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ACADEMIC ADVISING AS A TOOL TO ANALYZE THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS OF COLOR AT A DIVERSE UNIVERSITY

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ACADEMIC ADVISING AS A TOOL TO ANALYZE THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS
OF COLOR AT A DIVERSE UNIVERSITY

A Thesis
Presented to the School of Education of the
University of San Francisco

In partial fulfillment of the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
In
Organization and Leadership

By
Julia Light

Spring 2021

This thesis, written by

Julia Light

University of San Francisco

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under the guidance of the project committee,
and approved by all its members,
has been accepted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS
In
Organization and Leadership

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(Date)

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I would like to thank the participants in my case study that shared their experiences out of the goodness of their hearts. I hope empowering their voices and sharing their experiences can add to the existing literature and potentially benefit future students at this institution.

I would like to thank my peers in the Organization and Leadership program who have endured this process with me and who have made this experience such a positive one. I'm so proud of all of you and your community and friendship has meant so much to me. I would like to thank the professors I have had throughout the past two years in this Masters program who have guided me and helped me grow into a scholar who could produce this thesis.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyze the experiences that undergraduate students of color had at a diverse, private university in Northern California. This study used a qualitative methodology of phenomenological research to learn of the experiences of undergraduate Students of Color. Three participants were interviewed and asked about the resources they relied upon throughout their undergraduate experience and in the academic advising system on this campus as it related to their academic success. Critical Race Theory was used as a lens to frame the results and the findings showed the effects that family and class background had on the experiences of these participants. A sense of community on this campus that supported these students was important to them. The results also showed that these participants felt supported at this institution but relied only on certain types of resources available to them. This study adds to the body of existing literature and aims to empower the voices of Students of Color and challenge cultural deficit narratives to show the wide variety of experiences that Students of Color have in navigating the college experience.

CHAPTER I

As part of my role as a Degree Audit and Graduation Advisor at this institution, I begin working with undergraduate students in their final three semesters, once they have applied to graduate. My team in the Graduation Center runs the Commencement ceremonies every Spring and Fall semester and that gives me the opportunity to see the joy that students and their families share together on one of the most special days of their lives. It is a day filled with gratification for so many students who have overcome many obstacles and put in tremendous hard work in order to reach this goal.

Seeing so many students celebrating on their final day of college, I also catch myself wondering about which students are not at graduation and who did not overcome those obstacles. By the time students are assigned to me as their Graduation Advisor, they should have received the bulk of their advising. In some cases, they feel they have been supported, while others have never utilized the advising model available to them. Degree completion and the advising experience are such a large part of my professional identity and I care about how they affect the lives of many. Every semester as I watch students walk across that stage at Commencement, I wonder what could have changed the experience of those who did not make it there.

Problem Statement

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2020), there were 16.6 million undergraduate students enrolled in Fall 2018. Of that population, 8.7 million were White, 3.4 million were Hispanic, 2.1 million were Black, 1.1 million were Asian, 647,000 were of two or more races, 120,000 were American Indian/Alaska Native, and 45,000 were Pacific Islander. Though the vast majority of undergraduate students are currently White, the United States is becoming more and more diverse and this is reflected in the student bodies of higher education

institutions (Franklin, 2013). Despite this increase in diversity, Students of Color are still not appropriately supported in their academic careers (Luster-Edward & Martin, 2018). A lack of cultural competency and attitudes of colorblindness that exist on college campuses are detrimental and exclusionary to Students of Color and often lead to racial stereotyping or discrimination (Luster-Edward & Martin, 2018). Universities have been called upon to work beyond the establishment of diversity policies and actually foster an inclusive and supportive environment for students, staff and faculty of color on campuses, and creating a sense of belonging and engagement is key for Students of Color to persist (Luster-Edward & Martin, 2018). Colleges and universities need to serve more than the dominant culture and grow toward inclusivity (Solórzano &Yosso, 2002). Models for what success for Students of Color at a university could look like have been proposed and research is evolving in an action-oriented direction (Eakins & Eakins, 2017).

Academic success at institutions is reflected and increasingly measured by graduation rates. The U.S. The Department of Education (2019) defined graduation rates as the measure of the percentage of undergraduate, first-time students who achieve their degree at the institution where they started it within a specific amount of time. The gap between graduation rates for Students of Color compared to their White peers is a well-established issue. The National Center for Education Statistics reported graduation rates by ethnicity in 2018 for all first-time bachelor's degree seeking students who completed their program within six years and reported that White students graduated that year at 65.9%, Black students graduated at 42.4%, and Hispanic students graduated at 56.7%. When students begin a degree but do not graduate, it costs universities resources that are already limited, it is detrimental to its ability to meet educational objectives and the academic, social and emotional needs of its students (Mangold, Bean, Adams, Schwab,

& Lynch, 2002). Various institutional factors such as location and funding affect graduation rates at different U.S. universities (Anstine, 2013) and factors such as a student's level of involvement in college, a sense of belonging, family support and feeling supported in their college environment affect graduation rates for different racial and ethnic minority students (Creighton, 2007). Taking all of these factors together is an important first step toward taking action to create programs in order to improve more equitable graduation rates.

Academic advising has been shown to help increase academic performance for students at the university level and it is important to advise the whole student, beyond just academics to truly foster their growth and success (Strayhorn, 2014). Though there is much research and work to be done in the field of academic advising (Zhang et al., 2019), it has proved to be a key in the success of Students of Color in college. Factors of advising such as creating a humanizing experience, using a multidimensional approach and being proactive with students have been proven to foster success in Students of Color at institutions with high graduation rates (Museus & Ravello, 2010).

The struggle to support Students of Color in higher education is evident in their lower graduation rates, and academic advising can be used as a tool to address this at diverse institutions. This university, which will be referred to as Northern California University (NCU), seems to be an anomaly amongst thousands of higher education institutions, as it has created a framework for success on campus with both a diverse student body and a higher than average graduation rate. This thesis seeks to understand how the experiences of Students of Color inform how academic advising at this institution is thought about and how faculty, staff and advisors serve these students.

Background & Need

The U.S. The Department of Education reported that in 2018, the six-year graduation rate for students who completed a bachelor's degree at the same institution where they started was 62.4%. All students aspire to attend an institution where they will be as successful as possible which is why higher graduation rates help admission rates and generate more tuition for universities as well as boost their reputation and serve an important social good. Students strive to graduate and universities strive for high graduation rates. Most universities strive to be both diverse and have a high graduation rate but as studies have shown, very few have both.

NCU seems to successfully navigate this dynamic. According to the U.S. & World News Report of 2021, NCU was 4th in undergraduate student ethnic diversity. The most recent demographic breakdown of NCU's undergraduate student population showed that only 27% are White. Compared to the national average graduation rate in 2018 of 62.4%, NCU's graduation rate for full-time first-time freshmen entering Fall 2013 (completed by Fall 2019) was 75%, according to NCU's website. This is much higher than average and is used, along with the ethnic diversity statistics of the student body and the attractive location of campus, to market the institution to future NCU students. Taking into consideration the strength of the students who attend NCU, the structure of the NCU undergraduate student experience is what sets it apart.

Research has established that academic advising can help improve academic performance and that graduation rates measure said academic performance (Zhang et al., 2019). Higher education needs to become more equitable in order to support Students of Color who have struggled to graduate at high rates. However, how academic advising can be used as a tool to increase graduation rates for Students of Color has yet to be explored. Using Northern California University as a potential successful model, this thesis will attempt to fill that gap.

Purpose of Study

The aim of this thesis project is to conduct phenomenological research in order to examine the experiences of undergraduate Students of Color who have navigated the academic advising model at NCU. The study will aim to determine how these undergraduates connect this advising model to their academic success and therefore degree completion. Throughout an undergraduate career at NCU, each student is assigned to four advisors based on their major of study. These advisors are each part of their own different departments: Admissions department, Center for Academic and Student Achievement, School/College departments, and the Graduation Center in the Office of the Registrar. Each student is passed from one advisor to the next at designated times as they progress through their degree. This model seems to be unique and highly individualized with the intention of supporting each student every step of the way between multiple advisors who specialize in each of the four stages of the undergraduate career. This study will interview participants to gain insight into the experience of advising in each stage and how it affected their academic success.

This study will address the gap in the literature between research on lower graduation rates for Students of Color and academic advising as a tool to foster student success. By listening to the stories of Students of Color at a diverse higher education institution, this thesis aims to gain insight into what this advising model does well to support its students and what can be improved upon. If this study concludes that this model fosters student success, perhaps it can be expanded and used as a model for other institutions.

Research Questions

1. What resources do students of color use to successfully navigate and complete their undergraduate degree?

2. What has been the experience of academic advising for students of color at NCU?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this thesis is Critical Race Theory. Critical Race Theory attributes the inequities experienced by racial and ethnic minorities in our society, such as the discrepancy in graduation rates between Students of Color and their White peers, to persistent and pervasive structural racism. Racial analysis is important in examining educational inequities because of the historical lack of theory on race and racism in this field and because it provides an explanation where analyses of class and gender are not sufficient (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). By not acknowledging and theorizing race in the educational system, white supremacy and racism can be promoted (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Literature on Critical Race Theory proposes that the foundations of racism in our society stem from the lack of human rights granted to slaves in U.S. history who were considered property at the time and the inequities based on race which have persisted since then (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The objective of this theory is to create a more just and equitable society by listening to the stories and experiences of those who have been marginalized (Parker & Lynn, 2002) and recently literature has evolved toward a focus on the future of research through the lens of Critical Race Theory. It is argued that past research defaults to the dominant narrative that People of Color are portrayed as less than and that they lack institutional power as a result of this racism (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). A longer discussion of Critical Race Theory and its relationship to the literature informing this study and research questions can be found in Chapter 2.

Significance of Study

This thesis may be of interest to university administrators who are tasked with increasing graduation rates at their institution. It may hold significance because it will reveal insights about the success of the current advising model and whether or not it positively affects student success

and rates of completion at a diverse university. In addition, this thesis may also hold significance for academic advisors looking to improve their advising style and perhaps the advising model at their own institution. This study could hold valuable information for advisors at any institution that serves Students of Color and in particular advisors at NCU, at any of the four stages of advising. This thesis could also hold significance for future students who will rely on advising resources to support them through college. By hearing about the experiences of other students who have gone through this system, they may learn from and take action based on the experiences of others and take advantage of resources that they might not have otherwise. Finally, this thesis is personally important to me because degree completion and graduation is a large part of my professional identity. I care about the success of the students that I advise and improving their experience and supporting them is my aim in conducting this thesis.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Research demonstrates that academic advising can be used as a tool to improve graduation rates at higher education institutions. Although student racial diversity in U.S. institutions is highly valued, often Students of Color often do not get the support they need to succeed. One way that student success in higher education is measured is through graduation rates and though many factors are involved, Students of Color consistently graduate at disproportionately lower rates than their White peers. Academic advising is a crucial aspect of a student's college experience and a tool that can be used to help increase graduation rates particularly for Students of Color. Critical Race Theory is used to frame this literature review as it explains the racial inequalities that lead to these discrepancies between Students of Color and their White counterparts in the first place.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) claims that race can be used as a tool to explain the many inequities that are experienced by People of Color in society today. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) discuss the importance of analyzing inequities through the lens of race because unlike class and gender, race is still quite untheorized. The authors say that though race has been studied, it has not been applied to the analysis of educational inequality. They also say that while important, gender and class-based theories are not robust enough to explain all the variance in school performance and experience. The authors offer an example of this saying an "examination of class and gender, taken alone or together, do not account for the extraordinarily high rates of school dropout, suspension, expulsion, and failure among African-American and Latino males" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2995, p. 51). Race is a crucial element in understanding the inequities

in the U.S. education system. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) speak on the salience of racial analysis and say that scholarship that focuses only on class or gender-based theories excludes a key element of the experience of oppressed people. They claim that disregarding race can suggest that racism is insignificant and this can actually reinforce racism. Parker and Lynn (2002) agree that there has been a lack of scholarship around race and racism in educational research which has promoted white supremacy ideologies and colorblindness. The authors discuss that historically educational research has silenced the voices of Students and People of Color and explained away social educational inequities which is why counter storytelling is crucial in dismantling white supremacy and improving equality in education.

This section includes a brief history of CRT which includes Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) original scholarship explaining the foundations of the theory and applying it to the field of education. It includes the work of Parker and Lynn, (2002) that articulates the goals of Critical Race Theory, why it was created and how it is used to analyze educational inequities. It also details the ideas developed by Solórzano and Yosso (2002) that illustrate the need for future research in education to use the lens of Critical Race Theory rather than accepting previous traditional research methods that stem from the dominant, privileged perspective. While Critical Race Theory can be applied to many fields and aspects of society, each of these works apply the theory to the inequities we experience in education and prove the great value of this theory and the benefits from action sparked from it to improve both the lives of People of Color and U.S. laws and society to make them more just. Racism in society and laws and rules must be the focus if changes are to be made. The inequities that Critical Race Theory analyzes lead to the discrepancies in graduation rates for Students of Color that will be explored in this thesis. From

original property rights and a lack of human rights for People of Color to the standards that are in place today, the effect that race has had on Students of Color in higher education is indisputable.

The foundational work that defines Critical Race Theory as it applies to the field of education includes the work of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995). This scholarship argues that although race is an important topic in the U.S., it is untheorized and oversimplified. The theory is used as a tool to analyze race as it affects school inequity among students. It argues that the inequalities experienced between White and non-White students is a result of our racialized society. Racialization creates a hierarchy in society that consistently gives legitimacy to white supremacy. This legitimacy is so deeply embedded into society that racism is perpetuated. The authors explain that since People of Color in the U.S. were originally classified as property when they were exploited as slaves, they were not granted human rights then and this is the key from which many inequalities in our current society stem. Critical Race Theory argues that because racism is so deeply embedded in our society, the structure creates these inequalities, like poor school funding, that results in poverty and poor school performance and the cycle continues with no end in sight. The authors also explain that Critical Race Theory acknowledges the strength of storytelling of experiences of marginalized groups to create change in education for students and in every other facet of society where these inequalities exist. By naming their own experience, marginalized people remember their own truth and how they first became oppressed. This challenges the stereotypes created by the dominant culture which they may have internalized. This original scholarship is important because it sets the foundation for Critical Race Theory as it has evolved from this time and how it is applied to scholarship and research in education and particularly college success today.

Parker and Lynn (2002) take the work of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) and expand on its proposal to illuminate the unequal social construct our society has created. Building on this foundation, the goals for Critical Race Theory are outlined as "(a) to present storytelling and narratives as valid approaches through which to examine race and racism in the law and in society; (b) to argue for the eradication of racial subjugation while simultaneously recognizing that race is a social construct; and (c) to draw important relationships between race and other axes of domination" (Parker & Lynn, 2002, p.10). Parker and Lynn (2002) use Critical Race Theory to argue that current research is not sufficient and does not take race into consideration where it needs to be prominent such as methodology, how we study populations, or epistemology, what is determined as knowledge about a population. They also use CRT to analyze educational problems and to shed light on this racism embedded in the laws and change the notion that racism is only an egregious racist act by an individual. The authors wrote "CRT has emerged from the legal arena to uncover the deep patterns of racial exclusion (Parker & Lynn, 2002, p.12). Critical Race Theory argues that narratives of People of Color can help tell of the racism that people experience and aid in forming laws that combat this. Critical Race stories can shed light on racially discriminatory practices or people and provide a non-dominant perspective that may not have been present before (Parker & Lynn, 2002). The authors say that storytelling can refute a dominant narrative that may be taken for granted as non-racist truth because white supremacist ideas and norms are so deeply embedded in policies and practices in the U.S. This is important because it builds from the theory to propose action through laws and real change, including educational policies and practices that can support improved college graduation rates by Students of Color.

Another dimension in this field of thought is represented by Solórzano and Yosso (2002) who shift the focus to research methodology through Critical Race Theory. This builds off the works of both Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) as well as Parker and Lynn (2002) and points the focus in the direction of future research. The authors challenge common "neutral" and "objective" research that portrays the experiences of People of Color as less-than. The theory implies that institutional power (which People of Color do not have) drives racism. It argues that White and middle class students' voices are heard in U.S. institutional history but that voices of Students of Color need to be acknowledged and empowered. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) suggest that racism is also combatted through storytelling by challenging cultural deficit stories that the dominant narrative sustains. The narrative of how Students of Color are marginalized and struggle academically and socially in school is emphasized in much research but narratives of intelligent and successful Students of Color seem to exist minimally. Critical race methodology is an approach to theoretical-based research that makes race the focus of the process. Research can be used as a tool to empower the experiences and knowledge of marginalized groups in order to combat racism and work toward social justice.

In summary, Critical Race Theory conceptualizes race as a social construct that is in the historical foundation of the U.S. and as it contributes to the social inequities experienced by people and Students of Color. It calls for the empowerment and focus of the voices and experiences of Students of Color in order to create change and to change the way research is done and laws are created. The following sections describe this research by putting the focus on Students of Color, validating the experiences of Students of Color and analyzing the racist foundations that lead to the discrepancies in higher education that are discussed. They justify the

claim that institutions with a high population of Students of Color can foster great student success demonstrated by high graduation rates through culturally appropriate academic advising.

Student Diversity is Valued but Not Supported

Research demonstrates that student diversity in U.S. institutions is highly valued and yet Students of Color often do not get the support they need to succeed in higher education. Research illustrates how universities can increase diversity and how that diversity leads to economic growth (Franklin, 2013). A diverse university community needs to do more than create a policy, however. It needs to truly take a variety of actions to support students and faculty of color (Luster-Edward & Martin, 2018). Eakins and Eakins (2017) provide a model of what supporting minority students could look like. Taken together, the studies reviewed in this section suggest that universities understand and acknowledge the importance and benefit of having a diverse institution and increasing diversity within the student body but that they are still struggling to move beyond just establishing diversity policies and hiring and enrolling People of Color and actually fostering an inclusive environment on campus and supporting, retaining and ultimately graduating Students of Color. Trends in more recent research focus on how current students can be best supported by the colleges and universities so that they will thrive and return each semester and succeed in their academic career.

Franklin (2013) analyzed data from universities to determine what factors affect the racial diversity of a student body and what implications those factors have regarding the current trend of universities striving to increase diversity on campuses. Franklin did this by analyzing data from the IPEDS (The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) enrollment survey of Fall 2008 classes from 4-year universities, excluding for-profit universities. The data factors used were university location, ethnicity of students, and student body characteristics for 1,739 schools.

The findings of this study determined that the location of a university campus, the demographics of that location and characteristics of a university (such as public vs. private, religious affiliation, enrollment size, cost, Pell grant, etc.) have much to do with the amount of diversity an institution has. It found that for undergraduate students, public universities often have more student diversity and in general, religiously affiliated schools are less diverse than non-religious schools. It also found that schools on the west coast of the U.S. are more diverse and school diversity is higher in urban universities than rural ones. More selective schools and schools with more international students and that have larger enrollments are also correlated with higher diversity. Franklin concludes that school characteristics matter more than geographical location in determining student diversity. Once an institution establishes diversity in their student body, it is important they move beyond that and acknowledge the need of supporting their diverse Students of Color as Luster-Edward and Martin (2018) explored.

Luster-Edward and Martin (2018) addressed the lack of diversity and support of minority students in many higher education institutions in the U.S.. Luster-Edward and Martin surveyed the perceptions of leadership at a Midwest research university to analyze current practices and establish a need for change to create a more diverse institution and inclusive environment for minority students and faculty. This study included interviews with a focus group of five Students of Color, interviews with 15 faculty of color, and an online survey sent to 200 both White students and Students of Color on the University of Missouri's campus of 35,000 students. Because of the small sample size of this study compared with the entire student population, results may not be generalizable. However, the results of this study do demonstrate the importance of cultural competence in leaders on campus and the value of using Critical Race Theory to frame the research questions. Students and faculty agreed that cultural competency is

key when working to improve diversity and color-blindness serves only the privileged and is detrimental. The participants felt that while there were diversity trainings and plans in place, neither seemed to spark change or foster inclusivity on campus and more active forms of leadership were needed. Participants of color agreed that most had been racially stereotyped on campus or in a university setting. Participants also acknowledged the presence of diversity training for faculty and students but that it may not be effective in fostering inclusivity because of a lack of cultural competency. The participants were aware of policies for diversity but implementation and true results had yet to be attained. Luster-Edward and Martin concluded with the importance of the implementation of these policies and for leadership to make this a priority, not just something to check a required box. Eakins and Eakins (2017) built off the importance of this work and explored a model for supporting minority students in higher education.

Moving beyond the findings of Franklin (2013), Eakins and Eakins (2017) addressed the success and experience of African American students in predominantly White institutions. Eakins and Eakins demonstrate the problem that many African American students feel alienated and unsupported at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) and graduate at lower rates than their White peers. They also offer an example for a successful model that would help support and increase retention for African American students in the U.S. The key implications state that factors that contribute to the strength in success for these students are a "sense of belonging," financial security, adequate pre-college prep, and a familial support at home. The proposed model suggests that universities create a recruitment and retention plan that includes the whole institution, not just the admissions department, and that a cohort model can increase student success as well. To retain African American students, academic advising, new student orientation, gender-specific programs, peer mentorships and workshops should be utilized all

specific to this new cohort of African American students. Eakins and Eakins (2017) conclude that by helping students not feel alone as the only African American student in an entire class and by developing this cohort model and encouraging relationships between these students, the likelihood that these students will form bonds, be more engaged in the university, and feel cared about and supported, the more likely they are to return each semester and eventually graduate.

In summary, research demonstrates that student diversity is highly valued in U.S. institutions but that often Students of Color are not adequately supported so they can be most successful. This includes Franklin (2013) who established of the importance of student diversity and how it is attained on campuses, Luster-Edward and Martin (2018) who articulate the need for leadership to foster an inclusive environment for students and faculty of color and implement diversity policies on campuses and Eakins and Eakins (2017) who proposed a model that includes ample support, connection, and engagement in order to successfully retain and support minority students. Taken together, this body of research paints a picture of diversity in higher education and the results it yields in this system that historically functions by and for the dominant culture. It supports a call for future growth toward inclusivity that will benefit all.

Graduation Rates Measure Success yet Racial Discrepancies Between Rates are Apparent

Research suggests that graduation rates are becoming more significant as benchmarks for successful colleges and universities, and they are being used to determine important decisions for the U.S. higher education system, but, as their importance grows and as the U.S. higher education student body becomes more diverse, the discrepancy between lower rates of graduation for Students of Color compared to their White peers is more pronounced. This implies that the system is not serving Students of Color equally well. Research illustrates what factors influence graduation rates in U.S. institutions and reveals this discrepancy between types

of students (Anstine, 2013). Research goes further to analyze what factors specifically affect the graduation rates of those underrepresented students and suggests that institutions acknowledge this issue and create programs to support these students so they can succeed (Creighton, 2007). Taken together, the articles reviewed in this section agree that location and funding are important factors in determining graduation rates and that Students of Color disproportionately graduate at lower rates than their White counterparts. The body of literature agrees that further study is required to improve this and create equal education for all U.S. students. Identifying these factors is the first step towards creating and implementing programs that will bring equity to the higher education system.

Anstine (2013) conducted a study on what factors influence graduation rates in U.S. universities. The author's goal was to determine the impacts that various variables, i.e teaching centers, learning communities, faculty to student ratio, faculty salaries and school location, had on graduation rates at six different universities across the U.S. The data from this study were collected from six universities, the 2009 U.S. News and World Report data, and other sources for supplemental information such as faculty salaries and locations of the universities. The findings tell that graduation rates at liberal arts colleges are 10% higher than public universities and that faculty salaries are positively correlated with graduation rates. The study also concluded that the existence of expensive "learning communities", which group students with similar interests together in order to build a support network for them, or a "teaching center", which provides teachers with resources to support their work with students, do not help improve graduation rates at universities unless certain factors of type of university and certain individual factors can be tested alone. It is important for universities looking to improve their graduation rates to take into consideration what type of university they are if they are going to implement programs toward

this goal. The author concluded that location is an important factor in determining diversity in an institution and identifying the factors that affect graduation rates for all students is the first step toward serving the underrepresented students in higher education.

A study conducted by Creighton (2007) addressed the retention and graduation rates of the growing population of racial/ethnic minority students in the U.S. higher education system. The author used previous studies to draw conclusions on each student group and determine factors that may affect their graduation rates and to draw positive and negative commonalities that each of these groups share with the majority group students in higher education. The purpose was also to suggest that institutions acknowledge and create programs that cater to the success of these different groups of students so they can be successful. The participants included undergraduate students broken into four groups of underrepresented groups: African American students, Hispanic students, Asian Pacific American students and Native American students. African American students were more likely to graduate if they were successful in pre-college programs, committed and involved in their college, felt socially supported by their college, felt diversity training was present, saw African American faculty at their institution, and had specific counseling programs for African American students. Test scores and high GPA did not predict graduation rates for Hispanic students. Confidence in academic abilities, family support, financial aid, campus climate, a sense of belonging with other Hispanic students, having a job on (not off) campus, student involvement in the campus community, and being born in the U.S. are all factors that contribute to higher graduation rates. Asian Pacific American students who did not have sufficient pre-college prep, who were first-generation college students, whose first language and culture was not English and American, who had to work or support family responsibilities while attending college, and who came from low-income backgrounds, who felt

discriminated against and/or marginalized may also have lower graduation rates. Native American students were found to have the lowest graduation rates of any racial minority. Factors that contributed to this include socioeconomic status struggles related to regulations on this specific population of Americans, cultural discontinuity (that Native Americans experience reality in the U.S. differently from anyone else which leads to struggles with students' confidence in themselves and in their experiences) and feeling excluded or alienated from the institution. This study demonstrates that not all minority students are the same and it is important to see students as individuals who have different experiences, cultures and perspectives. Each institution has different effects on minority students and their success in college and in graduation rates. Institutions must consider the factors outside academics, such as their resources, mission and location, that affect and can help students graduate at higher rates as they move toward creating new models.

In summary, this body of research illustrates that graduation rates are becoming more and more significant and are being used to determine important decisions for the U.S. higher education system. It also demonstrates that Students of Color are disproportionately represented with lower graduation rates than their White counterparts. Research stresses the importance of identifying key factors that influence graduation rates so that they may be improved and that location and funding are important factors in determining graduation rates (Anstine, 2013). Research shows that there are specific factors that affect graduation rates of each student population specifically and some general factors could benefit all ethnic minority students in some ways (Creighton, 2007). Further study is required to improve upon the factors that contribute to this inequity and to create equal education for all students.

Academic Advising as a Tool for Fostering Student Success

High quality academic advising plays a large role in student success. Since the demographic of college students is changing, educational leaders must rise to the challenge of making the system more equitable so that all students have the tools to complete college. Research shows the significance of advising in students' lives and that advising goes far beyond academics; the whole student and their environment and lives outside of school must also be taken into consideration (Strayhorn, 2014). Research illustrates that academic advising is a key component in fostering success in Students of Color in college and that there is much work to be done and improvements to the advising system can always be made (Zhang, Gossett, Simpson & Davis, 2019). Additionally, certain factors are more helpful than others in working toward the crucial goal of student success for those students who are underrepresented in higher education and research findings detail those important influences (Museus & Ravello, 2010). Taken together, the research claims that advising can have a great impact on a Student of Color's degree completion. There is much research that currently exists on academic advising and much about Students of Color but little about academic advising as it relates to Students of Color and their successful college completion. This thesis will attempt to contribute to the momentum of this educational trend of research and hopefully develop models for future institutional improvement.

Strayhorn (2014) discusses the importance of student success, i.e., degree completion, as it deals with the issues of college access, student success, diversity, culture of higher education and belonging, and the significant role that academic advising plays in this for students. The author suggests that being an academic advisor and leader for students requires hard work and acknowledging of the lack of access for many despite recent advancements. He also states that higher education institutions each have their own culture and as leaders, academic advisors must be cultural navigators for students to succeed in this culture. He says that only one quarter of

student success is determined by high school GPA and test scores which leaves most to be

determined by factors that the higher education community can help with, for example,

"finances, engagement, major, belonging, campus climate, and yes, advising" (Strayhorn, 2014,

p. 59). A sense of belonging is also crucial for student success in college because if they feel they

belong, they will stay and work hard to complete it. A sense of belonging is created when

advisors (cultural navigators) help students figure out how to understand and get through this

new culture. Strayhorn (2014) describes this:

> Cultural navigators know something about the culture—how it operates, how to get
>
> things done, how to be part of it and feel a sense of belonging. They share that
>
> information with students, help them adjust to college life, and make themselves
>
> available as trusted go-to resources whenever possible. (p.59)

This research discusses the influence that an advisor has on their students and the opportunity to

shape their experience and foster a sense of belonging which could be the key to their

achievement.

Zhang et al. (2019) conducted a study that addressed practical ways to improve academic

advising at the university, college, faculty, and department level. Data were collected from

participants at the University of Northern Alabama and included the university advising

program, the college of business's advising process, the department of computer science and

information systems modified group advising approach, and a faculty member's advising

experience. A key finding of this qualitative study implies that each level of the institution

(university, college, department and faculty) should prioritize and contribute to student advising.

Too much effort from one level and none from another will not serve the student. Additionally,

the authors determined that it is important for advisors and administrators at every level to listen

to feedback in order to continually improve the advising process. university. The authors state that more research needs to be done on the topic of improving an advising model as current research is often near-sighted and quantitative and new perspectives are needed.

Museus and Ravello (2010) elaborate on the research that discusses the need for improvement of academic advising and explored the influence and effect that academic advisors have on their students of underrepresented populations at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) that have higher success and graduation rates. Institutions that had a racial composition of 50% or more White students had both higher than the national average graduation rates for ethnic minority students and graduation rates for ethnic minority students that were equal or higher than their White counterparts were studied. The College Results Online database was also used to compare institutions to choose one community college, one state college, and one research college from which to gather participants. Forty-five participants including 14 advisors and 31 racial minority students were selected for interviews conducted for the study. The study concluded that three main characteristics of advising help Students of Color succeed in Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) with higher graduation rates for Students of Color: humanizing the academic advising experience (being kind and caring about the students as people), using a multidimensional approach to advising (serving the whole student not just academic-wise and ensuring they have access to success and resources), and advising in a proactive way (connect them with resources when you know they will soon need them). Identifying these factors is crucial for changing the future of an academic advising model for Students of Color. They can be used to study more populations and to create new policies and procedures that truly foster success for underrepresented students in our higher education system.

This body of research confirms that there is much to be done in the research of academic advising in higher education in the U.S. (Zhang et al., 2019). It is imperative to the success of undergraduate students that factors outside of academics are addressed by academic advisors and that a sense of belonging is created for students (Strayhorn, 2014). Making the advising experience more humanizing, more multidimensional, and more proactive are three ways that advising has a real impact on students' college experience and whether or not they cross that stage at graduation (Museus & Ravello, 2010). This research can be a springboard for the study of successful academic advising models for Students of Color and how they may be used to improve the degree completion rates at institutions that have a majority of Students of Color.

Summary

This literature review claims that appropriate and thorough academic advising can be used as a tool to improve the graduation rates at highly diverse higher education institutions. The research demonstrates that student diversity in U.S. institutions is highly valued; however, Students of Color are not amply supported in their college careers. Graduation rates are affected by many factors and they are used to measure the success of students in many institutions. Because of the lack of support they receive, Students of Color graduate at disproportionately lower rates than their White peers. Academic advising is proposed as a tool that helps address this issue and increase student success in college, particularly for Students of Color. Critical Race Theory can be used to frame this body of work. There is a need for the study of academic advising as it affects the success of Students of Color in diverse institutions. In my thesis I plan to study a diverse institution that has achieved high graduation rates in order to analyze the role that a successful advising model can play in student success.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to learn how undergraduate students of color experience college and academic advising at a diverse institution. This study aims to empower the voices and lived experiences of these first-generation, domestic and third culture students whose backgrounds have shaped their paths and perspectives. This study also aims to add to existing literature on academic advising and how it may affect student success. Analyzing the experiences of Students of Color who have navigated an individualized advising model could assist institutions in making future improvements to current policies and practices. It could also help institutions develop a more equitable approach to this field of higher education that has such potential in helping students succeed. This case study attempted to answer the following research questions: What resources do students of color use to successfully navigate and complete their undergraduate degree? What has been the experience of academic advising for students of color at NCU?

Methodology Summary and Rationale

This study employs the qualitative methodology of phenomenological research of the academic advising and the academic success of Students of Color. Phenomenology is well suited for addressing the advising experience of Students of Color because it studies the lived experiences of a group of people. One of the main goals of phenomenology is to focus on what all participants have in common through the experience in order to determine the essence of what is being studied (Creswell, 2007). In this case, the essence was found in the experience of those Students of Color who have navigated the phenomena of this advising model. Creswell (2007) also stressed that the intent of a phenomenological study is to develop possible changes in policy

or practice based on the findings. Phenomenological studies also "lead to more ethically and experientially sensitive epistemologies and ontologies of practice" (Given, 2008, p.3). Determining what Students of Color experience in this advising model could contribute to future improvement at the institutional level.

According to Groenewold (2004) a phenomenological researcher's objective is to describe the phenomenon without letting any preconceived notions or biases get in the way of the facts. Phenomenology was created to bring certainty to Europe in the post-World War I era and proposed that the only way to be certain is to take personal consciousness as fact and study those realities as phenomena (Groenewold, 2004). Given (2008) says phenomenological research gained popularity in professional fields in North American first through social sciences and writings and as it was originally inspired by continental scholars, it can now be found in all professions.

According to Creswell (2007) the data from a phenomenological study of individuals who have a shared experience are explicated through significant statements, meaning and units, textural and structural descriptions and descriptions of the essence of the phenomenon. These descriptions detail what they experienced and how they experienced it. Information was gathered through interviews of individuals and document analysis and significant statements were identified from the data. Clusters of meaning and general themes were interpreted from these significant statements which ultimately led to an accurate description of the essence of this phenomena of academic advising as it affects Students of Color and their academic success.

Research Setting and Participants

Setting

This research study took place at a private, non-profit four year university located in Northern California. This university is a medium sized university with undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students and according to the university website, the six-year graduation rate for students who began in 2013 was 75%. Also according to the university website, in the Fall 2020 semester, the total enrollment for this university was about 10,000 students and the university reported that 75.2% of that term's student body were Students of Color.

The data collection occurred via interviews conducted through online Zoom video conferencing interviews. Participants were located in their own homes in various locations, as was the researcher. This was due to gathering restrictions due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. The video interviews were recorded.

Participants: Sampling/Recruitment Plan and Description

The sampling procedure that was used for this qualitative study is purposive sampling. Individual students were identified as representative and chosen because they met certain criteria (Bui, 2019, p.145). The researcher reached out to administrators in various departments as well as student workers at the university and asked for recommendations for students to participate in this study that met certain criteria. Two students were secured from recommendations of a student worker at the university. The two participants were asked for recommendations for a third participant they might offer but neither had recommendations of potential participants. The third participant was more difficult to secure and after asking staff and faculty members at the university for their recommendations to no avail, the researcher asked another student worker at the university who recommended an interested participant. The students that were recommended were sent an email with information on the study and the researchers contact information. The students who were interested responded to the email and if they met certain criteria they were

asked to participate in the study. The criteria included undergraduate students who were on track to complete their degree within the next two semesters, students who identified as Students of Color and students who had navigated the advising model on campus at this particular university. Because they must have navigated almost the entire advising model, students could not have transferred from another university. Once confirmed, the students were sent a consent form to complete and return before the agreed upon meeting time. A sample of the consent form sent to students is included in Appendix A.

The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with three different undergraduate Students of Color. The first participant, Oliver, identified as a Phillipino American who was born and raised in the United States and who identified as a first-generation college student. Oliver was an architecture major at this university. The second participant, Isabella, identified as a female who immigrated from Vietnam to the United States when she was ten years old. She identified as a first-generation college student and was an architecture major. The third participant, Ava, identified as a mixed race, half Taiwanese, half White female who was born and raised in Hong Kong. She identified as a U.S. citizen, moved to the U.S. to attend university and double majored in communications and advertising. Because of the small sample size of this qualitative study, the generalizability of the results is limited. The results are not be able to be generalized to other university campuses or all Students of Color in higher education. My writing is free of information that might be used to identify my participants.

Data Collection

For this study of the experiences of Students of Color in academic advising and their academic success, data collection methods consisted of one-on-one interviews. Interviews were used to gather insight on these students' experiences with academic advising to determine what

the participants experienced and how they experienced academic advising as it related to their academic success. Each participant was interviewed for a period of 30-45 minutes for a total of two meetings. Pre-written questions were asked in each interview with a focus on open-ended questions. The same interview protocol was asked for each participant in round one interviews and another interview protocol was asked of each participant in round two interviews. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) stress that open-ended questions best suit qualitative research because it allows the researcher to discover as much information as possible from participants.

Interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom video conferencing so the researcher could go back and code and transcribe the data. All data was secured on the researcher's computer which was locked and password-protected. According to Creswell (2007), in-depth interviews with multiple interviews per participant is a common form of data collection for phenomenological research. Creswell (2007) also says that the focus on gathering data in this kind of research should lead to descriptions of the experiences in order to provide an understanding of the common experiences of the group of participants.

Researcher Positionality

It was crucial that the researcher recognize their positionality regarding this study and the participants involved in order to understand how that positionality might affect the data collection and analysis process. As a White woman I acknowledge the privileges that I have. In the study I will be interviewing Students of Color who may have hesitated to be candid with me as a White person about the inequities that exist in the advising model that I work in. As a higher education administrator who evaluates and awards degrees daily, I acknowledge the biases that my experience has brought to this study in interviewing undergraduate students, some of whose Bachelors Degrees I may award one day. As a professional within the advising system I

interviewed students about, I realize students may not have been comfortable being completely open and honest about their experiences. I recognize that my positionality could have affected the data and I took steps to mitigate my influence on the data such as naming the students' potential concerns and reassuring them that I would protect their privacy and that nothing they said in our interviews will ever be shared with others in the university community. I also acknowledged to my participants that I care about them and their true thoughts and experiences and that I wanted them to feel comfortable to share their truth with me candidly about difficult topics such as racism and issues they have experienced in the advising process.

I acknowledge that because of the research I had done for this thesis, I had preconceived expectations about what data I would find which differed from the actual findings. Based on the literature I reviewed, I hoped for an academic advising system that was extremely helpful and that shaped the trajectory of the experiences of these students of color. Once I reviewed and coded the transcripts from our interviews, I validated what the students said by sending the transcripts and my findings back to the students for their personal confirmation that my coding was indeed accurate in their perspective.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study began with reviewing the recorded interviews from each participant. The interviews were transcribed through the Zoom software so that they could be reviewed and coded. Interviews were reviewed individually and field notes were taken following each interview on impressions, ideas and questions the researcher had. This was done to help identify significant statements and observations about the participants during the interview in order to develop areas of meaning from what participants said about their advising experience. From these field notes, an analytic memo with the initial findings after the first round of

interviews was created. The data was coded via indexing line by line from each of the six transcripts of the six interviews and succinct ideas from every few lines of the transcripts were noted by line number range. Once all interviews were indexed, the researcher studied the transcripts and indexing from each participant and made notes of themes that emerged from participants' shared experiences. The researcher then compared the themes across participants and made notes of which themes went together and which seemed to sit in tension with each other.

The validity of the data was ensured by sharing the analysis and transcription of the data with participants for feedback and confirmation that their perspective was accurately represented in the data. Reliability was maintained with the interview protocol and base questions were replicated for each student interview. It was important for the researcher to be aware of their own perspective regarding the phenomenon of the advising experience so that the data was not reviewed through the lens of the researcher but truly from the experience of the participants (Creswell, 2007).

Plan for the Protection of Human Subjects

This study was approved the the Internal Review Board with a blanket IRB Protocol #1438 for the protection of the students who participated in the study. The protection of human subjects that elected to participate in this study was of the utmost importance. The plan for this included engaging participants in the process of informed consent by having each participant sign an informed consent form prior to the first interview. The researcher also ensured the participants were comfortable with the interview plan and procedures and answered any questions they had. The researcher discussed the confidentiality of records and identity with participants and let them know that pseudonyms would be used as well as password-protection

for storing all data and information relating to them. The potential risk of emotional distress in discussing the advising experience as a Student of Color was relatively low but it was discussed between the researcher and participants and references to on-campus resources for counseling services were offered. The benefits of participating in this study were also discussed, which included the opportunity to reflect on their experiences of the past few years, the potential for this study to lead to improvements in the advising model and for equity for Students of Color on this particular campus. No monetary or financial benefits were offered.

CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

The findings of this study answer both research questions by reflecting the experiences of students of color as they navigate resources and academic advising in order to successfully complete their undergraduate degree. The major findings in this study are the effect that family and class background have on students' college experience, the sense of community that the students experience as a resource and their utilization of academic resources throughout their degree.

Familial & Class Background as a Resource

Family Support

When asked about their influences on their journey and the support they were provided throughout college, all three participants spoke of the significance of their family. Two of the participants said it was an expectation of their families that they would attend college and one put pressure on herself to attend college with the goal of eventually financially supporting her family. Oliver, who identifies as a first generation college student, spoke about his parents' expectations of him to go to college:

> I think it was always kind of an expectation from them. I do have two older brothers who didn't go to college right after high school and so I guess in a way, I was not really forced to, but it was an expectation, and so I kind of took it upon myself. And the high school I went to actually helped me a lot with getting into college.

These expectations that Oliver experienced from his family could be classified as support to succeed. His family encouraged and expected him to attend college so that he could have more opportunities and with the hope that he would be more successful in life. Isabella and Ava also mentioned the expectations that their family members had for them to attend college. Oliver, who is a first generation college student, received emotional support from his parents who made

themselves available to him and listened to his experiences and offered moral support even though they could not provide experiential or practical help from their own experience in college. Oliver spoke of a challenging time in his freshman year where his parents showed this type of support:

> I was thinking about transferring back to LA because coming into NCU I didn't really know anyone because no one from my high school or from my area attended here, so I felt kind of in a sense alone, because I was kind of more an introvert than an extrovert so meeting people was kind of difficult for me but yeah my family helped a lot...My freshman year I definitely would stay in my dorms lot so I would call them like pretty frequently, maybe, every other day I would say, and then like after a while maybe like every week. But they just told me to just kind of, you know, go through it and see how it would be like because for me as the first one to go to university out of my family, so they have kind of no experience with that and so all this was new to all of us. So them allowing me to just like talk to them and just support me; I would go home sometimes, and it would be more comfortable so just talking to them would help a lot.

The third participant, Ava, had parents and grandparents who attended college and as a result, she received different types of support from her family than the other two first generation students. Ava received moral, financial and experiential support from her parents who helped her through the college application process as well as with the financial aid application process. Ava spoke of how her father went to college in the U.S. and therefore knew the system and could help her navigate through it. She spoke of her parents as they supported her attending college:

> Yeah definitely it was (something her parents wanted her to do) and I felt the same way too. It was never even a conversation. The conversation was 'Where do you want to go? What do you want to study?' and never 'Are you even going to go?' because I knew in my head 'Yeah, of course I'm going to college'.

Ava received more practical support from her parents who had experience in the college system and Oliver and Isabella received more moral and emotional support as well as support to succeed from their parents who wanted them to earn an education so they could have greater opportunities in their future.

Pre-College Preparation

An important finding in the data was that high school context, in terms of resources and friendships, has shaped all of the participants' orientation to college. However, the experiences of the three participants were varied in that Ava and Oliver both reported having supportive programs in their high schools that influenced their path to getting accepted into colleges and Isabella said her high school was not helpful in applying to colleges. Ava and Oliver both mentioned that their high schools had specific college centered programs that helped students stay on track to get into college and offered college resource meetings often. As a result, their high schools had high college acceptance rates for their student body and Oliver said that having that resource really helped him succeed in getting into college. Ava described the resources her high school provided for preparing its students for college:

> The last two years of high school is the International Baccalaureate program that was pretty intense and pretty college focused. I tested out of a lot of credits like I didn't have to take a language course, I didn't have to take an art course or something. Writing skills and critical thinking is a lot of it, so I feel like that's been super helpful coming into college, because I feel like my writing skills are already pretty good even at that point, like writing academically.

Isabella said that because there was not much support in her high school for students applying to college, she had to figure most of the application process out on her own. She also reported that she was the only one of her high school friends in Seattle who was a first generation college student. Isabella described the challenges she faced in high school:

> Making appointments with counselors was difficult finding time to make appointments was also difficult and they didn't really help out in terms of applying in terms of what kind of documents you would need applying for fafsa things. That process was pretty difficult and I kind of had no one to follow the lead of and everyone else kind of had their parents do it for them. So I was just kind of on my own trying to figure things out.

Isabella said she had to rely almost exclusively on herself and her own research into applying to colleges and as a result of this lack of support, she said she really struggled to navigate the process and it took multiple failed attempts before she made progress. When asked if most of

their friends attended college, all three participants said that almost all of their friends attended some kind of college. The three participants mentioned the moral support they received from their friends throughout the college application process and the fact that it seemed like everyone around them was going to college which could have affected their likelihood of attending college.

Sense of Community as a Resource

A common theme found in the responses of all three participants was the sense of community that they found and relied upon throughout their academic career on this college campus. The participants agreed that this sense of community contributed to their success in college.

Reliance on Friendships

Each of the three participants mentioned a time during their freshman year when they struggled with loneliness and the transition living away from home for the first time. Both Isabella and Oliver expressed that they considered transferring back to a local college in their hometowns but that their friends on campus changed their minds. Oliver said that as an introverted person it was harder for him to meet new people initially but through the architecture program where they were required to spend extensive time with their peers, the friendships he developed as a result of that became his closest and most important relationships. These friends supported him and created a close knit community that made him want to stay and continue his studies at this university. Isabella mentioned her expectations about making connections in the beginning of college but how that changed later in her freshman year with the friendships that developed. She said her best friends now are her peers in the architecture program and her first

roommate introduced her to many of her other current friends. When asked about her first year at university and the transition into college, she said:

> I was kind of doing work all on my own and things like that. And I guess as a high schooler I had expected myself to make friends a lot more quickly. But first semester went through kind of like that, but then second semester was when I met most of my friends now. I think finding people that I could really connect with completely changed my mind about transferring back, I even had the paperwork and everything ready.

Isabella's friendships helped foster a sense of community for her that gave her support and a sense of belonging that contributed to her deciding to stay at this institution and continue her college education away from her hometown.

Close-Knit Departments Fostered Relationships

Oliver and Isabella spoke of the close community that the cohort structure of the architecture major program created and how that helped them find their own niche and make close friendships they could rely on. Oliver described how the repeated interactions that were required of him and his peers and his professors and the amount of time they all spent together in the cohort structure of the architecture program helped foster a sense of community for him. He also spoke of the collective challenge that he and his peers faced in the rigorous curriculum of the program that made it feel like they were all in it together. Oliver described:

> Something that stands out to me is the strong connection within the architecture department and the design department, how close kind of we became over the years. And for me at least that's where predominantly most of my friends are. So just kind of creating those bonds and having all those classes, together with everyone seeing them all the time, having like those late nights kind of when you have to stay up all night working and that community...Me and my friends or like the whole architecture department was in the architecture studio and we'd all kind of be there kind of hanging out doing our own thing. So, like in terms of like academic and social it was kind of blended I would say um because we were all together, like all the time because the things that we had to do we had to be like in the studio so a lot of us would just do our own thing we put like a movie up in the background, like order food, it was pretty nice to have like that kind of camaraderie.

Ava discussed how the smaller program and class size and the accessibility and ease of building

relationships with her professors fostered a sense of community for her that contributed to her

success throughout her academic career. Ava said:

> What I've come to realize that I really like about it that I didn't realize initially was I love how it's like a small school. And I feel like I really know pretty much everyone in my major. I feel like I know all my professors, like all the communications faculty and I'm also in advertising so all that faculty you feel like everyone's very approachable and like you know, I feel like I really get that close feeling with everyone here you know, like you're never more than like a connection away with somebody else and like professors are always very approachable.

The friends that participants made throughout college, the cohort structure of some programs and

the close relationships that were able to be made with faculty all contribute to fostering a sense

of community that the students reflected favorably upon and attributed partially to their success.

Value of Diversity

Another factor that was common amongst the participants was their challenges with their

racial identity as they grew up and their value and appreciation for the diverse student body at

this institution. The students struggled to embrace and be confident in their racial identity until

they came to college and were able to do so because of the diversity that they were surrounded

by on this campus. The participants value this diversity on campus because they are no longer

the isolated minority as they reported being and feeling growing up but now belong to an entire

student body of peers that are similar to them and their experiences as a student of color. This

allowed them to embrace their racial identity in college.

When the participants were asked about their own perception of their racial identity

growing up, each reflected on their own specific experiences as a minority and how they

attempted to assimilate into the dominant culture. Ava, who identifies as half Taiwanese and half

White but grew up in Hong Kong, discussed the multifaceted experiences she had as being

"White passing" but also speaking Mandarin in a Cantonese-speaking place and growing up in between three different cultures. Isabella and Oliver both reflected on their middle and high school experiences as they tried to fit in in order to make friends as they were a minority at a predominantly Latinx school and a predominantly White school. Isabella felt in middle school she thought about her race and ethnicity a lot and her self perception "to state it pretty clearly to be less Asian and more white in order to fit in". She said this changed in high school for the better as she became more accepting of her identity and having more friends from different backgrounds helped change her own image of herself in addition to educating herself and having access to more information in high school.

Oliver started to consider his racial identity in high school, also as a minority among his peers:

> They were mostly Latino, and so I was one of the few Asian Americans to go there and so like in a way, I was kind of teased and bullied a little bit. So that's when I kind of realized like my ethnicity, like it was kind of like an awakening I would say but it was definitely more high school than middle school and before that. It definitely made me kind of not shelter myself but kind of like put a bubble around myself. I would kind of refrain from like for example, bringing food to school because I'd be afraid that I'd be made fun of because of stereotypes and stuff like that. I think it was pretty difficult because I went to an all boys school, so I feel like everyone was just teasing each other all time so that was kind of normal but I kind of put it upon myself to like bubble myself because of you know, creating different types of stereotypes and what that might cause and stuff so yeah, definitely an effort to fit in. I feel like my high school self was not as genuine, as I am now like, looking back just trying to fit in with the crowd I was hanging out with.

When asked about how their racial identity comes up in college, Isabella said one good thing about this university is that it is really diverse and it has students of all kinds of different backgrounds and people from everywhere so it is easier to find more things in common with a lot of students. She said "It still made me think about the fact that I'm Asian, but not in the negative way, kind of thinking about it in the term that I have something to contribute as someone from

somewhere else, even if it's just small things like taking my friends to a food place and introducing them to something new". Isabella is speaking of her accepting and embracing her racial identity as a result of the campus environment she feels comfortable in. She values the diversity of students around her who share diverse backgrounds and cultures and has grown into her own confidence and sees her own identity as a strength and a value to offer others. Oliver has had a similar experience with his racial identity during his college career in regards to the diverse student body at this university:

> Coming into college, it was definitely a way for me to make friends. Especially coming out of high school, such a big change being able to embrace my culture and share different similarities between people and then finding that like they're they're really similar to me. I guess making friends was a way I introduced my culture in college. And just hanging out with people and grabbing food and just talking was like a lot easier to do in college in high school. I think I definitely started to identify more (as an Asian American) and just kind of embraced it and kind of immersed myself more back into the culture. Not being afraid of what I'm eating and when I'm cooking, where I'm going and what I'm doing just in general. I think it really helped me in college to embrace that and I think looking back at it now I'm proud that I was able to do that. Because I hid it for so long and that's not who I was and so I think I'm back to being my true self and being kind of genuine with myself.

It is noteworthy that each of the participants reported that they have never experienced racial discrimination on campus. The findings reveal the importance of a sense of community in college for these students which helped them feel supported and fostered a successful learning environment. Their sense of community was created through the friends that they developed close relationships with, certain program structures, close relationships with faculty and the value of diversity on campus that allowed them to embrace their culture and racial identity.

Utilization of Resources

In the academic advising system at this institution, all undergraduate students have both a faculty/major advisor where required meetings with students take place once a semester and an academic success coach who works in the Center for Academic and Student Achievement.

Meetings with an academic success coach are not required but they exist as a resource hub for

students. The findings of this study revealed that each of the three students did not rely on

academic resources that were available to them, for various reasons. Each of these students seem

to be quite self-sufficient in navigating their undergraduate degree which has contributed to their

individual academic success. These three students had very similar experiences with the

academic advising model at this university. All three of the participants relied heavily upon their

faculty/major advisor but never utilized or visited their academic success coach. The findings

reveal that these students felt supported at this institution but they did not use many resources

available to them on campus. Additionally, they heavily relied on their faculty/major advisor but

not on their academic success coach. This is the specific experience of these three students that

did not need the support of their academic success coach perhaps because they received ample

support from their faculty/major advisor.

Feeling Supported by Academic Resources

When describing the best part of navigating his degree and his program department,

Oliver said:

> They try to get us internships, or they have a class where we have to take an internship
> our senior year, so that's what I'm doing right now, and they do help by giving us a list of
> resources that we could reach out to and so that, going through all this architecture school
> and then having like the professors and the teachers caring about their students getting
> into the workforce is what I really like to appreciate from this whole experience. That and
> the people.

When Ava was asked what advice she would give another undergraduate student of color for

how to navigate the advising model and experience, she said:

> You want to be like a self starter, and like an individual and do things your own way, but
> at the same time, I think it's important to realize that you do have a community of people
> that you can ask for help and that do want to help you, and I feel like college is like a rare
> time like these four years, you can really get away with so much because people want to

help you and you have all these resources here and it's important to understand that but also not to like lean into it too much and like become lazy.

These two students are characterizing support as having resources and people in their departments available to them to lean on if needed. When asked about resources they used throughout their degree, all three participants said that they felt supported as students at this university. It seems that to these students, feeling supported is about having access to resources on campus as students. Two of the participants, Isabella and Ava, learned about many of the resources available to them during orientation, the first week of their freshman year. Oliver did not attend orientation which is why he was unaware of more resources than the other two participants. Each of the three participants said that they utilized their degree evaluation page and the school website to find information for the most part. Within their programs and in their faculty/major advisors and even on campus, these three participants felt supported and knew they had resources available to them. They did not, however, utilize many of the optional resources they had throughout their career on campus.

Reliance on Faculty/Major Advisor

Another major finding in this study was that the three students relied on their faculty/major advisor every semester but did not visit their Academic Success Coach throughout their academic career. Faculty/Major advisors give students information on which classes to register for and discuss plans to keep them on track for their degree. Academic Success Coaches are a resource hub for students who are doing well or struggling and are meant to refer them to find whatever resources they need. These two advising roles are designed to work hand in hand but of the three participants, Isabella visited her Academic Success Coach once freshman then never again and neither Oliver or Ava ever visited their Academic Success Coach. It seems that the specific experience of these students is that they got sufficient information from their

faculty/major advisor and perhaps did not need the resources that Academic Success Coaches in CASA (the Center for Academic and Student Achievement) offered. It also seems that the participants turned to their faculty/major advisor more because it was required, because they got specific information about their degree requirements and graduation requirements and because they were the most accessible resource to help them problem solve. Each semester an advising hold is placed on students accounts which cannot be removed until after a student meets with their faculty/major advisor. The three participants all shared that that was crucial for their attendance to those meetings and each of them speculated that if meetings with their Academic Success Coach were required that might have been helpful. It should be noted that when asked if they thought their experience with this was unique they said that they rarely heard of any of their friends visiting their Academic Success Coaches either.

Ava said that the best places she receives information around graduation requirements were from her degree evaluation page on the online portal and from her faculty/major advisor. She described how helpful that advisor has been to her in choosing courses and a degree path:

> She just really gave me options which I felt like I really needed, because I was super confused about what I could do or should do. I guess this time last year maybe was when I wasn't sure if I could graduate on time so she was like 'Okay, you can take this class and this class or you could take like these two classes, or you could take this class and then this other one next semester' like she like laid out all the routes that I could take to graduate on time. I felt like it was super helpful because I was kind of panicking so I like that she gave me options and really knew my situation.

Each of the three participants gave positive feedback on their advising experience. Isabella said that she did meet with her faculty/major advisor each semester but she also found that she could mostly plan her classes and degree path on her own with the help of the degree evaluation page on the portal. Oliver said that he gets the most helpful information from a professor who is also his faculty/major advisor and he has been extremely helpful through the process for him.

When asked why they did not rely on their Academic Success Coaches more or at all, Isabella said that her first meeting was not very helpful and they gave her contradicting advice from her faculty/major advisor so she never revisited the office. She also mentioned that making an appointment was not an easy process which may have deterred her from continuing to see her Academic Success Coach. When asked about why she did not revisit her Academic Success Coach (also referred to as CASA advisor), she said:

> Yeah I just never felt the need to. If I had a question I would just ask a friend of mine or if not I'd ask the Professor. The process of meeting a CASA advisor is not necessarily difficult but you have to sign up for an appointment and I know I tried to sign up with my advisor once for something but her schedule was just completely closed. And I was just like 'Well, I guess, whatever, I can figure it out myself' and her schedule was booked for a solid two weeks or so. I also think, maybe if there were more than one advisor who knew a little bit about you at least so even if you were able to make an appointment with someone else they would know a little bit and you don't have to kind of explain your whole spiel again. That would be helpful.

Isabella is the only one of the three participants who did see her Academic Success Coach once. Oliver explained that he never went to see his Academic Success Coach because he already had meetings to plan his courses and path with his faculty/major advisor and he preferred to rely on his friends and peers for direction:

> They would reach out like 'Oh I'm here, you know there's a resource here' but I just never felt the need to. I guess I had already a plan laid out like which classes I was going to take, and then I never kind of had trouble with that, so I never felt the need to. I felt like I should definitely have said 'Oh, this is who I am. If I need any help I'll contact you' but I think I went through the four years pretty fine without having to talk to them. I talk to my friends and stuff like 'oh what class are you going to take next semester?' or like 'what do you need to take?' I think that's pretty self sufficient and then the major advisors have guided at least through the major classes that I needed to take. That helped a lot and then I just felt like I kind of followed the rest of the architecture students to see what they were doing. And it kind of went with theirs.

Ava said she was under the impression initially that Academic Success Coaches were there to support career-oriented questions and issues and Oliver mentioned that knowing more about the role of an Academic Success Coach may have helped him utilize that resource. It could be that

there is a lack of knowledge about that advisor's function which could have contributed to the lack of reliance on them.

Lack of Use of Optional Resources

Isabella described what stands out to her as great about her experience at this university:

> I guess the help that is available to you, or at least knowing that there is help there, even if you don't really utilize it. I think having CASA and having the career services job, whatever they call the people that help you get a job or something like the career services center. It's great to know that they're there, you know, I haven't really utilized any of the tools that are available, but it's at least made known to me, so I think that's what's great about it, to know that at least they're there.

These three students acknowledged the existence of many academic resources available to all students and reported that they felt supported at this institution throughout their degree navigation; however, each of the participants said that they did not use many of the resources available to them. According to them, they gathered sufficient information on their own through their own research online, through the experiences of their friends and through information given by their professors. It seems that each of these three participants utilized the resources that were required of them as students and did not go out of their way to use resources that were available but optional to them.

Each of the three students were asked more about their experiences and use of the resources available to them. Oliver reflected on the growth and development of his Filipino identity and mentioned Kasahaman, the Filipino club on campus where many of his friends were involved, but he said that he never joined and did not give a reason. Ava mentioned that she knew there was a Hong Kong Student Association and a Taiwanese Student Association on campus as well and she said she considered joining but just never got around to it. Ava also brought up career services and when asked why she said she does not use them, she said:

> Yeah I think it's the same thing, you know, scared to make moves yourself like put yourself out there in the first place and the resume services and career nights I was like 'Okay like this year I'll go to them' and I never do but also, one of my professors has been really helping me a lot with my resume and portfolio and stuff like that so that's a more personalized approach. I feel like part of it's like I feel like the professors who know me well can help me better than if I just went into a career night thing and completely feel like I'm prepared.

Both of the other participants mentioned that they could also generally figure out things on their own in terms of completing requirements and navigating their degree, outside of the information they got from their professors and their faculty/major advisor.

An interesting finding that sits in tension with the students reports that they didn't feel the need to use some resources and that they never got around to using some of them is that these three students also brought up at least one resources each that was either not easily accessible to them or that they did not know how to find. Oliver mentioned that finding contact information for certain departments and navigating the university website was challenging to him. Isabella mentioned that learning that textbooks were able to be rented rather than bought for a higher price was something that was not advertised well and that could have been better communicated to students as a resource. Isabella also brought up counseling services that she may have used if it were more easily accessible to her:

> I know that counseling for a lot of students, they might need this, but for counseling or therapy or things like that I know NCU does offer that but I actually never was able to find where to do that exactly. I know a lot of my friends sometimes needed someone to talk to who wasn't really someone you knew, but they just didn't because I feel like that process is so hidden from you. So I think definitely learning where that is could make that more visible, because I think they say that it's there but it's kind of hard to find.

For various reasons, each participant did not use many of the resources available to them other than what was required of them. Students are required to interact with their professors inside and outside of class which could be why they relied heavily on their professors for

information. This may imply that the students used the resources that they did because it was required to use.

CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

The findings in this case study represent the phenomena of the experience of Students of Color as they have navigated their undergraduate degree and the academic advising system at a particular university. The findings revealed that family and class background have a significant influence on these students' path to get to college and their success in it. The findings also showed that students greatly value a sense of community that they have found on campus and that may be more valuable to them in their experience than utilizing the academic resources available to them. While these participants did not visit their Academic Success Coaches on campus, they did rely on the faculty/major advisor each semester which contributed to their success and pleasant experience in the academic advising system.

Familial & Class Background as a Resource

The findings that students relied heavily on their families as a resource and support system to get to college and to succeed in college confirm existing research. The backgrounds of these students helped shape how they would navigate their degrees and the role that each of their families played makes sense in how they got to where they are today. Isabella, a first-generation immigrant from Vietnam became self-sufficient out of necessity as she had to figure out the vast majority of all steps to get to and throughout college on her own. Oliver, also a first generation college student, also had to figure out applying to college and navigating it mostly on his own with the moral support of his family which makes it easy to understand why he, too, was self-sufficient. Ava, who had objectively the most support from her family getting to and through college, was confident and successful throughout the process in part because both of her parents had been to college before and had that experiential knowledge themselves.

My findings build on the literature that shows that Students of Color are more successful in their undergraduate experience if they have family support (Creignton, 2007). Creighton analyzed previous studies on the graduation rates for racial/ethnic minority students in U.S. higher education and found that students of color who had the support of their family contributed to higher graduation and retention rates for these students. All three of the participants had strong family support of them attending college and all three of the participants will be successfully graduating this upcoming semester. Additionally, these findings extended Creighton's (2007) findings by demonstrating that various kinds of familial support, such as emotional support, support to succeed and experiential support are also useful to student success.

Eakins and Eakins (2017) offered an example of a model that universities could use to improve retention rates for students of color, specifically African American students, and included in their recommendations for success was students who had the support of their families as well as adequate pre-college preparation. Both of these factors were present in the findings of this study and two of the participants' experiences with adequate pre-college preparation are supported by the literature. Isabella's experience, who did not report having adequate pre-college preparation but still succeeded in graduating, does not support the finding in the literature but this experience suggests that other factors are also important in affecting a student's graduation outside of college preparation in high school.

Part of the findings that were not found in the literature review is the influence of students' friends and the people in their community attending college or having attended college on the participants path to go to college. The findings suggest that if going to college is a normalized experience, high school students might be more likely to also attend.

Sense of Community as a Resource

The findings revealed that these participants highly valued a sense of community that was created within their friendships, the cohort structure that two of the participants had, and the value of diversity that the students felt on campus. A close-knit, rigorous cohort structured program resulted in students and faculty who spend a large amount of time together and tackle challenges together which created a sense of community for two of the participants. It makes sense that they will grow close and support each other. The struggle that all three participants had with their racial identity and culture was not surprising but it was surprising that none of the participants reported ever experiencing racial discrimination during their time in college. Luster-Edward and Martin (2018) found that Students of Color often experience racial stereotyping and discrimination because they are not adequately supported. These students may have not experienced racial discrimination as a result of the shared attitudes and diverse cultural experiences of the student body. The value of diversity that contributed to a sense of community on this campus could have contributed to this positive experience for these students.

The finding supports the literature that creating a sense of belonging is crucial for the persistence of students of color in order to foster an inclusive and supportive environment on campuses (Luster-Edward & Martin, 2018; Strayhorn, 2014). Strayhorn spoke of the role that academic advising has on a student's experience and said that when a student feels like they belong somewhere, they will stay and work harder to complete their work. He also said that academic advisors have the opportunity to shape the experiences of students and foster that sense of belonging. Oliver and Isabella experienced the benefits of such a model. They were in the rigorous, cohort structured architecture program and did indeed work harder because they felt like they had purpose and they were in it together with their peers and faculty which includes their faculty/major advisor.

The literature review also confirmed the findings that Ava specifically mentioned regarding the smaller class and program size. Anstine (2013) reported that institutions that have a smaller faculty to student ratio are correlated with having higher graduation rates. The findings agree with this as the participant Ava is completing her degree and reported that as one of the most supportive aspects of her academic career. Additionally, the literature supports the findings that a cohort structured model can improve retention in Students of Color (Eakins & Eakins, 2017).

Luster-Edward and Martin (2018) found that while institutions may have diversity policies in place, most students and staff/faculty of color reported not feelings supported. The data suggests that the specific experience of these students of color in this study might operate differently for this group. The findings may imply that the call to action that the literature review presents is being achieved on this specific campus; however, this sample size is too small to generalize in that way.

Utilization of Academic Resources

As mentioned in the previous section, the data showed that while these participants reported that they felt supported as students on this campus, they did not utilize many of the resources available to them. Additionally, all three participants relied on their faculty/major advisor but not at all on their Academic Success Coach. These students were quite successful without the reliance on many university resources. It is contradictory that the students reported feeling supported but also did not get around to using many tools available. A possible explanation for this is that the resources that were more accessible to them, for example, faculty members that they interacted with in class, provided enough information for the students to succeed.

The greatest tension between the findings in this study is that the students interviewed felt supported at this institution while also not using the resources available to them. Since all three of the participants gave ambiguous answers when asked what an Academic Success Coaches role on campus was supposed to be, it could be possible that this particular experience of these students is understanding that this resource and possibly others on campus are unclear to them. Additionally, it could be the experience or characters of these participants that asking for help is not something they are comfortable with.

It was not quite clear whether the participants who mentioned struggling to access certain resources truly felt that barrier and that the resources on campus were indeed not easy to find or use or if the students simply did not put much effort into utilizing and seeking out those resources. An interesting contradiction is Isabella, who reported that the website interface was challenging to navigate but also reported that she found almost all the information she needed online. This could just be a critique of hers to improve the institutions navigation tools but it would make sense that these students were successful in navigating their degrees if resources were appropriately supportive; however, the students' experience was separated from the reliance on these resources. It was interesting that the resources that all three participants did rely on were mostly required resources; for example, when the students each said they never visited their Academic Success Coach which was optional, but visited their faculty/major advisor every semester which was required for all students.

Another surprising key findings was that none of the three students reported relying on their Academic Success Coach but all reported relying on their faculty/major advisor. It is understandable that students would rely on their faculty members that they have a relationship with from their classes and who know the curriculum and who also a meeting is required with in

order to clear an advising hold on each student's account each semester. However, Academic Success Coaches are designed to work parallel with and support faculty/major advisors and get students where they need to be or access the resources they need. It is not clear from the findings whether the reputation or role of an Academic Success Coach is not correctly communicated to students or if students are knowledgeable about this resource and simply choose not to utilize it. The academic advising system at this institution is unique in large part because of the existence of an Academic Success Coach in the Center for Academic and Student Achievement and the fact that these students did not use it was quite surprising. Another possible explanation for this is that the students have gotten so far in their degree while relying greatly upon themselves that they are not comfortable asking for additional help.

The literature supports the findings that students would prefer to rely on resources they are comfortable with in scholarship by Strayhorn (2014). Strayhorn says that students crave a sense of belonging that can be fostered by academic advisors if they make themselves a trusted go-to resource for students. This implies that perhaps because a faculty/major advisor has a relationship with students, they have a trusted relationship with them and would be more comfortable relying on them than a stranger who does not know them or their experience.

The finding that my participants did not feel comfortable relying on their advisors for anything outside of academic questions and issues is not supported by the literature. Strayhorn (2014) said that advising must take into consideration the whole student which includes their life outside of school. However, the data shows that the three participants reported that they do not think advising should take their race and ethnicity into account and that it should only be an academic professional relationship. This may suggest that advising styles should be catered to

specific individual students who may have different preferences for how their relationship with their advisor operates.

The literature also supports the major finding that academic advising can be used as a tool to foster student success. Both studies by Museus and Ravello (2010) and Zhang et. al (2019) explored the influence on student success that academic advising has and attempted to identify factors that made academic advising more effective. Museus and Ravello determined that creating a humanizing experience for students and advising in a proactive way for students is crucial. The participants in this study reported their positive experiences with their faculty/major advisors because they knew their stories and also said that having a meeting each semester was very helpful. The students in this study reported that they got their best information on graduation and degree requirements from their faculty/major advisor.

Zhang et. al (2019) stressed the importance of continuing research on academic advising at the university level. They also stressed that in order to continually improve the process, administrators need to listen to feedback about their academic advising system. The findings in this study confirm this need and provide current student perspectives that the university could use to improve upon in the future.

Critical Race Theory

Using Critical Race Theory as a lens, my findings suggest that these specific Students of Color at this institution have had a particular shared experience, or phenomenon. Parker and Lynn (2002) identify the historical oppression of voices of People of Color in educational research and stress the importance of empowering the voices and lived experiences of Students of Color in scholarship today. This study aimed to analyze the undergraduate experience through the eyes of Students of Color for this reason. Parker and Lynn also said that Students of Color

can provide a perspective of the non-dominant culture that may not have been present historically and that this can reveal inequities that may exist. Scholarship by Solórzano and Yosso (2002) challenges the "neutral" research that historically has only studied White and middle-class students and that portrays Students of Color as "less-than". This study builds upon that literature in its findings that reveal all three Students of Color in this study are high-functioning students who successfully navigated their undergraduate degree without heavy reliance on others. This suggests that there is a wide variety of experiences for Students of Color in navigating the college experience. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) also suggest that racism is also combatted through storytelling by challenging cultural deficit stories that the dominant narrative maintains. The hope is that this study contributes to that challenge by sharing the lived experiences of intelligent Students of Color.

Recommendations

The results of this study have limitations in the size and generalizability of its findings. Since this sample size of three participants is so small, the findings cannot be generalized to represent any more than the experience of these three Students of Color at this particular university. The specific experiences of these students have also been shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic that has occurred over the past year. In the future this study could be continued and expanded in a similar way with many more undergraduate Students of Color at this institution and institutions across the United States. With a large enough sample size, significant results could be concluded in the future. Additionally, since this sample size was small, two of the participants were architecture majors and the third was a double communications and advertising major. It would be helpful in the future to include participants in all available majors on a college campus as this would provide more variance in the data and most likely in the findings. It would

also be important to include Students of Color from more ethnicities and backgrounds. A limitation of this study was the time constraint to select participants and in future research, ethnicities and races outside of the three Vietnamese, Tawianese-American and Pilipino-American students should also be included in a study about Students of Color. Each of these are students from Asian/Pacific Islander backgrounds and it should be noted that Students of Color from other racial/ethnic backgrounds might have had a specific experience.

In addition, further research could consider addressing the perspectives of faculty/major advisors as well as Academic Success Coaches to make the study more comprehensive. Interviews could also be conducted with them about their experience on the other side of the system. Inward reflection on the effectiveness and function of the Academic Success Coach role at this specific institution could assist in making improvements if it was found that indeed many students do not rely on their Academic Success Coaches at all. Further research could dig deeper into the connection between academic advising for Students of Color as it contributes to graduation rates since this study was not able to make that connection. This could benefit future Students of Color through their higher education journey as well as faculty, staff, administrators and academic advisors in this field, looking to improve their own academic advising system.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to learn of the experiences of Students of Color in their undergraduate career and what resources they use to navigate and successfully complete their degree. It was also to learn their experiences with academic advising at this particular university. The study hoped to connect academic advising as a tool that fosters success as it related to graduation rates for Students of Color. This institution maintains an undergraduate graduation rate higher than the national average and, as the literature has established, academic advising

plays a part in student success. We know that many institutional factors affect graduation rates (Anstine, 2013) but perhaps this advising system at this institution is a strong example of academic advising that adequately supports its students of color which in turn could contribute to its higher graduation rates.

From the findings in this study we have learned that these Students of Color on this campus and through their college journey are influenced by their family and class background. We have learned that these students value the sense of community and belonging that they have found through their friends, in their academic programs and through the value of student diversity that is maintained on campus. We also learned that these students are self-sufficient and did not rely on many academic resources available to them, including reliance on certain advisors but not others. These students gained much from one type of academic advisor and had positive, productive relationships with their advisors that contributed to their academic success. Through the lens of Critical Race Theory, we know that by listening to the lived experiences of these Students of Color, we are empowering their voices and adding their experiences to the body of literature that exists about our higher education system that favors the dominant narrative. By turning this knowledge into action we can decrease inequality between Students of Color and their White peers and continue to promote social justice in U.S. higher education.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

CHANGE THE WORLD FROM HERE

Consent Form for Adults

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Below is a description of the research procedures and an explanation of your rights as a research participant. You should read this information carefully. If you agree to participate, you will sign in the space provided to indicate that you have read and understand the information on this consent form. You are entitled to and will receive a copy of this form.

You have been asked to participate in a research study entitled "Students of Color Experiences of Academic Advising in a Diverse Institution" conducted by Julia Light, a Masters student in the Department of Leadership Studies at the University of San Francisco. This faculty supervisor for this study is Professor Seenae Chong, a professor in the Department of Leadership Studies at the University of San Francisco.

WHAT THE STUDY IS ABOUT:
The purpose of this research study is to learn the experiences of students of color at a diverse institution as they have navigated the unique academic advising model there. The objective is to learn how the advising model and the overall undergraduate experience has affected their success as a student throughout their academic career.

WHAT WE WILL ASK YOU TO DO:
During this study, the following will happen. At the agreed upon interview time, we will meet via Zoom for about 30-45 minutes for our first session. You will be asked interview questions I have prepared and we will have a conversation. I will request your permission to record at the beginning of the interview. Afterwards I will ask if you are comfortable scheduling a second interview and we can plan to meet later. You may stop me to ask questions at any time.

With your permission, we will audiotape and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide, and will be used for transcription purposes only. If you choose not to be audiotaped, we will take notes instead. If you agree to being audiotaped but feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview, we can turn off the recorder at your request. Or if you don't wish to continue, you can stop the interview at any time.

DURATION AND LOCATION OF THE STUDY:
Your participation in this study will involve one or two interview sessions lasting between 30-45 minutes each. The study will take place via Zoom.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:
The risks and benefits associated with this study are a loss of your time and the risks associated with regular activities. The benefit of the study is that it may add to the research on the field of education and international/multicultural issues. This information, once collected, might be read by policymakers, educational experts, educators and scholars and could affect the educational practice. If you do not want to participate in the study, you will not be mentioned in any documents of the study, and your decision to not participate will not be told to anyone. You may choose to withdraw your consent and discontinue your

participation at any time during the study without penalty. If you are upset by any of the questions asked, the researcher will refer you to counseling services available publicly or at the university if you are a member of the academic community (student, staff or professor).

BENEFITS:
You will receive no direct benefit from your participation in this study; however, the possible benefits to others include future students of color at USF whose experience may be improved as a result of the findings of this study and potential changes made as a result. We hope to learn about these experiences so that other institutions can adopt the successful model and use it to support other populations of students.

PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY:
Any data you provide in this study will be kept confidential unless disclosure is required by law. In any report published, no information will be included that will make it possible to identify you or any individual participant. To minimize the risks to confidentiality, real names will be replaced by pseudonyms on all interview and observation transcripts, and all audio files, observation notes, or other documents that contain personal identifiers will be stored in a password-protected computer or hard-drive that we will keep in a locked file cabinet until the research has been completed. Original audio-files will be destroyed at the completion of the study. Specifically, all information will be stored on a password-protected computer and any printouts in a locked file cabinet. Consent forms and any other identifiable data will be destroyed in 3 years from the date of data collection.

COMPENSATION/PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION:
There is no payment or other form of compensation for your participation in this study.
VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY:
Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits. Furthermore, you may skip any questions or tasks that make you uncomfortable and may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. In addition, the researcher has the right to withdraw you from participation in the study at any time.
OFFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS:

Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you should contact the principal investigator: Julia Light at 310) 720-4750 or jlight4@usfca.edu or the faculty supervisor, Seenae Chong at (408) 421-2085 or srchong@usfca.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board at IRBPHS@usfca.edu.
I HAVE READ THE ABOVE INFORMATION. ANY QUESTIONS I HAVE ASKED HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT AND I WILL RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM.

_____

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE   *DATE*

APPENDIX B

<u>Interview Questions Round 1</u>

1. Tell me a little bit about your background and how you came to choose USF.
   a. What do you identify as racially or in terms of your ethnicity?
2. What stands out to you as really great about your experience at USF?
   a. Who or what made it such a positive experience?
3. What has been challenging about your experience at USF?
   a. What or who made it difficult?
   b. What do you think might have helped?
4. Do you feel that students who are [racial/ethnic background] at USF have different experiences than white students? What's been your experience of that?
5. How do you balance your social life and being successful in your classes?
   a. Who or what helps you in finding a balance?
   b. What makes it become unbalanced?
6. What resources do you use or who do you go to to make sure you're doing well in your classes?
7. Where do you go/what process do you use to figure out next steps in your degree?
   a. How did you learn that?
   b. How has it helped you in being a student?
8. Who gives you the best information around graduation requirements?
   a. Why is it useful?
9. Who gives you information about graduation requirements that isn't helpful or information that you don't use?
   a. Why was it unhelpful?

Thank you. I'd now like to ask you more specifically about your experience with academic advising here at USF.

10. What is the reputation of the academic advising process at USF?
11. What has your general experience in the advising process been?
    a. What made it that way?
12. Can you share a time when the academic advising process was helpful or useful?
    a. What did it help you to do?
13. How about a time when academic advising was not helpful or created an obstacle?
    a. What did you want or need help with?
    b. What did you get instead?
14. How did your academic advising take into account your background as a [racial identification] student at USF?
    a. If not, what should have it considered?
15. Do you feel like issues of race or ethnicity came up in your academic experience (positive or negative)? If you feel okay, would you mind sharing a time when this happened?
    a. (If good) What felt good or right about that experience?

      b. (If bad) What would you have done that differently?

16. If you could give another undergraduate student of color advice for how to navigate the undergraduate advising model & experience what would it be? Why?

17. If you could redesign the academic advising experience at USF to better support students of color, what would you keep the same and what would you do differently?

18. What is something important about your undergraduate experience or experience with the advising model that I haven't asked you yet?

Interview Questions Round 2

1. After our last interview, did anything come up that you wanted to add?

2. What was your path to get to attending college?
   a. School?
      i. What was your high school experience like in terms of preparing you for college?
   b. How did your family affect your path to get to attending college?
   c. How did your friends affect your path to get to attending college? Did they all attend college? Was that normal in your circle?

3. What was your sense of your racial/ethnic background growing up? Did you think about it a lot?
   a. How does it come up for you, if at all, in college?
      i. If no, what part of your life is more important to you?
      ii. If yes, what are the ways it comes up?

4. What are the similarities and differences between the people you hang out with at USF versus where you grew up?

5. What was surprising about USF? Were there any gaps in your knowledge to navigate college?

6. So in our first interview you said finding housing was a challenge; what did you need in that search? How could USF have supported that? Was it an ongoing challenge or was everything sorted?
   a. What is another need you faced in school? How did you sort it out? Was there anything that USF as a university could have done to be more supportive?

7. Advising
   a. When do you go see the advisor that you see regularly?
   b. Are there things about classes or college or graduation that you would ask your friends or professor versus your advisor? What are those and why are friends/professors the better people to talk to about that?
   c. What does the advisor help you to do that you can't do on your own?
   d. Have you had an experience where the advisor wasn't able to help you? What did you do in that situation?
   e. Do you feel advising should take into account your racial/ethnic background?
      i. If yes, what would be helpful? If no, why not?
   f. What do you think a CASA advisor is supposed to do specifically?

    i.   Did you know your CASA advisor is supposed to be the resource hub for all students on campus? Not just for struggling students. They know every resource on campus for students and makes referrals based on student needs? Also Explore your Path portal to try out different majors or programs, etc. offers social-emotional resources, they know things about financial aid, textbooks, etc.

    ii.   How do you think knowing that would that have been helpful?

    iii.   In your opinion, what would have been the ideal role that CASA advisor could have provided?

    iv.   What would have helped you go to one?

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