from 30 years prior as well as a 34% decrease in perspective taking (p. 186). Konrath et al. hypothesized that this lack of empathy and subsequent self-involvement was related to growing up in an age where violence abounds in the news and video games, contributing to desensitization and reduced empathy for the pain of others. I considered information on millennials and the need to cultivate empathy in the interview questions I posed to the faculty and professional staff mentors in my study.

Parks (2011) cited examples of college students who attended an interfaith summer camp in which the attendees were part of a mentoring community. In the first example, although the mentoring community had dispersed at the end of summer and the members returned to their lives, the knowledge that the student could reach out to them brought him comfort in difficult times at college, providing him with a network of support. Another attendee of the same camp reflected on her experience and the residual effects of the experience, likening the mentoring community to a web or connection that gave her hope. The power of a mentoring community on emerging adults, as highlighted by Parks, was considered as I formulated questions for the faculty and professional staff interviews in my study.

Parks (2011) stated that college is an ideal environment to facilitate the development of emerging adults since its purpose is to educate as well as a place where mentors are built into the framework of the institution. Parks's description of a mentoring

community is an outline of what can be done in an institution of higher education with the support of the administration and the commitment of the faculty and staff. It helped guide the formation of interview questions I posed to the faculty and professional staff in my study.

Literature Review

This literature review visits at-risk students in higher education and includes research on students that are historically underrepresented, first generation students, and students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. The obstacles facing at-risk students and their struggle to persist in college, both academically and financially is examined. The review also takes a deeper look at student engagement and involvement, student development in relation to social and emotional competency, and mentoring relationships between students and faculty. This literature review lays the foundation for the research problem I have stated and supports the need for my study.

At-Risk Students

At-risk students in higher education are historically underrepresented groups who are in danger of not completing their college education after enrollment. These include "students of color, first generation and low-income students, students with disabilities, and English as a second language" (Eitzen et al., 2016, p. 59). In this literature review, I focus on those subgroups relevant to my research: underrepresented minorities, first-generation college students, and students from low-income families.

Selective Institutions of Higher Education

Students who attend one of the 468 most elite schools in the United States have two to five times more financial resources to support their education than students attending less selective, open-access two- and 4-year institutions (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013). According to Carnevale and Strohl (2013), the increased spending rates at these selective institutions results in higher graduation rates, better access to professional or graduate schools, and a brighter economic future for the student. Individuals who attain higher levels of education have a greater chance of employment, earn larger incomes, and pay more taxes than those with lower educational levels (Ma et al., 2016). Although data from the National Center for Education Statistics supports the claim that higher education, in general, benefits graduates, studies related to the choice of institution support the argument that enrollment in elite institutions can make a profound difference in both college and career opportunities. On average, graduating from a selective institution versus an institution of lower standing results in higher earnings once the graduate obtains a job.

Additionally, attending selective institutions leads to job opportunities in more prestigious organizations (Dale & Krueger, 2014). According to Hoxby et al. (2009), students attending elite schools "enjoy larger tuition subsidies, disproportionately extensive resources, and more focused faculty attention" (p. 1). Graduates from elite institutions seeking employment have a better chance of being interviewed because of the prestige of their education credentials, which are the main criteria for soliciting and selecting resumes (Rivera, 2011). In a more recent study, Witteveen and Attewell (2017)

found that graduates from the most selective institutions had annual incomes $13,000 higher than students from less selective institutions.

Low Socioeconomic Undergraduate Students

A college or university education increases an individual's chance to succeed economically, while it decreases the chances they will be dependent on public assistance (Ma et al., 2016). In regard to college enrollment, Ma et al. (2016) reported that for 2015, 82% of high school graduates from households earning over $100,010 (the highest income quintile) enrolled immediately in higher education after graduation, compared with 62% of students from households that earned $37,000 to $60,300 (middle income quintile), and 58% of those earning below $20,582 (lowest income quintile) (p. 3).

Another study that examined family income in quartiles showed students who do well on standardized tests but whose family income falls in the bottom quartile have a 1 in 6 chance of graduating from college versus students from the top-income bracket, who have a 2 in 3 chance of completing a 4-year degree (Tough, 2014). However, attending a highly selective school increases the likelihood that the student will graduate. Unfortunately, low-income students are significantly underrepresented in highly selective colleges. According to Reardon et al. (2012), 58% of students in elite colleges or universities are from families in the uppermost income category, while only 6% are from households that fall into the lowest income bracket (p. 14).

Underrepresented Minority Undergraduate Students

In 2005, the gap in enrollment rates for college between White high school graduates and their Black and Latina/o peers was 11% (Ma et al., 2016, p. 3). By 2015,

the gaps amongst high school students were reduced to 8% for Black and 5% for Latina/o graduates (Ma et al., 2016, p. 3). However, these minority groups were more likely to graduate from college if they attended an elite institution. Carnevale and Strohl (2013) found the following:

> Among African Americans and Hispanics who score in the upper half of the SAT/ACT test-score distribution, those who attend one of the top 468 colleges graduate at a rate of 73 percent compared with a rate of 40 percent for equally qualified minorities who attend open-access colleges. (p. 12)

These findings were supported by another analysis of students who attended highly selective institutions of higher education. Dale and Kreuger (2014) found that there is a positive effect on Black and Latina/o students who attend schools that require higher SAT scores.

First-Generation Undergraduate Students

Without parental role models, first-generation college students can face fears not experienced by students whose parents attended college. Jehangir (2010) found that the students in his study had doubts as to whether they belonged and feared being disregarded and perceived as being unprepared for college and incapable of doing well in college courses. Jehangir believed that tapping into the strengths that these students bring with them to college, such as the ability to speak multiple languages, should be used as a vehicle to empower them. He suggested that through learning communities these students could begin to view themselves as bringing unique skills to college that they can share

with their peers and build upon to establish a sense of belonging in higher education (Jehangir, 2010).

In a qualitative study of 30 Black female college students, 24 of whom were first-generation college students, a theme of homelessness emerged (Winkle-Wagner, 2009). The women interviewed expressed the struggles they felt regarding the expectations of their behavior, having to change who they were between their studies at a PWI, and the expectations their family and community had for them when they were at home. Many stated that they did not feel like they belonged in either setting.

Lehmann (2007) conducted a qualitative study at a research university using semistructured interviews. Lehmann focused on first generation White students and the roles that their habits or dispositions (formed through life experiences) played in their decision to leave the university. The first-generation college students who left the university did so voluntarily, not because of poor academic standing, citing that they felt alienated, and providing reasons that support a sense of class-cultural discontinuity. Lehmann believed that the decision to leave could be attributed to a disconnect between their previous role in society and the demands of their current role as a college student. A few of the students Lehmann interviewed expressed a sense of relief at their decision to leave and received support from their families to return home.

At a large, public Hispanic serving institution (HSI), a general education course on Mexican American history attracts 70 students per section, 90% of whom are Latina/o. The majority of students enrolled in this course are the first in their family to attend college. Of these students, nearly 20% are funneled into remedial English and math

courses, exacerbating feelings of insecurity (Barrera, 2014). Latino et al. (2018) conducted a study involving 2,499 Latina/o students at a postsecondary HSI and discovered that students who came to the university from an accelerated learning program had higher GPAs. Latino et al. (2018) recommended that policy makers invest in accelerated learning programs at the high school level as participation in these programs not only increased GPAs but built the student's confidence in their ability to succeed. Additionally, Latino et al. compared first-generation Latina/o college students to Latina/o college students who were not first generation and discovered that there was a notable difference in first- to second-year retention rates of students based on background. First-generation Latina/o college students were 4% less likely to return for a second year of college than their Latina/o peers who were not first in their family to go to college (Latino et al., 2018). However, the first-generation Latina/o college students who participated in an accelerated learning program had notably higher GPAs than the first-generation Latina/o college students who did not come to the university from an accelerated learning program.

Covarrubias and Fryberg (2015) conducted a study involving 121 undergraduates who completed questionnaires designed to determine family achievement guilt and survivor guilt. Covarrubias and Fryberg described family achievement guilt as guilt connected to exceeding the accomplishments of other family members. Whitten (1992) described survivor conflict as experienced by a group of Black students who exceeded their family members' academic achievements, with this conflict manifesting as "guilt, ambivalence, anxiety and depression" (p. 421). Covarrubias and Fryberg found that

family achievement guilt was reported more frequently by Latino students in higher education and by first generation students than by White students and continuing generation students.

At Risk of Failing to Persist to Graduation

Although the number of Latinas/os entering higher education has increased, the percentage of Latinas/os persisting to graduation ranges between 8 to 25% (Murphy & Murphy, 2018). In a study conducted by Arana et al. (2011), the researchers explored the interaction between the student and the institution relating to persistence. For the students who did not persist, family crises and obligations, as well as the need to work to support the family, were obstacles to persistence. Nonpersistent students also cited a lack of support or encouragement from faculty as contributing to their departure from college (Arana et al., 2011).

Salas et al. (2014) conducted a study of a Latina/o peer mentoring program in which third- and fourth- year college students, who were previously mentees, took on the role of mentor for incoming Latina/o students. The study involved two sets of interviews with 15 participants. Salas et al. stated that much of the literature on Latina/o students has a negative focus, citing grades on tests, academic readiness and GPAs as factors contributing to academic failure. The study examined critical elements that may influence the improvement of retention rates among Latina/o students. Salas et al. found that "social integration, validation and a sense of belonging" (p. 232) could contribute to persistence and retention among Latina/o students. Three major themes emerged: common challenges, common experiences and benefits from mentoring, and lessons

learned as student mentors. Common challenges included being first-generation college students, coping with discrimination, and concerns about campus climate and finances. One of the major benefits of the mentoring program was interacting with others from their own culture who had a different upbringing. Additionally, a sense of community generated by the program was cited as beneficial, providing the students with a comfortable environment, similar to the one in which they were raised. Salas et al. believed their findings supported the positive difference that mentors can have on a mentees' belief in their abilities to succeed in college.

In a study of students on academic probation living in a residence hall at a private, urban college on the east coast of the United States, students were able to increase their GPAs and improve their chances for academic achievement. This occurred with a plan of assertive student engagement that included addressing all aspects of a students' life to succeed academically. (Johnson et al., 2016). The study included 74 students, 51 of whom were Black, 12 Latina/o Americans, nine West Indian American, and two from other backgrounds. A large scale, team-led intervention recreated the once common academic practice of members of academia serving as in loco parentis. The team included staff members with a variety of roles including a director of residence life who was also a social worker, an academic advisor, residence counselor, residence assistance, study hall instructor, and peer tutors. The team approach created an atmosphere in which students felt supported and cared for. The students began to change the behaviors that had originally kept them isolated and unwilling to seek support. Some of the strategies utilized by the team to engage the students included weekly communication, discussion

of academic progress and checking their assignments, determining the obstacles to their ability to learn and strategizing to improve this ability, and listening to their concerns and helping them solve personal problems. As a result of the team's efforts, Johnson et al. (2016) discovered that none of the students were asked to leave the residence, and their GPAs improved.

Harper (2013) discussed the obstacles that Black students might encounter at PWIs. Harper (2013) stated that the lack of Black role models in positions of power at PWIs could be a disincentive for Black students and impact their drive to continue their education beyond the bachelor's degree level. Harper (2013) conducted a national study of 219 successful Black male undergraduates from 42 campuses. Of these participants, 56.7% had parents or caregivers who had low family incomes and were not working professionals. Many of the students in his study attributed their success to happenstance and believed their less accomplished peers could succeed if given the right opportunities. The students interviewed felt their academic success was due to factors such as parental expectations, strong and effective instructors, high school programs focused on preparation for college, successful student mentors who welcomed them into their confidence, transformative travel experiences, and significant relationships with adults who have achieved degrees in higher education. (Harper, 2013)

Retention and Graduation

Long and Riley (2007) discussed the effect of financial burden on minority and low-income students attending college, and their unwillingness to incur often necessary student loans to complete college. The authors cited unmet financial needs as a major

obstacle to completing a degree in higher education, even after accounting for all possible sources of financial aid and family contributions. Long and Riley stated that persistence in college could be thwarted when students are financially incapable of meeting educational costs.

Bettinger and Baker (2014) cited numerous obstacles to retention and graduation in higher education. These include the inability to access relevant information or seek help, being academically underprepared, having poor time management and study skills, and feeling disconnected from the university. Bettinger and Baker discussed the benefits of coaching as a multidimensional intervention that was capable of addressing several of these issues. Bettinger and Baker analyzed the effectiveness of a for-profit coaching service, InsideTrack, on a randomly selected group of students across 17 universities. The founders of InsideTrack believe that it is important to assess how students use their time outside of school as this is a critical factor that influences student retention and graduation. Coaching methods proven to contribute to academic success include helping students to plan and prioritize their studies. Bettinger and Baker reported an improvement in the rate of student retention by 9 to 12% for those students working with InsideTrack coaches. These students were found more likely to persist even after the coaching period was concluded (Bettinger & Baker, 2014).

Student Engagement

As mentioned previously, Astin (1999) defined student involvement as “the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (p. 518). Kuh et al. (2007) posited that student effort is the first component

of student engagement. The researchers also emphasized the importance of a second component, the responsibility of the institution in the engagement process including the resources provided to students, curriculum, opportunities to learn outside the classroom, and services available to support and encourage them to participate in activities geared toward their success. Harper's (2012) findings support the relationship between engagement and academic success. In this study, all students interviewed were highly engaged Black student leaders. These students held positions in several student organizations, established strong connections with administrators and professors outside of the classroom, and were involved in activities that broadened their education such as supplemental summer opportunities to do research, programs that combined travel with learning, community service, and internships (Harper, 2012). Harper and Quaye (2009) argued that a student could appear involved but not be actively engaged. A student who attends a study group but does not participate in the conversation is not fully engaged. Harper and Quaye cited the five benchmarks of effective educational practice on the NSSE as measures of student engagement. These benchmarks include the level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environment.

According to Hopkins and Domingue (2015), courses designed to promote social justice, such as intergroup dialogue, both engage students and challenge them to develop numerous skills including the ability to effectively communicate and use logic and reasoning, which increases their tolerance of others' beliefs and views. A study of 52 intergroup dialogue courses spanning nine institutions of higher education focused on one

of two topics. Approximately half of the participants (110 students) were involved in dialogues on gender, and the other half (119 students) discussed race and ethnicity. After the course ended, the students participated in individual interviews. Hopkins and Domingue's findings showed trends in learning "active listening, suspending judgment, perspective taking, voicing, working with conflict constructively, and recognizing social identities and social oppression" (p. 394). The students discovered that it was not only important to practice active listening but also to adapt new behaviors such as forbearance, reflective thought, and rewording and repeating another person's thoughts while being true to the original intention. (Hopkins & Domingue, 2015). Many felt that active listening required them to also refrain from forming opinions before the speaker had completed their discourse, which helped avoid the leap to bias and preconceived notions.

Hopkins and Domingue (2015) claimed that perspective taking is both a cognitive and affective skill as it requires thought and the capacity to empathize. Students reported that perspective taking was challenging because they "had to work hard to surpass the urge to be judgmental or to be dismissive of other people's opinions and perspectives" (Hopkins & Domingue, 2015, p. 397). Students also practiced voicing, which requires the speaker to reflect before speaking, choosing their words carefully, determining the timing and tone of their speech, and appreciating the importance of asking questions to improve their capacity to appreciate others. The students reported this ability to be one of the most difficult to learn and struggled with word choices so as not to offend.

Hopkins and Domingue (2015) stated that effectively managing conflict requires the use of several intergroup dialogue skills. Participants must be able to think and see

that the relationship between the groups they identify and socialize with and the attitudes of the group itself can be a basis for conflict. Further, participants must be able to recognize conflict as well as avenues with the capacity to lead to agreement or understanding. Students reported having to monitor their emotions and keep their anger and frustration under control to resolve a conflict. To recognize social identities and social oppression requires that an individual cultivate an awareness of how privilege and subjugation transpire in society. The students in this study realized the need for self-reflection to recognize these manifestations within their environment and grapple with how they responded to these realizations.

Hopkins and Domingue (2015) concluded with a discussion of the benefits that intergroup dialogue has on diverse campuses where a negative campus climate can adversely affect "students of color, low-income students, queer students, and other marginalized groups" (p. 401). Hopkins and Domingue advocated for student participation in intergroup dialogue courses to build and refine their capacity to effectively dialogue across diverse groups and examine the campus climate for attitudes and beliefs that present obstacles to accomplishing a healthy and respectful environment.

Additionally, in a longitudinal study on diversity, Parker et al. (2016) found that courses that focused on diverse cultural perspectives and equality or social justice positively influenced student moral development. Parker et al. analyzed data from three student cohorts from 17 4-year institutions of higher education at three points in their college careers. Unlike previous research in this area, the findings revealed that the aforementioned courses made a notable difference throughout the undergraduate

student's college experience. Parker et al. also noted the different degree of influence that the type of course had on a student based upon their level of academic achievement before entering college. For example, incoming students with lower academic abilities who enrolled in courses on diverse perspectives showed more improvement in their moral development than incoming students with higher academic abilities. However, the social justice courses had a greater effect on incoming students with higher academic abilities than on those students who entered with lower academic abilities. Parker et al. suggested that these findings could help academic advisors better match students to diversity courses, allowing them the opportunity for maximum development.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Astin (1993) identified five areas of student involvement: academic, faculty, peers, work, and other. Astin's (1993) measures for academic involvement are broken down further into time allocation, courses taken, specific learning experiences, and specific pedagogical experiences. Time allocation for academic pursuits includes time spent in class, studying, and using a personal computer. Astin (1993) studied the relationship between student involvement and academic performance and found that the amount of time spent studying was positively related to almost all facets of academic outcomes, including graduation and pursuit of a graduate degree. Schilling and Schilling (1999) conducted a study that began with student groups from seven various types of institutions of higher education including a small private liberal arts college, a historically Black university, a large research university, and a metropolitan university. The members of the group focused on studying the gap between student and faculty expectations for student academic effort. According to Schilling and

Schilling, these students expected to spend 1 hour per day studying outside of class for every hour spent in class; whereas the faculty expected students to spend 2 to 3 hours outside of class studying for every hour spent in the classroom. Schilling and Schilling found that the students did not vary from their initial expectations set in their first semester at college and typically continued to spend the same amount of time studying throughout their college experience. When initially surveyed, the majority of the students anticipated devoting 30 to 40 hours per week on course work; however, the students soon discovered they could get by with significantly less effort, spending as little as 20 hours or less per week on their course work. Also reported were the use of textbooks over primary sources, memorization over application, and minimal use of higher order thinking skills. Schilling and Schilling posited that to increase student effort faculty must set higher expectations for students in their first semester in college or risk minimal student efforts in their remaining years with the institution.

In Harper's (2012) study, the academically successful students interviewed observed that their less successful peers typically allocated their time to pursuits that did not contribute to academic success, such as dating, parties, video games, and sports. According to Sims (2014), these behaviors could be attributed to procrastination and related to the "competing attractiveness of alternative tasks" (p. 147). Sims presented a self-regulation coaching framework to address academic procrastination and identified four comprehensive task likeability factors that revealed patterns of procrastination: (a) the perception that the task provides a low level of pleasure, (b) expectations of a negative result, (c) projected lack of skill to complete the task, and (d) presence of more

attractive alternative activities. Sims related these factors to “self-regulation shortcomings” including “intrinsic/extrinsic motivation, anxieties of performance evaluation, low self-efficacy of performance and weak attentional control of distracters” (p. 147). Sims’s self-regulation coaching framework fosters academic success through its structure, which guides the student to behaviors such as persistence that result in being intrinsically motivated to learn and increased self-efficacy.

Academic involvement in the classroom by students of color can be hindered when pedagogical practices are not racially inclusive. Linder et al. (2015) conducted a study of 29 graduate students of color that focused on their experiences with faculty and in the classroom, resulting in recommendations for a more inclusive classroom environment. Students reported feelings of marginalization when faculty failed to facilitate discussions on racism on more than a surface level, creating an environment where the students of color felt compelled to act as the educator. Strategies for an inclusive classroom included the instructor “recognizing the role of emotion in learning, naming, and discussing power dynamics in the learning space, applying course content to events that are relevant in students’ lives, and engaging authentically with students” (Linder, et al., 2015, p. 186). Students further expressed the need for faculty to engage in difficult dialogues in the classroom to ensure an inclusive environment with the understanding that to avoid a conversation negates the underlying feelings in a charged environment. Faculty who were deemed successful at creating an inclusive environment in the classroom used active listening techniques such as restating a student’s comment

and giving them the opportunity to register what they had said and how it might be interpreted as well as the time to clarify and restate their thoughts.

Cole (2017) reported the use of culturally sustaining pedagogy in higher education in relationship to the Black Lives Matter movement while reflecting on how to incorporate student ethnic and life experiences into course content and constructively enhance a mentoring environment. Being a White faculty member, Cole questioned whether this was her proper role; however, she felt compelled to incorporate the movement into her media and society course because the majority of her class were students of color and first-generation college students. Cole defined the movement as "the contemporary struggle for equality and dignity amongst Black people in the USA" (p. 737). Cole abandoned the adoption of courses designed by her predecessors and contemporaries and instead used the lives of her students to develop course content. With a focus on learning about the Black Lives Matter movement, students were charged with connecting "the movement to important concepts in organizational communication such as identification, culture, and leadership" (Cole, 2017, p. 741). Cole reported that her students gravitated towards the study of grassroots organizational movements focused on social responsibility versus for-profit institutions. By doing so, they could more clearly see the connections to the principles of Black Lives Matter in action. Cole embraced the principles of the Black Lives Matter movement and remains a strong advocate for the application of culturally sustaining pedagogy across disciplines.

At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a PWI, new tenure-track faculty participated in a year-long faculty development program. This program was created to

help faculty be conscious of and willing to dialogue and learn inclusive teaching strategies to engage and support underrepresented minorities, first-generation college students, and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds on their paths to academic success (Schmid et al., 2016). The focus of the program is to help faculty place emphasis on the learner rather than on a curriculum that does not include them, reflect on how students learn, and embrace the methods of learning communities. Throughout the year, faculty members take several modules on a variety of topics, which last from 3 to 4 weeks. Time is built into the modules to allow faculty to apply what they learn to their courses. Two changes several faculty members made to their teaching practices were how they engaged with their students and the inclusion of discussions of equity and diversity in their classes. The university plans to add another section to the faculty development program that will focus on leadership to promote transformation, not only of the faculty, but of the courses they design, the departments in which they work, and the institution as a whole (Schmid et al., 2016).

Involvement with faculty can manifest in numerous activities to demonstrate student engagement. Measures include communicating with professors and advisors about career goals, meeting with instructors to discuss viewpoints and coursework, serving on committees with faculty that support campus activities, and working with faculty on research (Harper & Quaye, 2009). Parks-Yancy (2012) conducted a study involving low-income, first-generation Black business majors to determine how they attained social capital resources and how they learned and planned for their eventual careers. Parks-Yancy discovered that the 58 students interviewed had minimal knowledge

of the types of career paths they could take with the degrees they were pursuing. Despite the enhanced opportunities for employment a degree could create, 88% planned to stay at the company where they were currently employed (Parks-Yancy, 2012).

In a study conducted by Guerrero and Rod (2013) on 406 students in seven political science courses, there was a positive correlation between student presence during faculty office hours and student academic performance. In this study, the academic performance was measured by the grade received in the course. The researchers discovered that the greatest impact on grades was in the course in which students had the most difficulty, the research methodology course; thus, supporting the hypothesis that attendance at office hours would have a positive effect on grades.

Student success was also the focus of a project entitled Going DEEP (Documenting Effective Educational Practice), which involved 20 different types of institutions of higher education including PWIs, commuter schools, urban and rural schools, as well as selective institutions (Kinzie & Kuh, 2004). With an emphasis on the shared responsibility of faculty, staff, and administrators across each campus, these 20 widely varying institutions provided data to the NSSE. All reported that they actively practiced the benchmarks of educational effectiveness outlined by the NSSE, which resulted in higher graduation rates and more student engagement than predicted. Members involved in this project reviewed documents and campus websites, visited all the campuses, observed classes, meetings, and events, and spoke to more than 2,700 people. One strategy the DEEP schools shared was that they developed strategies to empower the student to take responsibility for their learning and involvement in campus

activities (Kinzie & Kuh, 2004). This included activities such as students teaching students, students designing their academic plan in collaboration with faculty and staff members, and students taking an active role on committees, sitting side by side with faculty.

Despite the success of the DEEP schools, not all scholars agree on the importance of students serving on committees. In his book on student voice, Beaudoin (2013) felt that this voice is not always honored when students sit on campus committees because the ratio of students to faculty and staff on the committee is unequal, with students holding only a few seats. However, the stakeholders of DEEP schools have high expectations for faculty, staff, and students; believe in shared responsibility for student success; and subscribe to collaboration and shared responsibility. In contrast with Beaudoin's findings, students attending DEEP institutions reported positive experiences serving on committees and feeling they were heard and respected for their input (Kinzie & Kuh, 2004).

A study of more than 455 U.S. institutions of higher education provided evidence of the benefits to students working with faculty on research projects (Webber et al., 2013). In this study, Webber et al. (2013) analyzed student responses from the NSSE survey and responses from the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement on student-faculty engagement in undergraduate research. The purpose of the study was to determine what the students and faculty deemed to be the benefits of undergraduate research. Webber et al. found that students benefitted from participating in research at the undergraduate level as it improved their ability to analyze and synthesize data, improved their presentational

skills, increased their ability to find gainful employment, or led to a desire to pursue a graduate education.

Using open-ended questions, interdisciplinary faculty researchers solicited feedback from undergraduate and graduate students and faculty who participated in research as members of numerous research teams (Soltano et al., 2016). Both the students and faculty reported that the benefits of this collaborative process outweighed the costs. Students reported two costs of participation: the amount of time required and feeling overwhelmed by having to conduct and learn research concepts simultaneously (Soltano et al., 2016). However, one positive result of this experience was that students felt their relationships with their peers and mentors improved. The undergraduates, being new to research, reported learning how to conduct a research study from start to finish, including determining research methods and design, finding articles, writing a literature review, and gathering, entering, reporting, and analyzing data (Soltano et al., 2016). They also gained a firmer conviction to apply to graduate school. All students learned to appreciate the need to obtain their university's institutional review board approval for research and to adhere to ethical guidelines for research (Soltano et al., 2016). Previously, Kuh et al. (2007) argued that if a student has only one opportunity to engage with a member of the faculty on a research project, it can be a transformative event.

Engagement with peers, regardless of whether they serve as mentors, was cited as contributing to the academic success of the students interviewed by Harper (2012). These students noted that peers contributed to their success by sharing their notes, study methods, and knowledge of resources to assist them in completing challenging courses.

Escamilla and Trevino (2014) also found that peer influence effected student persistence among Latino students involved in a migrant worker program tied to higher education at a southwestern university. One student interviewed in the study discussed the influence of his roommate's work study habits as increasing his desire to study. He also felt that a support system consisting of alumni would make a difference in persistence because they served as examples of students who faced similar challenges and still could complete their degrees despite the obstacles they faced.

Unlike the NSSE benchmarks of student engagement, not all forms of student involvement as defined by Astin (1993) contribute to success. Involvement in work, specifically, working full-time and working off campus has been associated with student departure from studies in higher education. In a study conducted by Arana et al. (2011), the students interviewed cited working off campus as the major reason they did not remain in school. Reasons for departure included having a job schedule that conflicted with the student's ability to take time off for exams and exhaustion from working and going to school simultaneously.

Astin (1993) stated, "A wide spectrum of cognitive and affective outcomes is negatively affected by forms of involvement that either isolate the student from peers or remove the student physically from the campus" (p. 395). Astin (1993) labeled these as other types of involvement, which include activities such as time spent watching television, commuting, attending religious services, doing volunteer work, marriage, counseling, and alcohol consumption (Astin, 1993). In a qualitative study of 12 Latino males in a community college, Ingram and Gonzalez-Matthews (2013) analyzed how

personal and academic commitments effected student engagement. Of the 12 students interviewed, only three considered themselves involved on campus, two of whom had on-campus jobs, and the other played sports. The uninvolved students cited lack of time, personal commitments, and hours devoted to study as obstacles to being more active in on-campus activities. Astin (1993) discovered a positive connection between student involvement with academics, faculty members, and their peers, and the students' ability to learn, succeed academically, and remain in college.

Student Engagement and Mentors

Espinoza (2011) discussed the significance of student engagement in the form of intervention in higher education. After conducting numerous interviews with students, Espinoza began to recognize patterns of specific events that changed a student's educational path. Espinoza coined the phrase "educational Pivotal Moment" and noted it "occurs when a college-educated adult, such as a teacher, counselor, academic outreach professional, or professor, makes a concerted effort to support and mentor a disadvantaged student in either an informal or official role" (p. 4). Espinoza stated the Pivotal Moment is life changing for a disadvantaged student, changing the educational path of the student and creating an environment in which the obstacles of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status can be overcome.

Peer Mentors

The affirmative effect of peers on student success is not limited to peer mentors. Kim and Schallert's study (2014) examined the effects of teacher and peer enthusiasm on student interest in the classroom. Interest can be individual or situational. The

environment itself activates situational interest versus individual interest, which a person possesses coming into an environment (Mitchell, 1993). Mitchell (1993) stated, "Whereas a teacher may have no control over students' incoming personal interests, that same teacher may be capable of having a noticeable influence on the students' outgoing personal interests by the end of the school year" (p. 425). Kim and Schallert (2014) studied how enthusiasm can affect the value an individual places on a particular interest and discussed the importance of catching and holding interest. Mitchell (1993) proposed that catching interest involves stimulation, which can be either cognitive or sensory. Sensory stimulation involves changes in sensory stimuli, whereas cognitive stimuli occur when individuals question what they know (Malone & Lepper, 1987). Holding interest requires that the subject matter be significant, as this can inspire the learner to work towards achieving their goals (Mitchell, 1993). In Kim and Schallert's study, the interest studied was the course in which the students were enrolled. Findings indicated that holding and catching interest were positively related to student awareness of the eagerness the teacher and students had for the subject matter (Kim & Schallert, 2014).

Effective mentors can help mentees understand the underlying structures and goals of the academic institution and make it easier for them to navigate through it, functioning as a conduit between academia and the real world (Morales et al., 2016). In a program at an urban HSI of higher education, peer mentors were screened and matched with a random group of at-risk mentees on academic probation who had enrolled in developmental math (Morales et al., 2016). The matching process involved both parties selecting their top three characteristics (e.g., race, gender, and major) for a successful

match. Data were collected throughout three semesters. Morales et al. (2016) conducted interviews and focus groups with the mentors and mentees. Mentees were required to attend every class, meet for tutoring weekly, submit a midsemester evaluation, and keep a log of their attendance at programs and activities. Mentees involved in the mentoring program were significantly more successful than those students in developmental math who did not participate in the mentorship program. In the first semester, 47% of the mentees passed versus slightly over 20% of the students who did not receive mentoring and passed. By the second semester, only 25% of the nonmentored students passed the course, versus 100% of the mentees. In the third semester, the percentages were 71% mentees and 61% of the nonmentees passing the course. Over three semesters, this averaged out to 35% of the nonmentees passed compared to 72% of the mentees. Besides an increase in mentored students passing the developmental math course, 80% of these students also reported increased self-efficacy (Morales et al., 2016). Another positive effect of the mentoring was that all the mentees increased their social and emotional commitment to the academic community. Morales et al. reported that not only were students engaged in the mentoring program, but their participation in activities not required by the program also grew. Students reported taking advantage of the writing center and attending events and meetings with faculty and campus administration.

Harper (2006) conducted a study on peer support in the Black community. His findings contradicted studies done by other researchers who have claimed that Blacks viewed attending college as “acting White” (Harper, 2006, p. 352). Further, Harper’s (2006) work challenged research on internalized racism within the Black community.

Harper (2006) contacted campus administrators at 6 public research institutions to recommend high achieving Black male students for his study. Of the 32 students from sophomores through seniors who participated, 9 reported both of their parents attending college, 10 reported that 1 parent attended college, and 13 said that neither parent attended college. Each of the students was interviewed face-to-face, with some follow-up via telephone. Students reported receiving support from both male and female Black students. None of the students interviewed spoke of feeling socially excluded by other students from their culture. On the contrary, they felt welcomed at the university (Harper, 2006). The students felt this regardless of the differences between how they spent their time. Harper (2006) noted that "high-achievers maintained that their disengaged male peers supported them, recognized their efforts and contributions, and never questioned their masculinities" (p. 348). No one felt accused of "acting White" (Harper, 2006, p. 347). The response to high achieving students was the opposite: They felt strongly supported by their male and female Black peers. Students also reported that given the large size of their institutions, they joined student organizations so that they could frequently interact with their peers. All students interviewed expressed that involvement in these clubs was their first encounter with support by peers of their own race (Harper, 2006).

The positive effect of same-race Black peer mentors on incoming students in a summer bridge program was cited as a contributing factor to student success in Harper's (2012) study on Black male achievers in higher education. Harper (2013) stated that older Black students actively sought new Black students at the beginning of each semester to

educate them on the realities of life at a PWI. This form of peer mentoring included citing specific instances of racism, microaggression, and feelings of *onlyness*. Onlyness is a term coined by Harper et al. (2011) and is defined as "the psychoemotional burden of having to strategically navigate a racially politicized space occupied by few peers, role models, and guardians from one's same racial or ethnic group" (Harper et al., 2011, p. 190). The importance of peer support was reiterated through stories shared by the students at these PWIs. For example, one college senior remarked that if it were not for his same-race resident advisor, he probably would not have made it to his senior year (Harper, 2013). The resident advisor shared a book with him that addressed the issues and feelings the senior himself was having regarding his experiences at a PWI. The information in the book validated what the senior was feeling. The senior stated, "Reading that made me feel normal; I didn't feel crazy anymore" (Harper, 2013, p. 205). Other students voiced similar feelings that persisting in college through the years would have been extremely challenging, if not unattainable, without the guidance of other marginalized students (Harper, 2013).

Tinto (2012a) stressed the positive effect that peer mentors can provide by serving both as a social support system and as tutors. Tinto (2012a) cited the Peer-Led Team Learning Program at Mountain Empire Community College which focuses on Algebra I as a good example. Tinto (2012a) found that students who participated in student-led tutoring sessions scored better on a variety of tests than those that did not receive peer mentoring. In fact, students who participated in this optional tutoring program felt their

understanding of algebra increased, and they requested that tutors also be made available for Algebra II.

Faculty Mentors

Johnson (2016) stated that "deliberate and thoughtful mentoring is one of the *most* important and enduring roles for the higher education faculty member" (p. 3). Mandell and Herman (2009) discussed the shared responsibility of mentor and adult student, where the student learns while working collaboratively with their mentor. Mandell and Herman advocated for altering learned behaviors, noting that to do so involves constant vigilance, mindfulness, application, and contemplation to transform oneself. To make this possible, Mandell and Herman recommend that the college curriculum is student-centered, which creates an environment where students are both invested in the course content and inspired to take ownership of their assignments (Mandell & Herman, 2009).

Campbell et al. (2012) conducted a study on mentors and college student leadership outcomes. The researchers administered the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership survey to over 36,000 participants in 101 institutions to determine an individual's potential for social responsibility in relation to the social change model of leadership development. Campbell et al. found that high-scoring students reported that their mentors positively influenced their personal development. Mentoring that effected personal development was found to have a greater influence on a student's social responsibility leadership capacity than mentoring for leadership empowerment. Additionally, the type of mentor mattered. Student affairs mentors were more influential than faculty mentors in developing a student's socially responsible leadership capacity.

Campbell et al. concluded that faculty mentors would benefit from being trained to guide mentees to grow developmentally.

Healy et al. (2012) discussed the role of student affairs personnel as moral mentors. Healy et al. argued that moral mentoring involves a commitment of time and engagement by the mentor to discuss a student's personal development with them, guiding the student to cultivate a viewpoint in keeping with their understanding of themselves. Healy et al. stated that moral development is part of cognitive development, and the role of the mentor is to help students "in meaning making and decision making, where moral actions are weighed and moral principles serve as boundaries for those actions" (Healy et al., 2012, p. 84). McGowan et al. (2007) agreed and looked at mentoring relationships through a constructive-developmental lens. Kegan (1982) contended that the constructive-developmental theory combines two ideas. First, that humans continually engage in the process of constructing reality. And, second, they develop by moving through different phases, sometimes growing and phases where they remain constant. McGowan et al. acknowledged the significant role the environment played in adult development and discussed the importance of a balance among the three dimensions of a holding environment: confirmation, contradiction, and continuity. McGowan et al. stated that for mentoring to be successful, "the holding environment must be tailored to the protégé's meaning-making structure and must meet the needs of that particular development stage" (p. 405). This means the mentor needs to realize when to hold on, let go, or remain. McGowan et al. did not believe that the mentor alone is responsible for the development of the mentee. Development is also influenced by other

systems in the mentee's life including their supportive relationships at work, within their family and friends, spiritual groups, and groups the individual is involved with at college (McGowan et al., 2007).

According to Healy et al. (2012), for the mentor-mentee relationship to be effective, it must be collaborative. The mentor must impart and stir hope, and the student must trust. It may be necessary to engage in difficult dialogue to help the student in their developmental journey. Healy et al. recommended four strategies for working through difficult dialogues: (a) identify resistance and withdraw, (b) provide a place for emotions or feelings to be recognized and expressed, (c) use the individual's "cognitive-structural meaning-making to role-model a response that is slightly more complex" (p. 86), and (d) pursue opportunities for the individual "to practice using the more cognitively complex and nondefensive response" (p.86).

As Mandell and Herman (2009) emphasized the importance of reflection, Healy et al. (2012) believed that the four strategies for working through challenging dialogue need to be followed up with time to meditate and deliberate to get to a higher order of moral understanding. Healy et al. stated that the effective mentor serves as a role model and develops a strong foundation, which includes awareness of personal values, integrity, and a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Further, the successful moral mentor develops helping skills, such as openness and empathy. Healy et al. asserted that the responsibility of the mentor is not to provide solutions but rather to engage in conversation meant to help stimulate deep thought. And, just as Daloz (1999) stated that an effective mentor shows care, Healy et al. advocated for actions springing from the moral principle of care.

Student Persistence and Academic Success

Dweck et al. (2014) stated that "psychological factors—often called motivational or non-cognitive factors—can matter even more than cognitive factors for students' academic performance" (p. 2). Not all students have the academic tenacity to succeed, although Dweck et al. stated that these skills could be taught. Dweck et al. stated that students who are academically tenacious believe that they belong in school and are immersed in the pursuit of knowledge and do not allow themselves to be thwarted by obstacles. These students have devised a means to endure to the end, utilizing tactics that keep them focused and on course (Dweck et al., 2014).

Student Persistence

Arana et al. (2011) conducted a qualitative study on persistence involving 33 Latina/o undergraduate students at a private Hispanic serving institution using interviews and focus groups. Arana et al. identified 3 dimensions as critical to either encouraging or obstructing student persistence: student context, college context, and interaction between student and college context. Student context included factors such as family matters and whether the student was a first-generation college student. College context included issues related to the college experience, both positive and negative. Interaction between student and college context involved "a recognizable cultural identity" (Arana et al., 2011, p. 245) at the university and appreciation for the student challenge of handling both home and school life simultaneously.

Regarding student context, Arana et al. (2011) reported that some persisting students stated that their first-generation status was not an obstacle but a motivator to

continue to graduation. Students saw a college degree as an opportunity for a better life for themselves and their families. Supportive parents also contributed to persistence; however, family crises had the opposite effect. One student reported the loss of parental support as the reason for dropping out of school due to the impact of the loss of a sibling on the student's grades. Another student reported that he dropped out because of family obligations when his wife became pregnant. Nonpersistence was also attributed to confusion over what field to major in and feeling less connected as a part-time student to the educational process because of the lack of time devoted to academics.

Trolian et al. (2016) examined the influence of faculty-student interactions on academic motivation in a student's fourth year of college. Data were collected at three points in the college careers of more than 1,800 students from 17 institutions in 11 states in the United States. Trolian et al. examined different types of faculty-student interactions with two types of interactions found to be positively significant: quality and frequency of the contact. Trolian et al. recommended that "building student-faculty interaction measures into performance or tenure review processes may incentivize faculty members, and offering students course-and non-course-based incentives for meeting regularly with faculty may increase students' overall frequency of interactions" (p. 822). Limitations of the study included a lack of participants of color, as 82.1% were White. Successful college preparatory programs designed for at-risk minority students encourage students and assure them that they have the potential to succeed versus remedial programs that send an underlying message of limited student potential (Dweck et al., 2014).

Schwartz et al. (2016) described a unique intervention program held on a college campus aimed at teaching underrepresented high school seniors how to recruit mentors from their existing networks. Fourteen students participated in the eight-session workshops designed to teach them the value of mentoring relationships, skills for recruiting mentors, and ways to build those relationships. Students in the program learned to appreciate the value of social capital, developed their self-efficacy, and changed their behaviors when interacting with nonparental adults. Twelve students participated in the qualitative study, which consisted of pre- and post-interviews. Benefits of the program included recruiting mentors who would be a good fit versus being assigned a mentor who may or may not be effective as well as increasing the students' abilities to engage in help-seeking behaviors in college (Schwartz et al., 2016).

In the Arana et al. (2011) study, further prompting revealed that another contributing factor to nonpersistence was student preparation. Programs that address noncognitive factors and make students aware of the high academic standards they need to meet are a means to communicate that they are both supported and believed to be capable of accomplishing their goals (Dweck et al., 2014). Astin (2016) noted that the underprepared college student is not given the same educational opportunities afforded to students of privilege in the United States, making it far more difficult for them to succeed academically. Astin (2016) further stated that underprepared students are far more likely to be from underrepresented ethnic minorities and those with low socioeconomic backgrounds. Astin (2016) cited high school dropout rates and the number of incarcerated citizens in the United States to further his argument for educational development of these

students and to help make education available for all students, regardless of their circumstances.

Positive experiences during college included supportive and enthusiastic professors and were attributed to making a difference in the lives of students who persisted in higher education (Arana et al., 2011). Some students who persisted, however, reported challenges. These included financial concerns and the discovery that not all classes taken in community college could be successfully transferred to their 4-year institution. Interventions by staff and faculty members helped students face these obstacles and were a factor contributing to their persistence. Arana et al. (2011) provided the example of a Latino student who found that he was not as comfortable at college as his previous school, having come from a school where the majority of his peers were also Latina/o. Making the adjustment to a school with fewer students from his own culture proved to be problematic. He also perceived that his academic ability was being questioned and did not complete college. Others who failed to persist reported having expected more support from the school than they encountered. Arana et al. concluded that students who are not able to connect academically and socially to their academic environment are in danger of nonpersistence. Events that fostered student engagement contributed to persistence and included opportunities for students to socialize outside class and recreational activities. Arana et al. stated that students who come to college underprepared and vulnerable are far more likely to leave without a positive and welcoming campus climate experience.

Kniess et al. (2015) conducted a qualitative case study of 11 undergraduate Black students in their second year at a PWI. Utilizing Yosso's (2005) community of cultural wealth model, Kniess et al. held focus groups, key informant interviews, collected artifacts and included observations to round out the study. Yosso (2005) listed six forms of capital that constitute cultural wealth: "aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant" (Yosso & García, 2007, p. 154). Four themes emerged from the research: "finding my community, the power of commitments, quest for balance, and strategizing for second-year student success" (Kniess et al., 2015, p. 151). Three of Yosso's (2005) forms of cultural capital appeared critical to student retention: aspirational, social, and navigational. Nine of the 11 students contemplated leaving in the second semester of their first year.

Students in the Kniess et al. (2015) study reported that their support networks were instrumental in securing their return to school. The commitments they made to themselves or organizations and their network made a substantial difference. One student whose support network was based in a mentoring program stated that his reasons for remaining were "solely, primarily 100% the people that I met . . . the people that I had met and became my circle . . . I wouldn't find anywhere else" (Kniess et al., 2015, p. 152). Strategies for housing staff to improve student retention for second-year Black students included developing opportunities for students to receive social and academic support, ensuring that mentors are available for first-year students, connecting students with peers, and building an environment for second-year students to exist as a community of learners (Kniess et al., 2015). Lastly, Kniess et al. found that participation in a focus

group gave students the chance to contemplate and discuss what they had experienced in college and the time to consider how to incorporate new ways of thinking and behaving so they can create an effective and sustainable plan to achieve their academic and personal goals.

Wolniak and Rekoutis (2016) conducted a study that examined students from adverse backgrounds who received scholarships and coped with college stressors. The researchers examined data from over 1,400 recipients of the Horatio Alger Association Scholarship Program. Of the students surveyed, over 85% "had critical financial need, about 40% experienced the death, incarceration, or abandonment of a parent or guardian, one-third lived in a household with alcohol or drug abuse, and roughly 12% had experienced homelessness" (Wolniak & Rekoutis, 2016, p. 9). Wolniak and Rekoutis likened the recipients' self-efficacy to that of survival optimism, having survived extreme adverse conditions prior to college but possessing the ability to successfully locate and utilize the resources necessary to survive in higher education. Wolniak and Rekoutis also cited the necessity for first-year students to reorganize their ability to adapt, realizing that distance removed the emotional support of friends or family, and that adapting to the new environment required investigating what their new setting had to offer in the way of support. Wolniak and Rekoutis's findings support previous studies on coping, confirming that positive coping mechanisms include "internal locus of control, social integration and support" (p. 23). To support students from adverse backgrounds and their ability to cope with college stressors, Wolniak and Rekoutis concluded with a recommendation for the increased visibility of campus resources and a heightened awareness of the programs that

students seek out. This includes mentors and the role they play in developing the students' self-efficacy, thus creating an atmosphere in which students are set up to succeed academically and socially.

Shared cultural experiences are a positive factor in the interaction between the student and college context. In an ethnographic study conducted by Albers and Frederick (2013), two Latina/o teachers at a high school of 2,000 students (75% Latina/o) cited the positive effect shared culture had on student success. The instructors felt that they were able to establish a strong connection with students through shared culture and ethnicity (Albers & Frederick, 2013). Connecting with other students from the same background also enhanced student persistence (Arana et al., 2011). According to Arana et al. (2011), those students who persisted "found the interaction between their self-identity and the cultural atmosphere of an HSI to be a major catalyst for success" (p. 246). Students who did not persist reported a lack of understanding of their need to balance outside responsibilities, such as work and family, with their college schedules and academic expectations. This sentiment was also shared by the Latino men interviewed in a qualitative study at an urban community college by Ingram and Matthews (2013), who recommended that educational institutions need to demonstrate sensitivity to the lifestyles of these students to encourage their persistence. The students interviewed in the study offered their opinions for what the institution should provide and suggested the school create occasions for students to socialize that took into account the limited time students have given their outside obligations (Ingram & Matthews, 2013).

Academic Success

Student success is not solely a matter of students taking responsibility for themselves. At the 20 schools involved in the Going DEEP project, key leaders make it a practice to reiterate to members of their institution the importance of focusing on the DEEP priorities and keeping learning centered on the student. Developing a culture of shared responsibility among administrators, faculty members, staff, and students for student success at these schools has resulted in higher scores for student engagement on the NSSE (Kinzie and Kuh, 2004).

Morales (2014) echoed a culture of shared responsibility based on his qualitative study of 50 students of color from low socioeconomic backgrounds. These students proved to be academically resilient despite being considered at-risk, both statistically and historically (Morales, 2014). Kitano and Lewis noted that the four dynamics most frequently used in resilience theory were “risk factors, protective factors, vulnerability areas, and compensatory strategies” (Kitano & Lewis, 2005, p. 201). Risk factors vary but tend to be environmental and include situations such as attending schools that do not prepare the student for college and the inability to access technology (Morales, 2014). As such, risk factors present challenges or obstacles to the student. Protective factors also differ but include dedicated individuals that the student encounters, both at home and in school, and the quality of the school attended. Protective factors serve to diminish the strength of the risk factors. Vulnerabilities are tied to risk factors and place the student in a compromised situation due to the risk factor. This could manifest in a situation such as when a student fails to complete an important task due to their lack of expertise,

connections, or understanding of how things work in an institution of higher education; thus, making them vulnerable to failure. Lastly, compensatory strategies take protective factors and make them active in repelling and eliminating both vulnerabilities and risks (Morales, 2014). Morales cited a specific example where a letter of support for college could be considered a compensatory strategy since the letter indicated that despite the challenges the student had faced in their lifetime, they were eager to attend college.

Morales (2014) identified four categories that emerged from his study and provided examples of how faculty can incorporate related strategies into the classroom experience to improve resilience, retention, and graduation rates in students of color with low socioeconomic status. These categories included ways faculty can (a) continually strengthen a student's belief in their abilities, (b) assist students to critically evaluate where they excel and whey they need to improve, (c) support students to take it upon themselves to locate assistance when needed, and (d) explain to students how the success they achieve in school translates to a future in which then can support themselves financially (Morales, 2014, p. 95).

Morales (2014) pointed out that many of the efforts to improve retention are based outside the classroom such as access to scholarships, "mentoring groups, learning communities, comprehensive tutoring, and supplemental instruction activities" (p. 94). Morales urged faculty to consider incorporating strategies into the classroom experience that were gathered from the information provided by the students who participated in the study—methods that made a difference in these students' lives and contributed to their academic resilience. Though many of the strategies Morales offered were classroom-

dependent, some could be utilized by faculty who also served as mentors. Regarding building student self-efficacy, Morales cited several strategies. Students responded positively to faculty who cited the success of former students who persisted and achieved success; faculty who spoke about their challenges and how they accomplished their goals; professors who provided students with timely, thorough, and regular comments; and teachers who pointed out that building academic skills and achieving success is an iterative and evolving process.

In a study conducted by Harper et al. (2011) involving Black male resident advisers at six PWIs in the United States, the students interviewed reported being scrutinized more closely for their work ethic than their White peers. The students also stated that they were judged by the type of apparel they wore and how they wore it, claiming their White peers were surprised by their eloquence when they spoke. Other stereotypes they encountered were the expectation that they serve as "the angry Black man" (Harper et al., 2011, p. 191) in meetings, standing up to authority on behalf of those too intimidated to speak. At least one resident adviser in five of the six focus groups expressed reaching a point where they contemplated quitting their position based on their experiences with supervisors and fellow students (Harper et al., 2011).

Harper and Hurtado (2007) conducted an exhaustive review of the literature on campus racial climates and concluded that students who attend "racially diverse institutions and are engaged in educationally purposeful activities that involve interactions with peers from different racial/ethnic backgrounds come to enjoy cognitive, psychosocial, and interpersonal gains that are useful during and after college" (p. 14).

Similarly, Milem et al. (2005) highlighted the positive effect that diversity can have on the campus community and the resulting student experiences that prepare them for working in a global environment. Milem et al. discussed making diversity work, citing the importance of increasing diversity on campuses through outreach programs with local high schools with whom they share a common purpose (e.g., a college-going culture, a demanding academic curriculum, and support for college preparation). Milem et al. stated, "Outreach programs should be connected with rural and inner-city high schools that have historically sent few graduates to colleges and universities" (p. 20). Milem et al. further noted that preparation on behalf of the institution of higher education needed to be adequate to welcome and support the recruited students upon their arrival. Milem et al. recommended using a multidimensional approach, addressing issues including the identification of educational inequities on campus, student engagement in organizations, a retention program, and financial aid opportunities (Milem et al., 2005).

Mudge and Higgins (2011) also advocated for the removal of barriers to college access for underrepresented students, recommending a nearly identical approach to that of Milem et al. (2005) of creating a college-going culture in high school and college readiness programs. However, Mudge and Higgins included family education, stating that "without family member approval and support, the realization of postsecondary aspirations isn't likely to occur for most students" (p. 130). As these families are unlikely to receive information through personal contacts, Mudge and Higgins advocated for intervention by the school for parents who do not have equal access to the resources necessary to help their children success academically.

The University of Virginia, a PWI, holds the distinction of consistently graduating more Black undergraduates than any other PWI in the United States (Apprey et al., 2014). Apprey et al. (2014) attributed this success to an "inclusive cluster-mentoring model" (p. 318) comprised of advising by peers for peers, mentoring and advising of students by faculty, programs that consider culture, and well-thought-out planning and support for parents of the students. An examination of the success of this program focused on three theories: social belonging, student engagement and cultural synchronization (Apprey et al., 2014). Apprey et al. stated that "cultural synchronization is present when two or more people or groups communicate in ways that reflect knowledge of the features that distinguish one culture from another" (p. 322). Apprey et al. also noted that instructors are better equipped to design courses when they are aware of the aspects of shared cultural values among Black students (Apprey et al., 2014).

Dweck et al. (2014) cited that students need to possess noncognitive factors to achieve academic success. These factors include the "students' beliefs about themselves, their goals in school, their feelings of social belonging, and their self-regulatory skills" (Dweck et al., 2014, p. 5). Rendon (1994) also spoke to the importance of students believing in themselves to achieve academic success; however, Rendon cited the effect of outside validation on self-belief as making the difference, especially among nontraditional students. Rendon worked with a team of researchers in the early 1990s on a qualitative study that reported on the importance of validation. In this study, 132 first-year students entering institutions of higher education participated in focus group interviews (Terenzini et al., 1994). These students were from four distinct institutions of

higher education including a community college, a predominantly White residential institution, a predominantly commuter state university serving a large Black student population, and a predominantly White research institute. Terenzini et al. (1994) looked at how students transitioned to college and their levels of student involvement. Students were interviewed using open-ended questions. Differences began to emerge between how the underrepresented students versus traditional students experienced transition. Underrepresented students reported feeling doubtful of their ability to succeed in college and focused on finding academic life challenging, whereas, traditional students were more concerned with making friends. Terenzini et al. (1994) stated that the results of these interviews indicated that first-generation and underrepresented students expressed the need for validation, both in and outside the classroom. Terenzini et al. recommended that programs be set in place to address these needs, such as educating faculty through professional development, including faculty and parents in freshmen orientation, and demonstrating to students that someone cares (Terenzini et al., 1994). Terenzini et al. also stated that the concept of feeling cared for permeated the interviews and reinforced the need for students to be validated through a show of respect and an appreciation for the value they bring to the college environment.

Influence of Mentoring on Mentors and Mentees

Written from the perspectives of five undergraduate researchers, Pita et al. (2013), produced several effective mentoring strategies. In regard to the mentoring relationship, Pita et al. recommended five strategies that mentors should employ: (a) make oneself available, (b) foster community, (c) be attentive, (d) encourage participation in the

broader research community, and (e) be understanding. Pita et al. deemed these strategies to have the capacity to inspire enthusiasm, student engagement, and student ownership in the quality of work produced.

In a study initiated by a Black female mentor, mentees were asked to share their "perceptions, experiences and educational outcomes as related to mentorship" (Griffin et al., 2015, p. 16). Six mentees, both Black and White, shared their personal narratives in written form. Four themes emerged as instrumental in helping each mentee achieve their goals: "approachability through psychosocial support, support and challenge, development of professional voice . . . and, discovering purpose" (Griffin et al., 2015, p. 17). The findings by Griffin et al. (2015) indicated that the students found their voice through contact with mentors who were easy to reach and who established trust, creating a relationship that allowed the mentee to grow while facing challenges, but also receiving the care necessary to help them find and share their thoughts and feelings. Griffin et al. noted the use of emotional intelligence by both the mentor and mentees expressed through optimism, empathy, and a willingness to developing others as contributing to healthy bonds and communications between mentor and mentee and successful results for the student.

Mayer's (2014) theory of personal intelligence is "divided into four interrelated areas of problem-solving: identifying information, forming models, guiding personal choices, and systematizing plans" (p. 73). Mayer also stated that self-awareness in relation to one's path is guided by personal intelligence; however, Mayer noted that emerging adults struggle with direction. Individuals with personal intelligence generally

express intentions that are not in conflict with each other and are capable of setting reasonable goals, and thus do not get overwhelmed or pursue goals that cannot be reasonably met (Mayer, 2014). Clayton Christensen, businessman, scholar, and religious leader challenges his Harvard Business School students with a similar task at the end of each semester. After having studied exemplary business theories that help to explain the history of a business and predict future outcomes, students are asked to apply those same business theories to examine themselves and consider their own future. In his book "How Will You Measure Your Life?" (Christensen, 2012) Christensen encourages them to ask themselves questions designed to guide decision-making and the formulation of plans that lead to a life of success and one that is built on integrity. This practice of applying business strategies to life aligns with Mayer's theory of personal intelligence which focuses aspects of problem-solving.

In the first year of the Mentoring Matters Program at the College of Charleston, upperclassmen, staff, and faculty were invited to volunteer as mentors (Booker & Brevard, 2017). Of the 90 mentees who participated in the program, only 58 responded to the end of the year survey. According to Booker and Brevard (2017), three major themes emerged involving the mentee experience: accessibility and communication, academic and social support, and valuable support with the transition. In this study, the type of mentor was positively related to effectiveness. Sixty-two percent of students who had faculty or staff mentors found this connection to be valuable or extremely valuable, whereas 50% of the students with peer mentors felt there was no connection at all (Booker & Brevard, 2017). Booker and Brevard also noted that regardless of the type of

mentor, the topics most discussed between mentee and mentor were academic issues (76%) and personal issues (53%). Students also reported that the program provided them with a personal connection with someone who could fulfill their need for a guide, friend, parent or helper (Booker & Brevard, 2017).

Langer (2010) conducted a study of nontraditional student perceptions of their mentee experience at a college where mentoring is required as part of the institution's mission. Langer defined nontraditional undergraduate students as part-time and commuter students. In a previous study published in 2001, Langer (2001) used the same research procedures involving interviews and a survey instrument but with a focus on faculty perceptions of the mentoring experience. This provided consistency between the studies in the research design and allowed for some comparisons between the two studies (Langer, 2010). Additionally, in the study published in 2010, Langer gathered data from student interviews conducted in person. Langer (2010) noted that since the completion of the first study, the institution's student population had become increasingly diverse and also included distance education students.

Langer's (2010) interview guide contained 20 questions organized into four categories: (a) experiences with the mentoring process; (b) objectives of mentoring; (c) defining functions, roles, and responsibilities; and (d) what do students value most about the mentoring process? (p. 38). In his findings regarding the ethnicity of students in the study, Langer (2010) found that students of color felt more alienated and insecure and had more trouble accessing resources than their White counterparts and were unlikely to discuss these issues with their mentors.

Johnson (2016) noted that there are distinct differences between advisers, mentors, and coaches. Advisers and coaches for students are typically assigned positions, although in these roles they have the potential to evolve into a more personal relationship with the individual as mentors. Allen et al. (2009) acknowledged that there were similarities between mentoring and coaching, including the length of the relationship with the mentee or protégé and the type of activities involved. These might include critiquing the protégé, instructing them on how to change the way they react or deal with situations, and creating a plan for action, including short and long-term goals (Allen et al., 2009). Coaching tends to be related to academic guidance and frequently done by professionals. Interventions are tailored to what the protégé requires and are frequently based on dialoguing with the protégé, asking them questions, evaluating their needs, and determining areas for improvement (Allen et al., 2009).

McLean (2012) identified five stages of a coaching assignment: (1) establish the coaching contract, (2) realize the current situation and the inspired future, (3) build the plan, (4) implement the plan, and (5) end the coaching engagement (p. 124). In the first stage, the coach discusses the coaching challenge, evaluates the client for their willingness to be coached, goes over the contract, and establishes an understanding of the initial objectives and desired results. McLean noted that in the second stage, only after the coach "has gathered the essential ingredients of the client's story, the key stakeholder perspectives, additional sources of data, and assessment information" (p. 145) should they proceed to set goals. Success is dependent on establishing the overarching aspirational goal or desired future of the person coached (client) and the behavioral goals

that will make achieving that goal possible. The third stage and planning phase involves the identification of barriers, abilities, conducting the inner work of developing awareness, and the outer work of adapting new behaviors. By the fourth stage, the relationship between the coach and the client should be well established, and the plan can be executed (McLean, 2012). The plan is guided by the goals and involves frequent check-ins and the malleability to reshape goals and direction as needed. During the fifth stage, the value of the experience is appraised, a long-range plan created, follow-up and support provided, and coaching outcomes measured. McLean argued that coaching builds leaders and successful organizations adopt a mindset for coaching by creating within them a "coaching culture" (p. 203).

Faculty and Professional Staff Perceptions of Their Influence on Mentees

Barrera (2014) discussed her efforts as a professor of Mexican American studies to change attitudes toward Latina/o students at a large, urban campus. At a forum with colleagues, she found herself in a situation where she felt the need to defend the cultural capital that Latinas/os brought to campus. She encountered a faculty member who made a derogatory comment about Latinas/os on campus, crediting them for "street smarts," not "school smarts" (Barrera, 2014, p. 212). To create a "greater sense of community among the students and to facilitate an extended student-centered learning environment both in and out of the classroom" (p. 213), Barrera created a mentoring program tied to several sections of a Mexican American history course, pairing graduate mentors with undergraduate students. After successfully running the program for five years, the dean of the college committed to not only keeping the program in place but to enlarge it. Before

implementation of the program, at-risk students were more easily overlooked because of the number of students enrolled in the course. The mentoring program had significantly reduced the students' feeling of anonymity both in the course and at the university. Students participating in the program are contacted via email and are required to attend a one-on-one meeting with their mentor in their first month of enrollment in the course. Outcomes included an increase in retention rates, attendance, student participation, and grades (Barrera, 2014). Students were also required to meet with a faculty member by the second month of the course. Barrera reported that this faculty-student interaction resulted in improved communications as at-risk students felt more comfortable sharing the causes of their struggles. Barrera noted that open communication made a significant difference in situations that could otherwise be misread. Barrera noted two students in particular—one who was sleeping in class and the other who had repeated absences. After speaking with both, Barrera realized that the first student was the father of a newborn child and the second was expected to work more than one job to help his parents. What could have been read as a lack of interest by these students was avoided because of the mentoring program, and the students received the assistance they needed to complete the course. Lastly, to better understand these students, Barrera modified a getting-to-know-you questionnaire that students were administered at the beginning of each semester. These questionnaires asked critical questions about the students' lives and aspirations and provided a foundation from which to work to understand each student's circumstances.

Reddick (2011) conducted a qualitative study on students of Black faculty mentors at a PWI. Using a semistructured interview approach, Reddick spoke to five

male and five female mentors, broken into two samples. The first sample consisted of two men and two women who were tenure-track faculty and who had taught undergraduate students. The second group of faculty members consisted of three men and three women who were recommended by former mentees as being excellent in this role. Reddick held two interviews with each mentor. The first interview focused on the faculty members' backgrounds and the paths they followed to become a professor. The second interview involved issues directly related to mentoring Black undergraduate students and their perceptions of their effectiveness in this role. The mentors concurred that they all felt personally responsible for the success of Black students noting their shared cultural identity and experiences as a minority in higher education (Reddick, 2011).

Two of the female professors in Reddick's (2011) study felt it was a moral obligation to nurture Black students and present them with opportunities for growth. Two male full professors shared personal experiences with their mentees of when they attended school, stating that their knowledge of microaggressions on campus helped their mentees to cope with their present encounters. Racial microaggressions are "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 271). Another male professor in the study expressed that their cultural commonality with their mentees made it easy to build rapport and trust, creating a dialogue of "equal exchange" (Reddick, 2011, p. 328). The mentors remarked that the trust established in the mentor-mentee relationship created an atmosphere where the mentees felt comfortable to speak about the issues of racism they

had encountered. Black faculty also addressed the feedback their mentees received from White faculty who gave the students inauthentic responses on the type of work they were submitting. The mentors stated that not telling students the truth about the level of their work was a form of racism. This put the mentors in the uncomfortable position of having to administer tough love to ensure that the mentees worked to their full potential (Reddick, 2011). Further, Reddick noted gender differences in the responses to cultural commonality, stating that the female professors responded more empathetically and felt a need to assist the students to find the connections and resources necessary to help them to feel that they belong in college. Gender differences also arose regarding the time constraints felt by female mentors who were expected to be nurturers, often increasing their workload disproportionately to their male mentor counterparts to accommodate mentees.

The mentors in Reddick's (2011) study described encountering Black students who could benefit from mentoring but were unwilling to seek help because they wanted to appear to be self-sufficient. One mentor noted that to work around this she tried to keep dialogue relaxed and questions open-ended, noting that this often helped the students to share. A final important concern of the mentors was the balance between obtaining tenure and ensuring that they continue to mentor and nurture the next generation of Black scholars. Understanding the unique contributions Black mentors make at a PWI, the mentors acknowledged that mentoring should be seen as equally valuable to publishing and scholarship (Reddick, 2011).

In a study conducted at nine separate colleges or universities, Schreiner et al. (2011) interviewed 62 at-risk students to determine the influence that faculty and staff had on their persistence. The students identified 54 faculty or staff as having a positive influence on their lives. The faculty and staff were then interviewed to determine what they believed they had done to influence these students' persistence and success. Seven themes emerged from the interviews with faculty and staff:

- The need to engage students.
- The knowledge of their ability to affect students at key points in their college careers.
- The desire to positively influence the lives of the students.
- Being uniquely different from each other in temperaments and assets but seen as sincere by the students.
- Deliberately choosing to engage students on a personal level.
- Separate methods employed by faculty versus staff.
- Statements made by community college students of the dissimilarities between the kinds of actions they took that resulted in academic success. (Schreiner et al., 2011, pp. 325-326)

Faculty in the Schreiner et al. (2011) study who wanted to make a difference cited numerous ways in which they carried out this goal including encouraging students, believing in students, spending time with them, and challenging them. Differences emerged in the faculty versus staff regarding how each perceived their influence and in what students valued from their interactions with them. Faculty believed that their energy

and enthusiasm to both support and challenge students made the difference. Staff believed the care and encouragement they gave the students was what made the students respond well to them. Schreiner et al. emphasized the importance of fit between students and the faculty and staff they encounter. Schreiner et al. stated that the most successful mentors genuinely have a positive response to the kinds of students that attend their institution, are aware of what the students require in the way of support, appreciate connecting with them, and are capable of taking the appropriate action regardless of the challenges encountered. (Schreiner et al., 2011, p. 334).

Effect of Mentoring on Student Persistence

The professional coaching agency InsideTrack successfully increased student persistence across 17 institutions of higher education (Bettinger & Baker, 2014). A critical strategy the agency employs is to discuss with the student the use of their time away from school. The InsideTrack coach asks questions about work schedules, caregiving responsibilities, and financial constraints to help students recognize impediments to academic success, strategize means to work through them, and make a plan to achieve their academic goals.

According to Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), student time spent with faculty in locations other than the classroom has a positive effect on student retention and the student's ability to achieve their academic goals. At a large, urban, highly diverse university in Los Angeles, a faculty mentor program was created in 1987 to work with at-risk students to further student engagement, both academically and socially (Santos & Reigadas, 2004). At the time of Santos and Reigadas's (2004) study, the student

population was slightly over 31% Latino, 30% Black, 25% White, 11% Asian, and 0.8% American Indian. This study was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the mentoring program. Santos and Reigadas sent questionnaires to 200 mentees of which 65 completed surveys were returned. Of the students participating in the survey, 70% were first in their family to attend college. Approximately 45% of the students were matched ethnically with their mentors and had been in the program for at least one year. Mentor and mentee met on an average of once a month. Santos and Reigadas found that students who were ethnically matched with their mentors met with them more frequently, reported higher levels of self-efficacy, more clearly outlined academic objectives, and had greater career goals than mentees who were not ethnically matched.

Effect of Mentoring on Student Academic Success

In the Santos and Reigadas (2004) study, the findings indicated that "frequency of student-mentor contact had a positive direct effect on program satisfaction and students' GPA" (p. 349). In the analysis conducted by Bettinger and Baker (2014) on the results from Inside Track, retention rates were higher for students who received coaching versus the noncoached group of students. After a year of coaching, this group was 5.3% more likely to remain in school (Bettinger & Baker, 2014).

Campbell and Campbell (2007) investigated the outcomes of a mentoring program on at-risk students at a large metropolitan university. The program was open to all students, but its main focus was on Latina/o and Black students. During the year of this study, 126 faculty or staff members mentored 339 students. More than 90 of the mentors were White. The remainder were 15 Latinos, 14 Asians, five Blacks and one

Native American (Campbell & Campbell, 2007). The students were matched to a control group by a computer with students with comparable characteristics including gender, ethnicity, entering grade level, and GPA. At the end of the year, the mentored group had a considerably better rate for persistence than the control group (Campbell & Campbell, 2007). Additionally, of the students who left the university, the results showed that slightly over 14% of the mentees departed versus over 26% of the control group. Lastly, mentored students were more likely to graduate than the students who did not participate in the program. Fifty-eight percent of the mentees graduated versus 52% of those who were not in the program (Campbell & Campbell, 2007).

Cavazos (2016) interviewed 10 successful Latinas/os in academia to determine the influence that mentoring and multiethnic coursework had on their academic achievement. One Latina instructor noted that students from her culture appreciated their commonality and connected with her because she was from the neighborhood. She further stated, “When the faculty mentor is Latina/o students believe they also belong in academia as future academics, but all students are exposed to diverse views, languages, and cultures, which enriches the educational experiences” (Cavazos, 2016, p. 17). One Latino academic, who at the time was working as a clerk, recalled a mentor who took an interest in him and encouraged him to apply for a position as a writing teacher because of his bachelor’s degree in English. Cavazos credited the mentor’s advice and support for the student’s abilities, which ultimately motivated him to apply for and receive the position.

Effect of Mentoring on Student Development of Social Competency

Lang (2010) stated that arriving at one definition for social competency is difficult as it appears in several disciplines and is also referred to as "interactional competence," "communicative competence," "interpersonal competence," "relational competence," "emotional competence," "communication competence," or "social skills" (p. 14). Lang noted that "it requires a transdisciplinary definition that addresses both individual elements and collective, social, group elements" (p. 14). The elements of social competence include:

- A perception of oneself and understanding of one's abilities.
- A perception of others and some understanding of their abilities.
- The ability to take responsibility for oneself and control one's actions.
- The ability to make decisions and to organize.
- An aptitude to interact socially and appropriately and to find balance in social interactions.
- An understanding of acceptable means of interfacing and the perception of social signals and precedents. (Lang, 2010, p. 19)

Although Lang's area of expertise is social work, the author (2010) remarked that the ability to spot the need for interventions in group situations, such as a classroom, is also a skill shared by teachers. Lang stated that "the recognition of 'intervenable moments' is a first step to becoming a skilled practitioner" (Lang, 2010, p. 77). Lang noted the importance of working in what is designated a "sufficient" (p. 79) group where all members are socially competent so they can recognize situations in which a group is

not functioning with social competence. Social noncompetence is present when a member or members of the group lack the social skills necessary to interact with others and engage in behaviors that obstructs the cohesiveness within the group (Lang, 2010).

Wentzel (2012) developed a model of social supports and classroom competence that outlines the positive relationship between classroom social supports and both social and academic student engagement. Wentzel posited that these social supports influence "the psychological and emotional functioning of students" (Wentzel, 2012, p. 484). Wentzel's model depicts the reciprocal nature of what is labeled relationship provisions (emotional support, help, safety, expectations, or values) and the individual, labeled self-processes (efficacy, attributions or control beliefs, and affect). The interaction between the two results in student engagement and ultimately, competent outcomes. Wentzel elaborated that social supports accomplish the following:

- Classroom expectations are made available, and the types of behaviors that are important are relayed.
- Efforts to meet these expectations are both guided and supported.
- Efforts to meet these expectations can occur in a setting free of danger or threats.
- Individuals are embraced as important to the group as a whole. (Wentzel, 2012, pp. 483-484)

Effect of Mentoring on Student Development of Emotional Competency

The emotional competence framework is divided into two areas: personal and social competence (Goleman, 2006b). Gardner (1983), who wrote extensively on the

theory of multiple intelligences, originally proposed seven human intelligences. These include linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, and two personal intelligences: interpersonal and intrapersonal (Garner, 1983). Gardner (1999) spoke of Goleman's work on emotional intelligence, stating that Goleman's description of emotional intelligence was in keeping with Gardner's work on the personal intelligences. However, Gardner (1999) stated the following:

> When Goleman speaks about emotional intelligence as if it entails a certain set of recommended behaviors—empathy, considerateness, or working toward a more smoothly functioning family or community—he leaves the realm of intelligence, in a strictly scholarly sense, and enters the separate spheres of values and social policy (p. 69).

Gardner (1999) did entertain the possibility of another intelligence, that of existential intelligence. However, he noted the fact that although there were spiritual leaders who pondered the bigger issues in their lifetimes, such of Joan of Arc, there were also those who committed acts that do not align with behaving morally or with empathy even though they were also existential thinkers, such as Rasputin. Thus, Gardner (1999) did not support the idea that behaving morally or with empathy translated to emotional intelligence.

A study of the effect of the emotional intelligence of faculty members in higher education was conducted on students in an introductory business course and their randomly assigned faculty mentors (Lillis, 2011). The purpose of the study was to analyze the connection between faculty-student interactions and student departure. Both

mentors and mentees completed the Emotional Competence Inventory, which consisted of 74 questions and 18 measures of competencies. These measures were divided into six groups: emotional self-awareness, social awareness, self-regulation, motivation skills, working with others, and leading others. To determine the faculty mentor's final emotional intelligence rating, Lillis (2011) averaged the ratings from the faculty's perceptions of themselves with student perceptions of the faculty. The results indicated that five of the nine faculty mentors received high scores for emotional intelligence with the remaining four receiving low scores. The findings indicated that students who met more frequently with their faculty mentors were more likely to remain in school. Additionally, the faculty's emotional intelligence rating negatively affected student retention when communications between the faculty and student were infrequent (Lillis, 2011). Lillis attributed this to the fact that minimal interactions resulted in minimal guidance, both academically and socially. Thus, regardless of the faculty mentor's level of emotional intelligence, more frequent interactions resulted in more positive results.

Effect of Mentoring on Mentors' Social and Emotional Competency

Johnson (2016) stated that students attending an institute of higher education frequently experience changes in their perception of themselves. Johnson further stated that it is during this time of transition that relationships are reexamined and reformulated and the emerging adult begins to envision their new persona. Johnson employed this shared recognition of the potential malleability of undergraduates as an inducement for faculty to consider the deeply rewarding role of mentor with the potential of creating circumstances that are positively transformational for the mentee. (Johnson, 2016).

Cherniss (2007) stated that the emotional competency of the mentor effects the mentee's emotional competence, stating that "the mentor often becomes an emotional model for the protégé" (p. 436). Cherniss also reported that emotional intelligence makes a significant difference in mentoring relationships as these relationships can involve vulnerability and intimacy. Therefore, a mentor with emotional intelligence is more capable of managing any anxiety that may be experienced during the relationship and is also capable of setting the tone for the relationship.

Using Bar-On's Emotional Quotient Inventory scale, three certified facilitators led a series of workshops and individual sessions over 2 years with 21 secondary school teachers in a rural school in Israel (Dolev & Leshem, 2017). The teachers voluntarily participated in the training. During the interviews, many observed that the experience was transformational. According to Dolev and Leshem (2017), by learning to incorporate emotional intelligence into their lives, the instructors found that this effected their wellbeing as well as improved their effectiveness as teachers. The instructors reported increased self-awareness and the ability to communicate more effectively with students, improving their relationships with students. As a result of the training, all teachers began to look at their students from a different perspective, taking into account emotional intelligence competencies and their effect on the students' actions and performances (Dolev & Leshem, 2017).

Mentors can be challenged when placed in a position to advocate for their mentees. Cherniss (2007) stated that understanding the emotional climate of an institution is important and noted that to be successful, a mentor needs to possess a wealth of

compassion. According to Cherniss, emotionally intelligent mentors are flexible, authentic, nurturing, approachable, inspirational, conscientious, caring, and empathetic. Teachers in the Dolev and Leshem (2017) study reported that emotional intelligence training equipped them to be more socially and emotionally sensitive when interacting with student mentees. Dolev and Leshem stated that the faculty members' training helped them to better understand their own emotions, which resulted in increased sensitivity to the emotions of students and a decrease in viewing students through a hypercritical lens. Faculty who were mindful and aware of their emotional and social state found this helped them to be sensitive to the needs of different types of students (Dolev & Leshem, 2017). Knowledge of emotional intelligence and how emotional and social competence effects relationships between mentors and mentees will help in the analysis of the findings from my study.

Conclusion

This study addressed the academic success of at-risk, low socioeconomic, first generation student mentees and their relationship with faculty and professional staff mentors. In this chapter, I discussed the conceptual framework used to guide my study and reviewed the current literature relevant to the research questions. I followed with a step-by-step analysis of the literature review search strategies and the library databases and search engines used to locate the material. I discussed the key statements and definitions inherent in the framework and utilized concepts from previous research studies to determine their relevance and benefit to the current study. This review included pertinent literature on at-risk students in urban, public institutions of higher education,

student persistence, and academic success, and the challenges faced by at-risk students in higher education. I examined student engagement and mentors, faculty as mentors, the influence of mentoring on mentors and mentees, and the effect of mentoring on student persistence. I examined the roles of faculty, professional staff, and peer mentors and their relationships with undergraduate mentees. Lastly, I investigated the influence of mentors on the social and emotional intelligence development of student mentees. In Chapter 3, I discuss the purpose of the study, research design and rationale, and methodology of the research.

Chapter 3: Research Method

In this interview-based study, I employed a basic qualitative approach to clarify how faculty and staff who mentor and coach at-risk undergraduates understand and pursue their work within their institutions, the strategies they use in this work, and the types of outcomes to which they see their work contributing. I systematically analyzed the data collected from these interviews to provide a better understanding of the views and practices of mentors and coaches in their work to improve student academic success and persistence towards graduation at a large, diverse, urban public institution of higher education that matriculates significant numbers of first generation learners, underrepresented minorities, and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

In this chapter, I describe my research approach and my role in the research process. I identify the target group of interest, sampling strategy, criteria for selection, and the method of recruitment of and contact with participants. I discuss the interview guide (see Appendix) and my efforts to ensure content validity and credibility. This chapter continues with a narrative concerning the data collection method including how the data was recorded, the debriefing of participants, and the ethical procedures that were employed throughout the process. Next, I outlined my data analysis plan and a description of how I coded the data. I conclude with a discussion of the issues of trustworthiness and how these were addressed throughout the data collection and analysis process.

Research Design and Rationale

The development of my research design was iterative; I developed and reworked the design as I refined my research questions. As I chose to conduct basic qualitative research, the purpose shaped its design.

RQ1: How do faculty and professional staff who mentor and coach undergraduate students who are at risk of failing to persist to graduation perceive their work?

RQ2: How do faculty and professional staff who mentor and coach undergraduate students who are at risk of failing describe their influence on these students' development and persistence to graduation?

RQ3: How do faculty and professional staff who mentor describe the role of their mentoring relationship in the development of social or emotional competency in themselves and their mentees?

In this study, I sought to contribute to the understanding of the interactions between faculty and professional staff mentors and at-risk students by investigating the experiences of faculty and professional staff who have mentored or coached this population toward academic success. This study could help to clarify what difference practitioners report their mentoring makes to their mentees' abilities to further their education. The findings of this study may be of interest to current and potential mentors, educators who are interested in establishing mentoring programs, and administrators who need to justify expenditures for mentoring programs of at-risk students.

As a quantitative approach is focused on gathering and analyzing data from large samples, and the focus of my study relied on gathering detailed perspectives from faculty

and staff, it was not feasible to use a quantitative approach. Therefore, I reviewed 16 different qualitative approaches (Patton, 2015). I had considered an ethnographic approach, which would have narrowed the focus of my research to mentors and mentees who share the same cultural background. As my concern was with persistence rates of at-risk students, choosing such a narrow focus would have limited my pool of participants that fit the criteria and shifted the focus to the culture of the groups versus the relationship of mentor and mentee. I had also considered a phenomenological approach in which I could explore the lived experiences of faculty and staff mentors in relation to their mentees. However, this approach would best suit a study in which I could interview not only the mentors, but the mentees as well. The scope of such a study would have required a large time commitment from all participants, and given the time constraints placed on employees at large, urban institutions of higher education, this approach would have vastly limited the pool of willing participants.

I concluded that a basic qualitative inquiry would be the most effective design for my research study. Although Patton (2015) labeled this approach generic, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that this term did not provide a clear meaning and suggested the designation of a basic qualitative study. Each qualitative method contains a different emphasis, concentration, or framework (Patton, 2015). In this study, I focused on meaning, understanding, and process.

My research problem, purpose statement, and research questions aligned with a basic qualitative inquiry approach. I used this approach to examine how mentors perceive their encounters with at-risk mentees, how they build their lives as mentors, and what

meaning they ascribe to their mentoring experiences with at-risk students. My research problem, the consistently lower rates of persistence to graduation of at-risk students from an institution of higher education, was the basis for the development of my research questions. The purpose of this study was to gather information on the experiences of faculty and professional staff mentors and coaches to increase the body of knowledge on their perceptions of the influence they have on the persistence towards graduation of at-risk mentees. My research questions aligned with the central focus of the basic qualitative research questions and include how the mentor's experience is described or explored, and what practical knowledge can be learned through interviews. The majority of my interview questions were open-ended. The reason for the selection of this type of question was to produce a wealth of data on numerous topics affecting underrepresented student mentees such as the perceived influence of mentoring on issues of academic success and persistence to graduation.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative studies, the researcher is the instrument for the collection and analysis of data (Merriam, 2009). Thus, I was able to manage the information gathered without delays and contact those participants whose information required clarification. It was my role as the researcher to conduct a successful interview by establishing rapport with the interviewees. I asked open-ended questions, which invited the participants to reflect and offer meaningful and rich responses. I was careful to be clear, listen and respond to the interviewees, ask probing questions when necessary, and use observation to make adjustments during the interviews when needed that were sensitive to the

responses of the participants. I also prepared for the unforeseen and remained attentive throughout the interview process. In the analysis phase, I was challenged to understand and clarify a large amount of data, condense it, use critical thinking skills to discern the significant from the insignificant, locate noteworthy patterns, and then provide a clear and structured presentation of the data (Patton, 2015).

Bias, according to Merriam (2009), is human. Energy spent attempting to eliminate bias should be replaced by prior reflection and disclosure of bias as well as vigilant monitoring throughout the research process. As I was not employed at the institution where I conducted my research, my role was that of an outside researcher seeking to conduct research at the institution. To minimize bias, I used data triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation (Patton, 2015). To achieve data triangulation, I used "cross-data validity checks" (Patton, 2015, p. 316), which was done through a comparison of the coded transcripts, interview notes, and listening to the audio recorded interviews. I accomplished scholarly triangulation using the theories presented in the conceptual framework as well as previous research findings from the literature review as lenses through which to view the data from multiple perspectives. Lastly, I achieved methodological triangulation through the combined methods of comparative and inductive analysis. To realize this, I coded the data gathered from the interviews and looked at themes and patterns, while allowing more categories to emerge throughout the analysis process.

Credibility was strengthened by bias management through validation with participants in the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). After I had interviewed the first few

participants, I began sending a complete, typed transcript to each participant and asking them if it was an accurate reflection of the information they shared or whether they wanted to add to or modify the transcript. I also created a table, logging their responses and the actions I took to ensure internal validation and checks for bias management.

Peer reviews take the form of scanning data and assessing whether findings are credible based upon the data that has been gathered (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A significant contributor to bias management was the peer debriefing provided by my dissertation committee. They debriefed emergent data and my findings throughout the process of data analysis and synthesis.

Ahern (1999) outlined a method for reflexive bracketing designed to help researchers avoid bias. This method is divided into three categories: preparation, postanalysis, and feedback. Preparation includes considering the researcher's race, gender, level of income, values, emotional triggers, knowledge of gatekeepers at the institution(s) where the research is conducted, the practice of seeking guidance when it appears that data has reached the saturation point, and examining obstacles encountered and considering how they might be transformed into opportunities. Postanalysis requires attention to examining the presentation of data, including reflecting on the number of times one participant is mentioned versus another to determine if this is an indicator of bias. Lastly, in the feedback phase, reinterviewing a participant might need to be done, or the transcript may need to be reexamined if bias is suspected. To caution against bias, I used the bracketing method outlined above to ensure that I was aware of any biases I may have had throughout the research process.

As I was not employed at the institution where I conducted this research, there was no question of power differentials between myself and the participants or a conflict of interest. The potential bias was managed through triangulation and dissertation committee debriefing as described above. I offered a $25 gift card from Amazon.com to each of the participants.

Methodology

The contributions of qualitative inquiry are many and include helping to illuminate meanings, allowing for the in-depth study into how things work, capturing stories for further understanding, clarifying how systems function, understanding context, revealing unexpected outcomes, and allowing for patterns and themes to emerge (Patton, 2015). My research questions directed the creation of the interview guide. These interview questions were designed to evoke the stories and experiences of the mentors of at-risk students. Most of the interview questions were open-ended, which increased the possibility for rich data gathering.

Participant Selection Logic

I interviewed 11 faculty and professional staff who mentor at-risk students in a California institution of higher education. The institution that I targeted to recruit volunteers does not assist external researchers with the recruitment process. They stated that it is entirely up to staff whether they wish to participate, and if they do, it is considered voluntary participation. The campus directory of this institution includes names, titles, departments and email addresses. Potential participants received an invitation to participate letter via email. The invitation letter specifically stated that the

purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of faculty and professional staff mentors and coaches to gain insight into the perceived influence of their mentoring of at-risk students' persistence toward graduation. Potential participants indicated their consent to participate by completing a short survey to determine eligibility to participate. The survey was designed to determine if they fit the criteria necessary to participate in the study. Potential participants received an email with a link to a Google form an embedded survey. The Google form was generated through my personal email account and I was the only individual who could access potential participant responses. Responses to the forms also populated a secured Google spreadsheet which could only be accessed using my personal email address and password. Those who did not meet the criteria, were notified and thanked for their interest. Those who met the eligibility requirements to participate were emailed and asked to set a time and location for the interview.

Potential participants whom I invited to be interviewed included faculty and staff members who have engaged regularly in mentoring and coaching at-risk students. I let participants know that I define at-risk students as students who are disproportionately underrepresented in higher education—particularly underrepresented minorities, first-generation college students, and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Thus, potential participants were made aware of the parameters of the criteria and could make an informed decision prior to commitment as to whether they would be suitable candidates for the study. During data analysis, I assessed the participants' perceptions of their influence on at-risk student mentees focusing on their influence on student development and success.

I used nonprobability sampling in this study since probability sampling allows for generalization, which is not the goal of a qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As I intended to find, recognize, and gain a better understanding of the perceptions of these mentors, I conducted purposive or purposeful sampling from a segment of the population that had the potential to provide rich data. Data analysis was inductive and comparative.

The inclusion criteria for the subjects of my study were that the participants were faculty members or professional staff at a 4-year public urban institution who have mentored at-risk students for a minimum of 2 years. In the short eligibility survey the potential participant were asked if they were faculty or staff, how many at-risk students they had mentored, how long they had been mentoring, and if their mentoring experiences were part of an established program. In a study of at-risk youth, Raposa et al. (2016) determined that overcoming the negative impact of stressors on youth to maintain a mentor-mentee relationship was best achieved by mentors who had high levels of self-efficacy and prior experience with the young people in their community. Thus, although the number of at-risk students mentored by an individual is beneficial, it is not necessarily an indicator of the mentor's overall ability to positively influence a mentee. The quality of the mentoring experience cannot be measured in numbers. It is derived from the perceived influence the mentor has had on a mentee. Thus, the questions asked in the eligibility criteria survey were designed to get a snapshot of the potential participant's experience as a mentor of at-risk students.

My exclusion criteria, which would disqualify subjects from my study, were faculty and professional staff members who had not mentored at-risk students in higher

education or those that had less than 2 years of mentoring experience. The university directory was used to locate faculty and professional staff members' email addresses for departments and programs across campus including departments focused on the study of Latinos, Blacks, social studies and ethnic studies, as well as centers focused on student success. Also included were departments focused on academic advising and student retention, the Equal Opportunity Program, and a first-generation college student program. The invitation to participate letter was emailed to members of these programs. It should be noted that the faculty and staff working in these units are diverse in their representation of culture, race and ethnicity, and include not only representatives of underrepresented populations, but White and Asian faculty and staff members as well.

Some researchers are at odds as to the appropriate sample size for basic qualitative research and state that it is contingent upon a number of epistemological and methodological circumstances including the purpose of the study and the type of research questions posed (Baker et al., 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015;). I initially proposed conducting a minimum of eight to 10 completed interviews with the understanding that this would be adjusted based upon the ongoing analysis of interviews. Data saturation can occur in small sample sizes when information gathered starts to become redundant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), and I had collected sufficient data by the conclusion of 11 interviews.

Prior to approaching potential participants to join my study, I sought approval from Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). My IRB approval number is 08-23-19-0173532. Once I received approval, I submitted an External IRB Approval

Registration Form to the university where I conducted my research. This university's form clearly states that it is not responsible for supporting external investigators' research. Rather, the university chooses to accept the researcher's institution as the one designated to provide Walden as the institution designated to provide IRB approval. Thus, to move forward with my research at this university, I submitted a copy of Walden's IRB approval as well as the approved protocols.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) recommended that both the data and findings that emerge need to reach saturation to ensure that there are enough data to understand the concept being researched. Patton (2015) suggested that researchers conduct data collection and analysis simultaneously as this method will drive "subsequent data collection decisions" (p. 301). Data saturation was achieved by limiting participation to only those faculty and professional staff who have mentored at-risk students.

Instrumentation

In qualitative analysis, data gathering can include a variety of techniques including participant observation, documentary analysis, conversational and narrative analysis, and in-depth qualitative interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I chose to conduct in-depth interviews for researching the perceptions of faculty and professional staff mentors, and this method allowed me to utilize a semistructured interview approach and provided the flexibility necessary to add probing questions based on the responses given. These in-depth interviews resulted in rich and original data regarding the participants' perceptions of how they helped at-risk students succeed in higher education. I also wanted to gain information regarding their unique personal relationships with their

mentees. Rubin and Rubin (2012) listed four categories of interviews: focus groups, internet interviews, casual conversations and in-passing clarifications, and semistructured and unstructured interviews. As my participants were faculty and professional staff with potentially demanding schedules and time constraints, I chose semistructured interviews, which were prepared in advance, focused, and limited in scope but designed to elicit rich responses. I conducted the interviews at the convenience of the participants. The interviews took place in a private room in the library as this was the location preferred by the interviewees.

The primary source of data was the information gathered during the participant interviews in the form of transcribed interviews. As the qualitative researcher, I served as the main instrument of data collection, using the interview guide I had created to elicit information. Additional sources of data included interview notes.

I used a semistructured interview approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), which included the use of an interview guide I designed that allowed for flexibility. The majority of the interview questions were open-ended, allowing for the exploration of the mentor experience. A few demographic questions were added to provide descriptions of the survey participants. Also, I evaluated my research problem, purpose statement, and research questions to ensure that the interview questions were addressing the key concepts. These include student engagement, undergraduate retention and graduation, faculty-student interactions, coaching or mentoring at-risk students, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, first generation students, underrepresented minority students, and academic success.

I took notes on questions and thoughts that arose in regard to the data I collected, and documented ideas for coding and themes. I also reflected on the research process itself and examined my notes and findings for bias. Patton (2015) highlighted the connection between the credibility of the research and the credibility of the researcher: "The quality of reflexivity and reflectivity offered in a report is a window into the thinking processes that are the bedrock of qualitative analysis" (p. 700). Therefore, as the researcher and data collection instrument in this qualitative inquiry, I used reflection to ensure that I remained as objective as possible. The first step in the process is to use the bracketing method designed by Ahern (1999) to reflect on any biases I might have. After each interview, I documented my reactions to emerging data. I included my impressions of the intonation and body language of the participants during the in-person interviews conducted for this study. I also documented any unexpected responses and noteworthy quotes.

The interviews were audio recorded. Ideally, I conducted all the interviews in person, which made it easy to observe the nuances in the interviewees' body language. I transcribed the interviews manually over the course of several weeks and double checked the transcriptions against the audio recorded interviews for errors. I sent a copy of the interview transcript to the corresponding interviewee to ensure that there were no errors and to provide them with the opportunity to clarify any points they felt they needed to make. Coding did not commence until a final transcript was approved.

The interview guide I designed contains 14 questions that fall into one of five categories: (a) behaviors/experiences, (b) opinions/values (c) feelings/emotions, (d)

knowledge, and (e) sensory (Patton, 2015, p. 455). During the interviews, I used probes and follow-up questions when the responses received were unclear or to gain greater depth from the participant. The type of probing question used were based on the information needed. For example, detail-oriented questions use who, what, when, where, and how to provide a full composite of an experience or action to obtain a complete and detailed picture of some activity or experience (Patton, 2015). Elaboration probes were also used to encourage the participant to give more information. Lastly, clarification probes were used when responses were vague or confusing by implying that the lack of understanding was not the fault of the participant but the interviewer.

Interview Questions

I developed my interview questions by revisiting the purpose and problem statements. I took notes while attentively engaging with the participants during the interview process. No historical or legal documents were used in this study. The questions I developed for the interview guide included all aspects of the research problem and were framed using the conceptual framework guiding this study. These questions use language familiar to faculty and professional staff—mostly open-ended—allowing for unrestricted responses and focusing on their knowledge and personal experience of the topic of mentoring.

According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), the main interview questions should include all aspects of the research problem**,** while probes keep the dialogue focused and inspire the participant to offer profound and comprehensive information. Through active listening and with my interview guide, I used probing questions during the interviews

when the responses I received needed clarification or if they suggested a relevant path worth pursuing.

Unlike quantitative fieldwork where numbers can be checked for validity and credibility, in qualitative analysis, the researcher must report how the data were collected and entered. I provided participants with the transcript of their interview to ensure that their responses were accurate. Lastly, I discussed coding decisions with my advisor to ensure that I did not alter the meaning of relevant text (Patton, 2015).

Patton (2015) discussed the importance of rigorous thought in qualitative research. It is a combination of critical, creative, evaluative, inferential, and practical thinking. Although rigorous thinking should be utilized throughout the research process, evaluative thinking is most relevant during the design phase. By reexamining the purpose of the inquiry, the intended audience, and the potential use of the findings, I was able to develop research questions that directed the creation of the interview guide. The use of evaluative thinking also helped clarify the entire methodological process from participant selection, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, and the development of the data analysis plan.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Faculty members and professional staff who had served on committees focused on at-risk students, as well as members of relevant departments and programs, were emailed and asked to participate in this research study. As the focus of this study is on mentoring at-risk students, targeting the faculty and staff in the departments and programs in which these students could be found provided rich data and diverse

perspectives, as these programs include not only faculty and staff who share the cultures of the underrepresented student populations, but a diverse pool of faculty and staff. Participation was voluntary, and I offered a $25 gift card from Amazon.com for participation. Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed.

The method for data collection was followed with all participants recruited for this study. I conducted 11 interviews with faculty and professional staff mentors. Interviews took place in person in a private room at the local library, as this was the preferred location of the interviewees. As the sole researcher for this study, I collected data using my interview guide.

I informed each participants that the interviews would last approximately 60-90 minutes. Additionally, I notified them that if more time were needed to explore their responses, they would need to prepare for a slightly longer interview so their experiences could be probed in greater depth. I recorded each interview on a high-quality audio device and noted my thoughts directly after each interview while impressions were still fresh. I transcribed the audio recordings manually.

I debriefed the participants at the end of their interviews. They were thanked and given a $25 gift card from Amazon.com and they were also reminded that their responses would not be associated with their names. Also, I gave them a debriefing form which asked that they refrain from discussing the study with colleagues who might also be eligible to participate, thus, preventing the potential to compromise future interviews that might need to be scheduled to meet data saturation. Transcripts were sent to each

interviewee who provided clarification and modifications to the transcript as needed. (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Data Analysis Plan

Patton (2015) stated that in qualitative analysis the data gathered is converted into findings, but there are only guidelines and principles available to assist the researcher in determining whether a finding is noteworthy. The researcher must make meaning based upon the patterns that emerge during data analysis. The bulk of my data was derived from the transcripts of the interviews but also included my notes of the participants interviewed.

I identified, organized, and categorized my data. I looked at the data and developed themes and codes to represent what the participants said about their experiences with students. At this stage of analysis, I focused on the information provided by the participants without allowing my perspective to guide the findings. Rubin and Rubin (2012) defined inductive analysis as the method of "building explanations from the ground up, based on what is discovered" (p. 15). I used inductive analysis as a guide and treated each interview as unique. This allowed the data to present a complete picture, creating meaning from the perceptions of the mentors regarding how they engaged student mentees. Additionally, I looked for patterns and themes across interviews through comparative analysis, noting similarities and differences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The questions in the interview guide directly correspond to the main concepts introduced in the research questions. Thus, the coding of the data collected from the

interview questions can be linked to the concepts addressed in the research questions. I hand coded as this gave me the opportunity to interact better with the data and discover emerging themes. I analyzed the data with the strategy of convergence, searching for recurring ideas I then sorted into categories (Patton, 2015) and placed into an Excel spreadsheet. Using divergence involves the processes of extension, bridging, and surfacing. Extension included delving deep into the patterns revealed while bridging allowed me to make connections among these patterns. Lastly, surfacing involves introducing categories related to the existing categories and then checking for their presence in the data. I labeled the relevant text as either a concept, theme, event, example, or topical marker (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) by placing the label after the corresponding word or phrase being coded and adding an additional term or phrase that captured the essence of the participants' responses.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that the strategy of adequate engagement in data collection might involve the researcher seeking discrepant or negative examples. Creswell (2007) recommended following up with discrepant cases to determine the reasons for these differences. Through convergent and divergent analysis, discrepant data may appear. I established a set of theme buckets to capture discrepant data in relation to each emergent theme I located—however no discrepancies surfaced that indicated a divergence from the primary patterns emerging from the data.

Issues of Trustworthiness

It was my role as the researcher to construct and sustain trustworthiness throughout the entire research process. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted that the terms

reliability and *validity* have also been used when addressing trustworthiness, though these terms tend to be used in quantitative research. As this was a qualitative study, I demonstrated trustworthiness by focusing on four key components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Shenton, 2004).

Credibility was established through several methods. First, I limited participants to only those faculty and staff who had mentored at-risk students in a 4-year urban, public institution of higher education, so that the data collected reflected a select pool of individuals qualified to offer their perceptions and expertise on mentoring or coaching in a specific type of university environment (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Next, I made it clear to the participants that participation was voluntary, and that they could opt out of the study at any time. This allowed the participants freedom and encouraged honesty, which in turn, increased credibility. Additionally, the interview guide consisted of open-ended questions, giving the participants the opportunity to share rich, detailed experiences as an expert. The prompts utilized did not imply that there was only one correct response for each question, which encouraged thick descriptions and enabled transferability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Once the data was gathered, credibility was strengthened through transcript review. Participants were sent the transcript of the interview to verify whether the information reflected their intentions. Triangulation via different types of informants also established credibility (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Informants in this study were ethnically and culturally diverse as well as either professional staff or faculty. This was accomplished by focusing the recruitment of participants from departments on campus that serve underrepresented minorities and first-

generation students. Additionally, I gave the potential participants a short survey which included asking them to identify whether they were an administrator, faculty, or staff member. Credibility was also strengthened through the use of advisory committee debriefing sessions.

I expect my results to be of potential interest to parties concerned with mentoring and coaching of at-risk undergraduates; however, I anticipate there to be special interest from those associated with large urban universities. This study and its results could be of special interest to those working in similar contexts. Specifically, those who could benefit are faculty and staff mentors at 4-year urban institutions of higher education with a population of comparable underrepresented minority students, first-generation college students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The potential for transferability will be enhanced by careful attention to the study sample (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) so that mentors in other institutions can relate to the backgrounds of the mentors and the populations they serve. As stated above, participants were both professional staff or faculty who have mentored underrepresented minorities and first-generation college students at an urban 4-year institution of higher education. Strict adherence to these parameters should serve to enhance the potential for transferability of the findings of this study to similar institutions of higher education in which these conditions also exist.

Dependability for this study was achieved by a thorough and detailed report of the process I followed including the research design and implementation, the steps taken in data gathering, the collection of relevant documentation from the institution where I

conducted the interviews, and the capturing of insights through reflective notetaking. As dependability is difficult to determine in qualitative research, it was established through a relationship between the data collected and the study findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This was strengthened by my dissertation committee's review, which helped to eliminate potential bias in the interpretation of my findings.

To ensure confirmability, I transcribed verbatim the interviews I conducted. I carefully coded the data from the transcripts without imposing my personal experiences onto the data (Shenton, 2004). Additionally, I created an audit trail that includes how decisions were made and what procedures were followed, including sharing the interview transcript with participants to check for errors or need for clarification, prior to coding data.

Ethical Procedures

Once I received Walden University's IRB approval, I began recruiting participants from a California 4-year, urban institution of higher education. I did this by emailing them an invitation to participate letter with an embedded link to a short survey to determine eligibility to participate, the completion of which served as consent to participate. The primary institution I used for my study provides open access to the names and email addresses of both faculty and staff in the online directory and also includes the department in which the individual works. As stated previously, I emailed faculty and staff in departments that serve underrepresented minorities and first-generation students. The invitation letter clearly identified the researcher and the sponsoring institution. It also stated how the participants were selected, the purpose of the

research, the benefits to the participants, the amount and nature of the participant's commitment, the inherent risks for participation, an assurance of confidentiality, a notice of their option to remove themselves from participation, and my contact information and availability to respond to any questions (Creswell, 2007). I notified the participants of access to data and its ownership and use during this process. Ownership of the data was clearly defined in the invitation letter. Participants were informed of their guarantee of confidentiality regarding the information they provided during the interviews. Names of participants will not be disclosed. Pseudonyms were used to differentiate participant responses.

Participants gave their consent by completing the short survey designed to determine their eligibility. This was accomplished by asking them to identify their role on campus, whether they have mentored at-risk students, the approximate number of at-risk students they have mentored and the length of time that have been mentoring. Participants were treated ethically during the recruiting process, data collection, and the debriefing process.

Besides myself, only my committee has access to the data collected in this study. I will protect data by securing all audio recordings and transcripts in a locked file cabinet in my home office and disposing of the data 5 years after the conclusion of my research. After 5 years, I will shred the written files and destroy all electronic versions of the data.

Summary

This study was designed as a basic qualitative inquiry. In this chapter, I discussed my rationale for using this approach versus other qualitative research approaches. I

discussed my role as researcher and how I avoided potential bias. I described the participant selection process and the sampling strategy. I discussed the creation of the interview guide and the sequencing of interview questions. I provided a narrative on data collection procedures and included my data analysis plan. This chapter concluded with an outline of the issues of trustworthiness and the steps I took to address these areas.

In Chapter 4, I will discuss the setting and demographics for my research. I will describe in detail the data collection and coding processes as well as explaining specific choices made regarding the coding, including the labeling of emerging themes. Additionally, I will provide evidence of the trustworthiness of my study and conclude with my findings and a summary.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of faculty and professional staff mentors to gain insight into the perceived influence of their mentoring on at-risk students' persistence toward graduation at an urban, public 4-year university. I recruited mentors from an institution with an ethnically diverse student body. All had experience working with at-risk students. Even though the majority of the participants interviewed did not mentor in an official capacity that was included in their job title, they devoted hours to mentoring because they saw it as their calling at the institution. All the interviewees cited perceived obstacles that at-risk students encountered as they navigated college life, and based upon their experiences, they offered a variety of effective practices that they had employed to help at-risk students persist towards graduation. I begin this chapter by restating my research questions. I then continue with a description of the institutional setting, data collection and analysis, my results, and conclusion.

Research Questions

I developed three research questions to provide structure and guidance for the development and design of this study:

RQ1: How do faculty and professional staff who mentor and coach undergraduate students who are at risk of failing to persist to graduation perceive their work?

RQ2: How do faculty and professional staff who mentor and coach undergraduate students who are at risk of failing describe their influence on these students' development and persistence to graduation?

RQ3: How do faculty and professional staff who mentor and coach undergraduate students who are at risk describe the role of their mentoring relationship on the development of social or emotional competency in themselves and their mentees?

Setting

To recruit participants for this study, I made use of a publicly available website directory of faculty and professional staff mentors at a large, 4-year urban university that includes individual employees' names, titles, email addresses, and departments in which they serve. I sent potential participants an invitation to participate letter embedded with a brief questionnaire designed to determine their eligibility to be selected for the study. I limited my participants to those who responded to my invitation and whose completed questionnaire indicated that they mentor at-risk undergraduates.

I chose to interview only those respondents who met the criteria by their own account of having mentored at-risk students in higher education for at least 2 years. I interviewed all the participants one-on-one and in-person in a private library meeting room available for booking. I followed up my initial interviews by email requesting that participants confirm or correct their interview responses. In some cases, I also requested clarification and/or additional details. I did not pose any new interview questions in this email correspondence.

Data Collection

I used the publicly available institutional directory to create a spreadsheet of faculty and staff members from relevant various programs and departments that might mentor at-risk students. Using an invitation letter with the embedded survey and

informed consent, I began systematically pasting email addresses into the online invitation letter and sending it out via my Gmail account. I entered incoming survey results into a Google spreadsheet upon completion of the survey. I checked my Gmail account daily to monitor results. It took approximately 6 weeks for me to identify 11 participants whose questionnaire results looked like they would make promising informants for my research questions. As potential participants emerged throughout the 6-week period, I contacted them via email to set up interview dates.

I presented each participant a $25 Amazon gift card in appreciation for their participation. I used an Olympus DS-4000 recorder (with xD picture cards) and microphone in combination with Google Voice on a laptop as well as transcription module software. All interviews were conducted in a private meeting room in the library. After each interview, I transferred the interview from the xD picture card into to a folder on my desktop, then moved it to the transcription module so that I could listen to the recordings while editing the Google Voice document that was generated on my laptop. This combined method of both recording and use of Google Voice sped up the transcription process.

Sample Size

I reached data saturation by the eleventh interview, as the recurring themes indicated redundancy (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The information gathered across the mix of faculty and professional staff mentors was rich and relatively easy to group under large concepts related to my three research questions.

Demographics

My interviewees included faculty members and professional staff members who had at least 2 years of mentoring experience with at-risk students in higher education. Ten of the participants identified as female and one as male. The pool was ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse. Of the 11, one was East Indian, three were White, three Black and four of Latin descent. A few participants had mentored through an established mentoring program, but all the participants spoke of most of their mentoring springing organically from encounters with at-risk students in classrooms or the library and from campus organizations or programs in which the mentor served in an advisory or teaching capacity. I created pseudonyms, which adhere to the gender identification of the participants in the study, to protect their anonymity (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Characteristics and Demographics

Pseudonym	Race or culture	Gender identification	Position
Alita	Latina	Female	Faculty
Anna	White	Female	Faculty
Beatrice	Black	Female	Faculty
Bianca	Latina	Female	Faculty
Eleanor	White	Female	Faculty
Graciela	Latina	Female	Faculty
Harrison	Black	Male	Faculty
Jaina	East Indian	Female	Faculty
Perpetua	Latina	Female	Faculty
Tyra	Black	Female	Staff
Winifred	White	Female	Faculty

Data Analysis

At its core, data analysis is simply "the process used to answer your research questions" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 202). My research questions and approved interview questions formed a boundary for my analysis. To analyze the data from my study I used a combination of inductive and comparative analyses. Inductive analysis guided my methodology, as I allowed the data to unfold, careful to let the data speak for itself through the patterns that emerged within and across interviews. My data was derived from careful analysis of the interview recordings and transcripts, from my reflective notes, and from clarifications and elaborations gathered during the member checking process. Through comparative analysis I examined the themes that emerged

from the interviews, taking note of similarities and differences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I used two methods to capture the interviews in tandem, Google Voice and a digital voice recorder. I then listened to the recordings while editing the transcripts generated by Google Voice, editing the text that was incorrectly captured. Then, using hand coding, I read through each transcript and identified and highlighted key words and phrases. I then scanned the entire transcript, allowing the highlighted text to develop into categories. As I had conducted interviews over a 4-month period, the process described occurred during the same time period and continued after the last interview was conducted. As patterns began to emerge, I felt I had reached data saturation before the last scheduled interview, but I completed all 11 of the interviews scheduled nonetheless.

During analysis I used convergence as described by Patton (2015). I searched for recurring ideas that I then sorted into categories and organized these categories into an Excel spreadsheet. Divergence was also used by incorporating the processes of extension, bridging, and surfacing. Through extension, I looked closely at the patterns and the nuances within the patterns. Then, using bridging, I made connections among the patterns that had emerged. Lastly, I used surfacing to introduce categories related to the categories I had identified, and I then searched for the presence of these categories within the data.

Using the highlighted transcripts, I was able to identify concepts, themes, events, examples, and topical markers (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) for the spreadsheet. I labeled the key words and phrases that I hand coded and added additional terms or phrases that captured the spirit of the participants' responses. This method allowed me to then present

my results by theme and category as they related to each of the research questions in the Results section below.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted that trustworthiness should be addressed with "careful attention to a study's conceptualization and the way in which the data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and the way in which the findings are presented" (p.238). To accomplish this, I regularly took time to reflect on and try to limit the impact of my biases, especially during the data analysis phase (Patton, 2015). As this was a qualitative study, I established trustworthiness through the employment of four key elements: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Shenton, 2004).

Credibility

Unlike quantitative research, which often employs the creation and use of instruments to measure data, credibility in qualitative research lies with the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, I sought to establish credibility through a variety of strategies including by limiting my inquiry to specific research and interview questions; through maintaining "adequate engagement in data collection" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 216), for example through member checks to ensure the accuracy of my data in the eyes of my interviewees; through reflexive bracketing to address my personal biases; and through extensive and systematic engagement with my data.

I triangulated data by interviewing participants from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives and from comparing the interviews and by cross checking the interview data, transcripts, interview notes and audio recordings. I sought to achieve

methodological triangulation through my application of content and inductive analysis, which involved the coding of data and identifying of themes and patterns from my initial interview and adding new ones as these continued to emerge during data collection and analysis. As the agent of data analysis, I sought to achieve theory triangulation by use of lenses provided by my conceptual framework, as well as the literature I reviewed in Chapter 2. I sought to further strengthen credibility through member checking, that is, by sending all 11 participants their entire transcript for review and content checking. Of the 11 participants, eight returned their transcript with changes, one confirmed the transcript as is, and two did not respond, despite repeated attempts to reach them. I emailed follow-up questions to all 11 participants, seeking clarification and additional examples for the points that had emerged as important in the data analysis. Seven of the participants provided further clarification and elaboration. By the third interview I noted recurring themes emerging, and as I did more interviews, initial patterns continued to repeat, along with occasional fresh ones, but no new or different concepts emerged in the 10th and 11th interviews, indicating to me that sufficient data saturation had been reached.

Lastly, I employed reflexive bracketing (Ahern, 1999) throughout the entire process: preparation, postanalysis, and feedback. During the preparation phase I conducted a thorough analysis of myself, ranging from my personal experience and values to the characteristics that describe who I am demographically, including such factors as race, gender, income and profession, cognizant of the impact that biases arising from these factors might have on credibility. During the interviews, I monitored myself for any internal emotional reactions to the interviewee's words and practiced active

listening, only asking follow-up questions when needed for clarity or to gain a richer picture of the stories unfolding. During the post-analysis phase, I searched the notes I created during the coding phase to see if I was giving more attention to one participant over another—as this could potentially indicate bias. I also looked at the transcripts to ensure that I was not ignoring data—as this can also result from bias. By consciously employing reflexive bracketing, I took steps to increase the credibility of my results.

Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability

I employed maximum variation of demographic characteristics and job titles to promote transferability, discovering patterns in the results across a diverse pool of participants. Additionally, I provided detailed descriptions of the results with numerous quotations from my interviewees in the hope that readers might relate the results to other settings serving at-risk individuals.

Dependability in qualitative research requires accepting the assumption that if the same research were replicated, it might not produce the same results. Dependability occurs when the "results are consistent with the data collected" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To promote dependability, I have kept an audit trail throughout the research process and have engaged in the ongoing practice of reflective note taking, including notes on my personal observations of the participants during the interview and what stood out for me, surprised or puzzled me in the aftermath of each interview.

I sought to ensure confirmability of the study by personally transcribing interviews and sending the transcript to the interviewee to whom it pertained for clarification and approval. Additionally, I personally coded the data gathered from the

interview process with careful consideration, focusing on the facts as they revealed themselves to eliminate bias in the analysis of my results. My dissertation committee's reviews of my drafts further strengthened confirmability.

Results

I interviewed eleven participants who had worked as either faculty or professional staff mentors of at-risk students at a 4-year institute of higher education. I have organized the results by research question, grouping results using themes and categories that emerged from these interviews (see Table 2).

Table 2

Themes and Subthemes

RQ1: Mentors' Perceptions of their Work	
Theme 1: Mentors' Perceived Reality	
Stress and emotional drain	
Time and workload	
Feeling undervalued or supported	
Need for mentors of color	
Theme 2: Reasons for Mentoring	
Mentoring is reciprocal	
Mentoring is positively transformative	
Mentoring contributes to the greater good	
RQ2: Mentors' Description of Their Influence	
Theme 3: Perceived Obstacles to Student Persistence	
Pressure to graduate in 4 years	Lack of funding
Faculty's negative perceptions of students	Bureaucracy
Structural racism	Violence
Lack of support from family and/or friends	Lack of social capital
Lack of self-efficacy	Lack of ability to self-advocate
Lack of college preparedness	Health issues: physical and mental
Homelessness	
Theme 4: Experiences with Effective Practices in Mentoring At-Risk Students	
A culture of accommodation	Embedding college-knowledge into the curriculum
Building trust	Helping students to seize the day
Listening and getting the whole story	Teaching life skills to students
Checking in	Setting goals
Career planning	Time
Referrals, resources, and networking	
RQ3: Mentors' Descriptions of Their Role in Relation to Social and Emotional Competence	
Theme 5: Self-Awareness	
Theme 6: Self-Management	
Mentors acknowledge influence of their own mentors	
Theme 7: Social Awareness	
Theme 8: Relationship Management	

RQ1: Mentors' Perceptions of their Work

How do faculty and professional staff who mentor and coach undergraduate students who are at risk of failing to persist to graduation perceive their work? Participants in this study often referred to mentoring as something greater than themselves—not so much a choice, but a calling. Although official mentoring programs exist that are attached to specific programs across the University, the majority of the participants mentored because the relationship with their students had developed organically. Data relevant to this research question revealed two themes. First, the perceived reality of mentoring and second, my interviewees' reasons for mentoring.

The Perceived Reality of Mentoring

This theme largely resulted from two interview questions posed to the mentors. The first question, "What do you find most challenging in carrying out your role?" and the second, "Who supports and encourages you to work with at-risk students?" The responses were either positive or negative and reflected both the struggles and triumphs they experienced in carrying out their roles as mentors. Four perceived realities emerged as significantly impacting the mentors' perception of their role: stress and emotional drain, time and workload, feeling either undervalued or supported and the need for mentors of color.

Stress and Emotional Drain. Stress related to the mentoring experience was mentioned by more than one mentor, though the reasons they cited for their stress varied. Although the participant, who will be referred to as Jaina (pseudonym) from this point forward, said that she felt that diversity was important to the college experience, she also

found it “difficult to teach a class which has a lot of diversity.” She indicated that she felt the need to be cautious and careful in how she spoke, as she stated she is from a culture that is very direct. She stated, “I come from a different culture where it *was* harsher, and you didn’t get second chances. So, I do not get this American way of saying all positives.” Jaina reported that she felt students misunderstand her approach, especially since she has taught critical thinking. Although she has explained to students that this requires her to question their statements and to disagree with them, regardless of whether she herself believes the position she has taken, students have accused her of being opinionated and biased.

The participant who will be referred to as Alita (pseudonym) from this point forward, reported that the diversity of faculty with different philosophical approaches posed her biggest challenge. She told me that she has experienced frustration over feeling that she had to explain herself to colleagues who have different approaches, whose minds she cannot change and who cannot change her. Alita stated

> There’s a core integrity to a lot of that that came by way of a lot of pieces, that came by way of the sacrifices so many generations before me—not just in my family, but just as a community as a whole. And the traditions put in place for change by communities as a whole that even led to my being able to *be* here to do this work. And so, the way I run my classroom space and the way I approach my mentoring relationships might not look like how you do it over there but we're also two completely different people. And so there are some things that maybe I can’t even pull off because of who I am, that are just going to seem to him like

> I'm *faking* an approach—than if I'm owning an authentic genuine approach that *is* grounded in a practice and a practice and a pedagogy from before me—that *does* have validity in spaces like this—because people are writing about them and slowly gaining traction to be able to put those in spaces that are accessible, like journals and books and space in a library.

The participant who will be referred to as Winifred (pseudonym) from this point forward, reported being most concerned about allowing the state of the world to permeate her ability to mentor students. She expressed concern that she might appear "defeatist." Because she cares deeply about her students, she has had occasion to bring the anger and sadness home to her family. She stated,

> I was reading about the treachery of our country and the betrayal of the trust of our service members and the complete disregard for their life. I was at home at the dinner table with my two kids, just crying. And my little 5-year-old came over with a note that was like "I love you."

Since she realized that she had clearly upset her children, Winifred told me that she tried to explain to them that the reason for her emotional state was due to the fact that she was mentoring a student who was also in the military and about to be deployed. Winifred explained that she was worried that he might get badly injured or even killed.

The stress from "caring too much" was also what the participant who will be referred to as Graciela (pseudonym) from this point forward, said that she found most challenging about her role as mentor. She stated, "I'm so invested in the outcomes of my students, and that can be, that can be detrimental to me." Graciela cited the need to set

boundaries and take care of herself. She reported being concerned about finding that balance. She stated that she knows as a tenure-track faculty member, if she continued on that path, without clearly defined boundaries, giving "so much only to the students and only grow that part of myself, I'm not going to be here long-term."

Time and Workload. Several mentors expressed that the challenges of time and workload created stress. The participant who will be referred to as Harrison (pseudonym) from this point forward, spoke not only of time and workload being overwhelming, but the sheer number of students he had as being the biggest challenge. He specifically pointed out that faculty of color feel "burdened" (a term he said he regretted using) to reach out to students of color—"because we know a lot of the time of the time those are the students who slip through the cracks the most. And, definitely, if we know that they're first-generation students or students from, other non-traditional backgrounds."

The participant who will be referred to as Anna (pseudonym) from this point forward, also indicated that the biggest challenge was the time needed to "be there for the students" or to help them "edit a paper." She said that she spends considerable time communicating with students and following up to ensure that they are on task and have the help needed to academically succeed. Likewise, the participant who will be referred to as Perpetua (pseudonym) from this point forward, indicated that her fear "is that when you really need me, making sure I have the time." She explained to me that having children of her own and a full-time position at the University, she has had to take a hard look at time—and occasionally say no to requests that would make it impossible for her to complete all her tasks on time. She said that she feels challenged by trying to build

relationships with mentees with the limited amount of time available. The participant who will be referred to as Beatrice (pseudonym) from this point forward, complained that the time needed to do her job is often taken away by bureaucratic demands—including committee work, and as a faculty member, research and publishing requirements. She admitted "the students are more rewarding than all that other stuff. So, I'd rather spend time with the students, which is not—that can be a problem for the administration. So, that's a difficulty."

Undervalued or Supported. A few of the mentors expressed that they felt that mentoring was not valued by administration at their institution, partly because although the activity may be encouraged, it is not considered useful for retention or promotion of faculty as evidenced by the requirements of faculty dossiers**.** The participant who will be referred to as Bianca (pseudonym) from this point forward, stated that she spent considerable time working one-on-one with students, yet. "that's not something that's reflected in my publications or my teaching or my service." She further stated, "I don't think that the university values it or understands how much, particularly faculty of color, and I don't think that they are recognized—how much it takes to retain the students that we have." Bianca mentioned a colleague who wrote copious amounts of letters of recommendations for her students, spent hours advising them and for her tenure review, the "evaluation didn't reflect any of that." Likewise, Harrison spoke of the lack of support, stating "in our quest to be supportive of students, there's sometimes a lack of support for *us* to be supportive of them—even though, just like every University, every University I think has some lip service about being supportive." He continued with the

fact that the University's website implies that the support is there, "But, the reality is, on the ground it doesn't always come across that there's support for faculty and staff who do the work of mentoring and supporting students.

Only two of the 11 interviewed mentioned that their immediate supervisors valued their work as mentors. A professional staff mentor, who will be referred to as Tyra (pseudonym) from this point forward, stated, "I have a really good manager that believes in always helping at-risk students. So, when she sees a student needs help, out of the blue, she'll just put down whatever she's doing to help that student." Tyra indicated that knowing that her manager is fully supportive of her mentoring role allows Tyra to thrive as a mentor to her students, knowing that her role is valued. Winifred, a faculty member, also indicated that she is supported in her role as a mentor by her immediate supervisor. However, she pointed out this was not the case in the past. She stated that since the new chair came on board approximately a year and a half ago, there was a shift in the value placed on mentoring in her department. Winifred said that he was "very, very supportive of mentorship." She went on further to point out that he listened to the students and recognized their needs because "his own experience, led him to really think that value is important." Bianca's response to who supports your work with at-risk students was simply "There's no support or encouragement. Nobody."

Need for Mentors of Color. Other mentors further acknowledged that there are a lot of faculty members serving as unofficial mentors, often because they are sought after by students or referred to by other students as faculty of color. One faculty member, Alita, said she felt that the lack of monetary compensation for mentors was indicative of

the lack of value placed on mentoring by the institution. As she pointed out, no one is providing "additional funding to the folks that are currently bridging that shortcoming." Graciela spoke of the benefit of having mentors of color available for students of color. She stated "One student I worked with, a Latina, also with humble beginnings, felt for the first time she was seen and heard from someone who could understand the different aspects of her identity, due to similar experience. It was life affirming for her and for me to be able to demonstrate what is possible."

Harrison spoke about his education and the lack of Black males in education for him to look up to as role models. He stated that while he was in the doctoral program he was tasked to reflect on his "own personal epistemology with regard to education." He was struck by the realization that he "never, preschool through doctorate, never once had a Black male teacher or professor. Not one. Had Black females, but never had a Black male." He stated the Black males on campus can feel alienated because "some of them are like me. They never had one—not a single Black man as a teacher, right?" He concluded with the thought that seeing Black men in leadership, in authority positions "could be a really powerful thing."

Likewise, Winifred stated that she has colleagues who are faculty of color or who share a similar background to her students and she is very much aware that "that makes a huge difference for them." She said that she does not believe that has prevented her from connecting with students, but she reports that she firmly believes that "to the extent that we can hire faculty and support and mentor faculty to be able to remain in departments

whose backgrounds more closely reflects the background that of students—I think that's absolutely something we should be doing."

My Interviewees' Reasons for Mentoring.

While this theme came up frequently, regardless of the interview question the mentor was currently answering, the interviewees' *reasons* for mentoring were often underlined or expanded upon when asked the interview question "Why do you take the time to do it?" Additionally, stories told by the mentors of specific mentees were frequently offered as examples for the motivation behind their role as mentors. The interviewees' reasons for mentoring fell into three major categories: mentoring is reciprocal, it is positively transformative, and it is for the greater good.

Mentoring is Reciprocal. More than one mentor mentioned that the relationship with their mentees was mutually beneficial. Graciela stated, "I mentor, but they also mentor me. And I feel that I learn so much from them, just as much as they are learning from me." Jaina said, "The mentor also learns. Mentoring my students has taught me a lot about life in the U.S., to see that I had a privileged upbringing, that I was lucky to be a full-time student and not have to worry about finances." The notion of reciprocity was also voiced by Winifred who said of her mentees "I learned a huge amount from them." Likewise, Anna stated "What I keep telling the students is that I learned from them as well." Lastly, Tyra also expressed a similar observation. She stated "I value that fact—that I am not only helping them, but they turn around and help me. So, each experience gives me an opportunity to learn more and grow more within myself."

It Is Positively Transformative. Overall, the mentors' responses indicated that the value of the mentoring role was mostly demonstrated by the behaviors of the mentees themselves—the trust they placed in their mentors, and the difference the mentors had made in their lives. Perpetua indicated that she had developed a reputation for being approachable and genuine amongst the students she mentored. This, she considered was reflected in the sheer number of students contacting her for help and saying "Hey, so-and-so told me to come to you, right? I've even had students in different departments, they say I come recommended." Perpetua recognized that the students who felt they previously had little support, suddenly found a mentor with whom they connected. They felt they found someone who truly cared about their success.

Harrison told a number of stories about students he mentored and how he helped change their lives. One of these mentees was a student athlete he had caught plagiarizing his term paper. Harrison stated:

> Instead of just busting him and leaving it at that, I worked with him to get him back on track—on a better path to academic success. Since I knew he was interested in coaching kids, I required him to do community service hours with a local agency that provided activities for youth. A couple of years later, I ran into him around campus and he let me know that he was inspired to keep working with this population after graduating; he then pursued a career in education (teaching and coaching). He let me know I influenced him in this direction, and I was very glad to see him use his talent/skill for athletics in such a way.

Harrison shared another story about a former mentee who was a single mother and a transfer student from community college. He reported that she struggled with the demands of the University, especially the writing assignments. Harrison stated that she "was ready to give up on college since upper division classes were challenging for her (beyond what she had experienced at the community college)." He worked with her and continued to encourage her to persist and develop her skills. His efforts paid off, and she remained at the University and eventually "was confident enough to apply to a graduate program in educational counseling right after graduating with her Bachelor of Arts degree." Harrison stated that she went on to obtain her Master of Arts degree and was currently employed at a local community college "helping students like herself." In fact, he stated that many of her students transferred to the University to take *his* classes upon her recommendation. "They say that she is the one who inspired them to keep going when things were tough."

Beatrice spoke of the value of mentoring, as it related to the growth she had witnessed in one of her at-risk mentees who grew up in foster care. This student's confidence grew during the time she knew her, which culminated in an event in which the student spoke in front of University administration and was acknowledged for her forthrightness and insights. Ultimately, this mother of three was offered a good job at an agency because she had made a name for herself. Beatrice stated "So, I don't want to take credit. It makes me very proud."

The participant who will be referred to as Eleanor (pseudonym) from this point forward stated that she benefitted from the guidance of a mentor while in college. She

stated, “I came very close to dropping out of those programs and if it wasn’t for having been able to connect with someone who mentored me and encouraged me to come back, I would not have finished my degrees.” Consequently, she reported that she understood what a difference the degree has made in her personal life and economic status. She stated that most of her mentees “aren’t aware that only about a third of the population has a college degree, that they’re among a really special group.” She stated that she makes it a point to tell them, as it helps them understand the significance of persistence towards the degree. She went on to say they also “don’t understand initially that only about 10% of the population has a master’s degree.” Eleanor paints the picture for them of transformation—that “if they can work through it now, that it will benefit them in the long run.”

The Greater Good. The concept of mentoring being larger than the individual was a recurring theme amongst the mentors. Sometimes they called it “paying it forward” or “considering the collective”—but they shared that their motivation for mentoring was driven by the greater good. Winifred brings her students into the process of doing research with her, empowering them to find their place. She stated, “I have about a dozen students right now that I have worked with in actually developing a research project that is about student well-being—and specifically, like, developing programs to support underrepresented students through their journey through their academic training.” Winifred spoke to the wisdom of giving a voice to those individuals that are typically ignored in the decision-making process, or are considered peripheral to the process – even though they are directly impacted by it. She stated, “I think one of the things that

our world desperately needs is more perspectives from people who haven't had exceedingly privileged lives—because there are all kinds of problems that we have in the world. And I think that other people have better answers than those people who are traditionally in power."

Many mentors expressed that the reason they mentor is for something greater than the individual—that by helping one student, many more might benefit from the effort. Graciela stated, "I consider myself when I was an undergrad student, an at-risk student. And I had incredible mentors in my life. So, for me, I paid it forward in supporting at-risk students at all levels of their educational journey." Tyra reflected on the goodness in her life, especially her two sons when she considered why she values her mentoring role. She stated, "My sons were very blessed with the people that was around them—and I wanted other kids that didn't have that opportunity to succeed like they succeeded." Now that her sons are grown, finished with college, working and starting families, Tyra realized that they also learned from and valued their mentors. Now, when they're in town, they assist Tyra in her mentoring efforts. She stated, "So, they see how their mentors and stuff helped them and with them being both African American men coming up. Their father was there. But, also they had other males and in their lives that was great mentors for them." Tyra indicated that she believes in paying it forward. Eleanor incorporates the idea of paying it forward directly into conversations with the students she mentors. She often mentors them through the college experience and into their careers, attending their graduations and checking in with them regularly. She stated that one of the conversations she has with mentees is, "Who else are they going to target in their family or in their

community to pass that mentoring on when they get there? Who are they going to help with the same kind of support? So that we continue to have an educated population."

One strong motivating factor for mentors of color that was reported by the interviewees, was the idea of community and being part of something to which everyone contributes – what one of them termed, "the collective." Perpetua said that she is aware that students of color seek out her assistance. She stated when students mention that their parents were farmworkers, she'd mention her own family, sharing the connection by stating, "Yeah, my mother." Perpetua stated that she has learned that this builds trust. "I'll try to make as many connections as possible, right? And, so if we are of the same cultural background, it's more likely that we have more connections, right?" Perpetua also informed me that sprinkles her conversations with words in Spanish, a strategy she employs to build trust and familiarity quickly with students who share her background—making them realize they are not alone, that she is there, and they are part of a large contingency of students, faculty and staff across campus—a community within a community.

Alita stated that given her upbringing, her community, that she's "always looking out for that collective." She reflected on the mentors that helped her along the way. She referred to her own mentors, saying, "You are part of who I carry in my story. You are interwoven into the fabric of, sometimes, even how I conceptualized my approaches in the classroom." She stated that being part of the collective absolves the individual from feeling "indebted" to one mentor or one student—but rather, that she feels "*accountable collectively* to a realm of people that that person might represent, right?"

Jaina indicated that her approach to students is not necessarily to label them as at-risk, but rather look at them as being young and without "a clue of what they're doing." She spoke of her own son and the hope she had that he would receive guidance in a similar situation, thus supporting the idea of a collective network of mentors available to students in need. She stated, "You know, I'm here to not only to teach you something; I'm here to sort of guide you and help through this unknown that you are starting on."

My Data as it Relates to RQ1. Research question one focused on the perceptions of faculty and professional staff who mentor and coach undergraduate students who are at risk of failing to persist to graduation. Mentors reported that their perceptions of their roles were influenced by the system in which they worked, their personal history and culture, and the at-risk students they mentored. Two themes emerged from this process: the perceived reality of mentoring and my interviewees' reasons for mentoring. Four major considerations defined the perceived reality of the mentoring experience for the participants: stress and emotional drain, time and workload, feeling either undervalued or supported and the need for mentors of color. My interviewees' reasons for mentoring fell into three major categories: mentoring is reciprocal, it is positively transformative, and it is for the greater good.

RQ2: Mentors' Descriptions of Their Influence

How do faculty and professional staff who mentor and coach undergraduate students who are at risk of failing describe their influence on these students' development and persistence to graduation? Two major themes were revealed by the data gathered. The first theme addressed perceived obstacles or challenges facing at-risk students as

they work towards academic success. The second theme concerned what the participants described as their experiences with effective practices to help at-risk students persist towards graduation.

Perceived Obstacles to Student Persistence

All the mentors interviewed spoke extensively on the perceived challenges facing at-risk students as they navigated the college experience. The connection between the influence of the mentors on student persistence resulted in the strategies these mentors used to help students to persist. These are outlined in the section entitled "Experiences with effective practices in mentoring at-risk students." Directly below are the themes that emerged as mentors spoke of the perceived obstacles at-risk students encounter as they work towards persistence to graduation.

Pressure to Graduate in 4 Years. Several mentors mentioned the recent push by the University to get students to complete their degrees in 4 years as being particularly detrimental to at-risk students. Harrison stated that students often have to work many hours in order to pay for school and then have trouble with the balance between the two. He stated, "I had a student who worked nights and then took classes during the early part of the day (after work for him). He was a re-entry student (returned after being out of school for a while) who struggled to adjust to new sleeping hours since his time had been adjusted to night-shift work."

Perpetua stated, "I still feel like there's pressure on the students to graduate in 4–5 years." This was reiterated by Eleanor who also pointed out that "a lot of people don't do it in those tiny, short windows that the University would like to see them graduate in."

Jaina also mentioned this pressure and said that the problem is exacerbated by the fact that these are recent transfer students from community colleges, unfamiliar with the rigors of University life, and yet are being told "Yeah, yeah. No problem—take 15 units." She further stated they do this despite the fact that they are also working. She continued with "They *have* to work."

Lack of Funding. Eleanor stated her belief that the main obstacle to persistence is lack of funding. She stated, "The family is unwilling to take out a loan to support them to go to school, so they're working a disproportionate number of hours both academically and in a job field in order to get through the degree." Harrison noted that students from a low socioeconomic background, who are already at-risk, often face additional obstacles related to their lack of funding. He spoke of "students with a past"—who previously had been both arrested and incarcerated. He stated, "I've had a few students who served time in state prison and then have come out of that and then able to make it into University setting." Graciela spoke of money and finances as paramount. She stated, "If you can't pay your rent—that's more important sometimes than going to school." And even if the students have a place to live, problems persist with financial aid. Alita stated a common occurrence is a student who has done everything expected of them to success in her class only to find out that their financial aid is late and they might get dropped from her class. The payment schedule of financial aid has also repeatedly been the cause of Alita's students not having their textbooks even though the semester had already begun. Although Alita is understanding of this occurrence in her classes, she points out that her colleagues aren't necessarily as forgiving. In fact, she stated, "We judge each other

across, you know, as colleagues? And we're like, 'Well, why do you allow your students to show up like that? You're setting them up for failure?'" Alita felt it is the least faculty can do to "afford some basic humanity" in something that is within their control—and make some accommodations for these students.

Faculty's Negative Perceptions of Students. Graciela also mentioned that faculty judge students, stating, "Faculty sometimes think that they lack the desire and determination of the commitment. But that's not true. They have that, but they also just have so many competing demands." Thus, there appears to be some overlap between the bureaucracy and how it feeds into faculty's negative perceptions of students' willingness to persist. According to the interviewees, this perception, reported to be held by some faculty, could impact how they interact with students they encounter.

Beatrice stated that some of her colleagues speak about their at-risk student's being "without the required level of capacity to do well." These faculty complain that it is torturous to read these students' papers. However, she stated that some faculty may be willing to help a student who comes to them and admits that they are struggling. But she said, "If they don't come, they're not going to go after them. I will go after a student." She goes on to say that some of her faculty colleagues have less tolerance of these students and have the attitude that "If they can't do it, then they shouldn't be here." My attitude is, "They are here. What are we going to do to help them?"

Above, Alita mentioned financial challenges. She stated, "Because there are other people in this institution who are going to put more value in weight on that, faculty who will put the blame on the student" thereby "setting them up to feel that element of shame

for *not* being able to show up with their books, for things that are beyond their control. It's like this ripple effect of accountability."

Winifred spoke of a faculty member with whom she once shared an office. She stated that when a student would come in for advising, but failed to bring a completed form with them, her colleague would "make them leave and come back for an appointment another day." Winifred continued with, "And what I felt like my colleague, and honestly the whole university structure was doing, was putting up barrier after barrier after barrier for students—and expecting that they would, when they hit those barriers, pause or stop and do a whole hoop of extra work to get through that barrier."

Bureaucracy. When asked the interview question "What could be done to improve the support of at-risk students at your institution?" Bianca replied**,**

> I would love to see our administrators have a student walk them through their day. Or, have a student walk them through the bureaucracy that is present at this institution. Have them see how long students wait for responses. Have them give a litany of the incorrect advising that they've been given. And, you know not every advisor is terrible. But, I think there's enough stories of students experiencing a hostile climate or an indifferent climate, to be able to piece together and understand how I think of it. As an institution, we could do a lot better.

Surviving bureaucracy was an obstacle mentioned by a few of the mentors. Beatrice stated, "Some young people feel like they can't get ahead cuz [because] they're always running around in circles." Likewise, Jaina stated that in addition to the

curriculum she is teaching, she also interjects critical information that is often lacking in the at-risk students' knowledge bank, "talking about how a college system works. Especially for a lot of first-generation students who have really no clue as to what college means—and, you know, the underlying rules that are not really stated." Jaina felt that the students feel lost. She attributed their lack of understanding of how things work at college to being a major obstacle to academic success for at-risk students. She continued, "It's the system. Most of things in life—like, tomorrow they go to work. It's the system. And they come in here and they're really not aware of how things work." Anna also felt the bureaucracy was an obstacle to at-risk students. She stated that even after telling the student about a campus resource, they do not necessarily follow through, that there is a level of fear in the unknown. She stated "To go to a resource, to a place that you've never been before, to a person that you've never spoken with before—it's tough. It's tough for adults—never mind for students."

Structural Racism. Graciela spoke about a Black female student that she felt "called to mentor. She used to call me every month crying that she would drop out of the program and I get it—because I was that student. I wanted to drop out because it feels so insurmountable sometimes. And she felt like somehow it was her fault." Graciela went on to speak about how a student may not realize that what they are feeling is a product of structural racism and structural oppression at work.

Bianca spoke of the curriculum itself and its negative impact on students of color. She stated that the "material is predominantly made for White teachers to work with in schools of color—as opposed to how do we train teachers of color to work with kids of

color? So, a lot of the students that I work with, students of color, in particular, talk a lot about feeling frustrated and angry about how they are asked to be teachers in a situation where they should be learning."

Violence. Encounters with violence were mentioned by a few of the mentors as being capable of completely sabotaging a student's academic standing. Tyra discussed a student who had been raped and the subsequent dramatic change in her grades. She stated "social and emotional obstacles can play a major part with students. It can take an A student down to an F student. It can take a student who talks all the time to being very quiet." Winifred had a student whose roommate was being abused by her significant other. Winifred's student could not cope with the situation, because she herself "had a history of family violence. And so she was in a complete mess – a total crisis" and in no state of mind to complete her assignment due the following day. Harrison reported on several of his students who have had violence disrupt their lives while attending college. One student had a family member who had been murdered. It fell upon this student "to make funeral arrangements and take care of other things like procuring death certificates, managing the decedent's final financial affairs." Harrison stated, "I've had a couple of students who had a gun pulled on them—either on campus, close to campus, on their way to campus. You know, those kind of things are either violence or threats of violence really do, they do hold people back quite a bit." Harrison also mentioned another at-risk student who "when he was younger he had a background where he been in a little bit of trouble," but managed to enroll at University. Apparently, this student was "in the city and he wound up getting shot multiple times. Sometimes, you're trying to live well, but

the neighborhood and everybody does not get the message, right?" He stated, "Though he had changed his life to a large extent, he wound up getting shot nine times one evening while in his neighborhood. He survived, luckily."

Lack of Support From Family and/or Friends. Harrison also spoke of the lack of support experienced by at-risk students. He stated "Your friends at home don't understand what you're doing in school, and some of the friends that you might have at school don't understand your folks at home. And then, so, then your kind of like constantly trapped trying to navigate these two social worlds, at least two, right?" Harrison pointed out that sometimes family can be the obstacle to student persistence. "When they're pinching pennies and family are making demands to get their financial aid checks—[because] the family feels like they need that money more than you do, more than the student does—those are problems."

Lack of Social Capital. Several of the participants mentioned lack of social capital as being particularly challenging for at-risk students. Anna felt it wasn't absolutely necessary to have social capital, but it was definitely helpful. She stated "It starts when you're a very young age. And you experience things that maybe some other students don't have the privilege of experiencing—shows, visits to campuses for any number of other family members, graduations—that kind of thing." She pointed out that for at-risk students, even if their parents are supportive of their academic goals, they cannot help the student navigate the system because they themselves lack the knowledge of how the system works. Alita acknowledged the advantage of social capital by recognizing the importance of students needing a network, and making the introductions

necessary to bridge that gap. She stated, “Let me introduce you to some other folks who may become mentors, who might eventually take this dynamic that we have right now - because you graduated into needing what you need from them—and that’s okay.” Jaina pointed out the importance of educating students to the reality of maintaining positive relationships with faculty. She tells her students, “Tomorrow, some of you will apply to something. And they will ask you to get your writing instructor to give a recommendation. If you come to me for a recommendation, consider how did you behave in my class? That is what I will remember.”

Lack of Self-Efficacy. Perpetua spoke of a student assistant that she mentored. She discovered that the student was not proactive and required “challenges” in order to build confidence in her abilities. She noted that she continued to increase the challenges she gave the student, such as challenging her to “contact administrators and send emails,” take initiative and represent the library at outreach events, and finally to present at conferences. Perpetua stated that the student grew because she was challenged to perform “out of her comfort zone.”

Harrison noted that many students lack confidence in their abilities. They will say, “I can’t do it. I don’t know if I can do it.” Students who lack self-efficacy have told Harrison that they felt like they didn’t belong or that “they weren’t smart enough; they weren’t good enough; they weren’t college material; they don’t match what the stereotypical image of college students is supposed to be.” Harrison stated many of these students don’t realize that there are people “like them” at the University, who “grew up in the hood,” or “grew up in poverty” or whose parents “don’t speak English.” He said these

feelings of isolation are the challenge that prevents these students from reaching out, to making those connections and getting the support necessary to persist. This sentiment was echoed by Beatrice, who said she makes a conscious effort to get to know the Black and Latina/o students in her classes. She pointed out that they do not see many faculty of color, and sometimes they just "don't trust anybody." She stated that she feels they just get tired and say, "I don't even know why I'm doing this." Alita spoke to the importance of sitting with and acknowledging the students—and knowing their community. She stated, "It's what they represent, and what drives them to want to stay in a seat. This is even though they're constantly told by a number of different ways that they don't belong in that space."

Lack of Ability to Self-Advocate. More than one mentor stated that at-risk students do not typically assert themselves—whether it stems from a sense of shame or feeling that they do not belong. Graciela stated, "I feel like at-risk students are so grateful for anything. Right? Because they don't feel deserving of attention, of support, they really don't." Graciela serves as a role model. She works to enlighten her at-risk students, to help them see that they do have the tools necessary to succeed. She tells them "I'm a hustler, I mean I hustled my way—to like where I am. And you know, what? I deserve to be here, because I get to be here mentoring you. Right?"

Eleanor discovered that one of the students she worked with told her that they had to "drive 3 hours each way" to get to and from campus. They went on to tell Eleanor that they're "really close to wanting to give up." This student didn't think to speak up and discuss the problem with their professors. Eleanor had to explain to the student that they

had the right to do so. She stated, “You need to work with your professors and let them know what the distance challenges are, and see if they can help you achieve more of a hybrid status in your class where you’re here for certain assignments and that other times is it possible to have another student possibly record the lecture for you and be able to interact with the professor via email.”

Winifred said that she has found most of her at-risk students “are highly under-entitled. They don’t assert themselves in contexts that it is totally appropriate for them to assert themselves. And that’s because of their conditioning, because of oppression, it’s because of all these, you know, big things.”

Lack of College Preparedness. Several of the mentors cited lack of college preparedness as a major obstacle to achieving student academic success in higher education. Beatrice stated, “Not having a good academic foundation is a really serious impediment.” So, if students were the best in their school, but their school was in a low achievement school district, they may not have had the best opportunities.” Tyra believed it was very important to ensure that at-risk students “have the basic skills to succeed. So, sometimes I find that even though, for my position, I teach technology, I also help the students try to better their grammar, increase the education as far as research for the topics or the papers they have to write.” Jaina stated, “Some of them think, ‘Oh, college you can come into class when you feel like.’” Perpetua pointed out that when she was a first-generation college student, she fell into the common trap of many students with limited financial means and life skills. She stated that on campus “there’s the credit card people offering you, like ‘Here, just sign up, right?’ But nobody tells you or educates you

on that and what that means. Consequently, already struggling, she went into financial debt, maxing out cards and stuck in a cycle of trying to pay them off. Eleanor also noted that the students she encounters are at different levels in their preparation for college. She stated this seem to largely depend on "the socioeconomic background of the high school that they attended in California. And, that they have a lot of raw, native intelligence—but aren't necessarily as polished as some of the other students might be—and they have to struggle more in the first couple of years to get to that point. And that requires a lot of time on their part."

Health Issues: Physical and Mental. A few of the mentors acknowledged that health—both physical and mental health are critical to the persistence of at-risk students. Alita stated, "Our mental health, collectively, I think is suffering for sure. And so, I've seen an increase in students who, you know, might have accommodations for that support. But, then they're also students who don't have accommodations—and systemically they don't have access to get the paperwork in order that they need for those accommodations."

Beatrice said that she sees lack of physical health as a definite obstacle to student academic success. She stated, "If they're having health problems and they don't have the reserve to push through the difficulties—because, getting a 4-year degree, getting your BA or your Bachelor of Science—that last 2 years is really tough." She went on to cite lack of support at home and money as additional obstacles when a student's health is already compromised.

Harrison mentioned that sometimes it is not the student's health that is causing problems. It is a family member who requires a lot of their assistance and attention due to their failing health that can be an obstacle to student persistence. He told a story of a young woman whose father had serious health problems and she was his primary caregiver. She would often be texting in class, tending to emergencies and even leaving or skipping class to take care of him. Despite these obstacles, she managed to get her degree, but her circumstance, at times, were overwhelming.

Homelessness. The mentors acknowledged that at-risk students can be at-risk for a variety of reasons. For some, a difficult home life or lack of finances contributes to the increased likelihood that they will experience homelessness. Tyra spoke of numerous risk factors for student persistence. She stated "Well, I would say my work with at-risk students varies. It depends on the student's situation—from finance to homelessness to low education, small skill set."

Alita stated, "This is an expensive place to live in and we know that homelessness is a huge issue for a student." Beatrice relayed a story about a student who endured abuse from her roommate rather than risking homelessness. She stated, "Her roommate took her phone, and was just messing with this person. And there was a long commute. And she had been homeless before. And I referred her to emergency services here. But, they only give you like 5 days." Anna told a story of a student with a child to support who had disappeared from her class, hadn't turned in her class work, and so she texted her to check on her well-being. The student had lost her housing. She told Anna, "Oh, I'm living in the closet with my baby—because we don't have a spot." Harrison stated "How

are you going to be homeless and have a place to study, right? And, how is that a condition under which you're going to succeed? You're not."

Experiences With Effective Practices in Mentoring At-Risk Students

As mentioned above, as the mentors spoke to their perceived obstacles to at-risk student persistence, they also addressed their experiences with useful practices and solutions that support student persistence. Below are the subthemes that emerged.

A Culture of Accommodation. Alita stated, "If a student doesn't have any formal accommodation for something that's been already systemically-acknowledged, then it's left to the individual (the student) to make that call in their own space. And I think that because of a lot of systemic pressures—sometimes, my peers make the call to not accommodate." Alita believes that a lot of the obstacles that students encounter could be eliminated if the campus embraced a culture of accommodation. She stated that funding issues are a significant barrier that could benefit from a culture that understands that barriers arise but should not be so great that they lead to "dysfunction." Alita stated that we should be "making this collective culture of "How do we accommodate that?"

Anna echoed the need for accommodations, stating that students "don't even know to ask. They're embarrassed. They think everybody else is doing it perfectly." So, to make it easier for students she states upfront to students in regard to assignments, "If for some reason you can't get it in on time, I'm not going to penalize you. That's what life is like. But you need to let me know. You need to say, 'I had to work extra this week.' And I'll excuse you." She does expect her students to meet the deadline they agree upon, but believes this practice prepares them to negotiate once they get out in the work

world. She further stated, “Because when I’m out working, if I get behind in something, I’ll ask my boss for that. It’s part of how you do things. How you operate. There are certain things that where people will say, ‘I can’t give you those extra days.’ But, most times, it’s possible.” So, by teaching students to find their voice and ask for accommodations, she believes she is teaching them a life skill necessary for their future.

Embedding College-Knowledge Into the Curriculum. Faculty who regularly encounter at-risk students in their courses have found practical ways to embed college knowledge into their courses. From her experience in the classroom, Jaina stated that she recognizes at-risk students and has come to realize that many of them face the same challenges. To ensure these students have a better chance for academic success, Jaina began working college-knowledge into her classes, “talking about how a college system works, especially for a lot of first-generation students who have really no clue as to what college means and, you know, the underlying rules that are not really stated.”

Winifred uses her encounters with students to develop a deeper mentoring relationship with them, by codeveloping research with them. Winifred teaches them to understand how to do research and guides them through learning the research process. Winifred said that students not only learn how to write research papers, they learn the valuable skill of giving presentations. These relationships appear to have resulted in students developing a sense of collegiality with their professor. Winifred stated, “Now, on Saturdays, I talk with them on the phone—at night. Several of them graduated and I still have kind of a close mentorship relationship with them.”

Building Trust. Most of the mentors spoke of the importance of building and maintaining trust. They all had individual methods for accomplishing this. Eleanor addressed the obstacle to persistence of students having to work and go to school and possibly raise children, all at the same time. She builds trust by sharing her own story with students in similar situations to help them realize that although it seems insurmountable at times, it can be done. She stated, "It just takes perseverance." Tyra explained that, "If a student trusts you, you will learn so much more—and you will find out exactly what the students need help with." Beatrice discussed whether or not it is necessary to share the same cultural or ethnic background before trust can be established. She stated "sometimes students don't learn to trust people who are different from them. So, it's better for them that they meet with somebody who at least looks like them." She further went on to explain that sometimes, it's irrelevant because some students "don't trust anybody." Beatrice has found her own method. She simply reaches out "to whoever is looking like they're lost."

Helping Students to Seize the Day. More than one mentor mentioned the importance of bringing opportunities to a student's attention. This included creating opportunities for them in which to thrive, as well as advising them to follow up on an opportunity that would benefit their growth. As Perpetua herself was a first-generation student, she stated that she feels she understands the struggles that underrepresented students encounter, and so she purposefully looks to help them avoid situations that she had found herself in while attending college. Having originally looked towards being a gerontologist, she was disheartened to learn during an internship experience that she had

while in school, that it would take years for her to break into a position with the city—because the path to those jobs required years of grooming and paying dues. Now that she works as a faculty member, who is also a librarian serving students who are studying in health fields, she advises them, “Go get a job at the Parks and Rec. Now.” She uses her experience learning about the employment opportunities with the city, such as with Parks and Recreation, to help students who have to work to go to school, to seek employment that will also allow them to network. She stated that when they graduate, they are already on their way to landing a position in the career they have chosen to pursue. Perpetua also has worked with a colleague to create opportunities for the student assistant working with them in the library. She reported that she has challenged the student to create and give presentations, so that this student is not only improving her skills, she is also building confidence—and is being primed to compete for a position in the field she has chosen—with skills others entering the field have not yet learned to hone while attending school.

Graciela reported that she decided to take her mentoring of the Black student who wanted to drop out to another level. She decided to invest in her and give her “a position on my team to be a graduate TA (teaching assistant).” She stated that she took a chance on this student despite the fact another faculty member warned her that the student “was going to take too much of my time.” By taking this step, Graciela was able to watch this young woman grow—“not just academically, but personally, professionally. And she has blossomed—just knowing that somebody believes in her, that somebody cares about her as a human being, that somebody wants to see her succeed.”

Listening and Getting the Whole Story. More than one mentor spoke of the importance of listening to the students. Jaina mentioned that her experience as a mother with a son who has a learning disability has impacted how she interacts with students. She reported that she was working with a student who was repeating a course with her, having dropped it in a previous semester. The student met with her and spoke at length about having a learning disability and how she had difficulty finishing a class. Jaina listened and responded, based upon personal experience – suggesting that the student shift her focus away from trying to get a higher grade, but instead focusing on completion, which she did, with a passing grade. Jaina stated, "I think it is my experience with my son and my practical view of life that helped me mentor that student and guide her through this course that was troubling her so much." Likewise, Beatrice reported that listening works for her when engaging with at-risk students. She stated that you need to ask "What's going on? And are they okay?" And then, you need to "take the time to listen." This sentiment was echoed by Bianca who stated **"**I think listening is the number one thing that I do. I ask questions to understand the severity of their sadness or frustration and anger, you know?" Then, based upon what the student says, Bianca will connect them with the appropriate resource to get them the help that they need—even if she needs to physically "walk them over to the Student Health Center or Student Services." Tyra also spoke about the difference that active listening can make. She stated "Sometimes, we tend to listen to students to respond. I listen to students to listen first—and then respond." Winifred spoke at length about an undocumented student who faced numerous obstacles to persistence, including liver damage from prior drug use, a

fluctuating and demanding work schedule due to his undocumented status, and the inability to pay his tuition on time which resulted in being dropped from classes—transforming him from a student getting As and Bs, to a student with Ds and Fs. She encountered him when he petitioned to retake a class for the third time, and she was the designated instructor who would need to sign off on his request. Winifred discovered that he was severely depressed and felt hopeless. After reviewing his transcripts, Winifred stated that she "listened carefully, expressed empathy, and talked with him about what his strategy was going to be for the current semester." Because Winifred took an active interest in this student's well-being, he returned to her office "dozens of times" over the course of two years to talk to her, as well as speaking with her on the phone. He told her that her "acceptance of him and evident care for him helped him see himself differently." She continued to support his efforts as he got involved with the undocumented student's association, then "took an unpaid internship at a hospital to gain relevant work experience and took on community advocacy work." Winifred relayed a story of the time that he was leading a silent protest on campus that she attended. As she approached, he opened the circle of participants wider and reached out his hand to her. She reported that she felt her "mentorship made a real difference in his determination and perseverance." She stated that she felt very proud when he graduated.

Teaching Life Skills to Students. Having been a first-generation college student, Perpetua has used her personal experiences to recognize the gaps in the system. Earlier she mentioned her lack of financial savvy, and she stated that workshops should be recommended to students—life skills training. She said "So, I went to a Student Success

Symposium and I think I recommended financial, kind of like financial, what do you call it, like 'financial education' to students." Likewise, Beatrice stated that there's more to school than getting the degree. She said that students need to learn time management, so that they can balance pursuit of their degree with learning how to interact with the people they encounter on campus, with growing socially and professionally, and with "just having fun." She went on to say, "All those things are so important to learn, I think in a college education." Jaina spoke of the importance of diversity on a college campus as being part of the educational experience. She stated, "The University is meant to give exposure. If an instructor is aware, they have to take the trouble to educate themselves. They have to be aware of their own biases, and of their awareness. That's the point of the University, right? That they come and they encounter these varied cultures and diversity of opinion. Otherwise, what's the point of coming here?"

Winifred acknowledged that she had a privileged upbringing. As mentioned earlier, she stated that she believes her at-risk students need to find their voice and assert themselves. Based upon her experience with at-risk students, she said she feels it is her job to help them develop "an appropriate sense of entitlement." Graciela discussed her research project on *imposter syndrome*. She said she witnessed tremendous growth in her at-risk students that participated in this project and wrote "digital stories about their experiences with imposter syndrome and their journeys here at the University." These students started out "shy and timid" and grew, "have gone on to do tremendous things—work at Stanford. I mean, end up leading orientations for the entire University." Graciela encouraged them by letting them know that she can relate to their sense of not belonging,

stating “Hey, I have a doctorate, you know, from UC Berkeley no less—and I still feel like an impostor.”

As mentioned earlier, Harrison spoke of numerous students he had encountered who possessed the brains to academically succeed, but who were lacking self-efficacy. He stated that he’s spends time building up the students’ confidence to believe in themselves, because he feels that mentors “need to be supportive.” He has found himself repeating phrases such as, “Look, I’ve seen a lot of students graduate who ain’t any smarter than you. You’re capable of completing this assignment. You’re capable of writing this paper. You are capable of graduating.”

Checking In. Several mentors spoke of the importance of checking in with their mentees. Tyra gave an example of one of her mentees with whom she checked in regularly, especially prior to important events, such as major exams. She reported that there was a stretch of time that she hadn’t seen her mentee for 3 days after an exam. So, she checked in with them saying, “Okay, I’m used to you being on this floor studying. Is this a good thing or bad thing?” And they said, “Oh no. I was finished my finals so I was sleeping.” Then she continued to ask about what was on the Chemistry 1A exam and how they felt about it, leading up to setting the course for the following semester and taking Chemistry 1B. Tyra reported that she uses a straightforward approach which works in her relationships with mentees. She stated that she does not let them get away from the encounter until she’s convinced they’re in a good place. So, with the aforementioned student, she continued the conversation, saying, “Are you sure? You know, whether not you passed that exam, so be honest.” Tyra stated “And, so talking to them in that fashion,

usually gets the truth out. It's kind of weird." Jaina also reaches out to students when they fail to attend class. And she makes it a practice to tell them during class, "Contact me, contact me and tell me this is an issue that you are facing." Anna outlined her method for checking in with students, ranging from giving students suggestions on how to fix their papers to pointing them to campus resources for support. But, the caveat she gives them is, "Do it, and get back to me in a couple of days." If students fail to follow through, she reaches out again to ask, "What's going on?" And she continues the pursuit and even offers alternatives.

Eleanor stated that she believes it is critical to "check in" with students to "make sure they're headed in the right direction—so they don't give up on themselves." Eleanor appears to be passionate about this as she credits a mentor for guiding her and helping her to prioritize when she was in graduate school. She mentioned a particularly difficult time when her child was struck by a car a week after school had begun. Her mentor helped her to realize that she needed to leave school at that time, assuring Eleanor that school would still be there when she returned—but that family, at that moment, was her priority. Eleanor took a break from school to take care of her child and returned when she was ready. She completed her degree. Alita also said that it is important to check in with students, so that if they encounter serious difficulties, they won't feel like reaching out is "a bother." She stated this can be accomplished if the "relationship chain is still intact." Graciela said that she observes student behavior and appearance—and if they appear altered in some way, perhaps swamped she makes it a point to say "Hey, I just want to

check in and see how you're doing." She said that "Even just that small act, you'd be surprised how that makes a big difference."

Setting Goals. Mentors discussed both short and long-term goals – using them to help the students to see the immediate tasks that need to be accomplished as well as the bigger picture. Winifred, who successfully supported the undocumented student mentioned earlier, through some very difficult years at University and through graduation, makes checking in a common practice, but combines this with goal setting. She stated, "I support them by checking in, by being kind of transparent, by giving them positive feedback—also with explaining what else needs to happen. I think one of the things that is especially important for at-risk students is mapping a whole process, especially for at-risk students who don't have the academic background." Jaina spoke of the importance of regular reminders and repetition to encourage students to persist. She makes it a practice in class to say, "When you're facing problems, the solution is never to stop attending class or stop turning in work." Tyra and Eleanor both addressed the fact that students often feel overwhelmed. To counteract student anxiety, Tyra reported that she instills in her mentees a mindset that focuses on one step at a time or moving from one short-term goal to the next. In addition to that, she reminds students of what they have already accomplished, thus building up their confidence in their ability to succeed. She spoke about a mentee who felt overwhelmed by the workload. She said "I tell him every day is a new day. Every day, you're one step toward your goal. So, if you can make it past one exam, you can make it past exam number two and you can make it past exam number 3." Eleanor also mentioned that she recognized student anxiety regarding

expectations for assignments. She said that she feels helping students gain perspective can keep them moving forward, helping them "realize that not everything they do has to be perfect." Eleanor said when a student feels "up against a wall," a mentor can help them to "reprioritize, re-strategize what might be most important at that moment." Tyra reported the usefulness of having a Plan A, B, and C—which translates to what is currently happening in the student's life and academics, followed by next month and next semester. Tyra said that this approach sends a message to the mentee that "you're always there—and thinking about them." She concluded with "those things are really key for me, for working with the students."

Career Planning. More than one mentor discussed career planning with their mentee. When Perpetua encountered a student who shared her previous aspirations for working in gerontology, she advised them not to wait for graduation to get a job with the city – since her ultimate goal was applying for a job with the city once she attained her degree. Given her personal experience with the city, Perpetua encouraged the student to get an entry level position with the city while continuing her education. Using her personal knowledge of the structure of employment in the city government allowed Perpetua to give the student sound career advice.

Eleanor has had a number of students she has helped with career planning. Eleanor relayed a story of a mentee who she was working with that was about to graduate with their bachelor's degree. Through their conversations of the future, she discovered that this student didn't understand next steps to moving on after graduation, on "how to pursue an adult professional job." He told her that he was considering getting a job at

Burger King. Eleanor helped him explore options that interested him, and he chose a path to a master's in library science. In part, she said that she thinks students look to her for this guidance, because she has shared some of her own struggles and accomplishments with them on her path to academic success. She said, "They feel that I will be able to give them additional support and guidance that will help them figure out how to direct their academic career, how to direct their academic success. And then often, when they graduate, they also want support in attempting to find a job in their field."

Time. Many of the mentors discussed making extra time to see students when they needed the help, rather than limiting their encounters to office hours. Jaina spoke of an at-risk student whose portfolio was not going to pass. She offered to come in at 8:30 a.m. to work with the student's schedule. She also told her, "Please come and meet me the day before – because I will allow you to redo your portfolio, but I need to talk to you about it– so try and come meet me." Likewise, Tyra stated, "If the student comes at 5 and I'm getting ready to leave, and I need to stay till 7 or 8 with this student, I'll privilege them. So, I think it's very important—if we can do something that will make it an equal playing field." Other mentors pointed out that in order to help their mentees, they also need to make time for themselves. Alita stated that even though she gives a lot of her time to her mentees, she does not feel that they are taking advantage of her. However, she noted that she sets boundaries – not only to protect herself, but to model this behavior for her students, so that "they're not being taken advantage of—and that they're not burning out and that they're not becoming more vulnerable, in addition to the vulnerabilities they're all carrying into a certain space."

Referrals, Resources, and Networking. Most of the mentors acknowledged the need to refer students when the resources needed were not part of their expertise or training. More than one mentor discussed the importance of helping students to network. As mentioned earlier, a student that Tyra mentored had been raped. Tyra said that the student was full of anger, so Tyra kept up a steady dialogue with her. Tyra stated that she came to the conclusion that the counseling wasn't helping because the student didn't trust the counselor she was seeing. Tyra told the student that the counselors aren't all permanent, and that it would "be okay to speak with some else." Tyra reported that after the student switched counselors, she finally began to find constructive ways to release her anger.

Some mentors reported taking the time to escort a student to one of the centers on campus—to make sure they get the assistance they need. For example, when Winifred's student with a history of family violence was in crisis due to her unhealthy living environment, they "went to the counseling center together and talked through, together, what her options were for a different place to sleep that very night. Is there a crisis bed for her somewhere, so she is safe?" Bianca stated that listening is of utmost importance. After determining what is troubling a student, she will "either walk them over to the Student Health Center or Student Services, or I will refer them—recommend that they go, or, I'll pop in to check on them." She has also recommended "podcasts that are centered on people of color, and, you know, health, social emotional, well-being meditation."

Perpetua works with a student organization for which she is their assigned contact. She stated that she is constantly gathering information resources for students to

help them be more successful, and so that she is ready when she encounters a student in need. Perpetua's office is filled with family pictures, and students often comment on them. She stated that she thinks the atmosphere helps students feel comfortable. She spoke of a student who came in for a reference consultation and soon confided in her that he was having trouble finding places to sleep. Perpetua stated that because she keeps abreast of resources, she was able to give him the campus information on emergency housing.

Anna discussed the importance of networking with peers. She stated, "I have been able to link students with former graduates. One such experience involved a student who was interested in entering a graduate program, but did not know how to begin the process. I was able to introduce that student to other students who were already in graduate school."

Harrison spoke of several students that he had referred to campus resources. He mentioned one student who ended up homeless because a tree crashed into their building and the "building was no longer livable." He mentioned another student he referred to campus resources because it was clear that the student was not getting enough nutrition. Since he had taken the time to build trust with this student, he was able to say to them, "You know, there's a need for some resources here, right?" Harrison mentioned a female student who had come to class to take a midterm and she was clearly rattled. He managed to take her aside and find out that she had been held up at gunpoint on her way to campus. He pulled her out of class and said, "You're not going to take this midterm. It's

not going to happen because you're in shock. And, in about 2 or 3 minutes that shock is going to start to wear off. We got to get you to counseling immediately."

My Data as it Relates to RQ2. Research question two focused on how faculty and professional staff mentors described their influence on the student development and persistence to graduation of their at-risk students. Responses often included the perceived challenges facing at-risk students in higher education and experiences with practices and solutions that mentors found to help students persist towards graduation. Data is reflected in the stories told by the mentors under the two themes that emerged: perceived obstacles to student persistence and experiences with effective practices of at-risk students.

Research Question 3: Mentors' Descriptions of their Role in Relation to Social and Emotional Competence

How do faculty and professional staff who mentor undergraduate students who are at risk describe the role of their mentoring relationship on the development of social or emotional competency in themselves and their mentees? Goleman (2015) divides emotional intelligence into four areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. Each area has its own set of corresponding competencies. Throughout this section, I will be referring back to previously told stories by mentors in Research Question 2, which focuses on the perceived obstacles that at-risk students face and the experiences of mentors with effective practices they've used to help students meet these challenges. These experiences with the interviewees' effective practices are the foundation from which the mentors' emotional and social competency are

demonstrated and then used to help students achieve not only academic success, but personal growth—thus increasing their emotional and social competency, as well.

Self-Awareness

Goleman (2015) defines self-awareness as "knowing one's internal states, preferences, resources and intuitions. Within this cluster, he lists three competencies: emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment and self-confidence. Earlier, Tyra spoke of the mentors in her sons' lives and the gratitude she felt for the guidance they received. Understanding the connection to her family and wanting to do the same as a mentor, Tyra appears to demonstrate emotional awareness, as she recognizes her own emotions and the effect they have on her perspective and her choices. Similarly, Jaina appeared to demonstrate emotional awareness when she shared information about her son with a learning disability, and how her relationship with him helped her to recognize and help students who were also struggling with their academics due to having a learning disability. When Harrison escorted his student who was in shock after being held at gunpoint to counseling, he demonstrated empathy and emotional awareness. He stated, "I've been in shock before and I know what's about to happen." Graciela commented on an interaction with a graduating at-risk student that she reconnected with at commencement. She reflected on the fact that she had tried to help him numerous times, but that he was unwilling to accept help. She stated, "It made him feel like he was being weak." Graciela demonstrated accurate self-assessment, as well as self-confidence when she countered with "I think sometimes our greatest strength is when we can ask for help. She stated that the growth of this student was apparent to her at commencement. It

appeared that he himself exhibited self-awareness in the form of emotional awareness and accurate self-assessment. He told Graciela, “I wish that I would have accepted the support that you offered me. I get it now—but I couldn't get it at the time.” In fact, self-confidence appears to be demonstrated by all the mentors, as they stated numerous times of their awareness of the positive differences they have made in their mentees’ lives. Further demonstrations of self-confidence are interwoven with other competencies and described throughout this section.

Self-Management

According to Goleman (2015), self-management refers to managing one’s internal states, impulses and resources. This cluster includes six competencies: emotional self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement, initiative and optimism. Graciela appears to possess the ability to self-manage, demonstrating emotional self-control when interacting with at-risk students. She stated, “Your heart breaks because you see the struggle that they’re going through and they’re always telling you, ‘Oh, Dr. *(eliminated Graciela’s surname),* I don’t want you to think that I’m not committed to this class.’ To this student, she responded “That’s never been in question. I know you’re committed to the class.” Graciela acknowledged the difficulty of being put on a pedestal by students, which then leads them to worry that they may disappoint her in some way. She stated that she has openly said to students, “There’s nothing that you could do to disappoint me.” She went on to share with me, “But, it can be tough, I think, on both sides.” This open acknowledgement of the students’ fears of disappointing also speaks to Graciela’s competency in conflict management as she appears to recognize her mentees’ inner

conflict—then takes action to both address and dispel their fears. Graciela also demonstrates transparency which Goleman (2015) describes as "maintaining integrity" and behaving in alignment with one's values. Graciela demonstrates her respect for others through her actions. She said that she has more than 150 students each semester and makes it a point to learn "every single one of their names." She also builds time into "their first assignment, that I get to know what communities they come from—and not just value the academic experiences in life, but what are the cultural strengths that they bring to the university." She went on to point out that students often do not realize what they bring, especially bilingual students, many of whom act as translators for their parents. Lastly, Graciela appears to be optimistic. When she chose to mentor the troubled Black student, despite another faculty member's warning her against the undertaking, she said that she believed that her mentorship would reap positive rewards. She went on to say that the mentorship made all the difference for the student. Graciela said that knowing that her mentor believed in her increased the mentee's self-awareness, especially in the competency of self-confidence. Graciela reported that the student also began to improve academically, thus increasing her self-management skills in the competencies of achievement and optimism.

Harrison stated that maintaining integrity is a critical component to the mentoring relationship. By being genuine and being human, mentors demonstrate high competency in transparency (Goleman, 2015). Harrison reflected on his approach to students. He stated, "Without communication, without starting to get to know people on a human level, it's very difficult to establish any kind of relationship that would produce a

benefit." Harrison goes on to say, "So, your job isn't to try to tell them what to do, but your job is to definitely try to give them a certain piece of the guidance—we're all human—so we can all make mistakes—but, if you're not coming with the best of intention, with a certain level of integrity to the things that you're saying to them you could actually cause harm." Alita's transparency is demonstrated by the reflective culture she brings to her classes, asking students to dig deep and share their truths, the people they carry with them. She reported that this method has resulted in students feeling truly accepted for who they are. It is an exercise in social intelligence (Goleman, 2007). Alita mentioned a student who at first shared the basics—what he thought she wanted to hear. She pressed him, and he eventually opened up, sharing deeply personal reasons for attending school—his mother, who was dying of cancer, and his need to make her proud. He said, "failure was not an option." He later stated that from sharing his thoughts in the classroom, "he felt seen as a human being" and "that he immediately felt like he was supported just for being able to acknowledge his reality openly." Alita's approach to mentoring appeared to make it possible for him to increase his self-awareness, especially in the competencies of emotional awareness and self-confidence. Alita also stated that this "work also entails me showing up as my authentic self, the fullness of my own humanity and sometimes letting them see how flawed we can be when we're supposed to have it together."

Perpetua, as a first-generation college student who acknowledged her need for guidance and mentoring while in school, said she makes a conscious effort to keep abreast of new resources available for students, thus demonstrating initiative in gearing

her professional development to areas that directly impact student success. She stated, "I try to learn as much as there is to know about the services that the University offers—so, that if I'm ever in that situation, I know how to connect the student to the right resource."

Alita spoke of her perspective on the role of mentoring. Speaking from experience as a mentee, she stated, "you got to acknowledge that people shift in their own lives" and "your greatest source of support at one time as a mentor or otherwise—that might not be where they're at right now—and that that's okay, right?" According to Goleman (2015), this demonstrates adaptability, or the flexibility to accept change. She went on further to state that it is important to have "adequate supports in place," which demonstrates self-awareness (Goleman, 2015). Alita also spoke of her role in the Latina/o culture and said that when she is working with at-risk students it is almost like "reaching across time and space—and working with some manifestation of myself." In addition to being adaptable, her apparent dedication, personal success and belief in her students and her culture exemplify the competencies of transparency, optimism and achievement (Goleman, 2015).

Mentors Acknowledge Influence of Their own Mentors. Several mentors credited their own mentors for having shaped them into the educators they are today, demonstrating the competency of achievement but honoring their mentors for their contributions to their success. Perpetua stated, "Yes, I think honesty and openness is very important. As I mentioned before, sharing my struggles and hearing my mentors, or those that I look up to hear their struggles, helps me overcome the ones that I have to deal with." Eleanor remembered, "I had moments in my personal life that I came very close to

dropping out of those programs and if it wasn't for having been able to connect with someone who mentored me and encouraged me to come back, I would not have finished my degrees. In one case, I had a child that was hit by a car and I had to drop out and take incompletes a week after classes had started." She went on to say, "Because I wouldn't have successfully gotten through college or graduate school without that mentoring myself, I realize how valuable it is for the students." In addition to achievement, Eleanor also demonstrates self-awareness in this instance, because she acted with the competency of self-confidence. She was mentored, and she stated that she could use what she learned to give back by also being a mentor.

Graciela mentioned, "I think my mentors from my undergrad, my master's program, my doctorate program—all women of color—they continue, I think, to support me and motivate me and inspire me." She went on to say that since she attended universities within the current system she works, and benefited "so greatly" from the system, she returned to the system to give back. Again, this not only demonstrates achievement for Graciela, but also the self-confidence that she has something of value to offer at-risk students. She said, "I understand the value of mentorship and the role that it's played in my life. And that's also what inspires me."

Social Awareness

Goleman (2015) states that social-awareness "refers to how people handle relationships and awareness of others' feelings, needs and concerns. Social awareness consists of three competencies: empathy, organizational awareness and service orientation. Graciela's reflection on her encounter with the graduating student at

commencement also demonstrated social awareness in the form of empathy when she stated, “But, again, you know, people of color, at-risk, people we think we have to take care of everything ourselves.”

Perpetua reported having had numerous encounters with students, in which upon first meeting them, they seem compelled to share personal information or problems. As mentioned earlier, she has pictures of her husband and children in her office that she believes creates a comforting atmosphere. But, beyond the physical space, Perpetua reported using subtle means of connecting with at-risk students who share her culture, by occasionally dropping words in Spanish into the conversation. Perpetua told me that she listens with empathy as students “feel comfortable opening up” and sharing their problems, such as the student that she referred to emergency housing, which demonstrated her competency in service orientation. In fact, several mentors have previously mentioned recognizing a need and filling it with an appropriate referral, also demonstrating a service-oriented approach to mentoring. This includes Harrison, whose student tried to take an exam shortly after being held at gunpoint, and Tyra, who used listening and probing to discern the need for her mentee to switch rape counselors.

Beatrice spent 10 years as a social worker for child welfare before coming to work at the University. She spoke at length about working with teenagers and trying to prepare them for life before their 18th birthday. Beatrice reported that she had thought because they were still in school and approaching graduation, there was hope. But she discovered that the teens saw things differently. They saw this as a future with “nowhere to go,” because “they didn’t have a job.” So, Beatrice worked to find them jobs, only to

discover that they didn't stay very long because "they didn't have the social skills." Undeterred, she helped them get into college. Again, they dropped out, because they had no support system. "So, then we got support for them in college to graduate. And we said, 'Woo. Our work is done.' And they had graduated from college, but they didn't know what to do. They didn't know where to go. They hadn't developed networks for jobs." After years of working in this capacity, Beatrice said that she realized the system was failing these teens. She stated, "And every time we got closer and closer, we still weren't getting the job done. Because what was necessary was a parent." Being cognizant of her students' feelings and making a concerted effort to recognize them and their struggles demonstrates a high level of empathy.

A few of the mentors related their purpose in mentoring was tied to their families or their communities. Their need to help appears to spring from empathy. Two of the mentors specifically mentioned their sons as their motivation for mentoring. In reference to who supports and encourages her to work with at risk students, Tyra stated that it was her sons – that she wanted to give other students the opportunities her sons had with the same chances for success. Tyra's reflection on her life and her drive to bring that to the students she mentors, demonstrates highly-developed social intelligence (Goleman, 2007). Jaina also equated her need to help students with the struggles her own son experienced. She stated, "As I said my second son has learning issues. So, I always have him in my mind when I work with at-risk students."

Earlier, Bianca spoke about the importance of connecting students to resources, but following up with a "lot of checking in," because as she stated, "If I struggled with

something in the past then I usually know from that experience that they need help in those areas." She also talked about how she and her brother were inspired and encouraged to be socially intelligent. She said, "I do it because I am really fortunate to have had a lot of opportunities in my life. And, I am second generation college-going, and my parents raised my brother and I in the United States, where we knew that our job was to give back—and however we could."

The competency of organizational awareness appears to be a strong motivating factor for Alita. She speaks about awareness of her community and the power relationships that effect both her students and fellow colleagues in their ability to succeed at the University. She demonstrates allegiance, stating, "When I think about the communities I was part of and Latino culture, in particular, our idea of self is very much attached to communal understanding of who we are within that." When she is asked to the table, "whether it's city work or academic work, at that table is always the chair that's there for me, always feels symbolic of everyone I carry with me."

Winifred demonstrates high competency in all areas of social awareness. She has spoken of the need for at-risk students to find their voice, she listened at length and turned the life around of an undocumented student with failing grades, and she personally escorted a student in crisis to a center to find her emergency housing. These actions demonstrate high levels of empathy, organizational awareness and service orientation. In regard to organizational awareness, Winifred demonstrates concern for at-risk students being "under-entitled" as she speaks of power relationships and helping those students find their voice and become respectfully assertive. She said that this is something she can

and must do to help them develop “a sense of appropriate entitlement.” She stated that in their early years in education, these at-risk students had “never gotten validated for being assertive” and more than likely were “given messages from K through 12 that were about sitting still—not asking for anything,” or possibly even punished “especially if you’re a man, especially if you’re a person of color.” Through her actions, Winifred also demonstrates the other two competencies of social awareness, empathy and service orientation.

Relationship Management

According to Goleman (2015) relationship management “concerns the skill or adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others. It contains six competencies: developing others, inspirational leadership, change catalyst, influence, conflict management and teamwork and collaboration. Graciela’s mentorship of the Black student that was on the brink of dropping out, led to tremendous growth in the student. By placing her faith in the student and offering her a teaching assistant position, Graciela demonstrated high levels in all the competencies of relationship management. In another scenario mentioned earlier, Graciela stated that at-risk students need to realize that they deserve to be at the University. She offered herself as an example to them, highlighting her skills to hustle as a means of survival, then used it as proof to the students that they have not only have ties to their community, but also that they have arrived as survivors and do possess their own form of social capital. By painting this picture for the students, Graciela demonstrates several relationship management competencies, including developing others, inspirational leader, change catalyst and ability to influence others.

Further, she also appears to be competent in conflict management, as she helps students to face their conflicting emotions of not belonging, but then guiding them to realize that their own survival skills brought them to the University—thus shifting the negative focus to a positive one—that of their inner strength. Graciela also mentioned the first assignment she gives to students which asks them to reflect on what they bring to the University. By building this into the curriculum, she has created an opportunity for students to let "their lived experience shine." This further demonstrates that Graciela is highly competent in relationship management.

Alita spoke of students she has shared her perspective with on the role of mentoring. She told them "You know you think you find a mentor in life and you owe them forever. You don't owe your mentor anything in that way—if it's a true mentorship." She equated this with her own experiences as a mentee, saying that she understood that someone who had once been a source of healing and mentoring for her, had moved on and was no longer fulfilling that role. By sharing her thoughts with her students on their fluid roles, she demonstrated that she had no expectations of permanency in their relationship. As she stated, she was there for them when they needed her, and that both she and they would move on to other places and relationships. Thus, Alita demonstrated that she works to develop others – sensing their developmental needs and helping strengthen their understanding of relationships, the first competency of relationship management. Alita asks her students, "Who do you carry with you?" Asking these big questions of her students, she guides them to reflect on their culture and attempts to empower them to take responsibility and become accountable for their

actions. Alita said that through reflection, students begin to fully appreciate their heritage, and this reflection empowers them to persist as a strategy to honor their family and their culture.

As mentioned in RQ1, Eleanor said that she believes in paying it forward. She not only practices this as a mentor, she asks this of her mentees. By asking them who they plan to help based on the guidance and support they have received, she demonstrates the competencies of influence, inspirational leadership and change catalyst. She also implies through this approach that she believes they are capable of accomplishing this task—which helps them to feel empowered and builds their self-confidence. Eleanor helps her mentees to realize how they are woven into the communal fabric—how they can act socially responsible for the good of others and also demonstrate competence in relationship management.

In several stories of student mentees, Harrison spoke of the steps he took to radically improve a student's chosen path. When he encountered a single mother who was also a transfer student from community college, struggling with her undergraduate degree, he worked with her to develop her skills. Through his mentorship, she not only completed her undergraduate degree, but also a master's degree. This story went full circle, as she then began working at a community college and funneling students to the University to take classes with Harrison. This mentoring relationship highlighted his competencies in developing others, inspirational leadership, change catalyst and influence. And, for the student, her self-awareness increased, both in the competencies of accurate self-assessment and self-confidence. With the student he caught plagiarizing,

Harrison took extensive steps to develop him and acted as a change catalyst by requiring him to do community service hours, working at a local agency invested in youth. This one action that Harrison took helped this student to realize his potential, continue his education and find a place in society and a career working with youth. According to Harrison, this student grew in self-awareness, increasing in the competencies of emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment and self-confidence. Both of these students also demonstrated an increase in social awareness, as they chose careers that were service-oriented.

Winifred stated that she had every opportunity and support growing up in a privileged environment. She appears to feel driven to help at-risk students who have not had the same groundwork to prepare them for the challenges of college. Her actions demonstrate high competency levels in relationship management, as she has created an environment in which students can join in research with her and experience a transformation by immersing themselves in the process. This work shows skill at developing others, being a catalyst for change and fostering a sense of teamwork and collaboration. Winifred also demonstrated great skill in conflict management, as she had the ability to resolve difficult situations. She managed to extract her student with a history of family violence from a toxic situation and find her emergency shelter and she helped an undocumented student with failing grades achieve his dreams of graduating.

Tyra spoke of the importance of patience in the mentoring relationship—which she stated is necessary for both the mentor and mentee. She demonstrates wisdom in expressing that this is a give and take relationship and can change daily for each party.

"One day you might have the patience of a hundred percent and your mentee might have patience of 20. And the next day, your mentee might have a hundred and you might only have 40—and either way, no matter what, you have to take that time that you dedicated to that person and stick with her." This understanding of inevitable tension in a mentoring relationship and her ability to rise above it, demonstrates that Tyra handles conflict management well. She also takes a team approach in her mentoring relationships with students. She uses a number of methods to accomplish this, including checking in frequently, listening until she gets the complete story and working with them to set goals. Tyra reports that students react well to this approach, as she has set expectations for them—to come to see her regularly and report in and she believes they feel empowered, because she has set the tone that their goals are shared.

Teamwork and collaboration is one of the competencies nested within relationship management. More than one mentor acknowledged that they learn from their mentees as well. Perepetua stated of the student assistant she mentored and challenged to grow "I like to learn about her culture—it's fascinating to learn about her culture. So, I'll always ask her things." By taking a personal interest in her assistant, Perpetua was able to challenge her and move her out of her comfort zone to realize her potential. Perpetua reported that the student grew, demonstrating self-awareness, especially in the competencies of accurate self-assessment and self-confidence. Additionally, Perpetua said that her student's skills in self-management increased, demonstrating the competency of achievement. Anna has been an educator for many years and has worked in a couple of states within the United States. She stated, "Every time I'd meet new

students, I learned something else that they're facing, their ideas, etc. And, as I work with other students, I'm able to take that experience and apply it in terms of helping others." Likewise, Harrison said that, "Over time, you start to build a greater level of rapport with other people and you start to learn more about their background. And, sometimes they learn more about yours." Winifred asserted "I learned a huge amount from them." As stated earlier, Winifred said that she believes that the perspectives of her less-privileged students could significantly improve society. She stated "I think one of the things that our world desperately needs is more perspectives from people who haven't had exceedingly privileged lives—because there are all kinds of problems that we have in the world."

My data as it relates to RQ3. Research question 3 focused on how my interviewees described the role of their mentoring relationship on the development of social or emotional competency in themselves and their mentees. I used Goleman's (2015) four areas of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management as a guide. The reflections and stories of the mentors suggest that both mentors and their mentees grow in emotional intelligence from their shared experiences.

Summary

This chapter began with a restating of the purpose of this study and the research questions that were used to organize and guide its design and progress. I elaborated on the setting in which the study was conducted and presented my methods for data collection, analysis and maintaining evidence of trustworthiness. I presented results from

11 in-person interviews with both faculty and staff mentors who have mentored students at risk of failing to persist to graduation in higher education.

My first research question focused on the perceptions of faculty and professional staff who mentor and coach undergraduate students who are at risk of failing to persist to graduation. The results led me to identify two themes: the perceived reality of mentoring and my interviewees' reasons for mentoring. In research question two I addressed how faculty and professional staff who serve as mentors and coaches for undergraduate students at risk of failing to persist to graduation describe their influence on these students' development and persistence to graduation. The first theme that surfaced was perceived obstacles to student persistence. The second theme involved the mentors' experiences with effective practices of mentoring at-risk students to address perceived obstacles in working to improve student persistence. In research question 3 I delved into how faculty and professional staff who mentor at-risk undergraduate students describe the role of their mentoring relationship on the development of social or emotional competency in themselves and their mentees. Four themes emerged in this section: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. Mentors reflected on utilizing these skills to help foster social and emotional growth in their mentees.

In Chapter 5, I will examine my results in relation to the literature review and conceptual framework. Further, I will discuss the potential of these results for affecting social change. Recommendations for continued research will be suggested.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusions

In this study I explored experiences of faculty and professional staff mentors and coaches to gain insight into their perceptions of their work with at-risk students' persistence toward graduation at an urban, public 4-year university. I hoped that focusing on these would shed light on front-line professionals whose experience might be useful to mentors of at-risk students at a variety of institutions of higher education. I conducted this qualitative study using semistructured interviews with 11 faculty and staff mentors at one institution of higher education. I focused my inquiry as an exploration of the following research questions.

RQ1: How do faculty and professional staff who mentor and coach undergraduate students who are at risk of failing to persist to graduation perceive their work?

RQ2: How do faculty and professional staff who mentor and coach undergraduate students who are at risk of failing describe their influence on these students' development and persistence to graduation?

RQ3: How do faculty and professional staff who mentor undergraduate students who are at risk describe the role of their mentoring relationship on the development of social or emotional competency in themselves and their mentees?

In working with the data generated by these interviews I found four principal themes that I titled the perceived reality of mentoring, my interviewees' reasons for mentoring, perceived obstacles to student persistence, and experiences of effective practices in mentoring at-risk students. In addition, I found other themes related to their reflections on themselves as practitioners, including self-awareness, self-management,

social awareness, and relationship management. In this chapter, I examine these themes as they relate to my Chapter 2 literature review and the theories included in my conceptual framework. I then discuss limitations of my study. In addition, I make recommendations for future research and consider implications of my research for positive social change.

Interpretation of the Findings in Relation to the Literature

RQ1 focused on faculty and staff mentors' perception of their work involving their reality of the mentoring experience and their reasons for mentoring. RQ2 focused on the mentors' perceived influence on at-risk student development and persistence to graduation. RQ3 centered on the mentors' description of their role and its relationship to social and emotional development for themselves and their mentees. Below, I discuss the results of my research and their connection to the literature I reviewed and conceptual framework I established in Chapter 2.

The Perceived Reality of Mentoring

Four subthemes are clustered under the theme of the perceived reality of mentoring: stress and emotional drain, time and workload, feeling either undervalued or supported, and the need for mentors of color. The underlying thread connecting these themes is the stress experienced by mentors in relation to their perception of the reality of mentoring. Thus, I highlight how stress impacts perceived reality as it relates to feeling valued or supported, to time and workload, and to its relation to the perceived critical need for an increase in the number of mentors of color available to students of color in higher education.

Some mentors reported that the need for mentors of color increased their stress levels due to the limited number of staff and faculty of color available to serve students of color. A few mentors also stated that mentoring is not considered in the promotion and tenure process, which sends the message that mentoring is undervalued. Most of the mentors spoke of the heavy workload associated with mentoring. They stated that the amount of time needed to mentor while also carrying out other unrelated academic duties resulted in a decrease in the amount of time available to accomplish all tasks related to other responsibilities. Even the few mentors who said they felt supported by their supervisors still reported experiencing stress when helping mentees through difficulties. These same mentors also reported that they worked longer hours to compensate for including mentoring in their workload.

Stress was reported by several mentors, but the stressors mentioned varied. One mentor said that the stress she felt was caused by faculty with different philosophical approaches. Other mentors reported that stress was related to caring too much about the students and the various obstacles they faced to the point of it being detrimental to themselves. However, in a study in which over 100 students were interviewed (Terenzini et al., 1994), an overwhelming theme resonated: the underrepresented students felt a great need to feel that someone at college cared for them.

The theme, lack of time and workload, was mentioned by nearly all the mentors as a reality associated with mentoring. Reddick (2011) stated, “Despite this pressure, Black faculty have endeavored to mentor Black students, often experiencing ‘bittersweet success’ as they work with students while navigating the often treacherous promotion and

tenure path" (p. 321). Some considered the sheer number of students that require mentoring to be a factor, whereas others commented on the type of help needed by the student that might be time-consuming, such as editing papers. Of particular note was the amount of time spent on communications with students, which can detract from other mandatory responsibilities. Reddick (2011) stated that, depending on their choice, it could have the potential to jeopardize their ability to qualify for tenure, which results in fewer Black mentors for at-risk students.

Two of the 11 participants stated they definitely felt their mentoring efforts were appreciated by their immediate supervisors. On the opposite end of the spectrum, mentors experienced lack of support and being undervalued by administration, supervisors, or colleagues. This was stated to manifest in mentoring not being considered in the promotion and tenure process, as well as in monetary compensation. The literature recognizes this dilemma of undervalued mentors. Astin (2016) made a strong case for supporting faculty mentoring efforts. Astin (2016) stated:

> If a college or university is going to take seriously its responsibility to educate its students, its professors need to operate more like trainers or jockeys—to make the "horse" run faster and better…the idea that the main goal of an educational institution is to "add value" to its students, to contribute to their learning and development and to maximize their chances of becoming productive, engaged, and responsible citizens and parents. (p. 56)

Faculty and staff mentors advocated for more persons of color to work with students of color. Reasons they cited for considering this essential included the students'

need to feel understood or to believe they were connecting to someone with shared experiences. Also mentioned was the positive impact that role models from the same culture or ethnicity could have and the importance of students of color seeing staff of color in leadership positions. The literature supports all four elements stated by the mentors as their perception of the reality of mentoring (Cavazos, 2016). Cavazos (2016) stated that of the academics interviewed, the new academics all had at least one Latina/o mentor and "their experiences with mentoring served as empowerment and a sense of belonging in academia through different types of support, such as belief in their academic writing abilities, shared experiences, and understanding of language and cultural background."

My interviewees indicated that mentors who share the same culture with their mentees can contribute to the persistence of at-risk students towards graduation. For example, a Latina mentor reflected on a mentee who stated that she "felt for the first time she was seen and heard from someone who could understand the different aspects of her identity, due to similar experience." Another mentor reflected on the power of Black students seeing Blacks in leadership roles. This sentiment was also shared by one of the White mentors who stated that her colleagues who are faculty of color and share a similar background with their mentees "makes a huge difference for them [their mentees]."

My Interviewees' Reasons for Mentoring

Three major reasons for being a mentor emerged from my findings: Mentoring is reciprocal, it is positively transformative, and it is for the greater good. Regarding the reciprocal nature of the relationship, mentors said that both the mentor and mentee learn

from the relationship. Johnson (2016) stated, “Mentorships are complex, interactive, and mutually beneficial: both mentee and mentor reap rewards from the relationship” (p. 24).

Being mentored can be a transformative experience for the mentee, as well as the mentor. Mentees often change their perspective or willingness to complete the steps they were given to succeed, to work harder to achieve their goals, such as completing their undergraduate degree, and in some instances, to trust and dream bigger, for example to apply for and pursue a graduate degree. Helping students transform by guiding them to ask the big questions and pursue the big dreams is supported by the work of Parks (2011). Parks (2011) noted that the mentoring environment needs to be a place that is safe for it to result in student engagement and the opportunity to explore the big questions and worthy dreams that can transform mentees. She cited a story of a middle class Black mentee who assumed that all it took to succeed was for a student to apply themselves. This mentee experienced transformation by tutoring an inner-city youth. She quoted his reflection, stating that he “discovered without the same resources and encouragement that he had known, it would be much more difficult than he presumed” (Parks, 2011, p. 182). Parks stated that “a worthy Dream coalesces a relationship between self and world that recognizes the reality and needs of the world and honors the authentic potential of the emerging adult in practical and purposeful terms, yielding a sense of meaningful aspiration” (p. 190).

Daloz (1999) noted that the possibility of positive transformation affects both the mentor and mentee. In delineating the guiding principles of the mentoring relationship, Daloz spoke of the narrowing of “the distance between the two” (mentor and mentee) that

occurs as the relationship develops (p.124). Daloz noted that the mentee begins to reflect and grow because they no longer completely accept without question their "deference to authority." (p. 124). Daloz further stated that the mentee's growth has the potential to impact the mentor-mentee relationship, so that it "has the potential to be transformed into something more profound and powerful. This has major implications for the growth of both partners" (p. 124). Johnson (2016) stated, "Mentoring results in an identity transformation: Excellent mentoring nearly always causes a shift or transformation in the mentee's sense of self in the academic or professional world" (p. 24).

Mentors stated that they believed that mentoring contributes to the greater good, for example, by giving underrepresented students a voice or by empowering them. Encouraging the student's voice is supported by Daloz (1999) who stated that it helps them better understand their place in the larger picture. Other mentors wanted to give back to the community as appreciation for the mentoring they themselves had received. A few mentors referred to being part of something larger than themselves, seeing their community as a collective to which they were accountable. The literature supports the participants' reasons for mentoring for the greater good. Barrera (2014) spoke of the mentoring program for the students in a Mexican American studies program. Barrera said:

> The most meaningful result of the program is that it dramatically improves faculty–student communication…we are able to foster a greater sense of community among the students and to facilitate an extended student-centered learning environment both in and out of the classroom. (p. 213)

Perceived Obstacles to Student Persistence

Mentors cited 14 perceived obstacles to student persistence. Six of these obstacles can be classified as inputs, i.e., perceived obstacles that students brought with them to college according to Astin's (1993) I-E-O model. These obstacles are: lack of funding, lack of support from family and friends, lack of social capital, lack of self-efficacy, lack of ability to self-advocate, and the one mentioned most of all by the mentors, lack of college preparedness. Three obstacles persisted or worsened due to the college environment itself and were cited by 10 of the 11 mentors interviewed. These were violence, health issues and homelessness. Student persistence was further challenged by the environment of college itself, with students encountering four perceived obstacles: pressure to graduate in 4 years, negative perspectives of faculty, bureaucracy and structural racism. The combination of pre-existing obstacles with newly encountered, college environment-specific obstacles affects student persistence. This is supported by Tinto's (2012b) sociological model of institutional departure. Tinto (2012b) found there was a definite relationship between student departure and the social and academic environments of their institution of higher education.

Experiences With Effective Practices in Mentoring At-Risk Students

Eleven effective practices for supporting at-risk students emerged through my interviews. Of these, three were mentioned by nearly half the mentors: teaching life skills to students; the importance of referrals, resources and networking; and listening and getting the whole story. Mentors spoke of the need to help students set goals, make time available to students, check in with them and build trust. The literature supports the

importance of building trust. Daloz (1999) asserted that creating trust was the primary duty of the mentor. The remainder of the effective practices were mentioned by at least two of the mentors: cultivate a culture of accommodation, embed college-knowledge into the curriculum, help them with career planning and guide them to seize the day. All these practices have an element of modeling behavior or practices to lead to self-empowerment and all require student involvement. The literature supports that student involvement through faculty-student interactions is an effective means to help students persist towards graduation (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto (2012a, 2012b). Daloz (1999) also spoke to the value of a mentor guiding the mentee on their journey and the impact this can have on their experiences in higher education.

Self-Awareness

Goleman (2015) stated that self-awareness is a key component of emotional intelligence which includes three competencies: emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment and self-confidence. One of the mentors I interviewed created an assignment that helps students build all aspects of their self-awareness. She has each student reflect on where they came from and who they brought with them to college. She stated this helps them to realize their uniqueness and what they bring to the university, often skills they didn't realize are an asset—such as the ability to speak two languages. Jehangir (2010) stated that recognizing strengths, such as bilingual skills helps the student feel empowered and makes them feel that they belong in higher education. Daloz (1999) also spoke on building a mentee's self-awareness so that they have the ability to view themselves from numerous perspectives and reflect on their world and their place in it.

Self-Management

Goleman (2015) described self-management as the ability to manage one's internal state, urges and resources. The six competencies associated with self-management are having emotional self-control, initiative, being transparent, adaptable, and optimistic and possessing the ability to achieve. All the mentors demonstrated competencies associated with self-management. They also worked to empower their at-risk students to develop these competencies. Three of these competencies were mentioned frequently during interviews. Mentors spoke of guiding students along the path to academic success, and helping them to achieve their goals. Several mentors spoke of the encouragement they gave to promote student initiative. More than one coach helped students realize how to accept minor disappointments, such as getting a grade of C over B, teaching them to be more adaptable. The literature supports these efforts. Bar-on (2007) measured emotional competence with the Emotional Quotient Inventory scales he developed. He believed that adaptability was one of the major indicators of emotional competence and could be measured by assessing an individual's flexibility, problem-solving capabilities and the ability to see things realistically.

Social Awareness

According to Goleman (2015), social awareness "refers to how people handle relationships and awareness of others' feelings, needs and concerns." Three competencies are associated with social awareness: the ability to be empathetic, possessing awareness of the intricacies associated with organizations and being service-oriented. McLean (2012) also acknowledged that successful mentors cultivate attributes such as empathy

and the “courage to challenge” mentees. Helping students understand how institutions of higher education are organized and how they function is an indicator of an effective mentor (Morales et al., 2016). Several of the mentors spoke of bureaucracy at the university and how the curriculum places students of color at a disadvantage. Two mentors spoke specifically about structural racism. All the mentors demonstrated an awareness of the organizational structure and many used creative means to counteract what they perceived as obstacles in the path of their at-risk students. At least three of the participants who were faculty members embedded assignments into their curriculum to help students better understand both the system and their place in it.

Relationship Management

Goleman (2015) described relationship management as the ability to encourage positive behavioral reactions from others. Competencies related to this skill including the ability to develop others, lead with inspiration, being influential, a change agent, and ability to manage conflict and work collaboratively on teams. Several of the mentors spoke of working with their mentee to plan, set goals, and discuss career paths. Healy et al. (2012) stated that for the mentor-mentee relationship to work, both parties must work collaboratively—with the mentor inspiring hope and the student’s willingness to trust. Three of the mentors equated the building of trust with the building of the relationship. A few of the mentors of color stated that it was often easier for students of color to reach out to them because there was a sense of shared experiences. According to the literature, trust can be established by a mentor (Griffin et al., 2015) with emotional intelligence who can express optimism and empathy to the mentee, establishing a connection with the

student that leads to positive outcomes. In a study conducted by Reddick (2011) on Black faculty mentors' relationships with Black mentees, the author found that having a shared culture between mentor and mentee made the experience richer and served as a foundation for trust that did not occur as easily when the mentors were White.

Modeling conflict management for the mentee helps the at-risk student to develop emotional intelligence as well. Daloz (1999) recommended introducing conflict to the mentee after trust has been established, as conflict challenges the student to examine problems from more than one perspective, contributing to their personal growth. Although mentees often brought challenges to their mentors, some mentors did speak to challenging their students to break out of comfort zones and work harder to reach their goals. Courses in social justice that include intergroup dialogue have been found to help students develop aspects of emotional intelligence, including conflict management and empathy. According to a study by Hopkins and Domingue (2015), students engaged in intergroup dialogue improved their communication and critical thinking skills—learning how to actively listen, suspend judgment and constructively deal with conflict.

Interpretation of Results in Relation to the Conceptual Framework

This study was anchored by a conceptual framework that was guided by Astin's (1993, 1999) theory of student involvement, Tinto's (2012a, 2012b) theory of student departure and framework for institutional action to enhance student retention, Daloz's (1999) approach to mentoring, Parks's (2011) model of a mentoring environment, Goleman's (2006a, 2006b, 2007) research on emotional and social intelligence and Bar-On's (2007) model of emotional intelligence. The work of Astin (1993, 1999) and Tinto

(2012a, 2012b) directly relates to the factors that contribute to student persistence or departure, as well as the overall student experience in an academic setting. The mentoring experience and the mentoring environment are the focus of Daloz (1999) and Parks (2011). Goleman (2006a, 2006b, 2007) and Bar-On (2007) are used to examine perceptions of social and emotional intelligence of both the mentors and the mentees.

Astin (1999) recognized 57 measures of student involvement once the student has entered higher education: academics, faculty, peers, work, and other. Astin (1999) stated that involvement is measurable and tied to student motivation. Areas with positive correlations impacted by student-faculty interaction included student satisfaction, intellectual and personal growth, and behavioral and career outcomes. Astin's (1999) observations mirror results from my study. Student satisfaction manifested in numerous ways. Students who came to their mentor with personal problems, such as housing crises, encounters with violence, and lack of finances were connected with campus resources to help improve their situations. Numerous mentors reported that the time spent helping students overcome these obstacles resulted in the students remaining in school and on task. Satisfaction also was reported by students asked to reflect on what they bring to the university, their unique skills and journey. Students began to understand the benefits of speaking a second language or the grit and determination they called upon to overcome a life that began in poverty, surrounded by crime and a lack of educational resources. Reflection empowered these students and inspired them to continue their academic and personal journeys and helped them to combat the feelings associated with outsiders' perceptions that at-risk students lack social capital.

Both faculty and staff mentors in this study reported on the academic and personal growth in their mentees. Personal growth observed by mentors included an increase in their mentee's self-awareness. More than one mentor reported on the academic growth of their mentee. Mentors brought mentees into research projects or guided them through the process. These mentors observed the mentee's growth in honing skills necessary for success both academically and professionally—including presentation skills, self-confidence and the ability to network successfully.

Mentors proved to be a positive influence on the behaviors of their mentees, from improving study habits to working collaboratively with their mentors in setting goals for academic success, and minimizing the stressors associated with remaining on the path to graduation. One mentor's firm and guiding presence for a student unwilling to accept assistance, resulted in a breakthrough for the student upon graduation, when he finally realized that he could have benefitted from the help that was offered and would not have been perceived as being weak. Another mentor spoke of a student heading towards expulsion due to plagiarism and the steps he took to transform this student's behavior with community service and consistent mentoring, resulting in a success story of a student completely engaged and discovering and pursuing a positive career path.

Mentees benefitted from their mentor's career guidance and began to make connections between their schoolwork and its relation to their future. One mentee finally realized the benefit that a bachelor's' degree had on job opportunities and secured a position at the university while applying for and entering graduate school. Another mentee in the military used his knowledge of the college system to take a proactive

stance in educating young military recruits about college credits and navigating the system. A mentee whose life started in poverty, exposed to gang life and manual labor began to realize his potential by working with his mentor and pursuing his dreams. Not only did he complete his master's degree, but he is also currently pursuing a doctoral degree.

Tinto's (2012b) model of institutional departure focuses on the role of the social and academic environment of the institution and its impact on student departure. Tinto (2012b) stated that if a student faces challenges at school and does not receive the help needed, the likelihood that the student will leave school will increase. Tinto (2012b) said that four conditions influence student retention: expectations, support, assessment and feedback and involvement.

The mentors in this study used expectations to challenge and support their mentees. Some mentors stated that there is a fine line between supporting and encouraging students to work through a problem. They also mentioned that it is difficult, but necessary to make this decision to hold back, so that students can realize their potential and trust in their abilities. Another mentor challenged students by "stretching them to read things and learn things or participate in things that are different from what they have been exposed to"—with the underlying expectation and belief in them that they are up to the challenge. This same mentor also stated that they believed that students need to be reminded that the courses they are taking, the knowledge they are gaining, and the critical thinking they are using to succeed academically—is what future employers expect of them. He challenges students with "learning how to figure out things that there might

not be an answer to directly"—something that requires deep thought and problem-solving. When student work is not up to par, another mentor will make it clear to the student that they need to work harder. However, she will refer them to the Writing Center and accept and grade the paper after the student has made the necessary changes to improve the quality of their work. Another mentor believes in challenging mentees to improve their skills for the workplace—to begin attending conferences and making presentations while still attending college. Bringing students onboard to participate in research projects is another mentor's method to relay their expectation that they want students to perform like colleagues. However, she still makes herself available to them when they require mentoring and encouragement.

Assessment by mentors took the form of checking in with mentees throughout the course of their relationship to ensure that they remained on track. In these meetings, mentors would focus on the student's short- and long-term goals—passing the next exam, finishing a paper on time through considering the future—graduate school and career planning. Feedback was both realistic and supportive. Some mentors needed to help their mentees understand the bigger picture, by not dwelling on a lower grade than anticipated, but accepting it and moving on to the next task at hand, while continuing to push them to work harder and improve their skills by exposing them to the resources necessary to accomplish this. Feedback varied, depending on the situation at hand. Students in crises, such as those exposed to violence or threatened with homelessness received immediate support and connections to resources. Students whose expectations of themselves needed rethinking were pushed to reflect on their achievements and dream of something bigger

than they had thought possible. The mentors had one goal in mind, to help the student reach their maximum potential while under their mentorship and to empower them to help themselves once they had left the academic environment.

Student involvement, the last condition Tinto (2012b) stated was necessary to retain students is firmly rooted in the ongoing relationship students have with their mentors. Mentors encouraged student involvement in a variety of ways. One mentor brought students together to collaborate with her on research projects, not only producing an end product, but also providing the opportunity for students to interact in a professional, collegial environment. Another mentor challenged her mentee to hone her presentation skills and to engage in outreach opportunities to improve her communication skills. A student headed down the wrong path due to plagiarism was redirected down the path of community service that led to a fulfilling community engagement experience and a revelation of the career path he ultimately wanted to pursue.

Limitations

It was necessary for me, as the researcher, to monitor myself throughout the process to minimize the impact of my own biases on the study (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Furthermore, I used purposeful sampling, which can also lead to bias, especially as I generated and chose participants based upon a set of criteria they had to meet to participate. To minimize the impact of personal bias, I employed reflexive bracketing (Ahern, 1999) to monitor myself throughout the process. My focus was on mentors' perceptions of their experiences with at-risk, underrepresented students at a 4-year public institution. Therefore, another limitation could be that I did not include the experiences of

faculty and staff who work with at-risk undergraduate students at private 4-year colleges or at community colleges. Therefore, the results of my study cannot be generalized beyond the context of a single 4-year public undergraduate institution.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results from my study provides data on mentors' perceptions of their role in the mentoring relationship. Perceived obstacles to student persistence were discussed and mentors spoke to the strategies they employed to improve their at-risk mentees chances for academic success. These results could be tested at institutions of higher education that seek to develop mentoring programs that consider the needs of at-risk students and their potential for academic success and retention based upon the mentoring experience. Future quantitative studies could test my results with a larger sampling across community colleges and 4-year institutions.

Interviewing mentees who have graduated to gather their perceptions of the mentoring experience as it related to student success, involvement and persistence could provide a balanced perspective of the mentor-mentee relationship from both angles. Another approach would be to interview at-risk first-year mentees who have persisted into their second year of matriculation. Future studies could include a comparison of institutionally designed mentoring programs to the organic variety analyzed in this study to compare the results of each and the common elements that contribute to successful mentoring relationships and student persistence in higher education.

Implications for Social Change

I found implications for social change in three areas. First, some of the faculty mentors experienced stress, lack of time and concern over being able to mentor and continue to successfully achieve promotion and tenure. Yet, the need for faculty of color to assist students of color was of primary importance to them. This can be addressed two ways—mentoring should be considered as valuable and included as criteria to be considered in the tenure process and secondly, more mentors of color need to be recruited to provide at-risk students the supports in place necessary, such as an adequate number of fully-trained mentors, to make this a reality.

Secondly, at-risk students continue to struggle with obstacles they bring with them to the institution. The government, educational administrators, educators and other stakeholders need to rethink education and make concerted efforts to level the playing field for all students who wish to improve their circumstances to receive an affordable, high quality education. This includes more funding allocated to schools in low income areas, so that students receive the resources and education necessary to be college ready. All schools should include social and emotional intelligence training in their curriculum to help increase empathy and tolerance for differences and to improve student critical thinking skills. Across the nation, policies need to change to increase the minimum wage to help students both in high school and college who are working, to have a means to ensure they have adequate food and shelter.

Third, colleges and universities need to examine and resolve barriers students encounter once they arrive at the institution: negative perceptions by faculty of at-risk

students, bureaucracy, pressure to graduate in 4 years and structural racism. This requires participation by staff and faculty in difficult dialogues, diversity training, streamlining of the financial aid process, embracing a culture of accommodation, rethinking the plan to push students through in 4 years and a rethinking of the curriculum itself to make it representative of all the students it serves. Helping at-risk students to realize their dreams and rise above the economic status into which they were born, not only benefits the individual student, but their families, their community and the economy. The contribution of consistent, caring mentorship not only gives back to the community, it serves the greater good. Supporting students of color to not only succeed academically, but to develop their skills, creates potential leaders and role models for future generations.

Conclusion

In this qualitative study, I examined faculty and staff mentors' perceptions of the mentoring role and their relationship with students at-risk of failing to persist to graduation. In doing so, I addressed my interviewees' perceived influence on their mentees, as well as their descriptions of useful mentoring practices and their suggestions for improving institutional support to address the many impediments to persistence faced by their mentees.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Opening Statement at the Start of the Interview

Thank you for agreeing to share your time with me for my research. You have volunteered to share your experiences and thoughts with me as someone who has served as mentor, coach or guide to at-risk students at this university. To ensure confidentiality of your mentees, please do not disclose any names or identifiers of students you have mentored or students to which may refer to in the course of this interview.

I anticipate that this interview will be approximately ninety minutes long. At times, I will ask specifically about at-risk students. The definition of at risk to which I will be referring includes "students who are disproportionately underrepresented in higher education—particularly underrepresented minorities, first generation students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds." Feel free to ask questions if you need clarification. Let us get started.

1. How would you describe your work with at-risk students?
2. What considerations are foremost for you when working with at-risk students?
3. What do you value most about your work with these students?
4. What works best for you when working with at-risk students?
5. In your experience what are the main impediments to the persistence of at-risk students?
6. When working with at-risk students does it make a difference if you share a similar cultural background?

7. Have you encountered any social or emotional obstacles to the engagement and persistence in their degree programs in your work with at-risk students? What do you recommend doing when facing this kind of obstacle?
8. How do challenge your at-risk students and how do you support them?
9. What kinds of growth have you witnessed in your at-risk students?
10. What do you find most challenging in carrying out your role?
11. Is the work you have been describing part of an established program, or does it spring from routine encounters with a student?
12. Who supports and encourages you to work with at-risk students? Why do you take the time to do it?
13. What could be done to improve the support of at-risk students at your institution?
14. Is there anything I should have asked that I did not ask? Is there anything more you would like to add?

Interviewer Closing Statement/Questions

Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your insights on mentoring. I will be emailing you the transcript from your interview for your review. I would like the opportunity to contact you again if I have follow-up questions after I transcribe our interview. Would you be amenable to that possibility? Do you have any questions or concerns that you would like to voice at this time or any additional comments you would like to share? Feel free to contact me, if you think of anything you would like to add to our discussion.