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"I DIDN'T FEEL ALONE": A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF UNIVERSITY BRANCH CAMPUS GRADUATES, HIGH IMPACT PRACTICES, AND STUDENT PERSISTENCE

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BRANCH CAMPUS GRADUATES, HIGH IMPACT PRACTICES,
AND STUDENT PERSISTENCE

A Dissertation
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
in
Educational Leadership

by
Jesse Raymond Neimeyer-Romero
September 2018

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ABSTRACT

University branch campuses play a vital role in today's higher education field. Branch campuses help facilitate the delivery of knowledge, development, and learning opportunities to populations that may not have any other prospect in regard to pursuing their educational goals. Branch campuses have also become a new way for institutions of higher education to collaborate and work together to serve students' interests. Yet, despite enrollment growth across thousands of higher education branch campuses that exist in the United States, the literature on branch campuses is scant. Furthermore, branch campuses, like their main campus counterparts, have a responsibility to ensure that their students are successful and reach their learning objectives. One of the ways in which branch campuses are promoting student persistence is through the use of High Impact Practices (HIPs). HIPs have helped shape education policy at colleges and universities since they were first introduced a decade ago. While there is still active debate on their effectiveness, they have become an established part of the curriculum as colleges and universities invest in resources to implement and institutionalize these practices. Given the lack of literature examining HIPs at university branch campuses, this phenomenological study sought to examine what branch campus students experience in relation to HIPs, and how these experiences influence student persistence. Additionally, this study uncovered other experiences that influence the persistence of branch campus students and

assists in providing a fuller understanding of the branch campus student experience.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

University branch campuses play a vital role in today's higher education field. Branch campuses help facilitate the delivery of knowledge, development, and learning opportunities to populations that may not have any other prospect in regard to pursuing their educational goals (Bebko & Huffman, 2011; Bird, 2011; California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1985; Douglas-Gabriel, 2016; Schindler, 1952). Branch campuses have also become a new way for institutions of higher education to collaborate and work together to serve students' interests. Yet, despite "spectacular" (Fonseca & Bird, 2007, p. 1) enrollment growth across thousands of higher education branch campuses that exist in the United States (Bebko & Huffman, 2011), the literature on branch campuses is scant (Fonseca & Bird, 2007).

Students attend branch campuses for various reasons including ease of scheduling, smaller class sizes, the use of block scheduling for courses, the convenience of location, the increase in instructor interaction, personal attention of staff, reputation of the campus, the campus offered a specific course or employed a specific instructor, and the idea that it may be "easier" to earn a good grade (Hoyt & Howell, 2012, p. 111). In addition, branch campuses serve

students who are place-bound and who have both financial and familial obligations (Fonseca & Bird, 2007).

Branch campuses, like their main campus counterparts, have a responsibility to ensure that their students are successful and reach their learning objectives (University of California, n.d.; The University of Texas System, n.d.; National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). One of the many ways in which branch campuses are promoting student persistence is through the use of High Impact Practices (HIPs).

High-Impact Practices (HIPs) as identified by Kuh (2008) include: (a) first-year seminars and experiences, (b) common intellectual experiences, (c) learning communities, (d) writing-intensive courses, (e) collaborative assignments and projects, (f) undergraduate research, (g) diversity/global learning, (h) service learning/community-based learning, (i) internships, and (j) capstone courses and projects. Each HIP has been studied extensively and found to carry significant benefits for students (Kuh, 2008). As a result, HIPs are widely promoted and implemented to increase student persistence and retention (Johnson & Stage, 2018). High Impact Practices have helped shape education policy at colleges and university since they were first introduced a decade ago. While there is still active debate on their effectiveness (Johnson & Stage, 2018; Kuh & Kinzie, 2018), they have become an established part of the curriculum. Colleges and universities invest significant resources to implement and

institutionalize these practices; nonetheless, there is a lack of literature examining HIPs at university branch campuses, what branch campus student experience in relation to HIPs, and how these experiences influence student persistence.

Purpose Statement

Given the extensive promotion and implementation of High Impact Practices to increase student persistence and retention (Johnson & Stage, 2018), the primary purpose of this study was to understand the High Impact Practice experiences of university branch campus graduates. Additionally, I sought to understand how student participation in High Impact Practices (HIPs) influenced their persistence. For purposes of this study, persistence was defined as a “student’s postsecondary education continuation behavior that leads to graduation” (Arnold, 1999, p. 5).

University branch campuses are established, in part, to assist the educational development of students in underserved communities (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1985; Fonseca & Bird, 2007; Schwaller, 2009); however, there is a gap in the literature concerning the experiences of students attending branch campuses. Studies have examined the reasons why students choose to attend a university branch campus (Bird, 2014; Hoyt & Howell, 2012), branch campus student motivations (Cossman-Ross & Hiatt-Michael, 2005), and branch campus demographics relative to academic

performance and retention (McClelland & Daly, 1991; O'Brian, 2007).

Nonetheless, based on a comprehensive review of the literature, there are no existing studies that explore branch campus student experiences in relation to High Impact Practices. Accordingly, the goal of this study is to bring further understanding as to what practices and experiences may be most influential in the persistence of university branch campus students, in an effort to help inform policies and practices to support branch campus student success.

Research Questions

As noted by Glesne (2011), research questions help identify what a researcher wants to comprehend. Therefore, to understand the High Impact Practice experiences of university branch campus graduates and how these experiences may have influenced student persistence, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do students who graduated from a university branch campus describe their experiences with High Impact Practices?
2. From the students' perspective, how did these HIP experiences influence their persistence, if at all?

Significance of the Study

This study carries significant contributions to the field of higher education. In addition to addressing a notable gap in the literature regarding the university

branch campus sector, this study sheds light on branch campus students. Similar to university branch campuses, they are also largely ignored in the literature. This study provides an understanding of university branch campus student experiences with High Impact Practices and how student participation in High Impact Practices (HIPs) influences persistence. Given the need for more research on High Impact Practices (Kuh & Kinzie, 2018), this study is timely. In addition to HIPs-related insights, findings reveal other important experiences that university branch campus students found influential in their persistence. Furthermore, this study addresses the need for more research examining student persistence beyond the first year of college and what influences students to continue their enrollment (Nora et al., 2005). This study provides recommendations to university and branch campus leaders on how to better serve university branch campus students. In addition to helping inform policy and practice related to student resources, services, and opportunities, this study advances areas for future research.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptually, various theories, concepts, and models of student persistence and departure (DesJardins, Kim, & Rzonca, 2003) guided this study. Initially, I framed this study utilizing Tinto's Student Integration Model (1975, 1993) and Tinto's Interactionalist Theory (1975). These theories and previous findings related to student persistence laid the groundwork for this study;

however, the limitations of Tinto's (1975, 1993) theory became apparent as the research commenced (Attinasi, 1999; Berger & Milem, 1999; Gonzales, 2012; Perna & Titus, 2005). Therefore, in addition to focusing on college social experiences and integration (Baker & Robnett, 2012; Berger & Milem, 1999), I considered the influence of family and prior experiences (Attinasi, 1999; Berger & Milem, 1999; Gonzales, 2012; Perna & Titus, 2005), which are encompassed in Nora's (2003) Student/Institution Engagement Model Theoretical Framework.

The Student/Institution Engagement Model proposes six major components: (1) precollege/pull factors, (2) initial commitments, (3) academic and social experiences, (4) cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes, 5) final commitments, and (6) persistence. Nora's (2003) framework links together factors and influences, including familial support and prior experiences (Berger & Milem, 1999; Gonzales, 2012; Perna & Titus, 2005), with such elements as meaningful interactions (Tinto, 1975), collaborative learning (Kuh, 2008), and social experiences (Baker & Robnett, 2012).

Related to student persistence are High-Impact Practices (HIPs), which offer students both academic and social experiences. Broadly speaking, HIPs are "teaching and learning practices [that] have been widely tested and have been shown to be beneficial for college students from many backgrounds" (Kuh, 2008, p. 9). Grounded in the various theories, concepts, and models listed above, High Impact Practices also served as a lens for this study.

Assumptions

As a professional at a university who has worked with students directly and indirectly, I entered this study assuming High Impact Practices (HIPs) set up students for success and are influential in integrating students both socially and academically into the fabric of university life. I have seen students improve over the course of academic terms and over the course of academic years in both areas. Each HIP serves a distinct purpose, from writing-intensive classes that develop students' writing skills and expose them to different types of academic writing, to internships, which are meant to develop students as professionals outside the classroom and give them hands-on experience. Going into this study, I believed that on a branch campus, HIPs might be more effective. With smaller class sizes and more one-on-one interaction with instructors, staff, and administration, I held the belief that their influence on the university experience may be magnified. Furthermore, as a phenomenologist, I assumed "that there are features to any lived experience that are common to all persons who have the experience" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 728).

Delimitations

This study did not seek to understand the experiences of university main campus students or examine High Impact Practices on a university main campus. The population of this study was limited to students in Southern California and did not include any students from other areas of the country. This

study did not seek to evaluate how High Impact Practices are chosen and implemented on a university branch campus and did not attempt to compare the experiences of university branch campus students from one branch campus to another.

Summary

High Impact Practices have helped shape education policy at colleges and university since they were first introduced a decade ago. While there is still active debate on their effectiveness (Johnson & Stage, 2018; Kuh & Kinzie, 2018), they have become an established part of the curriculum. Many studies have examined how HIPs benefit students and impact graduation rates, however, there have been none that have studied them in the context of a university branch campus.

University branch campuses play an important role in the higher educational landscape as they provide opportunities for learning to areas in which there would be none if not for their presence. However, there is a shortage of literature that examines them (Fonseca & Bird, 2007). Furthermore, the understanding surrounding university branch campus students, their students' experiences, and these students' resulting persistence has not been fully explored. This study attempted to take up that investigation and shed light on if university branch campus student persistence is influenced by experiences with High Impact Practices.

In the following chapter, literature related to this study is presented and discussed. Chapter Two reviews research and issues related to the three topics explored in this study: branch campuses, persistence, and High Impact Practices.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

University branch campuses play a vital role in today's higher education field. Branch campuses help facilitate the delivery of knowledge, development, and learning opportunities to populations that may not have any other prospect in regard to pursuing their educational goals (Bebko & Huffman, 2011; Bird, 2011; California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1985; Douglas-Gabriel, 2016; Schindler, 1952). Branch campuses, like their main campus counterparts, have a responsibility to ensure that their students are successful and reach their learning objectives (University of California, n.d.; The University of Texas System, n.d.; National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). One of the many ways in which branch campuses are promoting student persistence is through the use of High Impact Practices (HIPs) (Johnson & Stage, 2018).

This chapter offers a review of pertinent literature linked to university branch campuses, the persistence of students at colleges and universities, and High Impact Practices. This chapter is arranged into three sections with a concluding summary. The first section discusses branch campuses and how they are defined, how they developed, and the students and faculty who inhabit their halls. The second section reviews the concept of persistence and includes

literature related to retention, the relationship between engagement and integration, and the role engagement plays in student persistence. The third section examines High Impact Practices and their role as agents for student engagement and persistence. This review is meant to provide an overview of extant literature related to these three topics. Additionally, this review assists in providing a rationale for the current study.

Branch Campuses

Terminology

Throughout the literature, there are a host of terms that refer to the same topic and which can be used interchangeably. In describing educational establishments that are located away from a central campus, these terms include branch campus (Fonseca & Bird, 2007; Bebko & Huffman, 2011), satellite campus (Hoyt & Howell, 2012; Cosman-Ross & Hiatt-Michael, 2005), off-campus center (Lubey, Huffman, & Grinberg, 2011; Bebko & Huffman, 2011), extension center (Lubey, Huffman, & Grinberg, 2011; Nickerson & Schaefer, 2001), non-traditional campus (Lynch & Bishop-Clark, 1998), and even outreach satellite centers (McClelland & Day, 1991). In the same vein, the central campus connected to these branches, satellites, and off-campus centers can be called a variety of names. They may be referred to as the main campus (Bebko & Huffman, 2011; Wolfe & Strange, 2003) or the traditional campus (Fonseca & Bird, 2007; Lynch & Bishop-Clark, 1998). For consistency purposes and to

ensure clarity of discussion this literature review will use the terms branch campus and main campus, respectively, though the references cited may use other terminology.

The State of Branch Campus Research

Literature on college and university branch campuses is scant and largely unorganized. Branch campuses are largely ignored in academic literature (Fonseca & Bird, 2007), though one academic journal of note, *Metropolitan Universities*, has had at least two special issues dedicated to the topic in the last fifteen years. Wolfe and Strange (2003) stated in their study of branch campus faculty that little research has been established concerning the branch campus faculty experience. Hoyt and Howell (2012) noted that existing branch campus literature is varied and wide ranging with many authors and researchers focusing on different aspects of branch campus organization, life, populations, etc. utilizing different tools and surveys. Indeed, there exist studies based on the use of technology at branch campuses, the political processes in establishing branch campuses, how branch campuses increase access to education, and even branch campus decision-making processes (Hoyt & Howell, 2012). These studies establish research and report their findings, but there are few follow-up studies or other pieces of research that take what was found further. This creates a need for more research focusing on branch campuses. Hoyt and Howell (2012) noted their belief that university and colleges that possess branch campuses may be

conducting their own internal studies and may not be actively reporting their findings or making them available for greater academia.

With the absence of any type of regular sharing or publishing of individual institutions' data concerning their own branch campuses, surveys by national associations and individual researchers have been created and distributed to branch campuses administrators. The National Association of Branch Campus Administrators (NABCA), for example, created a survey and administered it between 2009-2010. The results of their findings are discussed later in this literature review. A decade earlier, Nickerson and Schaefer (2001) attempted to create a better understanding of branch campus faculty also using a national survey. That research is discussed, as well.

In the fall of 2015, the National Association of Branch Campus Administrators released the first volume of their publication, *Access: The Journal of the National Association of Branch Campus Administrators* (Levasheff, 2015). Though the publication included only one editorial (Levasheff, 2015) and one article (Gavazzi, 2015), which discussed assessments methods related to town-gown relationships, the journal illustrates the efforts that are currently underway to collect and encourage literature relevant to branch campuses. A second issue was released in March 2016 and included one article discussing the selection of branch campus management models (Fraser, 2016). Volume 2 was published in April 2017 and included discussion on branch campus types (Harrison, 2017), admissions and orientations at two-year colleges (Pulcini, 2017), and

involvement with local government (Gossom, 2017). A third volume was released in November 2017 and published only two articles related to the branch campus faculty experience (Harper, et al., 2017) and challenges related to adult higher education (McGill, et al., 2017). Altogether, this journal illustrates the growth of branch campuses and how they are being discussed.

The Definition of Branch Campuses

The Office of Postsecondary Education in the federal Department of Education provides a simple definition of what a branch campus is. §600.2 of the Code of Federal Regulations states that a branch campus is a “location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of an institution” (Institutional Eligibility under the Higher Education Act, 2016). The definition continues to describe a branch campus as permanent, has its own faculty and administration, has its own budget, hiring capability, and has course offerings that lead to a degree, certificate, or credential (Institutional Eligibility under the Higher Education Act, 2016). An American regional accrediting agency, The New England Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (2015), expands on this definition and requires that institutions that fall within their jurisdiction and have an approved branch campus meet certain criteria. These requirements include that the branch location should also have programming that fits within the institution’s objectives, possess the same academic standards, receive appropriate support for instruction, and have sufficient access to learning resources. Another American

accrediting agency, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commissions on Colleges, or SACSCOC, (2016) also defines what a branch campus is for their respective institutions. According to the SACSCOC (2016), a branch campus is a location of an institution that is separated geographically and is independent of a main campus. Additionally, the branch campus is further defined as a permanent establishment; offers courses that lead to degrees, credentials, or certificates; has its own faculty and administration; and has its own budgetary and hiring authority. The North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, The Higher Learning Commission, holds to this same definition of a branch campus but also establishes another subset of campuses named Additional Locations (2017). This third type of campus is geographically separate from a main or branch campus; allows students to complete 50% or more of courses leading to a degree or a Title IV certificate; and/or complete a degree originally begun at another institution, even if the degree program provides less than 50% of the coursework. Interestingly, one of the largest accrediting agencies within the United States, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, is quiet on the subject of branch campuses.

Bird (2014) further helped define what a branch campus is by describing its limitations. He noted that many branch campuses lack independence when it comes to making decisions based on curriculum and faculty matters. Branch campuses, thus, must rely on main campus of their institution for support and direction in these arenas

Though the federal government and multiple accrediting agencies have created definitions of what a branch campus is, there is no set model of what a branch campus looks like or how it operates. Though they do not create a typology or a formal system of categorization of branch campuses, Fonseca and Bird (2007) described the differing examples of university branch campuses. Some may serve only those who are completing requirements to transfer, such as the University of Wisconsin (Fonseca & Bird, 2007). Others, meanwhile, exist to provide the ability to complete a bachelor's degree with junior and senior level classes along with post-baccalaureate degrees, such as a master's program. Students at these campuses are coming from nearby and local community colleges. Still other institutions' branch campuses house unique programs or conduct specialized research that is not hosted by the main campus. Other university branch campuses are paired with another institution that may only offer two-year technical programs (Fonseca & Bird, 2007).

Through the findings of a national survey, a formal attempt was made to create a branch campus typology. In 2009-2010, the research committee of the National Association of Branch Campus Administrators created a web-based survey with notification of the survey given to known leaders of branch campuses and with announcements in educational leadership publications (Bebko & Huffman, 2011). The survey was open for one year, from July 2009 until June 2010 and in the end the researchers were able to collect information about 138 branch campuses and off-campus centers from 128 respondents. Bebko and

Huffman (2011) describe the sample size as very small, because with almost 5,000 degree-granting institutions in the United States, there is likely a larger number, perhaps thousands, of extant branch campuses, both public and private (2011). However, there does not exist any definitive list or database of branch campuses. The survey findings, though, provide a insightful snapshot of university branch campuses and all of their varying characteristics. Most interestingly, the survey assists with identifying how branch campuses, and off-campus centers, are physically structured and how many students they each serve and how they can be divided into different categories.

Through the survey, four models of branch campuses were identified. However, it is noted that with more respondents and more data, characteristics considered typical of branch campuses, as established by this study, could easily change, or disappear altogether, resulting in the typology developed and discussed to become null and void (Bebko & Huffman, 2011). The first identifiable model was the two-year public center. With an enrollment lower than 1,000, this type of branch campus is a relatively short distance away from its parent institution, about 30 miles. The campus' space could be owned or leased and has a rather small staff of just two or three (Bebko & Huffman, 2011). The campus is dependent on adjunct faculty teaching, who can be defined as working either full-time or part-time and non-tenure track faculty (Monks, 2009), and onsite leadership is present with one administrator whose highest level of education is typically a master's degree.

The second model is the four-year private branch campus (Bebko & Huffman, 2011). With less than 1,000 students, the campus is just one of more than four branches. The population of the entire institution has typically taken a course at one of the branches. This type of branch campus is located in leased space and is usually more than 50 minutes from the main campus. Full-time faculty teach about one-fifth of the campus' classes and there are at least a few staff members who work at the site to provide services to the students. An administrator with a master's degree is present and may oversee multiple sites.

Bebko and Huffman's (2011) third type of branch campus is known as the four-year public branch. Half of the survey's respondents identified as this model of a branch campus. Facilities are owned by the university and may be co-located with another institution. A range of student support services are provided for and half of the classes held are taught by full-time faculty of the university and leadership is provided by an administrator who holds a doctorate. The model can be sub-divided into two types: urban and non-urban. An urban model has a population of 1,000-2,500 students and be located 50 miles from the main campus while a non-urban campus would be fewer than 50 miles from campus and have less than 1,000 students.

The final model is characterized as large enrollment branches (Bebko & Huffman, 2011). The institutions themselves can either be a two-year or four-year school and has three or more branch campuses in addition to their main campus. Enrollment for the college or university as a whole is over 25,000 and about 25%

of the institution's students take a course at one of the branch campuses. The branch campus is located on or in property the school owns and is overseen by an administrator who has earned a doctorate and who reports directly to the head of the university.

Bebko and Huffman (2011), along with Fonseca and Bird (2007), described the different types of branch campuses according to their sizes and what they provide students. In an addendum to the original study by Bebko and Huffman (2011), Bebko (2011) discovered patterns and additional types of campuses based on campus missions. Drawing from NABCA survey data, Bebko (2011) identified the following types: (a) the "cash cow" (p. 60) center offering high-demand programs, (b) the increasing access campus, (c) the growing the brand branch highlighting local industries and certain programs, and (d) the full-service mini main branch campus which serves both traditional and non-traditional students and offers, or attempts to offer, as much of the college or university experience as possible in regards to services, programs, and instruction as one would find on a main campus. Other models related to mission are the university system campus and the multi-university center. The university system campus possesses separate accreditation and has an independent budget. The multi-university center is an establishment made up of different institutions who share space through common agreements and focus on high demand courses and programs (Bebko & Huffman, 2011). Together, Fonseca and Bird (2007) and Bebko and Huffman (2011) attempted to create cohesive

classification systems and ways in which to categorize the types of branch campuses that exist.

The History of Branch Campuses

There is no complete history of how branch campuses developed. It is difficult to create a full picture for several reasons. Based on a review of available literature, these reasons include the lack of uniformity in terminology related to branch campuses, states in the U.S. possess and have developed their own university systems, and private higher educational institutions have their own practices. Indeed, most branch campuses have their own origin story, whether they were developed as a result of the need for access to higher education after soldiers returned home after a world war (Schindler, 1952; Bird, 2011), a community desire and demand for state university programs (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1985), or to address an issue of space at a university or college's main campus (Schindler, 1952). The common idea between these origins, however, is the need for increased access to education and learning facilities.

Pre-World War II. As noted by Dengerink (2011), the idea of branch campuses is not new. In fact, Thomas Jefferson envisioned everyone in the state of Virginia being within a day's ride to an institution of higher learning (Dengerink, 2011). In 1909, Ohio University created an extension division and offered courses in rural areas around the state (Bird, 2011). This was, in part, a way to support teachers in their own efforts to educate the populace. Throughout the

1910s and 1920s, Ohio University continued to increase access by hiring faculty to travel around the state to deliver courses and establishing correspondence courses. In 1939, two evening divisions were established in two communities in Ohio but soon closed. However, in 1946, three branch campuses opened (Bird, 2011). The establishment of these campuses coincided with the rise of the modern notion of branch campus.

Post-World War II Era. Branch campuses began springing up around the United States in the years that followed World War II, as a result of the soldiers who were returning home from overseas deployments (Bird, 2011). In 1952, it was noted that 72 university branches were established in 1946 alone, with five in 1947, and an additional seven the following year (Schindler, 1952). By the 1949-50 academic term, the total number of branch campuses had grown to 87 in the United States. Public education was growing tremendously and institutions, in general, were expanding their degree offerings to meet the needs of students around the country (Schwaller, 2009). Accordingly, these branch campuses were fulfilling specific local needs and in time, some were able to grow some independence from their main campus and have developed their own unique identities (Schwaller, 2009).

Of the 87 branch campuses noted in 1952, only eleven were west of the Mississippi River while 47 were scattered amongst the states along the Great Lakes, eight in Connecticut and New Jersey, and the balance in the southern states east of the Mississippi (Schindler, 1952). The 87 branches belonged to 41

different universities or colleges. Schindler's (1952) study also noted that a branch campus founded before 1900 was included in the report and was the only one identified as having pre-twentieth century origins: the School of Mines and Metallurgy, part of the University of Missouri and established in 1871. Other campuses noted were created in 1916 and 1917, respectively. In his 1952 study, Schindler described branch campuses as being in their infancy and he identified them as the "stepchildren" (p. 228) of universities and colleges. However, he also declared the hope that they would eventually be fully welcomed into the fabric of the university.

California is one state that after the post-war period formalized the process of establishing branch campuses. In 1975, the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) adopted a set of procedures for allowing the state's public universities to establish branch campuses. Accordingly, in the mid-1980s a branch campus of the California State University system was proposed for an isolated area of Southern California, the Coachella Valley, to help cater to the needs of local residents (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1985). With two local community colleges serving the surrounding area, the proposed branch campus was meant to provide upper division classwork and programs and would be housed in portable classrooms on the grounds of one of the community colleges (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1985). Based on the established need, projected enrollment, and the isolation of the area, the branch was approved by the California Postsecondary Commission

and opened for business in the fall of 1986 with only 80 students. By the beginning of the next century, the branch campus had moved to its own property and had grown to a complex made up of four buildings offering four full years of an undergraduate degree, as well as masters and one doctoral program (California State University, San Bernardino, 2016).

Modern Era. In the decades following the post-war years, branch campuses have continued to grow and to be established. As noted above by Bebko and Huffman (2011), there are likely thousands of higher education branch campuses that exist in the United States, although the final tally is unknown and there is a need for an established list of such campuses.

Fonseca and Bird (2007) address the impact of technology on branch campuses. They note the once-common belief that technology would soon outpace “traditional education.” However, Fonseca and Bird (2007) note that branch campuses experience the opposite of what is expected. Looking at enrollment trends in 2007, Fonseca and Bird (2007) call growth at branch campuses “spectacular” (p. 1), with enrollment rising at campuses that are both new and those that are already well-established. This development can be attributed to students who are place-bound and who have both financial and familial obligations to attend to and so need a local campus to pursue their educational goals. Fonseca and Bird (2007) also surmised that the rise in educational technology has actually helped increase the growth seen on branch

campuses. Instead of challenging the respective missions of branch campuses, technology has actually contributed to their cause.

Branch campuses, Fonseca and Bird (2007) note, are able to make use of distance education, in which students are able to take courses transmitted through the Internet or interactive television. In addition, library access has increased and has allowed branch campuses to operate with a smaller amount of books and other paper sources and offer digital access to materials as main campus libraries are able to do. Fonseca and Bird (2007) also cite the use of data availability and duplication at branch campuses in which registration, admissions, and financial aid transactions can be completed without students needing to visit the main campus.

Branch campuses have also become a new way for institutions of higher education to collaborate and work together in serving students' interests. The Universities at Shady Grove in Rockville, Maryland brings together nine of the twelve institutions that make up the University System of Maryland (Douglas-Gabriel, 2016). The cooperative program serves 4000 students who apply to one of the partner institutions directly and who are able to complete their baccalaureates at the center. Established to meet workforce demand, the nine institutions, that include University of Maryland Eastern Shore and Bowie State, share classroom space but have their own individual offices to oversee their own institutional operations. This type of branch campus model is one that may prove

to be more cost effective as universities and college explore their own expansion (Douglas-Gabriel, 2016).

Faculty at Branch Campuses

At the center of branch campuses is the faculty. Faculty play an active role in students' success and their eventual completion of their degrees or programs. As the typologies developed by both Fonseca and Bird (2007) and Bebko and Huffman (2011) identified, some branch campuses have some resident faculty while others do not have any at all. The majority, according to the surveys and findings, must rely on adjuncts and their respective main campus to supply instructors. Some may have a voice in who is scheduled and hired as faculty, but others must have their instructional support set by their parent institution (Bird, 2014).

Available literature examining branch campus faculty is scant, however, universities and colleges having to rely increasingly on adjunct faculty for instruction is not a new phenomenon amongst university and college campuses, in general. As previously discussed, adjunct faculty can be defined as instructors who work either full-time or part-time but are non-tenure track faculty (Monks, 2009).

Beginning in the 1980s, four-year colleges and universities, in the interests of dropping the cost of labor, began to hire more adjuncts over tenure-track or full-time instructors while in the community colleges adjunct faculty had been common by the 1960s and 70s (Flaherty, 2013). In 1969, 78% of higher

education faculty were tenured or tenure-track; by 2011, that number had dropped to just under 30% (Flaherty, 2013). Economically, the switch makes sense, especially coupled with the decrease in government funding for higher education, both at the state and federal levels since the 1980s and 1990s (Mortenson, 2012). The average annual salary for an adjunct faculty member is only a little over \$21,000 compared to a tenure-track faculty member at \$66,000 (Flaherty, 2013). However, the move toward the hiring of more adjunct or temporary instructors was also a result of fluctuations and varying levels of interest in the programs that colleges and universities offer (Kezar, 2013). Thus, more faculty may be needed for one program one year and then less the next. The increase in applied fields being taught have also encouraged the use of adjunct instructors who are able to bring in practical experience and perspectives (Flaherty, 2013; Kezar, 2013). However, with this new reliance on part-time instructors come issues with lower graduation rates, poor performance in adjunct-taught classes compared to those taught by tenure-track faculty, and lower-transfer rates from two-year to four-year institutions (Kezar, 2013).

Adjunct faculty, as a group, do face structural barriers as members of the academic community. To explore these barriers, Kezar and Gehrke (2013) conducted a survey of the memberships rosters of two organizations comprised of academic leadership, the American Conference of Academic Deans and the Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences. The survey administered explored policies supporting adjunct faculty, or non-tenure track faculty, and collected

opinions on providing support to such a population and the factors influencing those opinions and practices. The survey resulted in a 30% response rate with 278 respondents and focused on the following services and policies in relation to adjunct faculty: orientation, medical benefits, family leave, office space/supplies, administrative support, mentoring, professional development for both teaching and research, paid sabbatical, multiyear contracts, service on committees, opportunities to advise students, and institutional governance participation (Kezar & Gehrke, 2013).

Kezar and Gehrke's (2013) survey found that campus leadership provided adjunct faculty support regarding orientation, office supplies, and administrative support, especially for those who may have had full-time appointments. While part-time faculty received support in these same areas, they were rarely given the opportunity to serve on committees, receive medical benefits and multiyear contracts, or participate in institutional governance. In addition, they are often not provided with professional development and mentoring opportunities or have the ability to advise students (Kezar & Gehrke, 2013). There are moves to provide more of these support services to adjunct faculty and that more services and opportunities now open to adjunct faculty than in the past. Altogether, however, adjunct faculty are at a distinct disadvantage compared to their tenure-track faculty peers.

Even with these factors considered, faculty at branch campuses are a unique subset of academics. Wolfe and Strange (2003) explored faculty culture

within a rural branch campus in a Midwestern state. Participants were selected via reputation and purposeful sampling. More specifically, faculty were chosen based on their influence knowledge, and length of service at the institution. The researchers utilized “naturalistic, qualitative” methods, such as observation, interviews, and document analysis (Wolfe & Strange, 2003, p. 346).

Wolfe and Strange (2003) found that because of the small size of the campus, a more personalized atmosphere existed. While this, is a positive feature for students, especially for those who are able to come into regular contact with their instructors, it also created an environment where faculty have greater job complexity, take on generalist roles, become more isolated, and as a result, have less contact with other faculty (Wolfe & Strange, 2003). Faculty operated within single-person departments, which led to increased stress in the attempt to complete all of their expected duties, including planning courses, recruiting students, and advising. As one instructor noted: “...If I were in the department of a much larger university, I wouldn’t have to be concerned about things other than teaching in that area and activities that were closely related...” (Wolfe & Strange, 2003, p. 350).

Though the closeness of faculty and students on branch campuses is a positive attribute, the development of faculty and their role as academics may suffer. The level of involvement expected, because of expanded duties, deters many instructors from building an academic career, especially as the standards of productivity in research are expected to be reached in order to gain tenure

(Wolfe & Strange, 2003). For those who are more focused on the development of their pupils instead of chasing the rewards of research, teaching on a branch campus, or a smaller institution, in general, may be the best environment for them. Wolfe and Strange (2003) concluded in their article that branch campuses need to pay more careful attention to the development of their faculty and instructors and provide them resources in their academic pursuits in addition to their other duties.

In 1998, co-author Nickerson conducted a national survey of branch campus administrators attempting to identify branch campus characteristics; validate a typology of branch campuses; and to better understand administrative views involving faculty, student, resources, organization, and institutional relations (Nickerson & Schafer, 2001). A total of 1,089 branch campus administrators received surveys to complete. Only 24.7% or 269 participants responded. Though the responses regarding faculty were second-hand, as they were coming from the campus administrators and not directly from the faculty themselves, the information gathered through the survey shed light on faculty life on branch campuses regarding hiring practices, governance, tenure, and resources, among other topics.

Assessing full-time versus part-time faculty, Nickerson and Schafer (2001) found that 75% of respondents had some resident faculty. On those campuses involved preparing students for transfer to the main campus, full-time faculty were more commonly found while community college branch campuses and

campuses that specialized in upper-division coursework were less likely to have resident faculty. Geography and the physical location of branch campuses in relation to their institution's main campus played a role in this distinction as some institutions determine it is easier and less costly to have full-time faculty drive out to branch campuses. As a result, the ratio of part-time faculty compared to full-time faculty is much higher on branch campuses compared to main campuses. This, in turn, creates an additional workload for faculty who professionally call the branch campus their home. These faculty must receive adequate and ongoing training to help meet institutional, departmental, and programmatic goals. They serve as the link between branch campus students and the main campus.

Faculty on branch campuses seem to be attracted to the idea that branch campuses can offer flexibility and autonomy (Nickerson & Schafer, 2001). Other characteristics, such as student demographics and the campus' mission were also considered. However, with teaching assignments on the branch campus, faculty feel overlooked by colleagues and those who have a voice in deciding tenure. With relatively infrequent interactions with main campus faculty, branch campus faculty feel undervalued and have less access to resources in comparison. According to the responses received through the survey, 30% of branch campuses have a more junior faculty but have a higher number of female instructors in relation to their main campuses.

In summary, Nickerson and Schafer (2001) found that there are both advantages and disadvantages with being academically assigned to the branch

campus of an institution. Though they may have limited access to resources and feel vulnerable in their mostly untenured state, branch campus faculty seem to find branch campus students more interesting and they are less encumbered by main campus politics (Nickerson & Schafer, 2001). A research university's main campus may view a branch campus assignment as exile, but at a comprehensive institution, a faculty member who is happy to focus their attention on students at a branch campus and receives excellent evaluations is a more valued member of their department, school, or college (Nickerson & Schafer, 2001). Largely, the picture that is painted of branch campus faculty is a happy one as they have mostly been assigned to the branch voluntarily and have been won over in their decision by the institution who has offered them this opportunity which is atypical than most academic assignments.

Though Wolfe and Strange's (2003) study centered on one branch campus and Nickerson and Schaefer's (2001) survey had a limited scope, the results of their work demonstrate the collective experiences of faculty who teach on branch campuses. Connections between faculty and students are more easily made and students are able to have more effective communication and opportunities to learn from their instructors in and out of the classroom (Wolfe & Strange, 2003). However, being a faculty member on a university branch campus has its drawbacks, as well, such as the feeling of being invisible or overlooked for certain opportunities (Nickerson & Schaefer, 2001). Those who instruct must weigh not only the priorities of their students and their campus, but also their

own. Neither Wolfe and Strange's (2003) or Nickerson and Schaefer's (2001) research addresses staff positions on branch campuses, but one can surmise that the same observations that the four researchers found regarding faculty, also occur with staff: isolation, independence, multiple 'hats' worn, and limited movement within the established university hierarchy.

Altogether, these definitions, characteristics, and images of faculty life serve as a starting point for the student experience on branch campuses.

Student Experience and Branch Campuses

There are many different reasons why students choose to attend the branch campus of a university. In a quantitative study that utilized a survey combined with institutional demographic data, Hoyt and Howell (2012) found that students attended a branch campus for several reasons. The survey results, which included 979 returned responses, uncovered the following reasons: ease of scheduling, smaller class sizes, the use of block scheduling for courses, the convenience of location, the increase in instructor interaction, personal attention of staff, reputation of the campus, the campus offered a specific course or employed a specific instructor, and the idea that it may be "easier" to earn a good grade (Hoyt & Howell, 2012, p. 111). Although the researchers included only one campus in their study, the reasons found were similar to those cited by Bird (2014).

While Bird (2014) encountered students who also were looking for flexibility and convenience, he found that many adult learners enrolled in order to

create a better future for both themselves and their families. These adult learners were “purpose driven,” tying their education with career success and quality of life (Bird, 2014, p. 58). In Bird’s (2014) observation, he noted that younger students on a branch campus attend because they want the personal attention from staff and faculty which they may not receive if they attend a larger university campus, similar to what Hoyt and Howell (2012) found in their research. Bird (2014) also noted that attending a local branch campus is a less expensive option for younger students who may see the cost of attending a school farther away as a cost prohibitive option.

Cossmann-Ross and Hiatt-Michael (2005) examined motivators for adult students on a branch campus, self-improvement and achievement scored higher in the survey administered which utilized both the Q-sort method and Likert Scale technique. These internal motivators played a larger role than external motivators, such as job promotion, increased earnings, or family opinion. In the study’s follow-up interviews with the participants, other factors that motivated adult students on the branch campus were the real-life experiences of their instructors and the sense of control that the students had over their learning environment. As many adjuncts are practitioners in their field of study, this is likely a common element on branch campuses.

Lynch and Bishop-Clark (1998) compared older students’ experiences on both branch and main campuses. Lynch and Bishop Clark (1998), in this study, defined older students as over the age of 25. These older students made up

about 40% of the campus' population. Lynch and Bishop-Clark's (1998) research found that students on branch campuses, due to smaller class sizes, had more interaction with their professors and as a result, were able to develop closer relationships. They discovered that older students appreciated the mixed-age classrooms with older students enjoying younger students' views though there were differences in learning styles between the younger and older students. Lynch and Bishop-Clark (1998) also found that on the main campus, classes seem to be designed with only the younger students in mind, with older students and their varied responsibilities and needs pushed to the side, in contrast to the older student experience on the branch campuses, where student-professor relationships flourished and facilitated learning. This last characteristic circles back to what Nickerson and Schaefer (2001) observed in their own study examining branch campus faculty. Branch campus faculty are more likely to develop closer relationships with their students and focus on their needs more so than their main campus counterparts.

Regarding student life on branch campuses, Bird (2014) also observed that branch campus staff and administration might have unrealistic expectations regarding the involvement and participation of their students. For instance, staff and administration may plan events and programming, such as a social event or a theater production coming to campus. However, resulting attendance numbers are low and dismal and the program itself may seem like a waste of funds and time. As Bird (2014) noted, many of the goals of student life programs, such as

building community and involving students on campus, may instead be met through the inclusion of service-learning in the classroom. Again, this approach may work better on a branch campus because of the connection that students may already possess with the surrounding community and the commitments they already have.

However, there may be an explanation for lower rates of involvement by branch campus students. Bird (2014) noted that in his experience working on branch campuses in Ohio, it was not always necessary for the campus to provide opportunities for extracurricular activities, meaningful or not. This was because branch campus students may already be involved and engaged in their communities, as they are directly from the surrounding area of their respective campus. They are not coming from outside the local area. As a result, they may already be active in community activities, such as volunteering at non-profits and other sectors, such as churches and local politics.

Altogether, students at branch campuses need effective and relevant tools, programs, and practices that allow for the development of their students so that they may be able and succeed in achieving their academic goals. Students coming to branch campuses, like main campuses, bring their own characteristics with them that affect their time at their institution and their eventual success or completion. However, certain characteristics and traits may be more visible and present on branch campuses than their respective main campuses.

Student Demographics. In their research focused on nursing students on both branch and main campuses, McClelland and Daly (1991) found a difference in the academic profile between students at the University of Iowa main campus and its branch campuses. The sample used, however, was small, including only 72 students, and was limited in that only two course grades were utilized. However, the study shed light on the differences between students on the campuses who were all studying within the same academic program.

McClelland and Daly (1991) found that the nursing students on the branch campus were typically older, gainfully employed, worked more hours per week, had children, and traveled a farther distance than their main campus counterparts. However, they were more likely to have a better academic record. Both their transfer grade point averages and their standardized test scores were, on average, higher than their counterparts on the main campus. Main campus students, on the whole, on the other hand, had higher university grade point averages and scored higher in certain courses than their peers on the branch campus. It should be noted that this study dates to 1991 and assists in illustrating the lack of studies on the branch campus student experience.

O'Brian's (2007) quantitative ex post facto study examined branch campus students in South Dakota and used both demographic data and personal characteristics to measure and predict retention. In this study, retention was defined as the institution's ability to keep a student enrolled through to graduation. The branch campus setting in the research was a common-use

facility utilized by three public universities in the state: the University of South Dakota, South Dakota State University, and Dakota State University. Home to seventeen full-time faculty employed by the three universities, the branch campus, known as USDSU, provides a variety of general education courses and program specific courses, which are taught also by faculty coming from the main campuses and adjuncts. Advising and counseling services, along with other student services, are also provided to the universities' branch campus students.

O'Brian's (2007) study included 490 students on the branch campus. These students were enrolled in both associate's and bachelor's degree programs. Student information, including gender, age, program of study, financial aid, standardized exam scores, remedial coursework, and graduation dates, was extracted and compiled from the date of their enrollment, fall 2001, to the fall of 2005. Utilizing descriptive statistics, Pearson chi squares, and discriminant analysis, the data was analyzed and characteristics of the student population were identified and compiled.

O'Brian (2007) found that retention rates on the branch campus decreased each year and that the highest rates of year-to-year retention were found amongst those students who were between the ages of 18-28. Those students who had ACT composite scores less than 17 had the lowest rates of retention and were surpassed only by those students who attended the campus who were younger than 17. Female students, as well, had higher rates of retention than their male counterparts by two to three times. Other factors that

increased retention was receiving financial aid versus none and enrollment in a baccalaureate program over an associate's degree program. O'Brian (2007) also found that students who enrolled in a remedial course were also less likely to be retained. Altogether, O'Brian's (2007) study provides a snapshot regarding the retention of branch campus students and how personal factors affect their attendance and completion of their educational programs.

O'Brian (2007) noted that the study was limited because of the narrow window of time that the study used to analyze students, those who attended between 2001-2005. As a result, it did not take into account more historical data, as the joint-use branch campus had been open since the 1990s. Though using and analyzing that data may have helped strengthen the results, sifting through an extra ten years of information and data would have taken much more time. Including that data, however, could have led to issues of validation as there may have also been trends regarding population shifts, differences in local demographics, economic climates, etc. The smaller window of time allows for a more accurate picture of the population currently utilizing the branch campus for their educational goals (2007).

Once students are attending a college or university, regardless if it is a branch or main campus, some may stay and while others may not. A student's behavior that leads to the successful completion of a degree, certificate, etc. can be referred to as persistence. However, student persistence affects not only

students themselves. Indeed, persistence can play a large role in institutional success, institutional funding, accountability, and community impact.

Persistence

Persistence versus Retention

Persistence and retention are terms often used interchangeably in research that examines why some college students leave school and why others stay. However, there is a difference between the two concepts. Arnold (1999) defined retention as a numerical measurement that showcases the number of students that return to their institution from the previous year. Similarly, the federal government defines retention as the tracking of a student in a program over time to determine if they have finished their respective program (Center for the Study of College Student Retention, n.d.).

Regarding persistence, Arnold's (1999) study characterizes the term as referring to a student's behavior throughout their time at their institution that leads them to eventually graduate. Other researchers have defined persistence in more general ways. Persistence could also refer to the completion of one's program in general, such as a certificate program, even without a formal degree in hand and not concern student behavior. A "persister," as defined by DeVoll (1989), is a student who has either earned a degree or a certificate (p. 4). DeVoll's (1989) definition, it seems, harkens back to the federal government's definition of retention.

Quite simply, the difference between the terms is that retention is a quantifiable description of student enrollment while persistence is qualitative (Reason, 2009). Because this detail is often overlooked, the two terms are often used together or seen as one concept, used interchangeably, and many in academia erroneously use one term or the other (Reason, 2009).

The Development of the Study of Retention

As previously discussed, persistence and retention are often used interchangeably in literature exploring educational completion, though they are not the same. However, the two concepts are related to each other. Therefore, this literature review provides a history of the study of retention to help provide further understanding.

Demetriou and Schmitz-Sciborski's (2011) report traces the history of the study of retention. In the 1930s, after the development of strict curricula and the rise in popularity of earning a degree, the first studies examining student retention were conducted. Demetriou and Schmitz-Sciborski (2011) found that these studies were simply collections of data by the federal government in order to examine and establish collegiate demographics, social engagement, and information relating to student departure. These data collections assisted in paving the path for retention research in the following decades.

Retention, as a fully fleshed out field within the study of education, first appeared in the 1960s (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). Retention became a common concern amongst higher education campus administrators as

they sought ways to support students. Institutions, therefore, began to develop activities and methods to “understand and support” retention (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011, p. 302).

In the early days of retention research, the prevailing view was that students who dropped out of colleges and universities did so because they were “less motivated” and “less able” to be successful in higher education (Tinto, 2006, p. 2). However, Tinto’s (1975) model of student integration explored the student experience and asserted that student attrition was connected to both formal and informal academic experiences in addition to social integration. Tinto’s (1975) model was later updated in 1993 (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Tinto, 1993) to take into account further development in the field.

As time went on, student enrollment declined and in the 1980s, enrollment management developed within colleges and universities in order to combat declining student populations (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). Literature on retention theories grew during this period and studies were developed that examined background characteristics of individual students as well as institutional satisfaction.

In the 1990s, retention studies began to focus on the needs and experiences of students from underrepresented backgrounds in higher education (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). Studies encouraged collaboration between institutional departments in order to enhance the student experience

and to promote retention. Studies also highlighted the importance of advising (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011).

The modern study of retention focuses on programs and initiatives that have been developed in order to foster retention and to lower attrition levels (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). Tinto (2006) noted that the views and ideas on retention have changed and evolved, as the study of how students connect and engage with their educational environments has begun to grow in its importance in conjunction with student persistence. The concepts of interaction and integration have taken hold, although these two areas of study based on the student experience are just two of the many facets in the modern study of retention or persistence (Tinto, 2006).

The Importance of Persistence

Persistence as an Aspect of Mission. Persistence, and also retention, has become an important area of concern for college and university administrators. Many institutions of higher education maintain their purpose in founding documents and mission statements. In many cases, universities and colleges hold the position that their existence is to provide education to any and all, contribute to the local and general economies, and provide a place of research for the betterment of science and society.

For example, in California, the University of California's mission is composed of three elements: to teach, to conduct research, and provide public service (University of California, n.d.). The University of Texas System states that

its mission is to provide educational opportunities through intellectual and personal growth, advance higher learning, and advance the quality of life for Texans (The University of Texas System, n.d.). These respective missions, and those of other colleges and universities across the country, cannot be met if students are not retained and persist to accomplish their educational goals.

Persistence as a Measure of Accountability. In addition to completing their respective missions and stated goals, ensuring that students persist and complete their studies plays into the increased level of scrutiny that is currently being placed on colleges and universities across the country. In 2005, the National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education released a report that considered and recommended ways to improve accountability amongst educational institutions. The report, *Accountability for Better Results (2005)*, noted that four out of every ten students at colleges and universities were failing to graduate within six years and that the workforce of the United States was becoming largely made up of international students. The report identified stakeholders and those who have a role to ensure the successful performance of higher education. These stakeholders included business and civic leaders, governors and legislators, state boards and higher education executives, the federal government, institutions, accrediting agencies, and faculty and students (National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education, 2005). Overall, the report stated that institutional goals must align with the public interest and that public leaders must define priorities and implement initiatives to address the

priorities identified. Though the report recommended accountability based on shared commitment, it failed to offer any concrete methods in how to measure and account for student success, retention, or persistence.

In 2006-2007, the Voluntary System of Accountability, or VSA, was created as a response to the National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education (The College Portrait, n.d.). Created by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, colleges and universities are able to share information about themselves within individual school profiles on a website called College Portrait of Undergraduate Education (Cowan, 2013). The website provides information to students and their families about the participating institutions, such as student and faculty characteristics, admissions requirements, average class sizes, along with other pieces of information. Users can also compare and contrast two institutions at a time and use advanced search options (Cowan, 2013). The website's goal is to provide a mechanism for public institutions to demonstrate accountability and transparency and to support the measurement and reporting of student learning outcomes (The College Portrait, n.d.). However, the website, and the organization, lacks any reporting based on either retention or persistence nor does it require colleges and universities to report their graduation rates. This could be seen as a way to distract from those issues and refocus on other institutional aspects.

During his administration, President Obama directed the Department of Education to develop and publish a college ratings system. Amongst the elements to be rated were completion rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2014), filling the gap in the Voluntary System of Accountability. The creation of this system of accountability included the desire to help colleges and universities improve in relation to access, affordability, and outcomes, to provide better information to students and families in their pursuit of higher education, to generate reliable and useful data to policymakers and the greater public, and to also help in informing accreditation and funding decisions. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2014), the information measured and used for the ratings systems comes from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System and the National Student Loan Data System.

In 2015, the new college ratings were released and made accessible on the Department of Education's website (<https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/>). Called the College Scorecard, users are able to instantly examine retention and graduation rates, along with information related to tuition and fees, location, and other pertinent information. All in all, student persistence and retention is an important measure and element of institutional accountability, as established by the federal government.

Persistence as a Predictor of Future Success. Aside from issues related to institutional accountability, ensuring that students persist and complete their studies is an important measure in securing active and engaging community

members far into the future (Jensen, 2011). As universities and colleges provide education and service to the public, they also make a difference in students' lives (Sternberg, 2013). When students drop out, they lose potential future income because they have not completed their program of study and received a degree or certificate (Sternberg, 2013). In a study conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau using the Current Population Survey, only 26% of the population had earned a bachelor's degree or higher (Day & Newburger, 2002). It was found that earnings increase with the level of education received. Those with only high school diplomas earned \$25,900 while a person who had graduated college earned \$45,400 and an individual with an advanced degree earned close to \$100,000 (2002).

Fourteen years later, Ma, Pender, and Welch (2016), also using data culled from the Current Population Survey, found that in 2015 those who had earned a bachelor's degree earned \$24,600 more per year than someone who merely a high school graduate. In addition, a bachelor's degree holder paid \$6,900 more in taxes (Ma, et al., 2016). The unemployment rate of four-year college graduates also measured about half of the unemployment rate of those with high school diplomas, with 2.6% and 8.1%, respectively.

When looking at gender and degree attainment, Ma, et al. (2016) found that female college graduates earned an average of \$51,700 when working year-round and full-time; men, comparatively, earned \$71,400. 25% of female college graduates, though, earned less than \$37,100 and 25% earned \$75,800 or higher.

For men, 25% earned less than \$47,000 and 25% earned more than \$102,000 (Ma, et al., 2016). The study also found that young adults were likelier to be positioned at the higher end of the income spectrum if they had higher education degrees than those who held only high school diplomas and who possessed similar demographic characteristics. Persistence, then, helps to ensure the attainment of a higher earning potential and thus a higher standard of living.

Persistence as a Measure of Higher Education Funding. Financial issues are a motivating factor for the many administrators who have become focused on persistence and retention. College and university administrators have had to rely on student population numbers to secure funding for their respective institutions (Ascend Learning, 2012; Tinto, 2006). In 2015, thirty-two states had funding formulas tied to performance indicators to finance their publicly supported higher education institutions, with five more about to transition to such a model (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015). These performance indicators include course completion and the number of degrees awarded. Persistence and retention through to program completion, therefore, are key in receiving funding from an institution's state legislature. Some states even have incentives and promise higher levels of funding if colleges and universities achieve higher graduation and completion rates. For example, Arizona will award colleges and universities 15% more in funding if they are able to graduate students with degrees that are higher in demand, however, the degrees that qualify have not been identified. The Florida College System's metrics include completion and

retention rates in their allocation of state monies while Louisiana awards institutions that have entered into performance agreements with the state's Board of Regents and can prove institutional efficiency and have a sufficient number of degrees awarded. In addition, the reputation of higher education institutions is at stake as losing students will only serve to harm colleges and universities that cannot retain and facilitate student persistence (Sternberg, 2013).

Persistence as a Method of Community Building. There are several reasons why the persistence of students matters in higher education. Hoffman and Hill (2009) identified three key ways in which universities and colleges help improve their regions and service areas: educating citizens, contributing to their respective local economies, and the provision of important research. By educating students, universities help ensure the learning of skills and greater productivity in the workplace. With an educated society, crime rates are lowered, civic participation rises (Jenson, 2011; Sternberg, 2013), and the probability of future generations becoming educated increases (Hoffman & Hill, 2009). At a personal level, when examining the expense of a secondary education, it is estimated that the benefits are more than three times as large as the costs when adjusted for the time value of money. Earnings of a college graduate, according to Hoffman and Hill (2009), are more than 75% higher than the earnings of a high school graduate. This connects well with the studies by Day and Newburger (2002) and Ma, et al. (2016), which identified higher incomes being associated with higher levels of education.

In addition, colleges and universities help contribute, in basic ways, to the economies of their surrounding areas. Universities must make expenditures for goods and services and at the same time their staff and faculty are typically made up of residents of the surrounding area (Hoffman & Hill, 2009). These local citizens, then, make their own expenditures at establishments within the area, helping to further support jobs in the local economy.

The third positive trait that Hoffman and Hill (2009) identified regarding institutions of higher learning is the provision of research. Colleges and universities are centers of the creation of knowledge. These institutions help form networks of social interaction, increase the capacity of scientific and technological problem solving, and train skilled graduates whose research can be moved into private companies.

Altogether, educating citizens (Hoffman & Hill, 2009), providing important research (Hoffman & Hill, 2009), contributing to the economy (Hoffman & Hill, 2009, Jensen, 2011, Sternberg, 2013), and pivotal institutional funding from state and federal coffers (National Conference of State Legislatures; 2015 & Ascend Learning, 2012) are all important elements in why the persistence of students matters in higher education.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptually, various theories, concepts, and models of student persistence and departure (DesJardins, Kim, & Rzonca, 2003) guided this study.

Initially, I framed this study utilizing Tinto's Student Integration Model (1975, 1993) and Tinto's Interactionalist Theory (1975). These theories and previous findings related to student persistence laid the groundwork for this study; however, the limitations of Tinto's (1975, 1993) theory became apparent as the research commenced (Attinasi, 1999; Berger & Milem, 1999; Gonzales, 2012; Perna & Titus, 2005). Therefore, in addition to focusing on college social experiences and integration (Baker & Robnett, 2012; Berger & Milem, 1999), I considered the influence of family and prior experiences (Attinasi, 1999; Berger & Milem, 1999; Gonzales, 2012; Perna & Titus, 2005), which are encompassed in Nora's (2003) Student/Institution Engagement Model Theoretical Framework.

The Student/Institution Engagement Model proposes six major components: (1) precollege/pull factors, (2) initial commitments, (3) academic and social experiences, (4) cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes, (5) final commitments, and (6) persistence. Nora's (2003) framework links together factors and influences, including familial support and prior experiences (Berger & Milem, 1999; Gonzales, 2012; Perna & Titus, 2005), with such elements as meaningful interactions (Tinto, 1975), collaborative learning (Kuh, 2008), and social experiences (Baker & Robnett, 2012).

Related to student persistence are High-Impact Practices (HIPs), which offer students both academic and social experiences. Broadly speaking, HIPs are "teaching and learning practices [that] have been widely tested and have been shown to be beneficial for college students from many backgrounds" (Kuh, 2008,

p. 9). Grounded in the various theories, concepts, and models listed above, High Impact Practices also served as a lens for this study.

Student Engagement as a Factor in Persistence

There are four identified agents in the student persistence equation, as outlined by Jensen (2011): academic performance, attitudes and satisfaction, academic engagement, and social and family support. These aspects connect to Tinto's (1975) Interactionist Theory, which gives importance and meaning to the interactions, or engagement, that take place between students and their college or university's social and academic environments.

For some in the field, student engagement is just an expected outcome: students in higher education are to be engaged. But how are they to be engaged? How can they be engaged? What exactly is student engagement? According to Kuh (2009), student engagement "represents the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities" (p. 683). Based on this definition, there is a wide range of activities that allow students to become both socially and academically engaged, in their chosen educational environment.

Student Engagement Through Social Integration. Social integration, as Tinto (1975, 1993) described it, is the level of association between an individual student and the social system at their college or university. Synthesizing research examining dropouts in higher education, Tinto (1975) found that

students leave behind the values, norms, and other behavioral patterns from previous associations, such as family and friends, and will eventually adopt and develop the values, norms, and behavioral patterns of their new college or university environment, whether social or academic. This, in turn has a positive influence on the retention (Braxton, Sullivan, & Johnson, 1997), or persistence, of students. Tinto (1993) continued to develop his theory on student departure and identified other issues that may influence student persistence, including isolation, finances, and other non-educational commitments. However, Tinto (1993) continued to hold that the higher the level of social and academic integration, the more likely the student is to continue through to graduation. Tinto (2006) later expanded on his earlier findings and according to his studies and continued examination of the subject, engagement “matters” and it has its biggest impact on students during their first year in a post-secondary institution (p. 4). Group associations, extracurricular activities, and interactions with faculty are all positive sources of integration (Braxton, 2000). Altogether these factors support students’ institutional commitment, or students’ continuance at their university or college.

Supporting Tinto’s assertions regarding student retention, persistence, and institutional commitment and the influence and importance of social integration, Jones (2010) found that social integration has a statistically significant impact on subsequent institutional commitment. In a study that examined the experiences of 1618 students at eight private, religiously affiliated

colleges and universities, Jones researched the impact that social integration had on institutional commitment in male and female students with the hypothesis that it would have a bigger impact with female students and that overall female students would have lower levels of commitment.

With 1101 surveys completed by the 1618 students, or a 68.1% response rate, students were asked to share their perceptions of social and academic experiences along with demographic and background information, such as race, gender, and high school grades (Jones, 2010). Using quantitative analysis, Jones (2010) found that the impact of social integration on institutional commitment was conditional on gender and that social integration had a higher influence on female students when compared to males. In addition, when social integration levels are lower for both male and female students, institutional commitment levels for females dip significantly. Jones (2010) suggested that female students with lower levels of social integration are more susceptible to a “cost of caring,” meaning that with smaller social networks, they become burdened by closer relationships than if they have larger social networks and higher levels of social integration (p. 697).

In comparison to Jones (2010), Ewert (2012) found that men benefit more highly than women in social participation. Ewert (2012) utilized the 1988 National Education Longitudinal Study, which followed students from 1988, when they were in the eighth grade, up until 2000. Ewert (2012) restricted his sample to students who had entered a college or university by 1994 and who had earned a

bachelor's degree by the year 2000. One of the independent variables in Ewert's (2012) analysis was social integration through clubs, government, the arts, and sports-related activities with the hypothesis that men had lower rates of graduation than women due to less social integration.

Using logistic regression, Ewert (2012) found that by the year 2000, 46% of women and 42% of men had graduated. In examining the difference between the two groups, the research showed that when men were more socially involved, whether it was through club membership, playing sports, and other extracurricular activities, they were more likely to persist and successfully graduate with a bachelor's degree. More specifically, if it was not for male participation in sports, whether it was varsity or intramural, the persistence rate gap between genders would widen even more significantly.

Ewert's (2012) findings support Bean's (1985) earlier research. Bean (1985) found that a student's social life has significant effects at every level and every year of a student's attendance in college. Peer attitudes also influence students' attitudes in comparison to staff and faculty attitudes. Bean (1985) considered students' peers as the primary agents of socialization within the collegiate environment.

According to Baker and Robnett (2012), the social experiences of racial and ethnic minority students also have a significant impact on their retention and persistence. Drawing from a campus-wide survey, Baker and Robnett (2012) tracked student retention to the fall semester of their third year. The sample

included 1,684 students, including 843 Asian-American students, 37 Black students, 191 Chicano/Latino students, and 431 White students (Baker & Robnett, 2012). Black students had the highest retention rate at 93%, with Asian-American students at 89%, Whites at 87%, and Latino students at 82%. Students' precollege and college characteristics were also taken into consideration and included gender, family income, nationality, language, cumulative college GPA, off-campus ties (such as off-campus employment), and perceptions of the college environment. Support from the college community, such as study groups, was also assessed using a Likert scale.

Altogether, Baker and Robnett (2012) found that regardless of academic preparation, as a result of similar precollege traits found in Black and Latino students, the college social experiences are important in achieving success for minority students. Black students were more likely to study with other students and participate in a club and Latino students were more likely to work off campus and tend to familial responsibilities. Latino students had a higher rate of persistence if they were able to participate in a campus club. This factor, however, was not an influence for White or Asian-American students.

Still, for those students who may be more extraverted in nature, social interaction might be a disservice as they are more likely to drop out due to their higher concern with socializing with their fellow students than focusing on their academics (Laskey & Hetzel, 2011). Laskey and Hetzel's (2011) study collected data over a three-year period and was centered on 115 students conditionally

admitted to a private university. The data included demographic information, such as gender and ethnicity, the number of times students took part in tutoring sessions, ACT scores, and high school and college GPAs. While 63% of the sample was female and 42% was Black, the 115 students were accepted from a mix of private, urban, and suburban high schools. These demographic factors, altogether, proved to have no association with student success in Laskey and Hetzel's (2011) study. Instead, personal characteristics, such as neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness played a larger role in determining persistence in addition to participation in tutoring sessions.

Laskey and Hetzel's (2011) research found that students who are more extroverted in nature are less likely to persist and be retained. This was a result of a higher concern for one's social activities than for academic performance. Students who scored higher in conscientiousness and agreeableness were more likely to attend tutoring services and were more likely to persist and achieve higher grade point averages than those students who did not. Those who did not score high in conscientiousness, according to Laskey and Hetzel (2011), were in need of more support, but needed encouragement to take advantage of academic assistance services.

Examining the role of student involvement, education researchers Berger and Milem (1999) found that social integration is an important predictor of continued institutional commitment. Data were collected from a larger study conducted in 1995 at a selective, private university that consisted of three

surveys (with 86.2%, 79.9%, and 68.5% response rates respectively) administered to a group of first-year students that originally numbered 1,547, at three different points during the academic year. Variables in the study included student background characteristics, initial commitment, mid-fall & mid-spring behavioral/involvement, mid-fall perceptual measures, academic and social integration, and subsequent commitment.

Berger and Milem's (1999) findings suggested that social integration played an even greater role in persistence development than that of academic integration. Findings also revealed that perceptions of institutional support through involvement on the campus with their peers helps lead to student persistence. Students who are less involved in their first term at college or university tend to stay uninvolved throughout the rest of the school year. Berger and Milem (1999) also found that uninvolved students were found to perceive their fellow students and their respective institution as less supportive which led to the likelihood of them becoming less integrated which, in turn, led to a higher rate of attrition. The findings also suggested that if uninvolved students can be identified early, they can be encourage to get involved whether it is social or academic in nature and thus raise the potential for successful retention and persistence.

Berger and Milem's (1999) findings imply that those students who are more likely to be retained and persist are those who have values, norms, and behavioral patterns that are more closely aligned with those that are already

found at their chosen institution. Students who differed most in terms of race and politics from the dominant peer group were more likely to leave the university while those who were more involved with their peers were more likely to integrate socially and develop higher levels of institutional commitment. In short, Berger and Milem (1999) were able to conclude that those who successfully integrate do so because of their previous experiences and their backgrounds. These findings also support an earlier study that found that in a college setting where the majority of students came from affluent backgrounds and conservative ideologies, more liberal-leaning students found it more difficult to integrate socially with their peers (Milem & Berger, 1997).

Berger and Milem (1999) found that their conclusions conflicted with those of Tinto's (1975, 1993) work. Tinto (1975, 1993) found that students leave behind the norms, values, and behaviors that have been taken on from family and peer communities. Berger and Milem (1999), in contrast, find that those traits still play a key role in the successful integration, and eventual persistence, of university students.

Berger and Milem (1999) are not the only researchers to have findings that differ from Tinto (1975, 1993). Attinasi (1989) examined the perceptions of current and former Mexican-American students at a large, public southwestern university. Through open-ended interviews, Attinasi (1989) studied minority student behavior in attending school. The sample included students who persisted and those who left the university before the conclusion of their

program. Attinasi (1989) found that students did not necessarily connect with other students on their campus so as to share their values or experiences. Instead, the students socialized with other students in order to make it through and negotiate the physical, social, and academic planes of the institution. By doing so, they created for themselves cognitive maps in which they learned about their new environment and adjusted themselves accordingly.

Perna and Titus (2005) explored parental influence on the persistence of racial/ethnic minority students, namely those who are African-American or Hispanic. Their research explored the relationship between parental involvement and continued persistence of students. Applying the multinomial extension of hierarchical linear modeling to data culled from the second and third follow-ups to the National Educational Longitudinal Study, the sample used was limited to those students who graduated from high school in 1992. Perna and Titus (2005) found that when parents in African-American and Hispanic households hold discussions with their children about attending college or university, the odds are higher that their child will enroll in higher education. In addition, the odd of their child attending a college or university is also higher if parents are in contact with their child's school in regards to academic issues. In the same vein, if a student reports that most of their friends are attending a 2 or 4-year school upon graduation from high school, the chances of enrolling in an institution of higher learning increases.

In exploring the academic success of Latinas, Gonzales (2012) also found that students do not and should not have to leave behind their prior experiences and ways of knowing and doing. Instead, these elements follow students through their educational careers and help promote student success. Gonzales (2012) identified several cultural motivators with their basis in familial relationships. These motivators included education as a family goal, community and contribution to the greater social good, and the value of a strong work ethic. In addition, Gonzales (2012) noted that time spent with family was a priority and assisted in participants ability to balance their academic goals and responsibilities. In short, family matters.

Together, the findings by Berger and Milem (1999), Perna and Titus (2005), and Gonzales (2012) support the notion that once students enter the halls of higher education, they simply do not lose the effects of their prior experiences and the influences of family and friends who have surrounded them. Instead, those relationships help shape their future experiences and helps them know what to expect. These findings fail to support Tinto's (1975, 1993) assertions that students must become separated or become blank slates, of sorts, in order to fully become a part of their college or university environment.

Student Engagement Through Academic Integration. According to Tinto (1975, 1993), academic integration is made up of various forms, namely grade performance and intellectual development. Academic integration can be formally measured by the grades received during an academic term by a student and

their development as an intellectual. The grading process helps determine if a student's attributes, work, and achievements are meeting the standards set by their educational institution. The grading process is an evaluation of students' alignment with the institutions values and objectives. Intellectual development, in comparison, is student's individual evaluation of their institution's academic system; are they themselves developing personally and academically? Braxton, et al. (2000) summarized the construct of academic integration as the reflection of a student's experience with the academic system systems and communities of a college or university., Therefore, using Tinto (1975) and Braxton et al.'s (2000) definitions, academic integration can be further broken down and defined as academic success in the college or university environment.

Factors Influencing Social and Academic Integration. In a synthesis of research concerning influences on student success, Kuh et al. (2006) identified several factors that assist students with achieving both social and academic integration. Regarding academic integration, Kuh et al. (2006) identified faculty-student contact and peer interactions as two important elements in ensuring academic integration. Faculty-student contact can be defined in several ways, including students being a guest in a professor's home, working on a research project with a faculty member, interacting with faculty outside of the classroom, and meeting with faculty regarding coursework (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 2003; Kuh & Hu, 2001). Peer interactions can occur both inside and outside the classroom. However, the aspects that influence successful academic integration include

discussing course content, group projects, tutoring peers, and discussing racial or ethnic issues. Other, more socially focused activities, such as becoming a part of a fraternity or sorority spending time playing in intramural sports, also play a role in successful student engagement (Astin, 1993).

Faculty-Student Interactions. Relationships with faculty, in general, are able to generally predict academic integration. Reason, Terenzini, and Domingo (2005), as a part of the Foundations of Excellence in the First College Year Project, explored the basis on which student academic success and persistence rests upon. Their sample consisted of 6,687 full-time and part-time first-year students, and 5,024 faculty from 30 institutions belonging to the Council of Independent Colleges and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. The students were eligible for sampling because of their respective institution's participation in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Faculty included in the study were tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure track instructors and taught either full-time or part-time. Faculty who only taught in graduate programs were excluded.

The NSSE gathered information related to first-year academic and non-academic experiences known to influence persistence and also collected self-reported educational gains (Reason, et al., 2005). Faculty were surveyed about their characteristics, pedagogical preferences, professional activities, and perceptions on their campus' approach to the first-year experience. Predictor variables included in the sample were students' precollege characteristics and

experiences, institutional organizational structures, faculty culture, and first-year student experiences at their respective campuses.

Through the use of multiple regression Reason, et al. (2005) found that first-year students' perception of the support they received was the greatest influence on the development of their academic competence. Students who reported higher gains in their academic capabilities were more likely to feel that they had good relationships with their faculty and that they had adequate academic and non-academic support from their institution's faculty and staff. Students who reported that their institution emphasized analysis, synthesis, and evaluation were also more likely to report higher levels of academic achievement than their peers who reported their institutions as less academically stimulating. Reason et al. (2005) also found that students who reported higher levels of academic competence attended universities whose faculty reported active involvement in conferences focused on teaching and learning in the first-year experience. These faculty also reported regular reading of materials discussing teaching and learning in the first-year experience.

Though Reason et al. (2005) cautioned use of the study to generalize universities, since the institutions utilized come only from the private, small liberal arts college community and comprehensive public universities, the number utilized in the study is not trivial; thirty institutions were used overall. Though it could be advised to replicate the study at other types of higher educational

institutions, Reason et al.'s (2005) study the importance of relationships between students and faculty.

The effects of student-faculty contact, however, could possibly be conditional. Kuh and Hu (2001) critically examined the relationship between academic integration and student-faculty contact. Kuh and Hu (2001) sought to define the nature of the interaction, its forms, and its contribution to student satisfaction during the college and university experience.

Kuh and Hu (2001) utilized the third edition of the College Student Experience Questionnaire as the source for their study's data. The Questionnaire is considered reliable and to have sound psychometric properties. It is also noted to possess high to moderate potential for assessing student behavior associated with college outcomes. The Questionnaire collects information about student characteristics, such as age, race, gender, major, and other pieces of personal information. The Questionnaire's items focus on students' experiences in three areas: the amount of time and energy devoted to various activities, perceptions of their institutional environment, and estimates of their progress toward college outcomes.

The sample for the study was made up of 5,409 students randomly selected from 126 colleges and universities, or 10% of the 54,488 full-time students who completed the survey between 1990 and 1997 (Kuh & Hu, 2001). Participants were from a mix of research and doctoral universities, selective liberal arts colleges, comprehensive colleges and universities, and general liberal

arts colleges. Forty-five percent of the students were majors in pre-professional areas, while women and first-year students were overrepresented at 61% and 35%, respectively.

Following a general causal model of environmental influences on student learning and development, Kuh and Hu (2001) created two control groups based on socioeconomic status and academic preparation based on a previous study (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991) linking socioeconomic status, or SES, and student ability to college outcomes. SES was measured with the level of parents' education and their contribution to college costs; academic preparation was based on students' self-reported grades and their educational aspirations.

Students reported that their most frequent contact with faculty was general in nature, such as visiting after class or asking about a course. Little personal or social interaction with faculty outside of the classroom, such as discussing a personal issue, was reported. The least frequent style of contact was working with a faculty member on a project. No difference was found based on gender in student-faculty interaction. African-American and Latino students reported more substantial contact than White and Asian-American students. If a student reported a higher level of academic preparation the more likely they were to have substantial interaction with faculty outside the classroom. Students who contacted faculty regarding writing assistance were more likely to be struggling in that area of academic performance (Kuh & Hu, 2001).

Meanwhile, students who had majors in the humanities and social sciences had more contact with faculty while those in pre-professional majors reported less contact. Students with majors in the sciences and math visited with faculty less often regarding writing assistance, most likely because of the majors requiring less writing (Kuh & Hu, 2001). The study also showcased that students attending research universities have less student-faculty contact while those at general liberal arts institutions reported more out-of-class contact with their instructors.

Altogether, Kuh and Hu (2001) demonstrated that student-faculty contact, which is an important factor in academic integration, can be conditional based on a number of factors, including race, institutional type, major, and academic preparation levels. Kuh and Hu (2001) suggested that a more populated sample, in both students and institutions, would have strengthened the study and may have resulted in different findings. The survey may have some built-in bias, with some schools having students complete the survey during class time. However, the study and its results give at least some insight into the relationship that exists between student-faculty interaction and academic integration.

Faculty Interaction and Online Classes. As colleges and universities offer more courses online, or through hybrid models in which classes are held in the classroom and online throughout an academic term, the question of how faculty-student contact occurs and how often arises. In a report, Twigg (2003) uncovered how colleges and universities are utilizing new technological practices and found

five main models of course delivery: the supplemental, replacement, emporium, fully online, and buffet models. In the supplemental model, technology-based activities are created to encourage student interaction with class content. Faculty facilitate conversation amongst students discussing the subject matter. The replacement model sees the faculty replaced with online learning techniques and less time spent in the lecture hall or classroom. Therefore, regular interaction between pupils and their instructor is extremely limited.

The emporium model of education allows students to choose when and where they access course materials based on their own needs (Twigg, 2003). Instructors are able to devote time and specific assistance to individual students as questions and concerns arise. In this model, interaction is based on student need and desire; interaction with faculty is not forced upon them. In the online model, faculty members have larger rosters of students but are able to utilize software applications to track and assess students. In one particular example cited by Twigg (2003), a faculty member at the University of Southern Mississippi was able to raise completion rates from 59% to 65% utilizing the online class concept. By using the software tools, faculty are able to promote their interaction with students who are in need of special attention, thereby increasing rates of academic success. Concurrently, students can participate in online discussions not only with the course instructor but also with fellow students. This model, therefore, promotes both peer and student-faculty interaction.

The final model identified by Twigg (2003) is the buffet model. Instead of a one-size fits all type of class, the buffet style of learning has students picking and choosing the type of learning styles that they themselves find most effective in ensuring their academic success, such as choosing to attend lectures, making oral presentations, and working on individual or group projects. Though found to be less effective than other models utilizing more online-focused resources, this particular model, again, places the role of the instructor as an as-needed aspect of the course.

Twigg's (2003) report assists in uncovering the evolving role of faculty in the higher educational setting and the types of student-faculty interactions that occur. The looks and styles of these interactions may change, and will continue to do so, as learning and teaching styles develop and adapt to the needs of incoming and incumbent students. Though online classes and other courses make more use of advancing technology, the role of faculty continues to play an important role in facilitating academic integration.

Classrooms as Sources of Academic Integration. Academic integration can be considered academic success in higher education, as previously discussed. One of the influences on successful academic integration and persistence is the classroom, a regular location in which students can interact with faculty and their peers. Tinto (1997) identified the classroom as a place to build community. In his investigation, Tinto (1997) studied the Coordinated Studies Program located at Seattle Central Community College. Students in the

program enroll together in a series of courses grouped together by a unifying theme and consist of cross-disciplinary areas, such as the humanities and the sciences. The students participate in cooperative learning activities and must learn to be interdependent in order to be successful. Using a series of longitudinal surveys and a case study structure, Tinto (1997) examined if and how the program made a difference for participating students.

The student sample in Tinto's (1997) study was drawn from four classes in the program and four classes in similar subjects. All students were first-year students at the college and were administered surveys both at the beginning and end of the academic term. While the first survey collected information regarding student attributes, such as prior education and perceptions about abilities, the second focused on collecting information regarding classroom activities, estimates of learning gains, and expectations about future enrollment. During the following fall term, information was gathered from institutional records regarding students' earned credits, enrollment, and grade point averages. With a focus on those students who only completed both questionnaires, the study's final sample consisted of 287 students. At the end of the initial term, Tinto (1997) and his team collected additional pieces of data at the study site. Participants were interviewed and observed in the classroom and surrounding environment. Students were able to speak to their experiences at that time and again in the spring term when the team returned to campus.

Using descriptive statistics and data analysis to uncover themes, Tinto (1997) found several patterns of activity and perceptions. Students enrolled in the Coordinated Studies Program, or CSP, reported greater involvement in academic and social activities at the institution than those students who were enrolled in the general classes. CSP students had a higher sense of involvement in their own studies and had more positive views of the college. CSP students, additionally, had a higher rate of persistence. Altogether, the factors that predicted this behavior and outcome included involvement with peers, hours studied per week, perceptions of faculty, and participation in the program. Tinto (1997) found through the interviews and observations that the CSP allowed students to form supportive peer networks that helped them transition and integrate into the college community. The shared community formed through the CSP allowed students to bridge the social and academic divide. Students also commented that observing diversity in the classroom, reflected through peers and faculty, helped facilitate their learning.

Through the research, Tinto (1997) and his team found that students are influenced by perspectives presented not only by their instructor, but also by their peers. Additionally, peer interaction in the classroom assists in creating networks of support. Academic gains, or success, which corresponds to academic integration, were also found amongst CSP students compared to those students enrolled in general courses. Tinto's (1997) study contributes to theories of

student persistence and reinforces the view of classrooms as sources of community.

Peer Tutoring and Academic Integration. Peer tutoring is a technique that many colleges and universities use. It is a form of peer-to-peer interaction based in the classroom and encourages academic integration. Peer tutoring is a rather broad term. In a review of literature examining the history and role of peer tutoring in academia, Topping (1996) broadly, and blandly, defined the term as students who have been paired together to help each other learn and learn through teaching. In other words, both the tutors and tutees learn together and through the act itself. Peer tutoring has shown to be more successful and be more cost-effective than students completing remedial coursework (Levin, Glass, & Meister, 1987) and it allows students to integrate with their peers academically.

As identified by Topping (1996), peer tutoring can be used in a variety of different forms. The cross-year small group technique sees upperclassmen acting as tutors to small groups of students in lower years (Topping, 1996). Other forms of peer tutoring include: the personalized system of instruction, with a tutor acting as a checker, tester, and recorder (Keller, 1968); same year dyadic fixed-role tutoring wherein pairs are in the same year of study (Annis, 1983; Benware & Deci, 1984); same year dyadic reciprocal peer tutoring which has been used sparingly (Goldschmid & Goldschmid, 1976); dyadic cross-year fixed role tutoring which studies have shown to increase confidence and positive attitudes in tutees (Black, 1993; Loh, 1993; Schaffer, et al., 1990; Black, 1993) ; same-year group

tutoring with rotating presentations and presenters by individual students to the peer group (Beach, 1960; Fineman, 1981; Hendleman & Boss, 1986; Magin & Churches, 1993) which seems to favor, according to Beach (1960), extroverted students; peer assisted writing which encourages writing as a learning device to improve thinking and learning and sees peer tutors as promoters of confidence and encouragement (Bell, 1983); and peer assisted distance learning which uses peer tutors as support systems for students completing coursework through distance learning (Amundsen & Barnard, 1989).

Topping (1996) reviewed eighteen studies examining the peer tutoring experience based on the cross-year small group technique. Topping (1996) is critical of these studies because they mostly utilize feedback as data, which can be subjective. Out of these eighteen studies, nine reported positive outcomes, one reported outcomes that showcased that peer tutoring was just as good as teaching by faculty, and only one reported negative results. Furthermore, three studies, including House and Wohlt (1990) and Mallatratt (1994), reported a reduced dropout rate for their respective institutions and five others reported general improvement in student academic achievement. Topping's (1996) review of the literature demonstrates that overall, this type of tutoring is a positive influence on academic achievement, or, in other words, academic integration.

Perhaps the most familiar form of peer tutoring that Topping (1996) reviewed is known as supplemental instruction. This type of peer tutoring targets high-risk courses instead of high-risk students. The courses often have new and

difficult content with many lectures and less opportunities for interactive teaching by faculty. One tutor, who has already successfully completed the course and attends with their tutees the class sessions, usually works with several students and at the time of Topping's (1996) review, over 300 colleges and universities in the United States utilized the technique. Through the use of supplemental instruction, Topping (1996) reported that the study completed by Kenney and Kallison (1994) examining the use of supplemental instruction in a math course found that there were positive and significant differences for students who took supplemental instruction compared to those who did not. Healy (1994) showcased improved exam results and reductions in dropout rates in a study also examining supplemental instruction.

While classroom and non-classroom experiences based in academics play a very large, active, and important role in the development of academic integration, so too do those experiences that take place outside the realm of the lecture, seminar, or laboratory. In two articles utilizing the same study, Kuh (1993, 1995) explored the impact of those experiences and what those experiences consist of.

Out-of-Classroom Activities as Integration. Wanting to discover the impact of out-of-classroom activities on learning and personal development, Kuh (1993,1995) sought out students to tell of their own experiences. Kuh (1993,1995) used a sample made up of 149 senior students made up of 69 men and 80 women, 101 Whites, 30 African-Americans, 6 Hispanics, 6 Asian-

Americans, 6 international students, 129 of traditional age and 20 older than 23. The 149 students were from twelve universities. Kuh's (1993, 1995) research team interviewed students between January and June 1989 probing into why they chose their institution, their significant experiences, their major highlights and low points, and their opinion of the total impact attending college made on themselves. After transcribing the data gathered, the team used both inductive and deductive analysis to identify themes and patterns.

Among the out-of-class activities that contributed to learning, students reported participating in campus leadership opportunities (Kuh, 1995). Students attending large commuter institutions attributed more benefits to this type of activity than those at smaller, independent, residential colleges and universities. Leadership positions required levels of responsibility and provided students experience in working with budgets and managing resources (Kuh, 1995). The time students spent pursuing their academics was also a factor with no differences among students, regardless of race, gender, or institutional type.

Kuh (1995) noted student employment was also an effective out-of-class experience. Students reported the ability to apply knowledge that they had learned in the classroom to responsibilities in the workplace. Interpersonal aspects, along with cognitive abilities, were both developed. The impact of travel, through student exchange programs, was discussed less often than other aspects and reflected the types of institutions that students were attending; students at small independent institutions were more likely to mention the

activity. However, travel, when able, exposed students to different lifestyles and cultures and broadened their cultural competence and skills (Kuh, 1995).

Also mentioned, and previously discussed, was the impact of peer interaction in the form of out-of-class discussions Kuh (1995). Higher gains were reported by students at independent institutions and faculty interaction proved more effective with women in interpersonal competence while it was more effective in developing cognitive complexity in men (Kuh, 1995).

Outcomes that were reported by senior university students included a rise in self-awareness, an increase in autonomy, confidence and self-worth, practical and social competence, academic skills, and the application of knowledge (Kuh, 1993). The outcome mentioned most frequently by students were experiences and interactions with other students from different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, which can be considered altruistic appreciation. Together, these allowed students to develop an interest in the welfare of others and an awareness, tolerance, and acceptance of those from different backgrounds. This was in addition to an appreciation for cultural matters such as art, literature, theater, and other topics that were taken over the course of a college career. Altogether, these deepened the academic experience.

Kuh's (1993,1995) studies, however, were limited in that the universities used in the research are known to have programs and high quality out-of-classroom experiences compared to other institutions. Thus, the transferability of the results may not be fully appreciated. Kuh (1993) also noted that selective

memory and institutional ethos may also play a part in the responses. Kuh (1995) also pointed out that some benefits that students received were influenced by experiences not mentioned during the interviews and so were unable to be accounted for. The research, however, let's some light onto the effects of non-academic practices and their effect on academic and cognitive growth. Other studies would be very easily able to pick up where Kuh (1993, 1995) left off in the examination of colleges and universities that offer different opportunities and experiences to their students outside the classroom.

Academic and social integration, as has been illustrated, can overlap and assist each other to become more fully developed. It has been found that social integration can be influenced in its development by the use of four active learning behaviors inside the classroom (Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000). Braxton, et al. (2000) found that these behaviors include class discussions, knowledge level exam questions, group work, and activities which require higher order thinking. Though academic in nature, these four behaviors have been positively cited in assisting social integration because of how they allow students, while developing their academic mettle, to actively work together, converse together, and process subject matter together (Braxton et al., 2000).

Student Engagement as an Influence on Persistence. A student's persistence, or retention, is often successfully predicted based on their levels of engagement or academic and social integration, as defined by Tinto's Interactionalist Theory (Braxton, 2000). There may be many reasons why

students who do not persist from one year to the next are less inclined to become academically or socially integrated into their educational environment. Indeed, there could be isolated reasons or a combination of reasons to cause a student to discontinue their studies. Influences that may affect student persistence may include having multiple priorities besides their studies, low expectations of oneself, lack of knowledge about being a college student, financial aid issues, and lack of interest in course material (Sternberg, 2013; Torres, 2006).

In an examination of personal characteristics and college success, Alarcon and Edwards (2012) studied 584 freshmen enrolled in a psychology course at a Midwestern university. The group was 65% female, 28.75% were first-generation students, and the median age was 18.98 years. The sample was comparable to the rest of the university's freshman class with a similar average of ACT scores and retention rate, 69.9% and 73.9% respectively. The researchers measured ability through ACT and SAT scores, motivation through conscientiousness as a part of the Big Five Inventory administered to the group, whereupon students were asked to score themselves on a Likert Scale. Motivation was measured through affectivity through a 20-item Positive and Negative Affect Schedule which was also administered to the group, retention through student enrollment history, and parents' education level through administered surveys.

Through the measures applied to the 584 students, Alarcon and Edwards (2012) found that ability and motivation are prime factors in whether or not a

student will be able to be retained, or persist, in their post-secondary education. A student must have adequate amounts of both in order to succeed in their academic careers, though Alarcon and Edwards (2012) noted that motivation may have a longer-term higher impact than ability.

Predictors of persistence or retention, like those of attrition as noted by Torres (2006) and Sternberg (2013), are varied. Torres (2006) cites the influence of mentors and family members as being integral to student success. Personal factors and personality traits, such as dependability, organization, and responsibility, are all important in seeing a student through to success (Alarcon & Edwards, 2012). While a student's history and prior experience in education may have some influence (Braxton, 2000), students' high school type or location has no bearing on predicting success as found in various studies (Baker & Robnet, 2012; Laskey & Hetzel, 2011).

In Lau's (2003) study, various factors at colleges and universities that affect a student's retention were examined. The study noted that the responsibility for student success is varied and does not fully depend on the students themselves; instead, other forces, such as faculty and administrators also play a role in limiting attrition. Lau's (2003) investigation identified the fact that faculty play a role in their use of computer technology, their emphasis on teaching and learning, the use of cooperative and collaborative learning, and in their capacity as academic advisors.

Administrators, on the other hand, play a role in their oversight of physical facilities, such as dormitories, study areas, and providing appropriate facilities for those who may be disabled, but also under their purview are social and professional organizations (Lau, 2003). Lau (2003) noted that “extracurricular activities and peer-group interactions can help the...students integrate smoothly into their new learning and living environments” (p. 131). Their responsibility extends to focusing not only on the development of academic minds, but also on those social programs that will successfully allow them to integrate into the life of a university or college (Lau, 2003).

Institutions of higher education have a responsibility to ensure that their students are successful and persist to degree completion. One of the approaches that institutions have implemented to ensure that students persist are a series of methods collectively known as High Impact Practices. These practices assist students in their social and academic integration and help engage them in their college or university environment, including branch campuses.

High-Impact Practices

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) published a report by George D. Kuh entitled *High Impact Practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter* (2008). The report was published as a part of Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP), an initiative launched in 2005 by the AAC&U to align the goals of college learning

with the needs of the twenty-first century. This specific report built on the work of the AAC&U and addresses specific educational practices that are meant to allow students to be successful in their higher educational career.

Identifying and Defining High Impact Practices

Kuh (2008) identified ten High-Impact Practices (HIPs) through previously existing research. These practices include: (a) first-year seminars and experiences, (b) common intellectual experiences, (c) learning communities, (d) writing-intensive courses, (e) collaborative assignments and projects, (f) undergraduate research, (g) diversity/global learning, (h) service learning/community-based learning, (i) internships, and (j) capstone courses and projects. Researchers in higher education have explored each HIP, including Kuh himself, and they have all shown to have some benefit to those students who participate in the activity. Research that Kuh (2008) cited include a mix of studies, books, summaries, and anthologies based on common university and college practices by authors and researchers who are well-established in the field of student development theory and who are prolific in their writings on the topic, including Pascarella, Terenzini, Astin, King, and Mayhew. Reports written and released by the U.S. Department of Education and organizations including the Association for the Study of Higher Education were also cited.

While these ten practices have been identified as high impact, there are certain characteristics that make them so. Kuh (2008) identified the common elements of high impact practices and what traits assist in identifying an

educational practice as high impact. The practice must be effortful and require students to devote time and energy to tasks that deepen their investment in and commitment to their education. The activity should help students build relationships with their peers, institutional staff, and faculty alike. Students are able to form bonds with those who are going through experiences similar to themselves and to those who are committed to seeing them succeed. In the same vein, the practice can be labeled high impact if they expose and engage students to and with other students who have different experiences, backgrounds, cultures, religions, and other characteristics.

Kuh (2008) also identified an activity as high impact if it offered rich feedback, both formal and informal, from supervisors, instructors, or peers. High impact practices should also allow a student to apply and test their newfound knowledge. Opportunities to integrate, synthesize, and apply knowledge help strengthen learning. The final characteristic that defines an activity or practice as high impact is that it should permit a student to self-reflect. Students should develop a deep sense of who they are becoming, including their values and their relation to others and the larger world. Altogether, these six elements, as noted by Kuh, are key in identifying high impact practices in education. In the following subsections, the ten High Impact Practices, as identified by Kuh (2008), are expounded upon. I rely on some of the most cited HIPs-related studies to assist in illustrating the characteristics of each.

First-Year Seminars/Experiences. Many colleges and universities have created and built into their curriculum first-year seminar programs (Kuh, 2008). These programs bring together groups of students with faculty and staff on a regular basis and place an emphasis on critical inquiry, writing, research, collaborative learning, and other basic skills that will allow students the opportunity to be successful during their academic journey. The National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition, housed at the University of South Carolina, regularly publishes a volume of studies exploring first-year seminars and their outcomes (Tobolowsky, 2008). The studies collected have been conducted at various universities around the United States and use a variety of assessments, both qualitative and quantitative. The objectives of first-year seminars are also shown to be varied. While some institutions may utilize first-year seminars to increase persistence and raise GPAs, others use them to increase student engagement and self-confidence, amongst others (Tobolowsky, 2008).

Some first-year seminars may be extensions of orientation programs, others are courses designed to promote the development of study skills, while some may be a full length academic course, and then there are those that may be a combination of these aspects (Griffin & Romm, 2008). First-year seminars at colleges and universities are as diverse as the institutions themselves. Some institutions make the course elective while others require it. They can range from one to three units of credit and they may stand-alone or be embedded into

learning communities (Tobolowsky, 2008). The volume of studies collected by the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition showcase that the courses have the greatest impact on lower ability students (Friedman & Marsh, 2008), they help develop skills necessary to become a participant in the learning community (Major & Brown, 2008), retention and academic integration is achieved in greater numbers through the courses (Dahlgren, 2008), and that first-year seminars have a positive effect on student development and confidence levels (Schwartz & Grieve, 2008).

One goal of first-year seminars and experiences is to expose new students to different perspectives and ways of thought. Vander Schee (2011) examined the use of different first-year seminars for different types of majors. At a small public liberal arts college in the northeast, new students with less than 18 college units earned were divided into 17 sections of first-year seminars. For example, business majors were assigned to sections entitled "Venture Out" while sections called "A Sense of Place" were made up of environmental science majors. Students who were undecided in their course of studies were enrolled in courses that were inclusive and focused on general topics, such as career exploration. In addition, a weekly "Perspectives" session was offered in which various faculty would introduce students to the different disciplines offered by the institution. The school's main goals for this first-year seminar program were three-fold: build community and identity amongst the freshman class, introduce students to the social and academic life of the institution, and foster an

appreciation for the liberal arts general education curriculum. The extra "Perspectives" session would offer unique perspectives based on the disciplines being introduced and discussed . Students were provided the opportunity to experience different points of view from a more critical, balanced, and informed knowledge base (Vander Schee, 2011).

Surveys were administered to 17 sections of the first-year seminar during the last week of classes. To increase the response rate, the surveys were also administered to 29 sections of various courses at the second through fourth-year levels, whereupon students were to reflect on and think back on their first-year seminar experiences. The Likert Scale was utilized for various statements about the first-year seminar. Altogether, 617 students were surveyed (Vander Schee, 2011). Randomly selected reflection papers, a requirement of the first-year seminar courses related to the weekly "Perspective" sessions, were also analyzed to identify themes and assess experiences.

Several themes emerged. Students reported that they gained a greater awareness regarding course content and how various topics in the general education curriculum are interconnected. The "Perspectives" sessions allowed them to consider various points of view different than their own. Students also expressed a greater confidence and enthusiasm for their studies. In all, Vander Schee (2011) found that the first-year seminars at the college reached their goal in fostering an appreciation for the liberal arts curriculum. Additionally, because

of their increased knowledge and confidence, students had less anxiety about choosing courses and a better level of motivation and enthusiasm.

Vander Schee (2011) noted that a limitation of this study was its focus on one institution and suggested that future studies take into consideration faculty perspectives on the first-year seminar at their respective college or university. The study also had a weakness with the inclusion of students who ranged from one to three years removed from their own first-year seminar experience. Their responses to the administered survey may have been based on memories or perceptions that have evolved since their time in the course.

Although Griffin and Romm's (2008) anthology presented a collection of various studies and examinations regarding the positive effects of first-year seminars on students, and Vander Schee's (2011) findings revealed that courses help develop perspective and confidence, Hickinbottom-Brawn and Burns (2016) take issue with what they identify as a troubling philosophy behind first-year seminars. While Hickinbottom-Brawn and Burns (2015) concede that the need to strengthen student readiness and interest is justly warranted, it is stipulated that the motivation to prepare students has changed over the years. The role of institutions of higher education has evolved from educating citizens to training workers, students have developed expectations of what degrees should be able to do for them, and grades have become inflated. These three aspects have helped turn the college and university into a type of business with education being the commodity. First-year seminars, according to Hickinbottom-Brawn and

Burns (2015), reinforce this attitude toward higher learning. Through this lens, educational success can be achieved through effective strategies and is just another obstacle to be overcome on the journey to economic success.

Education, learning, and bettering one's self is not the aim in this scenario, which is simply furthered through first-year seminars, which attempt to simply produce efficient students.

First-year seminars seek to develop skills in students that have been deemed "unprepared" and are meant to help them be successful (Hickinbottom-Brawn & Burns, 2015). However, there is an inherent danger in reducing higher education to a mere collection of skills, efficiencies, and instrumental gains, which first-year seminars perpetuate (Hickinbottom-Brawn & Burns, 2015). Instead of developing knowledge that is universal and independent of context and experience and knowledge that pertains to ethical decision-making and careful consideration of situations and generalities, first-year seminars call students to demonstrate and master tasks and expectations, such as constructing a citation or conducting a library search on a computer. These types of tasks clearly connect directly back to Kuh's (2008) definition of what makes a practice high impact in that the tasks allow students to deepen their investment in and commitment to their education because these pieces of knowledge will allow them to be successful in their coursework. However, Hickinbottom-Brawn and Burns (2015) are critical of this emphasis on technical skill and not on scientific

knowledge and practical wisdom, which is, in their argument, central to the purpose of higher education.

If students are expected to gain knowledge and get involved in the university experience, then engaging faculty who have expertise in the scholarly discipline is essential. However, first-year seminars are often not taught by traditional faculty. Instead, these courses often have student affairs professionals at the head of the classroom (Hickinbottom-Brawn & Burns, 2015; Hunter & Murray, 2007). These non-academically-based instructors, therefore, are simply used to train students, thereby perpetuating the market model of higher education and harkening back to the emphasis placed on technical skill building (Hickinbottom-Brawn & Burns, 2015).

Hickinbottom-Brawn and Burns (2015) highlighted an important concern: what is the true purpose of first-year seminars? Is the university a training ground with students simply learning tasks, processes, and practical skills? Or are they places of learning where the cultivation of knowledge is practiced? Hickinbottom-Brawn and Burns (2015) forced institutions that utilize the first-year seminar to examine their own motivations in their first-year seminar offerings.

Undergraduate Research. Once only in the realm of graduate education, many colleges and university now have opportunities for undergraduate students to take part in the research. According to Kuh (2008), undergraduate research can be pursued across all disciplines, although the sciences make more heavy use of this practice. Providing opportunities for students to engage in research

during their undergraduate career allows them to make connections between concepts and gives them the opportunity to be an active participant in the research process. Additionally, undergraduate research allows students to work alongside faculty (Astin, 1993) and studies have shown that participation in undergraduate research encourages the retention of racial/ethnic minority students and those with low academic achievement (Wubah, et al., 2000).

As most studies that examine undergraduate research include the natural or physical sciences, Ishiyama (2002) completed a study that assessed undergraduate research in the context of the social sciences and humanities. The setting was a public liberal arts and sciences university in the American Midwest with a population of 6,000 students. Making use of the, Ishiyama (2002) used the College Student Experiences Questionnaire, specially, the question asking if students had worked with a faculty member in a collaborative way on a research project. This question served as the primary independent variable. This variable was then measured against the dependent variable, or the responses to three other questions also contained within the questionnaire: to what degree did students recognize personal gains in thinking analytically and logically; putting ideas together, seeing relationships, and noting similarities and differences between ideas; and learning on their own, pursuing ideas, and finding information they needed to complete tasks.

Data were collected from random samples of first and second year students from 1999 and 2000 (Ishiyama, 2002). Out of 1025 students, 156 were

declared social science and humanities majors and out of the 156, only 27 students indicated participation in undergraduate research. Students who participated in undergraduate research had higher independent analytical development scores than those who did not report participation in undergraduate research. Ishiyama (2002) also found that participation in undergraduate research was of a particular benefit to first-generation students. Altogether, Ishiyama's (2002) analysis found that participation in undergraduate research was positively related to self-reported gains in independent analytical development and assisted in retaining first-generation students, who were identified in the study as "at-risk." The study concluded that there is no better way to encourage self-reliance and learning than through student participation in undergraduate research.

Learning Communities. Learning communities are made up of groups of students who take two or more courses together and work in a cooperative fashion with each other and with their instructors (Kuh, 2008). Like common intellectual experiences, these courses can be organized by topic or theme. Cross (1998) explained that learning communities are based on the concept of collaborative learning and defines learning communities as groups of people engaged in intellectual interaction for the purpose of learning. Learning communities are often created to meet the needs of different groups of students who are new to the world of academia, such as first-year college students (Tinto, 2003). These common courses could include an introductory class, a Freshman

Seminar, for example, that helps to develop character, study skills, or even career exploration. A common activity used by learning communities is community or volunteer service which helps create shared experiences for all of those who participate.

Cross (1998) contended that there is a changing philosophy surrounding the concept of knowledge and the most radical aspect may be the emerging importance of collaborative learning. Having, and creating, communities of learners is necessary because people, in general, are able to build knowledge by working with others. This concept, Cross (1998) identified, is known as constructivism which holds that knowledge is built by learners, or students, as they form mental frameworks to understand their surroundings, or students' educational environment. Learning communities are a source of collaborative knowledge and allow students to develop ideas in a cooperative and supportive environment.

Lenning and Ebbers (1999) described four different types of learning communities that are utilized on college and university campuses and created a useful taxonomy. The first type that Lenning and Ebbers (1999) identified is known as *curricular learning communities*. These communities are made up of students who are enrolled together in two or more courses. The courses cover a range of disciplines but may be unified through an overarching theme or topic. *Classroom learning communities* see the classroom as the center of learning and the building of relationships between students. Cooperative learning techniques

are used to encourage students to work together on course material. This method also allows for the use of different teaching methods and pedagogical processes.

The third type of learning community identified by Lenning and Ebbers (1999), *residential learning communities*, are created through on-campus living facilities. Residential learning communities focus on the academic development of students, unlike other living arrangements, such as Greek life housing, which may focus more on students' social development. Students in residential learning communities take common courses together and through the close living arrangements, are able to interact regularly, in both social and academic contexts, with their peers. The fourth learning community in Lenning and Ebbers (1999) taxonomy is known as *student-type learning communities*. These learning communities are designed for special populations of students. These student groups include, but are not limited to, those who are academically underprepared, underrepresented groups, students with disabilities, honors students, and students with specific academic interests. Other groups may be formed to be inclusive of specific minority populations. These learning communities bring together students of similar backgrounds or interests in an academic setting.

Tinto (2003) described learning communities as having three main characteristics: shared knowledge, shared knowing, and shared responsibility. Regarding shared knowledge, by requiring students to take themed courses as a

group, learning communities are able to create a shared academic experience and promote higher levels of cognitive activity. Shared knowing speaks to the ability of the groups of students to get to know each other on a personal level. Through learning communities, students must construct learning together and are encouraged to grow both socially and intellectually. Students in learning communities must also share responsibility. Through the completion of their coursework, students must learn to depend on each other to advance to the next levels of their education.

Tinto (2003) noted that there are several impacts that learning communities have on students. The study explored the impact of learning communities on academic behavior, social behavior, and persistence of students. The institutions included in this study were the University of Washington, LaGuardia Community College in New York City, and Seattle Central Community College. Tinto (2003) found in the sponsored study, which was deliberately limited, that students often form self-supporting groups beyond the classroom and spend more time with each other than students who take stand-alone courses. It was also found that learning community students become more active in classroom learning and dedicate more time to learning as a group, both in and out of the classroom. Thus, learning communities help bridge academic and social environments and help create relationships between students. In addition, learning community participation enhances the quality of student learning in that they perceive themselves as having made greater intellectual gains than similar

students in other, comparative courses. Students also reported that their learning communities proved critical in their ability to persist and continue in their studies. At Seattle Central Community College, Tinto (2003) noted that students who participated in learning communities had a continuance rate of 25 percentage points higher than those students enrolled in traditional courses.

In an effort to discover the effectiveness of learning communities, Zhao and Kuh (2004) conducted a study examining their outcomes related to student success. Student success, in this study, was defined as students' engagement in educationally purposeful activities, self-reported gains in a variety of desired outcomes of college, and overall satisfaction with their college experience. Zhao and Kuh (2004) defined a learning community as a program where cohorts of students take two, or more, courses together with, or without, a residential component. The researchers wanted to find if relationships existed between participation in a learning community and several different characteristics which included student academic performance; student engagement in a range of educationally productive activities; student perceptions of campus support for academic and social needs, quality of academic advising, and satisfaction with their college experience; and student's self-reported gains in personal and social development and competence. Zhao and Kuh (2004) also wanted to identify which types of students were more and less likely to participate in a learning community.

Zhao and Kuh's (2004) gathered data from the National Survey of Student Engagement instrument, or NSSE. The NSSE assesses student experiences in their involvement in educationally purposeful activities both in and out of the classroom, amount of reading and writing, participation in educational programs such as learning communities and study abroad, perception of campus environments including relationships, and student satisfaction with advising and their overall collegiate experience. The sample was comprised of 80,479 randomly selected first-year and senior students from 365 colleges and universities who completed the survey in the spring of 2002. With an institutional response rate that averaged 41%, the characteristics of students who reported participation, or plans to participate in a learning community, included the following: 30% of first year students compared to 24% senior students, 27% were full-time, 18% part-time. In proportion to their population, students of color were more likely to participate or plan to participate in a learning community. Specifically, 24% percent of white students, or 15,028 out of 61,578 participated, or planned to, as compared to: 35% Black students, or 1,501 out of 4,347; 30% Native American students, or 122 of 414; 32% of Asian students, or 1,445 out of 4,515; and 33% Latino students, or 1,198 out of 3,598 students.

Using different types of quantitative analysis, including t-tests, multi-variate ordinary least squares regressions, and logistic regression, Zhao and Kuh (2004) found that participation in a learning community is positively linked with student academic performance, engagement in academically related activities,

and overall satisfaction with students' college experience. Regarding academic achievement and active learning, first-year students in learning communities had lower grades than those who did not participate. Zhao and Kuh (2004) further examined this finding and found that those students who were enrolled in learning communities entered with lower SAT/ACT scores than those who did not. Controlling for this factor, there were no differences in the grades of first-year students, but seniors with learning community experience had higher grades compared to their peers who did not, thus suggesting that learning communities have a lasting impact on academic performance.

Zhao and Kuh (2004) also noted that participation in a learning community was linked positively to frequent faculty-student interactions and engagement in diversity-related activities. Learning community students were also more positive about the quality of their academic advising and also had positive opinions about their college or university campus and its support of their academic and social needs.

The study's main limitation identified by the authors was based on a question contained in the NSSE concerning learning communities. The question asked respondents if they participated or were planning on participating in a learning community. Therefore, Zhao and Kuh (2004) were not able to discern if a student had participated in a learning community by the time the survey was completed. In order to deal with this issue, Zhao and Kuh (2004) excluded students who indicated that they were uncertain if they would participate in a

learning community. Even with those students excluded, the results regarding first year students were essentially the same, most likely because first-year students had not yet reaped the benefits of being enrolled in a learning community. In addition, the study did not differentiate between the types of learning communities that exist, thus there were no comparisons or opportunity to discuss the effects of the different delivery systems.

Zhao and Kuh's (2004) study also has an issue with diversity. Out of over 80,479 students, over 61,000 were White while the balance was made up of Black, Native American, Latino, and Asian students. This factor, however, likely has more to do with access to education by minority populations. Though the Zhao and Kuh (2004) has its limitations, due to the data collected by the NSSE, their work explores what type of impact learning communities have on students enrolled in colleges and universities and helps to set a foundation in their effectiveness and role in the student experience.

Diversity/Global Learning. Diversity/global learning is defined by Kuh (2008) as courses and programs that allow students the opportunity to be exposed to different cultures, life experiences, and world views. The subject matter that is explored may include difficult topics, such as racism, and other subject matter, including ethnic studies and gender issues. Global topics could also include human rights.

While colleges and universities have increased the number of international students over the years, some have also created student learning outcomes that

focus on international and intercultural knowledge (Kinzie, et al., 2017). However, there has been little examination of how institutions are designing international activities or providing students with opportunities that would allow them to develop knowledge regarding world issues in addition to student perspectives based on global learning (Kinzie, et al., 2017). To assist in filling this void, the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Center for Postsecondary Research at the Indiana University School of Education collaborated on a study in which they utilized national surveys developed by each organization. The ACE survey, entitled Mapping Internationalization on US Campuses, examines internationalization at colleges and universities, analyzes progress and trends, and identifies priorities. It is administered every five years. The Center for Postsecondary Research administers the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and provides colleges and universities with information related to the engagement of first-year and senior students with research-based educational practices. Topical modules can also be attached to the original survey, which is completed annually. One module, created in partnership with ACE, is entitled the Global Learning Module and assesses student experiences and coursework related to global affairs, cultures, nationalities, and other international topics (Kinzie, et al., 2017). Kinzie, et al. (2017) examined the preliminary results of the 2016 ACE Mapping survey, which was completed by 1,164 institutions, and the results of the NSSE survey in which 61 institutions

completed the supplemental module. Together, these surveys offered a glimpse into how colleges and universities are approaching diversity and global learning.

Kinzie, et al. (2017) found that colleges and universities attempt to internationalize their campuses through several strategies. These include increasing the international student population, offering global courses and study abroad programs, internships and service abroad opportunities, and sponsoring events, speakers, and other activities with an international focus. Fifty-six percent of institutions indicated that they have initiatives in place to increase the level of internationalization in the curriculum and the same percentage of senior students report that they perceive that their institution has a strong emphasis on global learning. In addition, 49% of colleges and universities who responded to the surveys include global components in their general education requirements and about half of senior students reported completing a class focusing on global topics, such as human rights and world health (Kinzie, et al., 2017).

One of the most popular ways in which global learning can be achieved is through study abroad programs. The results of the NSSE survey show that 40% of students plan to complete a study abroad program. However, in reality, only 14% actually do. Though this could be a result of many factors, including cost, the surveys showed that institutions with higher levels of student perception of emphasis on global and international topics have higher numbers of students who take part in study abroad programs (Kinzie et al., 2017). Another factor that

encourages participation is student conversations with faculty and advisors about study abroad opportunities.

The surveys also allowed Kinzie et al. (2017) to surmise that senior students' perceptions of how their undergraduate experiences contributed to their knowledge, skills, and development regarding global issues and topics help bolster claims by colleges and universities about the strength of their global learning outcomes. The highest perceived global learning gains amongst seniors was global responsibility, being informed about current international issues, and preparing to live and work in a global era. This also correlated with the number of global courses students reported completing. The more courses completed, the stronger sense of internationalization (Kinzie, et al., 2017). In all, Kinzie et al.'s (2017) examination of diversity and global learning amongst colleges and universities uncovers an upward trend in regard to the implementation global and diversity courses as avenues of learning.

Writing-Intensive Courses. Writing-intensive courses are another practice that Kuh (2008) identified as high impact. Students enrolled in writing-intensive courses produce and revise various forms of writing and learn to write in styles across multiple disciplines and for various audiences (Kuh, 2008). In a scholarly paper, O'Brien-Moran and Soiferman (2010) examined the development of writing-intensive courses and what is expected of students who complete those courses. In the United States, writing and composition courses as foundational classes for college and university students were first created at Harvard

University in the late nineteenth century. As Harvard, at that time, was the leader in educational reform, these classes soon became standard practice in universities across the United States. Boyd (2010) reported that the idea that all students needed further instruction and practice in writing was solidified in the mid-twentieth century. Writing-intensive courses are expected to prepare students to write for all disciplines as they move forward in their educational journey, and as they are usually required before moving on to higher-level coursework, they are often seen as hurdles that must be jumped (O'Brien-Moran & Soiferman, 2010).

Writing-intensive courses, as Boyd (2010) explored, are usually defined as requiring students to write 5000 words per term, at least 50% of a student's grade is determined through writing assignments, students are able to revise their work, and class size is usually limited. While most writing-intensive courses are smaller in size to allow for more contact between instructors and their students the use of large lecture classes as vehicles for writing-intensive coursework has been explored. In these larger classes, all the other requirements are met or even exceeded. Some large lecture writing-intensive courses require students to write 6000 words with 70% of a grade dependent on writing assignments. Teaching assistants are used to meet with smaller groups of students, such as groups of 25 in a class that has 150-225 enrolled students, and to assist them in their work and the class material.

While writing-intensive courses are usually used as a foundational class for students attending college or university and as a training ground for entering one of the disciplines offered at their respective institution, their use can be expanded directly into the curriculum of these different disciplines. In a 2013 study, Brownell, Price, and Steinman explored the use of a writing-intensive course in a Biology program at Stanford University. Brownell et al. (2013) noted that two of the most important skills in an undergraduate biology curriculum are effective communication and comprehension of scientific literature. The study was conducted in order to discover if a writing-intensive neuroimmunology course would have an impact on students' perception of their ability to read scientific literature, their confidence in their communications to other scientists, and their confidence in their communications to laypersons.

Brownell et al. (2013) utilized a course whose goals corresponded directly with the questions of the study in that the class was meant to develop students' ability to read scientific literature and ability to communicate with other scientists and with laypeople. The course was specifically for those students with plans for careers in the sciences and was an upper-division undergraduate course. Expert professor gave lectures on topics within neuroimmunology with teaching assistants leading discussion groups to reinforce connections and themes. Students were expected to attend the twice-weekly lectures, read scientific papers, write *New York Times*-style (NYT) articles for a layperson audience, and discuss their papers in their assigned discussion groups. Each student wrote five

NYT articles and was given the opportunity to receive feedback on their writing and resubmit their work, if necessary.

The neuroimmunology course had 12 students enrolled in 2009, 15 in 2010, and 14 in 2011 (Brownell, et al., 2013). To study the effectiveness of the course, open-ended post course questions were used, pre- and post-course surveys were distributed using a Likert-scale style of questions, and an analysis of the students' writing was conducted. There were several findings made by the researchers. These included: students showcasing gains in their perception of their understanding of scientific papers; students perceiving improvements in their ability to write NYT-style articles; students' thinking that they improved their ability to communicate with fellow scientists; students' confidence in communicating science in general; students indicated that the course impacted their overall ability to communicate; and the course was successful, according to the students, in teaching both scientific content and science communication.

Altogether, the research conducted by Brownell et al. (2013) concludes that a writing-intensive course has a positive impact on student perceptions and abilities concerning reading and comprehending course materials and content and effective communication. Though the target students were science-based majors and the sample was small, the study, and the course itself, is a prime example of the effectiveness in using writing as a basis for course content in order to further develop students' abilities. In this instance, the effect is cross-

disciplinary and helps to strengthen the assertion that writing-intensive courses are foundational in their nature.

Though writing-intensive courses are usually positive in their outcomes, there are still some issues inherent in their design and usage. O'Brien-Moran and Soiferman (2010) noted that scholars question if it is truly possible to teach students to write in just one or two academic terms. It is also questionable if what is taught in writing-intensive classes can truly be transferred from one context to another. Brownell, et al.'s (2013) study makes the argument that writing-intensive courses may be useful within the disciplines and majors that students will eventually be sorted into. However, students overall must be able to successfully integrate academically into their educational institution and writing-intensive courses are a tool that help achieve that goal as they help introduce new students to what is expected of them in academia.

Collaborative Assignments and Projects. Kuh (2008) described Collaborative Assignments and Projects as activities that allow students to work and solve problems with others. Additionally, they allow students to improve their understanding in interacting with other students who may come from different backgrounds and experiences. Collaborative Assignments and Projects can take the form of study groups, group assignments, and group projects, amongst other activities. Group work has been established in many institutions of higher education (Lejk, et al., 1999) as they allow for students to develop important skills such as working both independently and collaboratively and actively taking on

responsibilities. Additionally, group work forces students to build time management skills (Sullivan et al., 1996).

Bourner et al. (2001) explored the use of group work and what negative and positive experiences may arise when students take part in Collaborative Assignments and Projects. Bourner et al. (2001) used a sample culled from a population of first-year accounting students attending a British university. These students were required to complete a group project and worked in groups of four to seven. The students were to test theories of organizational behavior within a real organizational setting which required them to go off campus to complete the project. The students were graded on three components: project management, a written project report, and a verbal presentation of their completed work. Members of each group were assigned the same grade.

Bourner et al. (2001) utilized a survey that was developed for an earlier study examining group work. Questions examined what students liked best and least about the project, how the group worked together, would students want to work with the same group again, what skills were improved, what would be done differently if the project was to be done over, a rating of the project outcome, and how much did students learn about themselves and their group members. The survey was administered a semester after the completion of the project which allowed for a cooling off period and time for reflection on the experience. Seventy-three questionnaires were distributed and 56 returned, which accounted for a response rate of 77%.

Overall, Bourner et al.'s. (2001) findings were positive. Students saw the group project experience as beneficial and developed a range of skills including working with others in a group context, research, and planning and organizing data. Students, however, were discouraged by the issue of “passengers” (p. 27), or students in the groups who were unmotivated and did not carry their full weight of the shared responsibilities. One of the aspects that students identified for future improvement was time management and the division of labor for the project. Students displayed overall satisfaction with the group project and gained self-knowledge from the group project and were able to learn more about their peers.

Bourner et al.'s (2001) study showcases the effects of Collaborative Assignments and Projects. Students can learn how to work together toward a common goal, build relationships, and develop skills that will be used again in the future, such as those related to research and presentations. Collaborative Assignments and Projects, therefore, are an especially useful HIP in the integration of students socially and academically.

Internships. Internships are designed to provide students experience in the professional work setting (Kuh, 2008). O'Neill (2010), in an article examining internships in higher education, noted that there exist multiple definitions of internships. A large university may describe an internship as something that integrates career experiences into undergraduate education while a smaller institution may note that an internship is supervised work that is discipline-related

and is meant to develop professional development and reflection. Meanwhile a community college can define an internship as a method of active learning linked to critical self-analysis.

Altogether, however, Internships are voluntary and temporary assignments received by students that are intended to enhance potential career opportunities (Binder, et al., 2014). Students can receive coaching and supervision from professionals who are already in their field of interest, which enhances the learning that has taken place in the classroom. Internships can also be referred to as cooperative education, cooperative extension, and field experience (Gault et al., 2001). These programs, known by multiple names, have a direct effect on the employability of students post-graduation, are attractive to recruiters, and can lead to higher salaries and increased job satisfaction (Binder et al. 2014; Gault et al. 2001).

Binder et al. (2014) found that student internships typically lasted between 36-52 weeks and took place in professional settings. Students were responsible for securing a place as an intern and for the study, needed to fully complete the internship in order to be included. The criteria created a sample of 15,732 students who began their studies between 2001-2005. Students' average age was 19.4 years old, 52.7% were female, and 81.5% were White.

Utilizing multiple regression analysis, Binder et al. (2014) found that internships, in general, are effective in raising academic achievement with higher scores reported across ethnicities and gender. For students who performed at a

below average level, internships had a more pronounced effect and internships helped increase the odds of a higher level of degree granted, as there are four classes of degrees awarded in the United Kingdom (Binder et al., 2014). There were no significant differences in the effects of internships based on whether they were mandatory or optional. Altogether, Binder et al. (2014) are able to conclude that internships have a crucial effect on academic outcomes.

Binder et al.'s (2014) study is strong in that they were able to utilize such a large sample, over 15,000 students. Their sample spanned all disciplines of study and did not focus on just one major, demographic, or another group. Though the study took place and focused on students located in the United Kingdom, the findings provide insights into the importance of internships in the educational process. At the same time, however, this study is limited in that it is not representative of branch campuses and the student demographics of U.S. colleges and universities.

In a literature review, Gault et al., (2000) uncovered that in a decades old article about interns, English and Lewison (1979) reported that the study of the practice of internships and their effects had been highly undervalued and under supported at colleges and university because they simply did not fit within the traditional academic model. Though internships have been a part of the student experience for decades, most higher education research had focused on formal classroom instruction. While early studies, such as Eyster (1992) and Hite and Bellizzi (1986), focused on students' pre-graduation perceptions and expectation

of internships, Gault, et al. (2000) identified studies that showcased that internships were effective in developing career skills, such as communication skills (Floyd & Gordon, 1998), leadership experience (Boatwright & Stamps, 1988), and enhancing academic skills (Floyd & Gordon, 1998; Boatwright & Stamps, 1988). Gault, et al. (2000) also found literature that supported the idea that internships helped build career success and offered both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (Hunt, Chonko, & Wood, 1986).

To address the relationship between internships and academia, Binder, Baguley, Crook, and Miller (2014) examined undergraduate students who completed the high impact practice between 2001 and 2008 at one of the largest universities in the United Kingdom. Internships took place between the second and third year of a bachelor's degree program and were integrated with courses required for the completion of the degree. The researchers' aims were three-fold: estimate and measure the effect of internships across a range of academic disciplines; compare effects for student subgroups, including gender, ethnicity, and aptitude; and to provide a control for self-selection of students, such as comparing courses with and without internships, courses that do not provide an internship option, and courses that exist with an integrated internship (Binder et al., 2014).

Capstone Courses/Projects. Capstone Courses and Projects are known by different names, such as senior projects or senior capstones. However, they all allow students to create a project that applies what they have learned during

their course of study at the end of their undergraduate careers (Kuh, 2008). In short, it is a culminating exercise that illustrates the achievement of knowledge. These projects can be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio, or even an exhibition of their work. Capstones are often offered by individual academic departments.

Hauhart and Grahe (2010) desired to highlight the nature of capstones and their substance. Their study examined capstones in the context of Sociology and Psychology programs located at colleges and universities in the western United States. Out of the 338 colleges that were identified as potential participants, 95 replied to the survey, resulting in 28% response rate. The survey collected institutional information, capstone characteristics, and capstone course mechanics. The surveys also asked questions related to course assessment.

The study's results showcased that out of the 95 institutions, 58 offered capstone courses (Hauhart & Grahe, 2010). The most common goals in offering capstones were to review and integrate the material students learned and to assist students to extend and apply the material they learned. Other reasons why capstones were offered included using it as a bridge to graduate study, to have students come more active citizens, and to have students become better consumers of knowledge.

Generally, capstones projects were made up of data collection and the writing of a research paper. A writing style needed to be followed and required paper lengths ranged from 10 to 25 pages with a minimum number of references

(Hauhart & Grahe, 2010). Capstone courses were made up of instructor and student-led discussions, common readings, and peer review of paper drafts. Assessment was usually completed through the assignment of a letter grade but responses were vague in regard to how these grades were determined. Aspects of assessment included participation, paper drafts, and presentations. The overall impression of capstones was that they are valuable to both students and to academic departments and serve to build and enhance students' skills and knowledge (Hauhart & Grahe, 2010).

Service Learning/Community-Based Learning. The service-learning concept is often a part of the coursework that students take part in during their time at their institution (Kuh, 2008). Students are expected to take issues and principles that they are studying and apply them to their surrounding community and help solve problems. Bringle, Hatcher, and McIntosh (2006) defined service-learning as an educational experience in which students participate in service activities that meet community needs. These activities, at the same time, allow students to gain a deeper understanding of course content, a better sense of their discipline, and increase their level of civic responsibility. In this last aspect, service-learning harkens back to the foundations of many colleges and universities. Felten and Clayton (2011), in their examination of service-learning, point out that the Morrill Act of 1862, which created land grant universities, was meant to enhance, in part, the United States' civic development. Service-learning assists educational institutions in meeting this mission. Simply put, service-

learning allows students to prepare to become active and contributive members of society once they leave their institution.

Service-learning can take different forms from institution to institution. At some, service-learning may be embedded into the curriculum, from first-year seminars to graduate programs (Felten & Clayton, 2011). At other institutions, service-learning may be short stints of time, as opposed to full academic terms or even full academic years. The service performed may be direct or indirect in nature, have low or high levels of responsibility, and could also require research by the student. The term community can also have different definitions, according to Felten and Clayton (2011). Community may refer to the campus of the college or university, a local neighborhood, a nearby city or state, international, or even online. Students who participate in service-learning can work with small non-profits to large for-profit organizations. Opportunities for reflection may also take place with papers written, presentations delivered, or discussions, and take place with varying levels of frequency.

While service-learning can take different forms in different types of communities, there are also different perspectives of its purpose and role in higher education. Butin (2003) summarized these conceptualizations in four ways: the technical perspective, the cultural, the political, and the poststructuralist perspective. In the technical perspective, service-learning is seen as a vehicle to student outcomes where students' personal efficacy and moral development are improved and a sense of social responsibility is achieved.

In addition, the growth of critical thinking skills is considered a key outcome. Cognitive growth is the focus in this perspective of service-learning.

Viewing service-learning through the cultural lens, Butin (2003) noted that researchers, such as Coles (1993), see service-learning as a road to an increased tolerance of diversity. In addition, Bellah et al. (1986) and Putnam (2000) suggested that service-learning, with its encouragement of students to go out into their surrounding communities, helps to cast off society's focus on the individual. The focus, therefore, is getting to know oneself through engagement with those who are different. The political perspective of service-learning sees students exposed to the power imbalances that exist within society (Butin, 2003). However, at the same time, Butin (2003) notes that service learning may help maintain these imbalances with students becoming the do-gooders helping the down-trodden and less fortunate. Students, then, are then transformed into the privileged. In the poststructuralist viewpoint, service-learning can be defined in two ways. In the first, there is no objective truth to be found through its completion (Lyotard, 1984). Service-learning, in this interpretation, is relative to the experience of the student. Foucault's (1983) philosophy on the subjectification of self, wherein one's identity is dependent on the confines of society, can be used to define service-learning as an experience in which a student can examine their role in society.

Butin (2006) delivered criticism of service-learning and the role that it has carved out in the world of higher education. Butin (2006) cited scholar advocates,

such as Freire and hooks, who see service-learning as a transformative pedagogical tool linking the real world with curriculum and the classroom, in addition to providing students the opportunity to develop respect for the communities that surround colleges and universities. However, Butin (2006) questioned if this is even possible across all disciplines within higher education as “soft” disciplines, which include the liberal arts and fields such as psychology and education, are more likely to make appropriate use of service learning than “hard” disciplines, such as the sciences and fields like engineering.

In addition, Butin (2006) harkens back to the political view of service-learning (Butin, 2003) in which students are in a position of privilege in its completion. With a premise of young, full-time, and childless students, the service-learning concept may be a luxury to the reality of enrolled students in higher education. Butin (2006) noted that the National Center of Education statistics (Snyder, Tan, & Hoffman, 2004) finds that 34% of undergraduates are over 25 years old, 40% attend school part-time, and only 50% are able to successfully leave their institution with a degree in hand. These figures do not bode well for the success of service-learning as an effective tool in higher education.

While Butin (2003, 2006) may have worthwhile criticisms of the concept of service learning, Berson and Younkin (1998) have identified the effects of service learning on students' who have engaged with them. Berson and Younkin (1998) revealed that service-learning implementation is a reaction by colleges and

universities against status-driven students of the 1970s and 80s, as found by Astin (1991). Public service, as a mission of higher education, and the notion that higher education is to help solve societal problems and issues have helped drive service-learning as an active part of the curriculum.

Berson and Younkin's (1998) study utilized a population of 286 students enrolled in a community college. The students were enrolled in six paired courses in American History, Sociology, college prep English, and English Composition. One section of each pair of classes was used as the control group in which the instructor used traditional subject matter and materials, including exams and assignments. The other section, the treatment group, was required to complete 20-hours of service-learning activity in addition to the traditional curriculum, including exams and assignments. Students enrolled themselves in the courses without any knowledge of the experiment, thus the student subjects were random.

In collecting data, Berson and Younkin (1998) received from the instructors attendance records while final grades and course completion information was provided by the college's registrar's office. A post-term survey was administered to students and assessed students' attitudes about the course material, satisfaction with the course, and the students' perceived levels of effort in the class. The instructors of the courses were also examined and participated in a focus group, completed beginning-of-term and end-of-term surveys, and

were interviewed. The researchers sought to uncover faculty attitudes about the courses and their own experiences in the experiment.

Overall, students who were enrolled in the courses that included service-learning as a requirement for course completion achieved higher final grades than those enrolled in the control group classes (Berson & Younkin, 1998). These students also reported greater satisfaction with the course, the instructor, assignments, and with the system of grading utilized. Mean course grades for those in the treatment group were .26 higher than those in the control classes. Students from the treatment group also reported that their grade was a fair assessment of their performance in the class and that the exams covered important elements of the course.

Regarding the classes' instructors, those that taught the treatment sections found class discussions to be more stimulating and classes vital in regards to student involvement (Berson & Younkin, 1998). The instructors also found the students to be more academically challenged, motivated, and exert more energy into the course. Faculty reported that they would offer service-learning as an option in their futures classes. However, they did not agree that it should be a requirement to be fulfilled by their pupils.

Berson and Younkin's (1998) study paints a wholly positive view of the effects of including service-learning in higher education. However, the summary fails to include any sort of description of the service-learning that was completed by the students. The study, does, though, include the opinions and thoughts of

the faculty who participated and the examination did not just focus on student outcomes. The report also does not delve into the demographic makeup of the students but at the same time, the researchers were able to ensure a purely random sample of students.

It should be noted that the vast majority of literature examining service-learning was developed during the 1990s and the early 2000s. Though there are pieces, such as Felten and Clayton's (2011) study, that have been written in the second decade of the twenty-first century, the bulk of the literature originates before 2010. This observation is not to invalidate the existing literature. However, this does display a need for further and more current research concerning service-learning.

Common Intellectual Experiences. According to Kuh (2008), Common Intellectual Experiences stem from the idea of a core curriculum. This can take the form of a set of required classes or a general education program that includes integrative studies and/or participation in a learning community. These programs will often use broad themes, such as technology and society, combined with curricular and cocurricular elements. Common Intellectual Experiences are loosely defined and highly flexible (Kuh, 2008).

Grant and MacLean (2018) illustrate a Common Intellectual Experience developed and implemented at Southern Utah University. In celebration of the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service, the university capitalized on the university's surrounding area and community partnerships and developed an

academic program called Semester in the Parks with the theme “America’s National Parks.” Faculty designed and redesigned courses to incorporate national parks thinking and learning opportunities in which nearby parks were explored. Students were employed at a resort located near Bryce Canyon National Park and lived in a nearby community and so were immersed into the local area. Faculty commuted from Southern Utah University to teach their classes on a weekly basis. These classes included Environmental Biology, Communications, Geology of National Parks, Information Literacy, American in the Outdoors, and other courses whose subject matter was related or interrelated with the established theme (Grant & MacLean, 2018). In addition to the coursework, regular trips were made to the national parks located in Utah.

The learning objectives identified by the university for the program were six-fold. These objectives included competence in the outdoors, practice of environmental stewardship, knowledge of the natural and cultural world, development of academic and professional abilities, building skills in tackling challenging and unscripted problems, and building self-confidence (Grant & MacLean, 2018). These learning objectives were met by the combination of courses, field excursions, employment, and community-building activities. In the first semester the program was offered, students wrote an e-book together in which they answered the question “why do we have national parks?” through integrating concepts and content from all their coursework. In the second semester, an individual theme for each week was identified from National

Geographic's "Top Ten Issues Facing National Parks" and the courses investigated the themes according to their own perspective during their session that week (Grant & MacLean, 2018).

According to students' self-reported perceptions related to their participation in the Semester in the Parks program, there were positive gains across the board. Students reported better connections with the southern Utah area, better connections with the outdoors, comfort with working in the outdoors, an increased level of knowledge about the cultural world, and an improved effort toward sustainable living, amongst other factors (Grant & MacLean, 2018). On the whole, student learning experiences were enriched through the utilization of a Common Intellectual Experience and helped student growth. Grant and MacLean (2018) assist in demonstrating how a Common Intellectual Experience can be constructed and used to help create connections for students beyond the classroom.

Criticism of High Impact Practices

While many positive effects have been, and continue to be, attributed to the implementation of High Impact Practices, there has been recent criticism and questions raised about their true impact on graduation rates. In a recent quantitative study published Johnson and Stage (2018) examined if the inclusion of HIPs into college and university curriculum correlated with higher four and six-year graduation rates. Specifically, the study focused on large public institutions. These were identified as those enrolling 10,000 students or more. Based on this

definition, there are 244 public colleges and universities that can be considered large. The sample included 101 institutions, or a little over 41% of these 244 public colleges and universities

Johnson and Stage (2018) found that Collaborative Assignments, Undergraduate Research, Study Abroad (or Diversity/Global Learning), Service Learning, Capstone/Senior Projects, Learning Communities, Common Intellectual Courses, and Writing-Intensive Courses had no relationship whatsoever with four and six-year graduation rates. Internships, however, were found to be a negative influence suggesting that they lengthen a student's enrollment time, while freshman seminars were also a negative influence. The study's discussion supposes that the negative influence of freshman seminars may be due to a sense of being overwhelmed. This could be the result of exposure to the expectations of the college or university. This, in turn, may influence students to delay their graduation. However, this finding may also suggest that colleges and universities invest too much of their resources in this early HIP while not spending enough on practices which occur later in a student's academic career (Johnson & Stage, 2018). The study also found that the number of HIPs present on a campus has no correlation with graduation rates and though student participation in HIPs did influence institutional engagement, that engagement was not necessarily an indicator of completion.

Naturally, Johnson and Stage's (2018) study caused a commotion in academia when the findings were discussed in an article posted online in *Inside*

Higher Ed (Valbrun, 2018), as many colleges and universities have implemented HIPs into their curriculum and have invested huge sums of money in order to do so. Accordingly, George Kuh, with Jillian Kinzie, associate director of the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research and senior scholar at the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, responded to Johnson and Stage (2018) through the same media outlet.

In their essay penned as a response to Johnson and Stage's (2018) work, Kuh and Kinzie (2018) criticized the central question of the study: Is the availability of HIPs at colleges and universities related to graduation rates? Furthermore, Kuh and Kinzie (2018) took issue with the study's data and the approach taken by the researchers. Kuh and Kinzie (2018) stressed that past publications and discussions related to HIPs emphasize that the quality of HIPs implementation is critical to their benefits being realized. Indeed, Kuh and Kinzie (2018) noted that the designs of HIPs and their implementation differ from institution to institution and some are merely better executed than others. They also discussed the role of campus context in relation to student experiences with HIPs and stress the importance of quality over quantity, which was the basis of Johnson and Stage's (2018) article.

Summary of Literature Review

Branch campuses offer a place for students who are searching for smaller class sizes and location convenience to complete degree programs in addition to

those who are seeking to improve their careers and quality of life (Hoyt & Howell, 2012; Bird, 2014). Though they are small and knowledge of them is scant, branch campuses play an important role in the communities that they serve. However, as existing research as shown, personal factors may affect branch campus students' retention rates, such as employment, gender, and family responsibilities (McClelland & Day, 1991, O'Brian, 2007) which has led branch campus staff and administrators to implement programs and practices to help the persistence of their students (Bird, 2014).

Persistence is a significant element in both the success of students and institutions of higher learning. For students who persist, they leave their academic institution with a degree in hand, a certificate earned, or another educational goal achieved (Reason, 1999). By having students see success in their educational objectives, colleges and universities help to improve their regions by ensuring an educated citizenry, contributing to their local economies, and providing vital research (Hoffman & Hill, 2009). Additionally, both student persistence and retention allows institutions to receive funding that is vital to the sustainment of their respective missions (Ascend Learning, 2012, Tinto, 2006) and is used as tool for accountability (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Students can be assisted in their educational journey by becoming engaged in their institution, both socially and academically (Tinto, 1975).

Methods that help encourage social and academic integration include those known as High Impact Practices. Altogether, these practices are effective

tools in higher education. Through various methods, students can gain experience (Binder, et al., 2014), develop skills (Griffin & Romm, 2008), learn about service (Bringle, et al., 2006), and be introspective (Vander Schee, 2011). High Impact Practices improve the student experience within education and serve to aid the development of those who participate. As this literature review help illustrates, these practices help to enhance traditional curriculum and assist in propelling students to persist, no matter the campus on which the practices are employed.

Additionally, though there are both criticisms and praises in relation to High Impact Practices and there are ongoing discussions and debates about their influence, they are still a group of methods and experiences whose impact should continue to be studied. Indeed, continued scholarship can help assess their validity and their value and assist in directing their future in the academy.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

In this chapter, I articulate the purpose of this study as well as my guiding research questions. I also explain my research design and methodology. These aspects include my data collection methods, data analysis techniques, setting of the study, and participants. I also discuss trustworthiness in relation to the research. Lastly, I review the concept of subjectivity and consider my own subjectivities and how they may impact various components of the research.

Purpose of the Study

Given the extensive promotion and implementation of High Impact Practices to increase student persistence and retention since they were first identified (Johnson & Stage, 2018), the primary purpose of this study was to understand the High Impact Practice experiences of university branch campus graduates. Additionally, I sought to understand how student participation in High Impact Practices (HIPs) influenced their persistence. As a reminder, for purposes of this study, persistence was defined as a “student’s postsecondary education continuation behavior that leads to graduation” (Arnold, 1999, p. 5).

University branch campuses are established, in part, to assist the educational development of students in underserved communities (California

Postsecondary Education Commission, 1985; Fonseca & Bird, 2007; Schwaller, 2009); however, there is a gap in the literature concerning the experiences of students attending branch campuses. Studies have examined the reasons why students choose to attend a university branch campus (Bird, 2014; Hoyt & Howell, 2012), branch campus student motivations (Cossman-Ross & Hiatt-Michael, 2005), and branch campus demographics relative to academic performance and retention (McClelland & Daly, 1991; O'Brian, 2007). Nonetheless, based on a comprehensive review of the literature, I found no existing studies that explored branch campus student experiences in relation to High Impact Practices. Accordingly, the goal of this study was to bring further understanding as to what practices and experiences may be most influential in the persistence of university branch campus students, in efforts to help inform policies and practices to support branch campus student success.

Research Questions

As noted by Glesne (2011), research questions help identify what a researcher wants to comprehend. Therefore, to understand the High Impact Practice experiences of university branch campus graduates and how these experiences may have influenced student persistence, this study was guided by the following research questions:

3. How do students who graduated from a university branch campus describe their experiences with High Impact Practices?

4. From the students' perspective, how did these HIP experiences influence their persistence, if at all?

These two research questions helped determine my research design and methodology, which I elaborate on in the following subsections.

Methodology

Research questions focused on exploring and understanding the meaning individuals assign to their experiences are suitably addressed through qualitative inquiry (Glesne, 2011). As I sought to describe and understand the High Impact Practice experiences of university branch campus graduates and how these experiences may have influenced student persistence, I conducted a phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology, at its most basic definition, seeks to understand individuals' subjective perceptions or experiences of an event or phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Leedy & Ormond, 2013; Lopez & Willis, 2004). It is derived out of a way of thinking, or philosophy, regarding approaches to human science and inquiry (Moustakas, 1994). Broadly speaking, there are two schools of thought or approaches to phenomenology: a) transcendental or descriptive phenomenology and; b) hermeneutical or interpretive phenomenology (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

I utilized a transcendental phenomenological approach (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental phenomenology assumes "that there are features to any lived experience that are common to all persons who have the experience"

(Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 728). Transcendental phenomenology emphasizes the human subjective experience and seeks to discover the universal essence of that experience. Additionally, transcendental phenomenology seeks to explore what can be learned through thoughtful and critical consideration of those subjective experiences (Moustakas, 1994). In transcendental phenomenology the researcher attempts to identify their bias and prejudgments/predeterminations and cast or set them aside through bracketing (epoché), which I elaborate on in my data analysis section below. In sum, transcendental phenomenology desires to gain information or knowledge through subjectivity while at the same time keeping the value of “thinking and reflecting” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 49). To learn about the experiences of university branch campus students, I employed data collection methods appropriate for a transcendental phenomenological study.

Data Collection Methods

To help me explore the research questions guiding this study, I relied on one main data source: interviews. Interviews assist in understanding experience (Seidman, 2013), which was the goal of this research study. I elaborate on my interviews in the following subsection.

Interviews

In order to bring about an understanding of student experiences with High Impact Practices, I relied on in-depth semi-structured interviews with six university branch campus graduates. Interviews are one of the most common

sources for gathering qualitative data (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Moreover, the purpose of in-depth interviews is to understand “the lived experiences of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (Seidman, 2013, p. 9).

Leedy and Ormond (2013) suggested that interviews in phenomenological research are to be unstructured; however, conducting unstructured interviews carries the risk of gaining responses that are not related to the research questions that form the basis of the study (Rabionet, 2011). As such, I elected to conduct semi-structured interviews. Creswell (2013) noted that interviews conducted as a part of phenomenological research need to have some sort of broad questioning to bring attention and discussion of the experience being explored, which is specifically how semi-structured interviews are designed (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Semi-structured interviews are organized using pre-formulated open-ended questions as the basis for the interview (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). These questions, however, do not constrict the interview. Instead, the interviewer is able to ask other questions that may develop organically as the interview conversation takes place. Given the long and conversational nature of semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2013; Seidman, 2013; Leedy & Ormond, 2013), one semi-structured per interviewee is common practice (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

My in-depth semi-structured interview approach (Creswell, 2013) assisted in drawing out the context of each participant's experience, the experience itself, and the participant's reflection of the experience. In-depth interviews allowed me to dig deep in the conversations I had with my research participants (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Seidman, 2013). Topics discussed included, at times, personal matters, which allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the individual experience. My interviews centered on five prepared questions with follow-up questions that organically developed in order to understand each participant's whole experience. For example, I asked participants to tell me a little bit about their experiences on campus as well as about the activities they were involved in as an undergraduate student on the branch campus and what these activities meant to them (See Appendix G for complete Interview Protocol).

Each interview was completed in one session, reflecting DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree's (2006) position that one semi-structured in-depth interview with each participant is suitable. High Impact Practices is not an issue that is significantly complex and participants were only recently removed from their higher education experience. Therefore, drawing out my participants' thoughts and ideas was not difficult. No second interviews were needed or conducted.

Each interview lasted 45-60 minutes. Participants were given the opportunity to select an interview format preferable to them, either face-to-face, via telephone, or face-to-face remote conversation using Skype. Just the same, the time and location of the interview was of their choosing. All interviews were

conducted on-campus in either an empty office or an empty classroom. In addition, all interviews were conducted in-person. Before the interviews began, I reviewed the Informed Consent form with each participant. The Informed Consent form indicated their understanding of the purpose of the study and their willingness to participate. During this process, I asked each participant if they had any questions. After confirming their understanding and willingness and answering any questions, I began the interview.

Interviews were audio recorded with two devices, in case of any technical difficulties. At the conclusion of the interview, I thanked each participant for their time and contribution to the study and gave them their Visa gift card. Each recording was downloaded to a password-protected folder in an external hard drive within two (2) hours of the interview's completion. Each recording was played directly from the downloaded file to ensure that the file had been fully transferred. Each recording was renamed with the pseudonym of the participant and the date and time of the interview. After confirmation of each download and its renaming, the original file on the recording device was deleted. I later had the interviews transcribed in their entirety by a transcription service and each transcript was saved to the same folder and hard drive and named according to pseudonym, date, and time.

Participant Selection and Recruitment

To identify and recruit study participants, I engaged in network sampling (Glesne, 2011). I also relied on criterion sampling (Patton, 2002). Both these methods are expounded upon below in this section. Via these strategies, I attempted to recruit at least three participants, as recommended for phenomenological research by Englander (2012).

As my two research questions centered on understanding the student experience concerning High Impact Practices and how these experiences may have influenced their persistence, participants had to meet three inclusion criteria. First, participants had to be recent graduates of State University Valley Campus (SUVC). For this study, recent graduates were defined as students who graduated from SUVC within six (6) months of the start of this study. In addition, participants had to have participated in at least one high impact practice. Finally, participants were required to attend the campus for their whole academic career, meaning that no transfer students were included in this study. Although not part of the criteria for inclusion in this study, all participants earned their bachelor's degree from SUVC in four years. In fact, all participants were part of SUVC's first freshman class.

Potential participants were recruited through the posting of a flyer on SUVC's social media accounts and campus bulletin boards. Posters noted the purpose of the study and that participants who completed an interview would receive a \$20 Visa gift card (Appendix A). I received permission from branch

campus personnel to post these materials. Additionally, I utilized network sampling (Glesne, 2011). This method can also be referred to as snowball or chain sampling. I asked individuals who are connected to the branch campus, such as staff, faculty, and various board members who may keep in contact with recent graduates, to recommend/think of potential participants and ask them to contact me if they were interested in learning about my study. Between these two strategies, all potential participants were identified and secured through network sampling. I presume that the use of social media accounts and campus bulletin boards was unsuccessful because I was seeking to interview students who had graduated and were no longer on campus.

Once potential participants were identified, I sent them an email invitation that included a message with an explanation of the purpose of the study, the process for participation, and an informed consent form (Appendix B). The email also noted that those who participated in the interviews would receive a Visa gift card. In addition, in the email I asked recipients if they knew of any other potential participants, to ask those graduates to also contact me. However, no additional potential participants were identified through this method. If a student chose to participate, they either sent me an email with a copy of a signed informed consent form or physically brought the form to me.

Upon receipt of the signed informed consent form, I sent each participant a link to an online sampling questionnaire (Appendix C) created via Qualtrics. This questionnaire completed the criterion sampling portion of the identification

and recruitment phase of this study (Patton, 2002). The questionnaire helped me determine if the graduate had indeed participated in at least one (1) High Impact Practice and collected basic data about their university career such as their major, whether or not they attended the branch campus for their entire academic career, and if they were the first in their family to graduate and earn a bachelor's degree. Those who indicated that they had participated in at least one (1) High Impact Practice received an email (Appendix D) thanking them for their submission and inviting them to participate in an interview to discuss their experiences. From that point, I continued to communicate with the participant until a suitable date and time to conduct the interview was determined.

One potential participant, who would have been my seventh participant, submitted their completed questionnaire several weeks after the completion of the research portion of this study. This individual received an email (Appendix E) thanking them for their time effort and the email notified them that the research window had closed. An email (Appendix F) for those who were interested in participating in the study, but did not indicate participation in a High Impact Practice was also prepared. It thanked the participant for their interest and let them know that they did not qualify to participate. However, the six graduates who completed the questionnaire in a timely manner did qualify and so the email was left unutilized. Below, in Table 3.1, I present demographic and background information for each of my participants.

Table 3.1

Participant Demographic and Background Information

Demographic/ Background Information	Participant					
	Faith	Raquel	Sam	Catherine	Briana	Gabrielle
First Generation Student	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Major	Psyc	Psyc	Comm	Lib St	Crim Just	Lib St
Age	22	22	22	22	22	22
Pell Grant Recipient	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Identifies As:				✓		
Mexican-American						
Identifies As: Hispanic	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Employed Post-Graduation			✓	✓	✓	✓
Enrolled in Graduate Program		✓				✓

Participant Profiles

Included in this section are short description summaries of each of the participants who took part in this study. These form part of the individual textual and structural descriptions described and discussed further on in this chapter (Moustakas, 1994). Some information was collected in the initial questionnaire that needed to be completed before participation in this study. Additional information was gleaned from the interviews. To ensure confidentiality, each participant was assigned a pseudonym.

As previously discussed, each participant graduated from the university branch campus within six months of the start of this study in October 2017 and attended the campus for the whole of their undergraduate career. They were all members of the first freshman class admitted to the branch campus and

members of the campus' first four-year graduating class. They are presented here in the order in which their interviews were conducted.

Faith

Faith was delighted and proud to be a part of the first four-year graduating class at the university branch campus. She enjoyed the small campus atmosphere and the opportunity to be involved in student government, which involved planning activities. Faith was the first in her family to graduate with a college degree in the United States; her mother earned the equivalent to a bachelor's degree in Mexico, but she explained that it is a much different process than how one earns a degree in the U.S. Faith originally planned to attend the local community college and her application to the university was unplanned. She originally planned to complete just two years at the branch campus and then attend the main campus for her last two years, but she enjoyed the branch campus so much she stayed and completed her degree in Psychology. Faith was 22 at the time of her interview and identifies as Hispanic. High Impact Practices that Faith took part in included the First-Year Seminar, Writing Intensive Course, and Collaborative Assignments and Projects.

Raquel

Raquel is currently a graduate student at SUVC's main campus. She decided to pursue her master's degree after graduating from the branch campus with a degree in Psychology. Raquel was 22 and like the other participants, was the first in her family to attend a university. She saw herself as an example for

other family members who may want to pursue their education. As a Psychology major, she was highly active in the campus' Psychology club and served as a peer tutor for the program before applying to the university's graduate program. Raquel identifies as Hispanic and took part in Diversity/Global Learning, Capstone Courses and Projects. She also took a Writing-Intensive Course.

Sam

Sam was a first-generation student who attended the branch campus. He majored in Communications. Sam described himself as a hard worker, waking up early some quarters to attend classes on the main campus and eating meals on the go between lectures. Sam was a first-generation student, but he followed two older sisters who also pursued their education. Sam's goal is to work in Hollywood as a writer and he used his senior project to help explore that career option. Aged 22 when interviewed for this study, Sam identifies as Latino and is currently working at a cultural center close to the university branch campus. During our interview, Sam discussed his Capstone Project, Writing-Intensive Course, and his experiences with Diversity/Global Learning.

Catherine

Catherine was keen to share her experiences related to HIPs when I sat down to interview her. She found it exciting to be able to share her views on the topic and discuss her perception on how they shaped her experiences at SUVC. Catherine was the first in her family to earn a bachelor's degree and neither of her parents graduated from high school. At the time of the interview, she was 22

years old. She majored in Liberal Studies and was hired right away as a teacher after she graduated. She described herself as very motivated, involved, and took pride in that she was able to complete her credential alongside her undergraduate degree requirements. Catherine identified herself as Mexican-American and mentioned that because of her light skin, she usually passes as White. Catherine was the only participant in this study who experienced a Learning Community as an intentional High Impact Practice and she also took part in Collaborative Assignments and Projects, as well as Diversity/Global Learning.

Briana

Briana, who was 22 when she was interviewed, was very comfortable in sharing her experiences with me. She was the first to graduate from a college or university in her family. Her course of study was Criminal Justice and she would like to become a probation officer or work in a position inside the court system. Briana described herself as very involved on campus with different clubs and organizations. Briana plans to take her degree and work in the public sector in order to make a difference in her community. Briana identifies as Hispanic. While a student at State University Valley Campus, Briana completed a First-Year Seminar and a Writing-Intensive Course. She was also the only participant in this study who identified Undergraduate Research as an experience she took part in.

Gabrielle

Gabrielle was a Liberal Studies major at the university branch campus and was also 22 when I sat down with her. Her original plan was to attend a community college and later transfer to a four-year school, but her plans changed when an admissions counselor visited her high school and she learned about the local university branch campus. She was the first in her family to graduate with her Bachelor of Arts degree. Identifying as Hispanic, she took great pride in being involved on campus during her time as an undergrad and spoke enthusiastically of her time as a part of the Dreamers Club on campus, which was made up of DACA students. Gabrielle's HIP experiences included Service Learning/Community-Based Learning, Diversity/Global Learning, and the First-Year Seminar.

Setting

This study was conducted at State University's branch campus, State University Valley Campus¹. In addition to its designation as a branch campus, this particular branch campus was chosen because of its implementation and use of High Impact Practices and role as an education leader in the surrounding community. The university, and by extension the branch campus, is designated as a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI). An HSI is defined as an institution that

¹ Pseudonyms

has an undergraduate enrollment that is at least 25% Hispanic (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 2017).

Based on the typology developed by Bebko and Huffman (2011), State University Valley Campus, or SUVC, is a four-year public branch campus. In alignment with Bebko and Huffman's (2011) typology, SUVC's facilities are owned by the university, the head of the campus holds a doctorate, and student support services are available on the campus, such as a student center, library facility, career services, a campus bookstore, financial aid, academic advising, a recreational and wellness center, and a health center. Using Bebko and Huffman's (2011) typology, the campus is urban in that it has a student population over 1,000 and is located a significant distance in travel time from the main campus. Classes are taught by both full-time and part-time faculty. Furthermore, State University provides support in many areas including: livestreaming classes to SUVC; representatives traveling to SUVC to meet with branch campus students regarding services that are not provided on a full-time basis, such as advising for certain majors; events and activities for students, staff, and faculty planned and executed by main campus departments; and shuttle services between campuses.

One of the areas in which State University has put a tremendous amount of focus on is the implementation of High Impact Practices, especially after the appointment of the current university president who has invited renowned experts in student engagement, such as Dr. Vincent Tinto, to speak to campus staff and

administration. Additionally, there is also a push at the state university system level for the implementation of High Impact Practices. SUVC, as a part of the university, has followed suit and in recent years has enacted several measures to help increase student persistence and retention. Bringing these practices to the branch campus has been especially important as the campus only began accepting freshman students less than five years ago.

SUVC is located about 75 miles away from the main campus of State University in a valley that is known for its tourism, cultural arts, and agriculture². In addition to SUVC, the area is serviced educationally by three school districts, a community college that enrolls approximately 15,000 students per academic term, and several small for-profit colleges. The demographics of the student body is illustrated in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2

State University Valley Campus Demographics, Fall 2017

Total Headcount: 1,301	
Race/Ethnicity	%
Hispanic/Latinx	65
White	16
Non-Resident Foreign	6
African-American	2
Asian	3
Unknown	6
Two+ Races	2
American Indian	1
Student Level	%
Undergraduate	92
Graduate	8

² Reference source is not provided to maintain the anonymity of the educational institution.

Geographic Origin	%
Local	80
Non-Local	20
Gender	%
Male	33
Female	67
Undergraduate College of Major	%
Arts and Letters	20
Business and Public Administration	25
Education	1
Natural Science	18
Social and Behavioral Science	34
Undeclared	2
Graduate College of Major	%
Arts & Letters	1
Education	91
Natural Science	8

Regarding first-time freshman, the retention rate from the first year to the second is, on average, at 85% and from second year to third year 72%. The demographics displayed above may not be typical of other branch campuses located in the general region in which this branch campus is located as many branch campuses are two-year public centers or large enrollment branches, as defined by Bebko and Huffman (2011).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed utilizing Moustakas' (1994) method of analyzing phenomenological data, which is an adaption of earlier methods of analysis. In addition to bracketing, Moustakas's (1994) method consists of the following phases: listing and preliminary grouping, or horizontalization; reduction and

elimination; clustering and thematizing; textural description; structural description; composite textural description; composite structural description; and textural-structural synthesis. Each step of Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological analysis method is elaborated on below and, if applicable, illustrated through an example from this study.

The first step in Moustakas' (1994) method is listing and preliminary grouping, or horizontalization, of the data. In this step, every statement that is elicited from the interviews that is relevant to the experience, or phenomenon, is listed accordingly. I reviewed each of the interview transcripts and took out each phrase that discussed the participants' experiences with High Impact Practices and phrases that discussed persistence. In addition, I also listed phrases that spoke to non-HIPs experiences and their influence on persistence, which as discussed in Chapter Four is a major theme in this study. These phrases were organized using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. In Table 3.3 I provide an illustration of this step.

Table 3.3

Horizontalization

Horizontalization: Catherine	
Phrases Relevant to High Impact Practices Experiences and Persistence	Phrases Relevant to Non-High Impact Practices Experiences and Persistence

Common Intellectual Experiences:

Oh, I loved it. Because I had a lot of classes with my friends, and I didn't feel alone, and I didn't feel comfortable meeting new people yet, because I was already in a new school. I don't want a lot of new things thrown at me ...so I was able to stay with a lot of people I had already known or knew who they were at least. So, it wasn't totally brand new to me, it made me feel like, okay even though everything else is new, I have some type of consistency with the people that I know, and I really like that.

We would meet on campus early, or we would stay late, and we would work on ... we would work on projects together if we had been in projects, we would work ... study for midterms together ... because none of us knew what midterms were until we got into college and said, "What, it's been a month and we already have to take a test, it's worth 50% of my grade!"

That's where I would say I got a lot of my informal tutoring experience, because I would study beforehand, and I felt like teaching the material to other people helped me study on my own, because I feel like if you can teach something to someone it means you really know it. So that's how I felt like I did well on my tests, because I was able to teach it to other people.

Learning Community:

I respect my cohort in that way, because we were all motivated to do

Uh, so I started here as part of the first freshman class, back in 2013, and I primarily came here for financial reasons. I lived in [name of city redacted], and didn't really have financial capabilities to go to university anywhere else, so this was ... I didn't feel like I was settling coming here, but I felt like this was my only option, but I wanted to make the best of the situation that I knew I was in.

Obviously in high school you're there all day and then I was in theater, so I was there practically all day after school, sometimes until ten o'clock at night, so I'd be basically there 12 hours; whereas in college starting my first quarter, I was only here three days a week no more than six hours a day, and it felt really empty, and I thought well you know, school always came really naturally to me, I can do school no problem, but I feel like I need to do something more. I wanted to be involved, I missed having that feeling of being friends with people who I was involved with in school, so I saw flyers for the student center, and I thought, "I could get a job." And I never had a job before ...

[on being involved and having jobs on campus] I'm a kind of person who likes to keep busy. If I don't keep busy, I get lazy ... and if I'm not getting my schoolwork done, that's a big issue for me. So as long as I always have something to do, I'm gonna get it done. So that's why I didn't like having the downtime my first couple of months at [SUV C], when I was only taking classes, because it felt boring to me, and when I'm bored I'm not

the same thing, under the same amount of time. We all knew we had a year to finish, we were all gonna get finished within a year, and we all grew really close together because of that, and we all ... because we all struggled through that program together. Misery loves company. We were all suffering together ... but we all became really good friends.

Collaborative Projects:

It's a hit or miss positive. Some classes that I really enjoyed and already knew the people with ... projects were no big deal. My entire credential program if we had to work together, never any frustrations. Whenever I had something with my bachelor's degree, that was a different story ... because like I said, sometimes I was in a class where I didn't know anybody because I was taking an upper-division when I was still a freshman or sophomore ... and learned really quickly right away, either we were all gonna do it together, or I was gonna do it by myself, because that's how group projects are. Yep, it needs to get done and I'm not gonna have anybody sink ... I'm not gonna sink with anybody else, I'm gonna make sure I'm the survivor.

motivated. So I always knew from day one that I wanted to graduate in four years no matter what, even though my degree is five ... I wanted to finish it. So, I always tried to look for different ways to keep myself motivated and having outside activities made sure that I never really had downtime to be distracted from my goals.

[on being involved and employed on campus] I made a lot of friends that way. It's hard to make friends in classes, because you just think we're all here because we have to be here; whereas when you are out and doing things that you want to do, you find people that are also interested in the same things you are, because you're here ... they're here because they want to be here. And that way I also found myself surrounded by a lot more people that are motivated, because you think that everybody who comes to college is motivated on their own, because nobody has to go to college ... so they have some motivation to come, but after a while you can start to see the differences in how motivating people really are, and I found that whenever I was doing volunteer activities, or working on campus, or just being involved in any way, I was usually surrounded by people. Even if we were studying different things, we were all motivated to the same degree. So that also kept me willing to work, because I was surrounded by people who wanted the same thing.

Once collected and organized, these interview excerpts were then reduced in order to identify the invariant constituents (Moustakas, 1994). Invariant constituents, or invariant horizons, are phrases that “stand out” and refer to the “unique qualities of an experience” (p. 128). Each phrase or expression was analyzed for two conditions: a) does the phrase contain a moment of the experience that is necessary to understanding it? and b) is it possible to abstract and label it? (p. 121). If a quote could be abstracted and consequently labeled, it could be considered a horizon of the experience. If not, the phrase was cast aside and not used. Those that remained at the end of the process were considered the invariant constituents of the experience, or phenomenon. The phrases that made up the collection of invariant constituents were transferred to a new sheet in the Excel spreadsheet file. An example of Invariant Constituents is illustrated below in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4

Invariant Constituents

Invariant Constituents: Catherine
<p>...we were all motivated to do the same thing, under the same amount of time...we all grew really close together because of that...</p> <p>Misery loves company. We were all suffering together...</p> <p>If I didn't have those people with me, I wouldn't have gotten a lot of work done.</p> <p>...we all decided to stay after class to get it done, or we're all meeting up now to get it done, because if we don't do it together ... we'll all fail.</p>

It really did motivate us to work.

...I had a lot of classes with my friends, and I didn't feel alone...

...I was able to stay with a lot of people I had already known, or knew who they were at least.

I started finding myself with my friends still, but the rest of the class felt very unmotivated and I didn't feel comfortable.

After they were amassed, the phrases, or now, rather, the invariant constituents, needed to be clustered, or collected, into distinct themes, or thematic labels (Moustakas, 1994). A theme, as defined by Saldaña (2016), is an extended phrase or a sentence that identifies what a collection of data is about or what it may mean as a whole. Themes can also describe behavior, morals from participants' stories, and could also take the shape of representative, or iconic, statements (Saldaña, 2016). Themes are constructed from data. Saldaña (2016) recommends a "winnowing down" (p. 200) of themes and labels to what is essential to understanding the phenomenon that is being studied. The clustered phrases and quotes served as the core themes for the experience and were organized in a new sheet in the Excel spreadsheet file, as illustrated in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5

Clustered Phrases

Clustered Phrases	
Theme	Example Phrases
Experiences with High Impact Practices	
Providing Foundational Support	<p>[The First-Year Seminar] was really trying to get us used to this whole new way of thinking and doing stuff. 'Cause we're new. We didn't know anything. And so it's a lot of information that you're gonna need to know in order to really, like, survive here. Like such as making sure you know how to read your [advising] report...</p> <p>I liked that class because coming into college you don't know what to expect, so that class told you what you should expect. So, it helped you out. Every week was a different subject, so one week could have been like, your FAFSA, like, how to fill it out on your own. The second week, your [advising report] report and so on. That's what that class is for, it's to help you out so you can be more independent...</p> <p>The freshman seminar class that I took it was building connections with my classmates but also it was an introduction to the campus as we were new freshman in a new school so it was know[ing] how to ask questions to your advisors, to faculty, and staff.</p>
Academic and Social Skill Building	<p>It was expository writing, but this one was specifically for psychology majors. I think we all know that there's different ways of writing, but I think it really helps you focus on your style of</p>

writing. Because what we would do is, it would be writing a paper each week, and she [the professor] would kind of like, go through them and, and pick out the little bits, like slang that we've been using that we don't really notice. So, I think it helped, allowed me to become a better writer

I've also done writing for media. So, it was like trying to write in new forms. I never knew how to write, like an article for a newspaper because I never had to do it before...I never had to write one of those public statement type things. So, I learned how to write different things...I did do the writing intensive stuff...beforehand, the only experience I really had writing for anything like that, for anything, really, was just purely essays for classes.

I decided to take the course because I wanted to challenge myself to write properly, practice my English... [the papers] were all [focused on] APA writing...specific for criminal justice.

Since this was a paper, plus a project, it got me to do more research.

...someone has to essentially take on the leadership role and just tell everybody else what to do.

...learned really quickly right away, either we were all gonna do it together, or I was gonna do it by myself, because that's how group projects are. Yep, it needs to get done and I'm not gonna have anybody sink.

I think that's where I would say I got a lot of my informal tutoring experience,

	<p>because I would study beforehand, and I felt like teaching the material to other people helped me study on my own, because I feel like if you can teach something to someone it means you really know it.</p>
Practical Connections and Application	<p>I saw that in [name of local community], we have a lot of conflict between the police department and students starting from middle school to high school, they have a negative connection with law enforcement. So, I just did like a mini survey on why the negative connotation.</p> <p>I will say, that I have learned more inside of a classroom, teaching, in student teaching, observation work, as a teacher, than I do in the classes that I've had here.</p> <p>I would steal those ideas and use them when I was practicing, especially for math...</p> <p>I was the writer, I was the producer, I was the director, I was doing all these hats. That one's more hands on 'cause it was like, "okay, well now we have to figure out scheduling. Like, when can we all meet up to rehearse?" Or as the case was in the very, very end, when one of them couldn't help me out during the reading on the day I had to take over for them. And it was like, "okay, well now I'm their understudy I guess." It was actually more putting stuff that I had to learn to actually communicate with people, like interpersonally and try to get this group to actually succeed.</p>
Peer Support and Interaction	<p>A lot of us were mostly of a Latino kind of culture. So, we had that kind of going for a lot of us. But then we did</p>

occasionally have someone that comes from another one. We had to learn how to kind of deal with, almost like how they're used to doing, seeing things, how does that mesh with the way we're used to doing things?

Because I had a lot of classes with my friends, and I didn't feel alone, and I didn't feel comfortable meeting new people yet, because I was already in a new school. I don't want a lot of new things thrown at me...so I was able to stay with a lot of people I had already known, or knew who they were at least. So, it wasn't totally brand new to me, it made me feel like, okay even though everything else is new, I have some type of consistency with the people that I know, and I really like that.

I respect my cohort in that way, because we were all motivated to do the same thing, under the same amount of time. We all knew we had a year to finish, we were all gonna get finished within a year, and we all grew really close together because of that, because we all struggled through that program together ...

After your second year you're mostly with the people in your same major. So, I was able to go to anyone and just get help whenever I needed, or they could come to me.

I think what really helped was the group effort since we know a lot of these students already because of the four years. I think that really helped us stick together and not give up because I think on my own I would have just

been like, you know, this course is hard.

Experiences Beyond High Impact Practices

Familial Motivations

I'm a role model for my younger cousins. And I think that was a big motivator too, being the first student to graduate from a four-year college, university.

And when I saw that I got in, it kind of motivated me to see, like, "wow you could actually get into a university," you know?

'cause I knew that if they could do it, I could do it, you know? My oldest sister, she's four years older than me. So, meaning when I was in high school, she was already about to finish college. She was ready to finish [name of university]. So, I was like, "okay, yeah." I mean, it was a little tough, but I know if she can do it, I can definitely do it.

Financial Motivations

I think just money wise, it was cheaper to be here than go to another university. Because I have my parents' support, I can live at home for free and I get to eat for free and I was only focusing on just paying for my tuition and my books. I received a lot of scholarships and other people from the outside don't get a lot of scholarships, but since I stayed in the community a lot of people like to support the ones that stay in the community.

So, that's how I chose to come here because financially I was able to stay home, didn't have to pay for rent or that much, and I had my parents there for the help that I needed.

I primarily came here for financial reasons. I lived in [name of city] and didn't really have financial capabilities to go to university anywhere else. I didn't feel like I was settling coming here, but I felt like this was my only option, but I wanted to make the best of the situation that I knew I was in.

Financially, it was just better for my family 'cause we're not exactly the most well off. So I just really liked coming here for the financial stability.

On-Campus Involvement and
Employment

I wanted to be involved, I missed having that feeling of being friends with people who I was involved with in school, so I saw flyers for the student center, and I thought, "I could get a job." And I never had a job before.

I'm a kind of person who likes to keep busy. If I don't keep busy, I get lazy ... and if I'm not getting my schoolwork done, that's a big issue for me. So as long as I always have something to do, I'm gonna get it done.

I feel like it broke me out of my shell. I definitely I got to know people around the community. Whether it be more students on campus or just important people in the community. I feel like it opened a lot of doors for me, being involved on campus.

I learned more of the material because I was teaching it to other students. And I guess it made me like my major more 'cause at some point I was

having doubts about it; should I switch? But I think that being a tutor helped me stay in my major and graduate in four years, like my initial plan and stay here on campus because they provided me those opportunities.

Small Campus Environment

I didn't want to go into like a big campus--so I kind of chose to come to [SUVC] for that same reason of the small intimate, how classes are, twenty students, smaller amount of students. I like to get one on one with professors so that was very interesting because I was scared to go into the bigger two hundred student classes.

Well, since it's a small campus, I feel like we got a lot of attention. The professors were always there to help us out and they even learned our names. I feel like everybody's very polite and they ask you, "how is school going?" And they show that they care about you.

I really enjoyed the fact that since we are a fairly small campus, I really got to know a lot of my teachers. Some I'm on a first name basis. And I liked that because if I ever needed help or if I ever had a question, I felt more comfortable going up to them and asking them. Whereas if I was just one of hundreds in a class, I would kind of feel a little weird, but that wasn't my experience here so that was good. I really got to know people on a much better level than I feel like I probably would have over there at the main campus.

I also got a chance to really get to know pretty much everyone in my classes 'cause whenever you were here since there's not that many people and you have the same major as somebody, [you're] more likely to see them over and over and over again. So, I really got to know a lot of my classmates and I got to befriend them.

Next, I constructed an individual textural description for each participant (Moustakas, 1994). An individual textural description is a narrative of the experience, or phenomenon, that uses quotes and phrases used by the participant verbatim in order to present its “nature and focus” (p. 133). The individual textural description is meant to create clear and concrete images of the experience. Once there was an individual textural description written for each participant, I then constructed an individual structural description for each participant (Moustakas, 1994). Individual structural descriptions focus on uncovering the underlying dynamics of the experience that is meant to be understood. In this method, the ‘how’ of the experience is described and illustrated. As noted by Moustakas (1994), an individual structural description is a narrative that seeks to understand the structures that exist surrounding an experience or phenomenon. Both textural and structural descriptions for each participant were created in Microsoft Word. The participant profiles included

earlier in this chapter are a part of the individual and structural descriptions created for this study.

Once I developed both textural and structural descriptions for each participant, I created a composite textural description and a composite structural description. The composite textural description explored all of the themes and invariant constituents and showcased the experiences of all my participants as a whole (Moustakas, 1994). The composite structural description, while utilizing the individual structural descriptions, involved the concept of imaginative variation. According to Moustakas (1994), imaginative variation seeks to find meaning through the use of one's imagination. Different perspectives, positions, functions, etc. could be employed in order to adequately describe the structure of an experience and to account for what is experienced. Moustakas (1994) simplifies the idea to a single sentence: "How did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it is?" (p. 98). A composite structural description seeks to understand the how the group of participants experience the phenomenon. The composite textural and structural descriptions were also created in a Microsoft Word document and formed the basis of the next step in the data analysis process.

The final step in Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological analysis method is constructing a textural-structural synthesis. This phase integrates the composite textural and structural descriptions that have been created. It provides a presentation of the textural and structural meanings and the core of the experience. It may be divided by theme or topic and it interweaves both texture

and structure to describe the findings related to the phenomenon. The textural-structural synthesis for this study is presented in Chapter Four.

Throughout my data analysis process, I engaged in bracketing, which meant to filter out my personal thoughts, opinions, and ideas concerning the phenomenon being studied, so that I could approach the data with a clear and impartial mindset. The philosopher Husserl, who also established phenomenology as an approach to research, developed bracketing as a concept; bracketing is seen as an essential component of the phenomenological approach (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Though there is no consensus on what constitutes bracketing, at its most basic definition, bracketing is looking beyond presumptions or bias and instead focusing on the essences of the experiences that are being explored (Tufford & Newman, 2010). There are several methods in which researchers can separate themselves from predetermined ideas. These can include writing reflective memos, conducting interviews with a colleague, and maintaining a journal before and during the research process (Tufford & Newman, 2010).

As further discussed in the Trustworthiness section of this chapter and exhibited below (Table 3.6), the bracketing technique that I utilized was writing reflective memos. Cutliffe (2003), in his examination of bracketing, refers to the memo technique as reflexive journals. These put on display a researcher's mental processes, their positions, and explain the decisions that they make during the research process. Reflecting on these areas, as well as one's

personal thoughts and feelings that may develop over the course of the research, help to separate out bias and presuppositions when it comes time to neutrally break down the data. I used memos, or journals, as a source for catharsis and to monitor my subjectivities in addition to strengthening the trustworthiness of this study.

In sum, through Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological analysis method, I was able to describe, in detail, how students on a university branch campus experience High Impact Practices and how those experiences may impact student persistence. Both the "how" of the experience and the "what" of the experience will be presented in Chapter Four as well.

Subjectivity Statement

Many of the issues that surround the question of trustworthiness are those related to subjectivities. According to Peshkin (1988), all of one's subjectivities should be identified in order to tame and monitor them in an effective manner; if not, a researcher risks insinuation. Creswell (2013) notes that researcher bias must be clarified "from the outset" (p. 251). This work is very close to my own experiences and to what I do on a professional basis. Therefore, some subjectivities were evoked: my student mindset, or "Student I," experiences with High Impact Practices, or "HIPs I," and my role as a professional in higher education, or my "Professional I."

The “Student I” had a strong presence. Working with students and being a student myself allowed me to be on familiar territory with the student mindset. The views and experiences of the participants were, at times, similar to my own, though there were differences, as well. The “HIPs I” came into play, as well. I enrolled in many writing-intensive courses throughout my college career. I know firsthand the benefits of taking courses where writing abilities are developed, ideas are put to paper, and new writing techniques are explored. The last subjectivity that was elicited was my “Professional I.” Working for an administrator in a setting that is part of the Academic Affairs division of a university, how to keep students enrolled and successful is always a concern. New practices, techniques, services, and programming are constantly being discussed and debated. In that regard, I was already in possession of ideas and thoughts about the impact of the practices that were examined in this study. Additionally, I have spent time in Student Affairs during my time working in higher education and have had experience working alongside students in order to build community.

As a professional at a university who has worked with students directly and indirectly, I believe High Impact Practices (HIPs) set up students for success and are influential in integrating students both socially and academically into the fabric of university life. I have seen students improve over the course of academic terms and over the course of academic years in both areas. Each HIP serves a distinct purpose, from writing-intensive classes that develop students’

writing skills and expose them to different types of academic writing, to internships, which are meant to develop students as professionals outside the classroom and give them hands-on experience. Going into this study, I believed that on a branch campus, HIPs might be more effective. With smaller class sizes and more one-on-one interaction with instructors, staff, and administration, I held the belief that their influence on the university experience may be magnified.

Trustworthiness

As the researcher, I employed various strategies in order to ensure trustworthiness of the study including: a) recognizing and monitoring my subjectivities (Peshkin, 1988); b) conducting negative case analysis (Glesne, 2011); c) engaging in member checking (Creswell, 2013); and d) employing a critical friend (Gordon, 2006). In order to keep the abovementioned subjectivities at bay, my own feelings were monitored in the reflective memos discussed previously, keeping track of the “warm and cool spots, the emergence of positive and negative feelings” as indicators of when subjectivities were engaged (Peshkin, 1988, p. 18). These memos were utilized in order to take note of when these feelings appeared. This type of audit, as it were, was completed when interviews were reviewed after their transcription and allowed me the opportunity to take note of when subjectivities may have affected the research at hand and assisted with the bracketing process I employed. An example of a memo written

during the course of the research of this study is illustrated below and there is specific discussion of both positive and negative feelings that were uncovered.

Table 3.6

Reflective Memo

Bracketing Memo #4

February 18, 2018

RE: A Question of Settling

During my interview with Catherine, she discussed that she attended the branch campus as a result of financial pressure. Specifically, she did not have the funding to attend any other institution. Though she specially mentioned to me that she did not feel as if she were settling, she did also state that she felt like the campus was were only option.

This seems to reflect my own experience attending California Baptist University. I had applied to other schools, but those were knocked out of the running due to financial considerations: they simply were not giving me enough in scholarships and grants. Though I was even accepted to a public university and the cost would have been much cheaper, my parents did not really want me to attend one, so like Catherine, I feel like I settled in deciding where I attended college based solely on finances.

However, I feel like I made the most of the it, and Catherine seems to have done the same. I threw myself into campus life and got heavily involved. But there are still times where I reflect back on my past decisions and wonder if I made the right ones, including where I spent my undergraduate years.

One's subjectivities must always be taken into account and be in the back of one's head while out in the field. As Peshkin (1988) notes, it is wise to know and be aware of personal sentiments and to "take account of them" (p. 19).

Taking a step back, identifying the subjectivities at hand, and taking ownership of them alerted me of their presence. Examples of these identifications are below in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7

Monitoring Known Subjectivities

Occurrence	Identification	Subjectivity
First Interview Faith	Student Government	Faith discussed her involvement with student government on the branch campus. This connects with both my “Student I” and “Professional I.” As an undergraduate student, I served in the student government at my university and was heavily involved as a student leader. As a professional within higher education, I sometimes worked directly with student government representatives and staff in order to successfully stage events and assist in building community amongst the student body on the branch campus.
Second Interview Raquel	Learning APA	Raquel discussed how her Writing Intensive Course exposed her to APA-style writing for her major, Psychology. This reminds me of my time as both an undergraduate and graduate student. As I majored in History, I had to become familiar with the Chicago style of writing which is used for those in the field of History. Their use of footnotes, reference style, and other elements are completely different from that of APA, which I first learned and utilized during my time as a graduate student in Public Administration. Like Raquel, I found useful those courses which

		made active use of these writing styles which forced me and my peers to learn the writing techniques required to be successful. Raquel's discussion connected to both my "HIPs I" and my "Student I."
Fifth Interview	Student	
Gabrielle	Ambassadors	During her interview, Gabrielle discussed her involvement in several clubs and organizations during her time as an undergraduate at the university branch campus. One of these organizations she referred to as student ambassadors and spoke of how they interacted with campus visitors, volunteered with activities and events on campus, and helped support the campus dean. My "Student I" connected with this because during my own time as an undergraduate, I served as a student ambassador in the Institutional Advancement division at my undergraduate university. Like Gabrielle, I was able to connect with campus and off-campus stakeholders, other students, and helped to serve the university in a goodwill advancing capacity.

All in all, though, I realized that subjectivities were always present, though they always were accounted for. Their collective impact was identified and cautiously approached. In this study, there was an "enhanced awareness" (Peshkin, 1988, p. 20). As Glesne (2011) notes, "a continual alertness to your own biases and theoretical dispositions assists in producing more trustworthy interpretations" (p. 211). To enhance the research, I took full responsibility of my

personal ideas and experiences. In order to maximize the trustworthiness of the project, there were other techniques and practices that I employed.

Another technique that I used was the conscious, and unconscious, search of negative experiences, stories, etc. in relation to High Impact Practices. Glesne (2011) notes that this technique allows the researcher to point out things that may not be so easily noticed and allows for the refinement of one's study. Creswell (2013), in his discussion of negative case analysis, states that using such case analysis furthers the development of a more objective study and a "more realistic assessment of the phenomenon" (p. 251). Accordingly, in Chapter Four, I included discussion of negative experiences.

Also, I employed member checking by going back to my participants and allowing them access to their interview transcripts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This process allowed respondents to correct any errors that I made or clarify any statements that were in question. Finally, the last method I utilized to ensure the trustworthiness of this study was employing a critical friend. A critical friend is one who provides critique and critical feedback (Gordon, 2006). Additionally, a critical friend assists a researcher in providing clarification during the research and analysis process in sorting subjectivities (Gordon, 2006). My dissertation chair, whose areas of interest and scholarship include how organizational behaviors and structures help shape students' educational experiences, served as my critical friend.

Summary of Research Design

In this third chapter, I presented the purpose of this study and the research questions that guided this research. I then described the methodology that was utilized and explained the methods used to collect the data. I also discussed how study participants were identified, recruited, and selected. In addition, I provided profiles for each of my participants. Information related to the study's setting was also presented. I also described, step by step, my data analysis process. Lastly, I wrote of my subjectivities as a researcher and defined the methods I used in order to establish trustworthiness of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the findings of the study. As a reminder, I sought to explore the following research questions: a) How do students who graduated from a university branch campus describe their experiences with High Impact Practices? and b) From the students' perspective, how did High Impact Practices experiences influence their persistence, if at all? The findings are organized by the themes I constructed from the data. The themes highlight how participants described their experiences with High Impact Practices. Then, from the participants' perspectives, I discuss how these experiences with High Impact Practices influenced their persistence. In addition, based on my participants' narratives, I discuss common non-High Impact Practices that participants connected to their persistence.

Five interrelated themes were identified: a) Providing Foundational Support, b) Academic and Social Skill Building, c) Practical Connections and Application, d) Peer Support and Interaction, and e) Influential Experiences Beyond HIPs. *Influential Experiences Beyond HIPs* explores with those experiences that are non-HIPs related. While students gained valuable experiences through HIPs, their persistence, overall, was influenced more so by

non-HIPs related experiences. This chapter concludes with an identification and discussion of the core of the experience, *Influential Interactions*.

Experiences with High Impact Practices and Influences on Persistence Providing Foundational Support

Foundational Support refers to the learning opportunities that allowed students to gain knowledge and a better understanding of the university and the collegiate environment. Additionally, this theme also showcases the development of students' abilities to act independently and take an active role in their own success in navigating the halls of academia. The HIP specific to this theme is the First-Year Seminar. This course helped develop the skills and abilities of students and helped provide foundational support as students began their journey in higher education.

First-Year Seminars are an important High Impact Practice and as stated previously, have been incorporated across many college and university curriculums (Kuh, 2008). I found that the First-Year Seminar (FYS) at State University Valley Campus was an elective course and not required for graduation from the university. The course, instead, was an extension of the campus' orientation program and sought to develop motivation and drive for the students who enrolled and participated in the course.

As an extension of the campus' orientation program, the First-Year Seminar course assisted many of the participants in orientating them to the

campus and helping them to acclimate to university life. For the majority of the participants, this was an important experience as they were first-generation students who did not have familiarity with higher education and what they should expect when enrolling at a university. As Briana explained:

[The course] helped me because it gave you who to go speak to. In a sense it was an informational kind of class. It opened the doors to knowing people around campus. They would have speakers come in, like your advisors, and they just kind of walked you through it as to how to read your career center and your [university student portal] and stuff like that.

Briana's description of the FYS affording her the opportunity to get to know and interact with instrumental individuals on campus connects the FYS experience at SUVC with the idea of social integration, which is the level of association between a student and the social system at their college or university (Tinto, 1975). Social integration, in turn, is one of the key influences in student persistence (Jensen, 2011).

As Briana and other participants discussed, the FYS at State University Valley Campus included a series of presentations. Some were focused on campus services, other presentations were focused on some of the mundane tasks and functions that students would need to be familiar with in order to be successful at the campus and at the university, while some were focused on life after college, such as resume building.

Similarly, Gabrielle recalled the class as a helpful introduction to the branch campus and to the university as a whole. Not knowing what to expect, the FYS for her, and the other participants, was a method by which she was able to become familiar with her new academic home and be introduced to the different facets of university life. Gabrielle spoke about the various presentations on different topics:

I liked that class because coming into college you don't know what to expect, so that class told you what you should expect. So, it helped you out. Every week was a different subject, so one week could have been like, your FAFSA, like, how to fill it out on your own. The second week, your [advising report], and so on. That's what that class is for, it's to help you out so you can be more independent because in college you should be more independent. I felt that class was really helpful.

For Gabrielle, what she learned in the First-Year Seminar about the campus and the university and how it functions and how it serves the students allowed her to take care of herself and not rely on continuous assistance from advisors and staff during her time at State University Valley Campus. This was something she highly valued and helped her succeed as an independent student: “It impacted me a lot because I was able to do things on my own. I really didn't have to see an advisor unless it was necessary. So, I was able to do things on my own.”

Similar to Gabrielle, Sam remembered the presentations focused on becoming familiar with university procedures and learning how to maneuver and cope in his new environment – both academically and emotionally. He discussed FYS in terms of academic success in the following way:

[The First-Year Seminar] was really trying to get us used to this whole new way of thinking and doing stuff. 'Cause we're new. We didn't know anything. So, it's a lot of information that you're gonna need to know in order to really, like, survive here, such as making sure you know how to read your [advising] report and know all the classes that you basically need to take, and know how many classes you probably should take, depending on your work load and stuff like that. Yeah, so that was good. That was really trying to help us out with that.

As Sam described, he found value in learning how to engage in self-advising, Sam learned how to read and analyze his own academic progress through the university student portal from the academic advisors who visited his FYS. Sam appreciated this guidance because he learned valuable information that contributed to his success. The teaching and development of such skills relates back to the one of the purposes of HIPs, which is that HIPs should allow students to apply and test their newly acquired knowledge (Kuh, 2008). While Sam found value in presentations related to academics, Sam also found helpful discussions and presentations that dealt with emotional health:

And then you have, like, the stress, which also was trying to help us out because stress can lead to bouts of anger and that's not exactly the best thing to have on a college campus that's trying to really create a sort of peaceful environment for everyone. So, if you know how to deal with your stress, you know how to not put too much pressure on yourself, and you would know you don't necessarily need to be perfect in everything. If you don't get that A on this class, but you still manage to get, like an A- or B+, you're good, you know? It's not like it's the end of the world. You don't need to put this much type of pressure on you. It was all trying to really benefit us.

Sam appreciated that his First-Year Seminar instructor broached the subject of stress management. The advice that he received in the class was something that he took to heart as he dealt with stress during his educational career. This allowed him to continue his studies in a healthy frame of mind and helped him persist and complete his degree.

Sam's experiences with his FYs differs from the other participants in the way that he also focused on the lessons related to stress relief. Sam discussed the need to realize that perfection is likely unattainable, that grades are relative, and that the pressure of university life should be monitored. Sam described the support of staff in helping students deal with this type of stress and the services that were introduced in the class, including those related to the health and

wellness center on the campus. This knowledge allowed him to continue his studies in a healthy frame of mind and helped him persist and complete his degree. This foundational support is important to highlight as Sam's experience showcases a different type of orientation found in the First Year Seminars at SUVC that provides elements beyond academics, organizational structure, and familiarization with the campus. This is an illustration of Lau's (2003) finding that universities and colleges have a responsibility to provide programs, both academic and social, that allow students to successfully integrate into the life of the campus along with the importance of personal factors, such as personality traits, that are influential in the persistence of students (Alarcon & Edwards, 2012).

In the same fashion, Briana recalled some of the same aspects in her experience with the FYS regarding the focus on becoming familiar with the campus. However, she also remembered a focus on writing:

The freshman seminar class that I took it was building connections with my classmates but also it was an introduction to the campus as we were new freshman in a new school so it was know[ing] how to ask questions to your advisors, to faculty, and staff. They showed us how to properly write resumes and focused on college writing, resume, applications, that sort of thing.

Being introduced to college-level writing is an important part of becoming academically integrated into the university environment. As Major and Brown

(2008) identified, First-Year Seminars are valuable in that they assist students in developing the skills necessary to become a participant in the learning community. Without an introduction to higher-level writing, students at State University Valley Campus would struggle in future courses that require some awareness of writing techniques, analysis, etc. (The National Writing Project & Nagin, 2006).

Raquel's memory of the FYS also spoke to a focus on career and resume building, but she also fondly remembered the speakers who visited her class and with whom she and her classmates had the opportunity to interact:

I enjoyed [the First-Year Seminar] because they provided us with skills [resume writing] that we could use in the future. We got the career center to come to our class and talk about the career center. We made appointments with the career center. It was professional. The business professor was my professor for my freshman seminar.

Both Briana and Raquel's experiences showcase important characteristics that are essential components of HIPs. First, they encountered the practical application of skills, resume building, that could be used in the future. Secondly, Raquel's mention of her professor showcases interaction with faculty, which can influence the persistence of students (Reason, et al., 2005).

Raquel also recalled speakers coming into the classroom and presenting on their careers and experiences. These interactions, which resulted in increased levels of motivation, help illustrate the influence of First-Year Seminars as HIPs:

Every week we had a speaker. And we had speakers from like, police officers, for volunteering...we got a few and it was very helpful. A lot of students I know, they were able to talk to them, get their business cards, and stuff like that. Just listening to their stories, their struggles, and they were motivated speakers. So, I think that helped us out too, like think in the future that like, we can make it, I guess.

The focus of having these speakers come in and present their experiences was meant by the professor to have Raquel and her classmates explore potential career paths. Accordingly, Raquel and her peers experienced opportunities that helped them think about the future and the purpose behind why they were attending a university. Just as how Gabrielle was able to reflect on her writing and her personal academic progress, Raquel was able to reflect on her potential future and what that may look like once she had finished her education which was motivating in and of itself and influenced her continued persistence.

The First-Year Seminar and its content helped students become familiar with the university environment. Topics covered in the course included what services were available to them on campus, such as advising, financial aid, and the library; other subjects ranged from career oriented topics, such as how to write a resume or apply for a job, to practical knowledge, for example, how to log-in to the student management system and access their records and how to read their academic report, something that would be needed on a regular basis for

meetings with academic advisors and advising faculty. Faith mentioned how helpful it was to access this information and how the FYS helped push her along in her academic journey:

If I wouldn't have taken the freshman seminar, I wouldn't have known how to use my [advising] report and that's like, a big thing here on campus. So, yeah I think overall, [these classes] are all necessary and you should be taking them, but until now I think I've reflected and seen that each little piece of them was important and it was kind of like a path to grow.

Once students were able to develop a firm foundation and become familiar with their new educational setting, they were able to set a course in which to pursue their educational goals. Through their coursework and experiences with High Impact Practices, they were able to access opportunities to build their skills and develop their talents in the classroom.

Academic and Social Skill Building

Throughout my conversations with recent graduates of State University Valley Campus, there was a strong focus on how they were able to build their skills related to writing, leadership, and cultural competence through their experiences with High Impact Practices (HIPs). The skill building was not limited to only one HIP in particular. The HIPs that participants discussed in regard to skill building included a Writing Intensive Course, Collaborative Projects and Assignments, and Diversity/Global Learning. High Impact Practices, no matter

the practice, allowed participants the ability to build their skillsets and advance in their education. Whether it was learning how to conduct research, write a paper, or work with others through Writing Intensive Courses or Collaborative Projects and Assignments, building one's proficiencies and talents drove students to persist. Additionally, they were able to build understanding and knowledge of other cultures and populations through Diversity/Global Learning.

Writing Skills. One of the most common High Impact Practices (HIPs) that participants discussed was the Writing-Intensive Course, likely because the university requires a writing course to be completed by every student earning an undergraduate degree. Each participant discussed their enrollment in such courses and what assignments and activities they completed during the course. Largely, across the board, the experience was very similar in that they were able to develop and improve their writing. The exact type of Writing-Intensive Course (WIC) depended on students' majors. For example, if a student was a Psychology major, their WIC may be focused on writing papers that were researched-based. If a student was majoring in Communications, their respective WIC may examine different styles of writing focusing on the need to communicate different messages through different mediums. Writing-Intensive Courses are identified as a High Impact Practice because they require effort on the part of the student and require them to devote time and energy that allow for a deepened investment and commitment to the university (Kuh, 2008).

Faith described the course as one in which she took for her major and in which she and her fellow classmates were able to focus in on their writing and the writing process. She elaborated her experience at length:

It was expository writing, but this one was specifically for psychology majors. I think we all know that there's different ways of writing, but I think it really helps you focus on your style of writing. Because what we would do is, it would be writing a paper each week, and she [the professor] would kind of like, go through them and, and pick out the little bits, like slang that we've been using that we don't really notice. So, I think it helped, allowed me to become a better writer and allowed me to kind of... proofread my own writing more than I used to because I think before we would just pretty much [use] spellcheck and little things that you would pick out. But I think this allowed me to kind of, I guess, write a little more maturely. And just proofread as much as you can, because that's what we would do in class as well, we would kind of hand over each other's papers and proofread each other's, as well.

Faith's experience illustrates that she was able to learn an important technique of the writing process through her WIC. The ability to proofread one's own work is an important aspect that must be learned and encouraged in order to help develop good writing habits and abilities. This helps students, and anyone who writes in whatever medium, to learn more about their own style of writing

and encourages taking a critical eye to one's own work. Proofreading is a skill that Faith was able to take with her as she continued her studies at the university and apply to papers that she wrote in her other courses. This finding reflects the work of Brownell, et al. (2013) who found that Writing Intensive Courses can help further students' writing abilities, which assists in furthering academic integration.

Sam's WIC was one that he took for his major, as well. As a Communication major, his course had a much different focus than Faith's WIC. However, like Faith, though, he was able to grow in his writing and knowledge of the writing process:

I've also done writing for media. So, it was like trying to write in new forms. I never knew how to write, like an article for a newspaper because I never had to do it before...I never had to write one of those public statement type things. So, I learned how to write different things...I did do the writing intensive stuff...beforehand, the only experience I really had writing for anything like that, for anything, really, was just purely essays for classes. In there, I had to learn how to format a newspaper article which means...you only need to do maybe two sentences per paragraph and you have to start with the very, very important thing at the very front, and the very [unimportant] things that you can probably leave out at the very bottom, because if you gotta get people's attention at the very

beginning, especially with the first, I believe it was like five words, those first five words don't catch people's attention, they're just not going to read it.

Sam's WIC was very specific to his major, which he would eventually need to depend on in his future career. Sam's WIC and his experience showcases the many forms that a WIC may take. While Faith's experience focused on the proofreading process, Sam's experience focused on learning the different ways he could communicate through various mediums. Just as Faith learned a technique and practice that she apply into future courses, Sam was able to learn practices that he would be able to apply in the workplace.

Faith and Sam took their Writing Intensive Courses as a part of their respective majors, Additionally, Briana also took a WIC as a part of her major. However, she saw other benefits in taking the WIC other than just completing a requirement. She saw the course as a way to improve her writing after receiving a bad grade early in her university career and to help with her English development. In describing the WIC as a part of her coursework, Briana said:

I took it because when I started here my freshman professor [sat me down]...[during] his office hours...because my first paper here I got D. And I was like "Oh no, a D." He told me what he wanted or what he was expecting, but I was like, "I can't give you that because I don't know how to write to this level." So, we sat down and practiced on my writing and I decided to take the course because I

wanted to challenge myself to write properly, practice my English... [the papers] were all [focused on] APA writing...specific for criminal justice. I always had trouble with research papers in the way that I just never knew how to interpret data and how to incorporate [data] into writing. So, it kind of challenged me there to learn how to analyze research and make it into a prompt or make it into a paper.

Briana's experience with a Writing Intensive Course illustrates another type of impact and experience that can be had when a student takes a WIC. When students enter college or a university for the first time, they may not have all the skills necessary to succeed, especially when it comes to writing to a level that is acceptable for higher education. Enrolling and completing a Writing Intensive Course allows students to develop a stronger foundation based on the language and communication skills that will be needed in order to successfully complete their coursework and eventually earn their degree. In addition, Briana, like Faith, also learned techniques in which to improve her writing; in Briana's case, she was able to learn how to approach writing a research paper using APA and how to analyze data in an appropriate way way. This, again, is a skill that she would be able to apply as she continued on at the campus. For both, the WIC allowed them an avenue for academic integration, which is imperative for persistence.

Similarly, Raquel also touched on how taking a Writing Intensive Course prepared her for future educational endeavors:

[The Writing Intensive Course] helped me out with my future classes, a lot of my classes are APA format, so that helped me out a lot. Also, how to read an article...they showed us...not to read the whole thing but look for sections. When I was in undergrad, I know it was very helpful for my major because psychology is all about APA, and we have a research paper in every psychology class.

Now that I'm in the master's program we also do a lot of APA.

Just as Briana touched on how her WIC was focused on utilizing the APA style of writing, so did Raquel find her WIC useful in building her skills and preparing her for using APA on a regular basis, as she currently does in the graduate program in which she is enrolled. This illustrates the HIP nature of the Writing Intensive Course in that it allowed the student to apply the knowledge learned (Kuh, 2008).

Gabrielle's WIC also assisted in developing her research skills. She spoke of a writing assignment in which she and her classmates created a village and its population and all the essentials that population would need to survive:

We were given a paper where we had an amount of villagers living in your village. [There were] females, males, there [were] kids, there [were] elders, and then you had to make sure that they would survive in your village, so you had to create your own water source, [decide] who was gonna be in charge of the medicine, if there was gonna be electricity, if there was gonna be running water. All these things. So, in order for them to survive, let's say [a] type of world

ending or something, but only this place [survived], how would you keep those people alive? Since this was a paper, plus a project, it got me to do more research.

Gabrielle's Writing Intensive Course, and her experience therein, seemed a bit different when compared to the other participants' descriptions of their WICs at first glance. The assignment about creating a village does sound very different and unique, however, the essential experience was the same in that she was able to learn basic research skills and how to apply them when writing a paper, or an essay, or any other type of assignment that may require research. This application of learned skills showcases the nature of the experience as high impact (Kuh, 2008). Currently, Gabrielle is not enrolled in a graduate program, although she is completing her teaching credential. If she chose to pursue an advanced degree, however, these research skills would be valuable and worthwhile.

The WIC Gabrielle took also influenced her writing in general. Over the course of the term, Gabrielle and her classmates wrote many papers to grow their skills and at the end of the course, were able to observe their development. Of this, Gabrielle stated:

The other assignments that we had, now those, we'd do different drafts. So, in the beginning we did a certain assignment, and then at the end we did a similar one just so we could see what our difference was through [between] those ten weeks.

Gabrielle also noted that she had the ability to reflect on her writing growth and the changes that she was able to make over the course of the academic term. Reflection, as previously discussed in the literature review, is one of the indicators of a High Impact Practice (Kuh, 2008) and with Gabrielle's ability to reflect on her writing, the experience of completing a Writing Intensive Course is illustrated in full.

In summary, many of the participants in this study spoke about how their Writing Intensive Course assisted them in developing their writing style and the writing process. Raquel spoke about how the WIC helped her become familiar with the APA style of writing, both for the completion of her undergraduate degree and for the current graduate program in which she is enrolled. Without forming a solid basis in APA, Raquel would not have been able to succeed in a major that requires regular proficiency in that type of style.

Students developed their writing through various skills such as proofreading. These skills were able to be applied throughout their undergraduate studies. In some cases, these skills are now being applied while pursuing graduate studies. In addition, as expressed by students, these skills can be applied in future careers.

Leadership Skills. In addition to building up writing skills and techniques, Catherine and Sam, in particular, realized the opportunity to build their talents in regard to leadership and learning how to work with individuals with different work styles. Both Catherine and Sam, in the classes in which they took part in

collaborative assignments and projects, took on leadership roles in order for their groups to succeed. Both described it as not being an option; it was as if it were mandated. Both described their experiences leading their groups as trials by fire. They were motivated, in part, because they did not want to fail as a result of someone else's lack of responsibility. Sam stated:

Yeah, every now and then, I ended up with somebody that didn't exactly pull their own weight. So, it was either me, or it was someone else. Generally, we had to pick up their slack. It's happened enough times in my life to the point where I generally overall wasn't a fan of group projects, because I always go into that mindset, "oh, I'm gonna get stuck with someone else's workload." Some of them were definitely like, uh, okay we're all equal and we're all putting our input. Some of them, because it's like different for every group basically, someone has to essentially take on the leadership role and almost just tell everybody else what to do.

Similarly, Catherine described her experience with group projects as follows:

It's a hit or miss positive. Some classes that I really enjoyed and already knew the people... projects were no big deal. My entire credential program if we had to work together, never any frustrations. Whenever I had something with my bachelor's degree, that was a different story...because like I said, sometimes I was in

a class where I didn't know anybody because I was taking an upper-division when I was still a freshman or sophomore ... and learned really quickly right away, either we were all gonna do it together, or I was gonna do it by myself, because that's how group projects are. Yep, it needs to get done and I'm not gonna have anybody sink.

Though both Catherine and Sam were not happy to take on the role of leader in their respective group projects and assignments, both were able to gain experience in taking charge and delegating in order to succeed. Putting themselves into leadership roles was a motivating factor for both Catherine and Sam and played a part in their persistence.

Coupled with taking on and gaining leadership experience, Catherine found herself developing additional skills when working with others and studying in groups:

I think that's where I would say I got a lot of my informal tutoring experience, because I would study beforehand, and I felt like teaching the material to other people helped me study on my own, because I feel like if you can teach something to someone it means you really know it. So that's how I felt like I did well on my tests, because I was able to teach it to other people.

In completing this informal tutoring with her peers, Catherine was able to build her basic skills in teaching. Her experiences and the responsibilities and

opportunities she embraced, such as learning basic teaching skills, working in groups, and collaborative assignments, proved useful later when she became a specialty mathematics tutor over two of her summer breaks. In this capacity, Catherine was able to assist incoming college freshmen in the completion of their pre-requisite math courses. She spoke of how her informal peer tutoring experiences allowed her to gain the skills to help others in their studies. To this point, it should also be mentioned that student employment on campus is a potential High Impact Practice that has been explored in the literature (McClellan, Creager, & Savoca, 2018).

Cultural Competence. While many of my study's participants discussed the development of their writing skills and only two, Catherine and Sam, discussed building leadership skills in relation to their experiences with HIPs, five of the six participants spoke of their experiences directly related to Diversity/Global Learning. Raquel, Gabrielle, Briana, and Catherine each spoke of assignments related to race. These experiences mirrored each other's very closely and I surmise that they either took the same course during the same academic term or shared a common instructor. Sam, in comparison, experienced Diversity/Global Learning through participation in a cultural program that was a part of a course he took as a part of his major, Communication. Each were able to speak to how they were exposed to different cultures and how that assisted in them gaining a better understanding of people who come from background

dissimilar to their own. Though they were able to build cultural competency, however, these recalled experiences were not influential in their persistence.

One of the courses that was offered at SUVC was a class that focused on issues related to racism. As a part of the class, students were required to complete a survey that examined their attitudes toward different populations and attempted to measure their levels of racism. After the results were received, students were expected to complete an assignment in they went out into the wider community and attend a cultural event related that particular group. In Raquel's case, the survey she completed suggested that she was biased against White people. Consequently, she visited a Catholic church and attended an English-speaking mass. As a Hispanic individual, she regularly attends church but celebrates mass in Spanish. While she appreciated worshipping with others of the same faith but in a different language, Raquel said that "it [was] weird...I'm so used to being with Hispanics that was very weird to be in a...White community." When I asked her how the experience influenced her motivation, if at all, she bluntly stated, "I don't think it really had an impact on me in school."

Similarly, Gabrielle also attended a church different from the one that she is familiar with and attended their mass. However, she was unable to recall many details related to the rest of the course or the assignment. However, what she was able to recall was that she enjoyed the experience because it allowed her to learn about a different culture and "how different people do certain things a different way than you're used to." In the same breath, though, Gabrielle

expressed her belief that the experience had no influence on her decision to stay enrolled at SUVC, instead the experience allowed her to gain an appreciation of a different culture.

Like Raquel, Briana, too, mentioned the completion of the survey. However, unlike Raquel, Briana's survey did not identify any one particular group that she was biased against. Additionally, Briana did not recall attending a cultural event. However, she did recollect that it prompted her to watch her language and how she spoke with others and how she interacted with them. She described this shift in the following way:

It self-taught me to [check] the way that I speak to someone...you double check yourself on what you say to people. You double think of what you say or how you treat others. So it kind of helped me with that.

Briana here describes the possible long-term effects of Diversity/Global Learning. This type of learning encourages sensitivity to others and helps student develop respect for other cultures and ethnicities.

Catherine did not mention the survey while discussing her diversity/global experience, but instead related that the assignment was to attend an event related to a culture to which one did not belong to or was unfamiliar with. Instead of visiting a house of worship like Raquel, Catherine attended a friend's cousin's coming of age celebration, a Debut:

It's basically like a Quinceanera, but in a Filipino culture. So since I knew I had this assignment, I said, "Can I go?" I mean I know about people who are Filipino, my boyfriend's Filipino, but I don't know a lot about the culture and I had never even heard of a Debut before this, I just thought Quinceaneras were the only thing that you know, people celebrated. So, I went, and [saw] a lot of food that I had never seen before ... that was what probably surprised me the most, the food, because they have a live pig, like right in the middle of everything, and I thought I've never seen anything like that before. So, that was interesting... and even the way they eat too, everything is served almost buffet style whereas I'm used to being at home, everything would be served for you kind of thing ...it was just a different experience that I had and they had other little traditions that felt [were] a little bit similar to a Quinceanera, so I felt a little bit comfortable with it.

Though she professed her comfort with the event and the celebration, Catherine did admit to moments in which she did not feel entirely relaxed. This she found was related to differences in language:

I have never been in a room for that long in a language that I didn't understand... I speak enough Spanish to get by, and I've been to Mexico before, so when everybody's speaking a lot of Spanish, that's pretty familiar to me, [when] everyone speaks English that's

pretty familiar to me, but everyone that I was surrounded by was speaking Tagalog and that was the first time where I felt where I really had no idea what was going on. So, that was an interesting experience, too.

Like I did with all my participants, when I broached the topic of her persistence related to this cultural experience, Catherine did relate that was it not for the assignment, she would not have attended the event and would not have been exposed to this new culture. However, there was no connection to her motivation to continue attending SUVC.

Unlike the preceding experiences related to Diversity/Global Learning, Sam spoke of being exposed to different cultures through an event coordinated through a communication class he completed. The class was based on multiculturalism and each student chose a country to research and present on culture for an event that celebrated cultural diversity. The event was open to the campus community and coordinated by the class as a group. Sam described the event in the following way:

We put our booths up with our information and some of us, if we wanted to go the extra mile, dressed up in the culture that we were representing and some of us decided to also bring food to help them out 'cause it wasn't just for our class, it was open to everybody. I know our group did Guatemala. I also saw Mexico. I believe I saw Ireland. I believe I saw ... uh, I forgot which Asian

country it was. So, we got all these different cultures here being represented...I actually got to learn a couple things from other places and try some of their cuisine and that was interesting. Some didn't exactly sit well with me, and by that I mean the cuisine, not the other cultures. We [were able] to [go to] other people's booths and then they tell us, then they come to our booths and we tell them, so it was really just trying to put all this information together.

Elsewhere in this chapter, Sam is mentioned describing the campus population of SUVC as homogenous, mostly made up of those of Hispanic/Latinx background. With that in mind, he was highly appreciative of the event and the assignment because he was able to be exposed to cultures different from his own. In fact, being able to learn about these other cultures birthed something inside of him as he described a desire to travel and visit some of the countries and cultures he learned about that day.

Through classes and programming, students were able to become familiar with diverse cultures, viewpoints, and life experiences. These are all aspects of Diversity/Global Learning, as described by Kuh (2008). Cultural competence was able to be built and students were able to gain the ability to interact with individuals of different cultural backgrounds. However, as showcased through the students' own words, these new skills did not necessarily influence their persistence. While the study's participants were able to develop new skills and expand their learning, they also had opportunity to apply those skills and what

they learned in the classroom to new environments and build connections between the classroom and off campus locales.

Practical Connections and Application

One theme that I constructed while examining participants' HIPs experiences was *Practical Connections and Application*. This theme was illustrated through several of the participants' ability to connect what was being learned or presented in the classroom to the corners of the community in which the participants worked and volunteered. The *Practical Connections and Application* that participants were able to identify were motivating in and of themselves. These connections to the real world can also assist in developing motivation, which is a key factor in predicting persistence (Alarcon & Edwards, 2012). Furthermore, as Kuh (2008) discussed, HIPs can be identified when they offer opportunities to integrate, synthesize, and apply knowledge and this, in turn, helps strengthen learning. Additionally, HIPs can also offer the ability for students to develop a sense of their own individual values and their relation to the world at large.

Related to these points, Briana, spoke of an assignment that she took on herself, which assisted her in building on some of the skills that she was learning in the classroom. During her coursework, Briana was completing service learning, another HIP, in two places, a local high school and the local sheriff's office. While taking a course in which she needed to write a research paper, she identified an issue wherein students mistrusted the local law enforcement and

had a very negative view of their position within the community. The assignment was not to complete new research, but Briana took it upon herself to conduct research on her own and gained permission from her instructor to do so:

I saw that in [name of local community], we have a lot of conflict between the police department and students starting from middle school to high school, they have a negative connection with law enforcement. So, I just did like a mini survey on like why the negative connotation. Because I feel like in middle school you're still young, why do you have that negative connotation with your police department? It was just like a survey of a couple questions that were like "Why is there that negative connotation?" I ended up learning that it's just that you're young and you're not following the law so therefore you don't like anyone telling you what to do or you like hear stories that your friends make up that really don't necessarily happen. It wasn't a senior [project]. It was for a class and we had to write a research paper but I asked [the professor] if I could do [the survey] since I was volunteering at the high school. We had to do like a research paper for our final and she let me do that.

As previously discussed, Briana initially had issues writing papers and she was able to build her skills through a Writing Intensive Course, which assisted her in also tackling research papers. However, she was able to build up her skills

to such a level that she was able to go out into the community, identify a problem, and take on the task of finding out the “why” in a troubling situation. This here is a direct illustration of connecting what is learned in the classroom (the research process) and applying that learning to the surrounding community.

Catherine also had the opportunity to make practical connections between the classroom and the school in which she completed her student teaching service. She spoke of the different ideas and methods related to teaching that were discussed in her course at the university and how they were used her own student teaching experiences:

I will say, that I have learned more inside of a classroom, teaching, in student teaching, observation work, as a teacher, than I do in the classes that I've had here. Not to say anything against the theory of Education ... or the classes that I had to study, or the assignments that I have to do, because they were all helpful, but when I'm in the classroom, and when I'm reading a book, it's a completely different experience...

Although she spoke about an evident disconnect between theory and practice, Catherine was able to connect some of those methods and strategies she learned about in the classroom and apply them as a student teacher. She spoke of an example in which she took a new strategy for teaching a mathematical principle and putting it in action. In the end, it was to her benefit, as

the strategy proved effective and showcased her talents during an observation by a master teacher:

I would steal those ideas and use them when I was practicing, especially for math, because Common Core's changing a lot of the way that teachers think, but specifically in math, because you're not teaching rote memorization algorithms anymore, it has to be learning based, and all that kind of stuff. So, there were a couple of different assessment strategies that I wasn't sure of and a couple of students and professors had mentioned, "Well why don't you try working on this strategy?" When I tried in my classroom, well, I was getting observed that day, and it went over really successfully, and my professor said that was the best observation that she had seen.

It is important to note that upon her graduation from the university, Catherine was offered a job teaching in a local school district. She was able to secure employment quickly and began teaching within three months of commencement.

While Catherine found practical connections between her learning in the classroom and the workplace environment, Briana found connections between her writing assignments and community problems. Similarly, Sam drew from his coursework in Communication Studies and made practical connections and applications to complete his senior project/capstone project. Sam's senior project consisted of writing a screenplay, as he hopes to become a writer in the film industry, and staging a reading of the completed screenplay in the campus'

theater. While planning the process and the endeavor was one thing, Sam found that it was a completely different process when put into action:

So then in the spring, I had to go out and find people that would be completely willing to help me out, and so we had to then rehearse everything, so it was like really like I was...the writer, I was the producer, I was the director, I was doing all these hats. That one's more hands on 'cause it was like, "okay, well now we have to figure out scheduling. Like, when can we all meet up to rehearse?" Or as the case was in the very, very end, when one of them couldn't help me out during the reading on the day so I had to take over for them. And it was like, "okay, well now I'm their understudy I guess." It was actually more putting stuff that I had to learn to actually communicate with people, like interpersonally and try to get this group to actually succeed.

In order to produce a reading of his finished screenplay, Sam found that he needed to recall his studies in communications in order for his project to be successful. Just as Catherine and Briana found practical connections between their respective majors and the worlds in which they hope to build their careers, Sam found that he needed to rely on the knowledge that he gained in his communication studies courses and put those principles in action to complete the task laid before him. Sam, through his learning and the application of that learning, showcased mature intellectual development in completing his capstone

project and reflects his successful integration into the university on an academic level (Tinto, 1975), which allowed him to persist and achieve success.

The common thread between the three participants who explicitly described experiences related to *Practical Connections and Application* was that they were able to put into practice what they learned in the classroom. In Briana's scenario, as she was completing her volunteer work in both a local high school and in the local sheriff's station, she was able to identify a problem that needed some investigation. From the knowledge that she gained in the classroom about research and the process behind it, she was motivated to find an answer to a question that she herself identified. After finding the answer through her own survey, she was able to see that her future work could possibly make a difference in her hometown community. Briana found this motivating and encouraged her to apply her learning in ways that she had not thought about before.

With Catherine, she was able to directly apply practices that she learned in the classroom to her own classroom, as she was student teaching. Catherine was able to realize that her learning was taking her somewhere and that it would be helpful in the long run, even though it may not be apparent right away. While she criticized her classroom learning, she was able to take part in its practical application. This motivated Catherine in completing her studies and helped her realize that theory can really be applied in practice.

Just like Briana and Catherine, Sam applied the principles of communications into a real-world scenario. His senior capstone project related precisely to his career aspirations—a Hollywood writer. He drew motivation from seeing himself, in a sense, act out the part of a Hollywood participant: recruiting actors, coordinating rehearsals, and putting on a final performance, which was the final outcome of all his efforts. Sam derived joy and excitement from his work on this project. His emotions were on full display during my interview as he smiled and talked enthusiastically about his experience. This capstone project, and the way in which he was able to actively apply his learning, influenced his persistence and illustrates Alarcon and Edwards' (2012) identification of motivation and its role in promoting persistence.

While working to connect their academic learning to practical application, students also were able to work regularly with their peers and fellow classmates. These meaningful interactions were able to lead to opportunities for support.

Peer Support and Interaction

Throughout my conversations with participants about their experiences with HIPs, one of the oft-discussed aspects of the courses and HIPs that they participated in was the opportunity for them to interact regularly with their peers, to give and receive their support, and gain methods of understanding their branch campus classmates. Regular interaction, as Tinto (1975) notes in his Interactionist Theory, helps to develop social integration and has a positive

effect on student persistence. The interactions revealed in this study were not limited to just one HIP.

As previously mentioned during the discussion about the development of leadership skills both Sam and Catherine had interactions with their peers that were not always entirely positive. However, Sam also enjoyed the contact with his classmates as it allowed him to perhaps view things differently and learn more about students' cultures and life experiences. Of this he stated:

Yeah, because while this [campus] isn't exactly the most diverse in terms of culture because most of us all generally came from the same kind of culture, we did have people coming from different areas. A lot of us were mostly of a Latino kind of culture. So, we had that kind of going for a lot of us. But then we did occasionally have someone that comes from another [culture]. Which we had to kind of maybe learn how to kind of deal with, almost like how they're used to doing, seeing things, how does that mesh with the way we're used to doing things? So, we've had to learn how accommodate to either, to both of us to try to get the best way that we can all get this done. And some of us, then, you have the younger people and then people who are just coming to college again for like, the first time, and they're in their mid to late twenties or they're already in their late [or] early thirties. So, you have like, the age kind of difference that we then had to work with.

Sam's experiences speak to how he was able to interact with others from backgrounds different than their own. Though he notes that State University Valley Campus was mostly homogenous from a racial/ethnic diversity standpoint, he was able to work with other students who were returning to complete their education, students from age groups different than his own, and also with students who had different ways of working and completing assignments. Altogether, he needed to learn how to work with his peers and classmates and come together with them in order to succeed. This coming together with his peers allowed him to socially integrate and interact regularly with his peers, which, in turn, influences persistence (Tinto, 1975).

Though Catherine may have had less-than-favorable experiences in regard to group work and collaborative assignments, she still appreciated taking many of the same classes with her peers. This was not a result of any particular HIP, such as learning communities. This was achieved because the small size of the campus allowed for students to take many of the same courses together if they were in a particular major. Catherine described her experience positively:

Because I had a lot of classes with my friends, and I didn't feel alone, and I didn't feel comfortable meeting new people yet, because I was already in a new school. I don't want a lot of new things thrown at me...so I was able to stay with a lot of people I had already known or knew who they were at least. So, it wasn't totally brand new to me, it made me feel like, okay even though everything

else is new, I have some type of consistency with the people that I know, and I really like that. We would meet on campus early, or we would stay late, and we would work on projects together if we had projects, we would work ... study for midterms together...because none of us knew what midterms were until we got into college and said, "What, it's been a month and we already have to take a test, it's worth 50% of my grade!"

As a new student on a university campus, Catherine liked the fact that she was not just another student in the crowd and was able to gain familiarity with her classmates. This allowed her to develop a sense of belonging and form relationships, which assisted with her course completion. She was able to study regularly with her peers, work on projects with them, and share many of the same classroom and academic experiences. She found that she was not alone in her academic pursuits, and she had a great appreciation for that. Catherine was able to successfully integrate socially which, in turn, contributed directly to her persistence.

Furthermore, Catherine was in the unique position of taking post-graduate classes while still completing her undergraduate degree. While taking these post-graduate classes, she was placed into a cohort and learned to work together with them on a regular basis. Though not identified as a learning community, the cohort functioned as such, as they took classes together and progressed as a

group through the program. In relation to that experience, she described it in the following way:

I respect my cohort in that way, because we were all motivated to do the same thing, under the same amount of time. We all knew we had a year to finish, we were all gonna get finished within a year, and we all grew really close together because we all struggled through that program together...that was probably my hardest year at [State University Valley Campus], because that's where I couldn't be a full-time student anymore. I had to student teach half the day, five days a week, and then come to class at night, and that was rough, but we ... I think what is the phrase? Misery loves company. We were all suffering together but we all became really good friends... I'm living with two of the people who were in my credential program from last year, because we became so good friends.

For the portion of her studies that focused on earning her credential, Catherine found the cohort-style of learning most conducive to her learning. She found great help and assistance in working regularly with the same group of people and found that their common goal, earning their credential, was a great motivating factor. Catherine thoroughly enjoyed her experience on the whole in the cohort style of learning and relished in the peer support that she received.

Like Catherine's experience with her cohort, Gabrielle took many classes with her peers who were enrolled in the same major as she was, but this was not

a formal learning community. She found it helpful that she had a network of classmates that she could call upon when she needed help with the material: “After your second year you're mostly with the people in your same major. So, I was able to go to anyone and just get help whenever I needed, or they could come to me.” In this context, Gabrielle experienced regular peer interaction; much in the same way Catherine described her cohort experience. Examining Gabrielle’s experience, it could be said that since she took the majority of her classes with the same students, she too experienced a cohort model of learning. However, this was not a formalized situation.

Faith also found support amongst her classmates and peers. While completing one of the core classes for her major, Faith was faced with a heavy workload in a particularly difficult class that she needed to pass so that she could move on in her program. However, she was able to find assistance in her peers:

I think what really helped was the group effort since we know a lot of these students already because of the four years. I think that really helped us stick together and not give up because I think on my own I would have just been like, you know, this course is hard. I'm probably not gonna pass. And that would have been my mentality, but as a group we would all kind of push each other. So, I think that helped a lot.

Faith, like Gabrielle, was also in an informal cohort situation. There were many fellow students with whom she had shared many courses with and were on

familiar terms with her. The group project that was assigned in the particular psychology class she refers to above was facilitated because of the common effort between the groups members which was only accomplished because of the relationships that had been built up over their previous experiences together.

Regularly interacting with classmates and peers allowed participants to be pushed along, in a positive manner. For some, it was a form of peer pressure, to continue on and succeed in their program. In Catherine's case, participating in a cohort for the completion of her credential program, while still an undergraduate student, was a large influence in how she persisted through to her graduation:

If I didn't have those people with me, I wouldn't have gotten a lot of work done. The reason why we did was because we all decided to stay after class to get it done, or we're all meeting up now to get it done, because if we don't do it together ...we'll all fail, you know, because we won't work on it on our own, none of us will do it, because we don't know how to do it unless we have each other. So, it really did motivate us to work.

As Catherine was in a unique situation in which she was enrolled in a credential program while simultaneously completing her undergraduate studies, she worked with both undergraduate and graduate students. While working with her undergraduate peers, she sometimes encountered frustrations, which influenced her motivation. While she found motivation in working with older students, Catherine did not, at times, find it effective working with her peers when

she was taking the undergraduate portion of her coursework and taking the same classes with them term after term:

After a while, it kind of got a little boring. I was with the same people, and that's where I mentioned earlier where you can start to see people who are motivated and unmotivated ...I started finding myself with my friends still, but the rest of the class felt very unmotivated ... and I didn't feel comfortable being like-... that, it felt middle school where you couldn't choose your classes yet, and you had to be grouped with people just because they were your age.

Gabrielle also enjoyed the support she received from her peers in her major program of study. She described working with her fellow peers in the following way:

I feel like it got me out of my comfort zone more because I'd, you know, like if you have a problem you don't, sometimes you don't want to speak out because you're like, "Oh, they're getting it. Like, why am I not?" But sometimes they could also have the problem and if you collaborate then you're both like, "Oh, like, I didn't know you also had a problem." So, you could work on it together and it's better. You could get to the answer better.

Gabrielle was positively influenced by working with like-minded students. In her experience, this type of group-think assisted in her completion and influenced her motivation. She appreciated the sense of a common goal in

completing assignments and projects. The presence of a common goal for her and her peers was something that Catharine also experienced and enjoyed. Together, both Catherine and Gabrielle's persistence was influenced by common experiences and interactions with their fellow peers.

One High Impact Practice, diversity/global learning, allowed students who took part in the experience to develop their cultural awareness and appreciation. In turn, this awareness and appreciation.

While participants described their experiences with HIPS and how HIPs influenced their persistence, they also discussed other elements and experiences that contributed to their persistence. As one of the overall goals of this work is to help inform policies and practices at university branch campuses for the purpose of promoting student persistence, retention, and degree completion, the non-HIPs related experiences that my participants drew attention to are of value and significance to this work. In fact, these experiences provide important insights into how branch campuses can implement HIPs in ways that are relevant to university branch campus students. In sum, given my roles and responsibilities to my participants as a qualitative researcher (Glesne, 2016), the next section of my analysis examines non-HIP related experiences and the role they played in the persistence of branch campus students, which I labeled *Influential Experiences Beyond High Impact Practices* and discuss below.

Influential Experiences Beyond High Impact Practices

As noted above, although this study focused on the experiences of students in regard to High Impact Practices, one of the common talking points amongst my participants was discussion about experiences outside the realm of High Impact Practices. This study strived to explore their experiences related to HIPs, but it is impossible and irresponsible to ignore those elements that make up the whole of their experience. The over-arching theme, *Influential Experiences Beyond HIPS*, consists of the following interrelated sub-themes: Familial Motivations, Financial Motivations, On-Campus Involvement and Employment, and Small Campus Environment. Each experience influenced participants' motivation and their persistence.

Familial Motivations. A common experience amongst study participants was being the first in their family to attend college or university and complete their degree or being a part of the first generation of college students in their family. Raquel spoke of being the first in her family, including extended family, to attend college. She spoke of how this influenced her motivation and her persistence. She saw herself as a leader in her family: "I'm a role model for my younger cousins. And I think that was a big motivator too, being the first student to graduate from a four-year college, university."

Raquel's motivation here was her self-image as a trailblazer for her younger relatives. She found in herself great inspiration. That pushed her to continue her studies and eventually graduate and then later enroll in a graduate

program to advance her studies. Raquel hoped that her example would spur her cousins and other relatives to pursue their own educational goals.

Like Raquel, Faith, too, was the first in her family to attend school beyond high school here in the United States. At the end of her senior year of high school, she decided to take a chance and apply to the university. "I was kind of just, it was just winging it like, you know, maybe I'll get in maybe I won't. But [name of local community college] was always like, my first option," she stated.

Faith, however, did not have to take that first option and attend her local community college. Instead, she was accepted to State University Valley Campus. The acceptance itself proved to be an encouraging factor for her: "And when I saw that I got in, it kind of motivated me to see, like, 'wow you could actually get into a university,' you know?" Pushing herself and putting herself out there in a somewhat vulnerable state, as one could always have their application rejected and declined, was nerve-wracking for Faith. Nevertheless, she was, in the end accepted and that showcased to her that perhaps she did have the mettle to enter into higher education and complete her degree.

Unlike Faith and Raquel, Sam was not the first in his family to attend college or university, but he was a part of the first generation of his family to do so. Sam has two older sisters and their experiences motivated him and helped set an example. Sam described his scenario in the following way and how it influenced him to pursue his own education:

'cause I knew that if they could do it, I could do it, you know? My oldest sister, she's four years older than me. So, meaning when I was in high school, she was already about to finish college. She was ready to finish [name of university]. So, I was like, 'okay, yeah.' I mean, it was a little tough, but I know if she can do it, I can definitely do it. And my other sister who wasn't exactly that interested in academics as much as the two of us were. So, she had some troubles with certain classes. But she would still manage to do it. She still managed to graduate from [name of university].

Unlike the others who were the first in their families to graduate from college, Sam was able to observe the experiences of his older siblings. As he notes above, this in and of itself was motivating for him. One sibling had “tough” experiences but Sam noted that he felt that if she was able to complete her degree and work through it, he would be able to complete his own degree, as well. His other sister did not attend a university but was able to attend a local community college. Though he states that she was not as “interested” in academics as he and his other sister are, he was still able to use her as an example, which influenced his persistence and completion. Taken together, as highlighted in the existing literature, family matters. Especially for historically underrepresented students or non-traditional students (Kiyama, 2010; Perez & McDonough, 2008; Perna & Titus, 2005), which in fact tend to be the tradition on branch campuses (Bird, 2014; McClelland & Daly, 1991).

Financial Motivations. Another issue that was mentioned by more than one participant was financial issues. For more than one student, attending State University Valley Campus was an issue of finances. More than one participant was accepted to other colleges and universities; one student was even accepted to a world-renowned institution. However, choices and educational goals were limited because of individual experiences with finances. Finances played an active role in persistence and how students experienced their time as an undergraduate at State University Valley Campus.

For Raquel, the decision to attend the branch campus of State University was made easier because of its status as a local institution and the fact that by being a local option it would be a less expensive proposition to attend a university:

I think just money wise, it was cheaper to be here than go to another university. Because I have my parents' support, I can live at home for free and I get to eat for free, and I was only focusing on just paying for my tuition and my books. I received a lot of scholarships and other people from the outside don't get a lot of scholarships, but since I stayed in the community a lot of people like to support the ones that stay in the community. So, I was able to get a lot of scholarships and I think I wouldn't have gotten them if I would have gone somewhere else.

In Raquel's case, there were two main ways in which attending State University Valley Campus was the more affordable option. The first is that it allowed her to live at home. She did not have to worry about the cost of room and board, which would have come about if she would have left the local area to pursue her degree. The financial support her parents gave her in allowing her to continue living at home was a contributing factor to her continued enrollment at SUVC. Secondly, because she stayed local and attended a local institution, she was able to qualify for scholarships that would not have received had she left the area. Together, these two elements made the most sense for Raquel in terms of finances and were a motivating factor in her persistence at SUVC.

Raquel's reasons for attending State University Valley Campus and her persistence were echoed in the experiences and motivations of Gabrielle:

The main thing that pushed me to come here was financially I was able to afford it. Because I wasn't getting much help financially. So, I thought, "okay, I could start here," because at first, I was thinking community college. But then once [name of admissions counselor] went to my school [they] told us about this campus. And I was like, "Oh, yeah I could afford this." So, then I came here as an undecided and once again, with all the people here I decided to go towards liberal studies and to my luck they offered that major here. So, that's how I chose to come here because financially I was able

to stay home, didn't have to pay for rent or that much, and I had my parents there for the help that I needed.

Gabrielle originally had plans to attend the local community college. However, those plans changed when she learned about the state university branch campus in the area. Her decision to change plans was motivated by the fact that it was a more affordable option than leaving the area and attending another college or university to achieve her educational aspirations. By staying in her hometown, she was able to continue living at home and take advantage of the assistance that her parents could provide her with over the course of her studies.

Just as Raquel and Gabrielle found motivation to stay enrolled at State University Valley Campus because of their respective financial situations, Catherine, too decided to attend the university campus because of her concerns about cost:

I primarily came here for financial reasons. I lived in [name of city] and didn't really have financial capabilities to go to university anywhere else. I didn't feel like I was settling coming here, but I felt like this was my only option, but I wanted to make the best of the situation that I knew I was in.

Catherine's motivation to attend SUVC was financially-based from the very beginning. She mentioned that she did not feel like she was settling by attending the branch campus of a state university. She described the decision as

being pragmatic and practical. By staying local, she was able to stay home and live with her family, cutting down on potential costs. Additionally, Like Raquel and Gabrielle, Catherine's persistence was influenced by the support received by the continued financial support of her family.

For Sam, attending the local campus of a university was also an issue of finances. In his case, he was financially motivated because it would have placed less stress on his family to go elsewhere: "Financially, it was just better for my family 'cause we're not exactly the most well off. So, I just really liked coming here for the financial stability." Sam was influenced by his desire to not be a burden on his parents or other family members. Overall, his decision to attend SUVC was based on selflessness and thinking more of the greater good of his family. Sam's discussion about the impact of his family on his persistence recalls the discussion of the role of family as a positive influence for students of color in the work of Perna and Titus (2005). As Perna and Titus (2005) found, these important relationships help shape future experiences and dispel Tinto's (1975, 1993) position that family must be left behind for students to become successful in their academic pursuits.

On-Campus Involvement and Employment. Graduates from the branch campus also mentioned, in numerous ways, their experiences working on campus and participating in clubs and organizations. The study's participants worked in various positions on campus, including as peer tutors and as a student assistant in the administrative offices and campus student center. These aspects

of involvement added a new dimension to their overall experience at the campus and how they became motivated in their studies. Additionally, this connects directly to the literature, which finds that a student's socialization has significant effects on attendance in college (Bean, 1985). Membership in clubs and organizations and campus employment also served as active agents for student involvement allowing for social integration to develop outside the classroom, which is a predictor of institutional commitment (Berger & Milem, 1999). Additionally, the findings related to on-campus employment speak to the discussion taking place around campus employment as a possible High Impact Practice (McClelland, Creager, & Savoca, 2018).

For Catherine, becoming involved on campus and getting a job on campus was something that just made sense for her and her state of mind. She found that while it helped fill her time spent on campus, it also motivated her in her education. She started out by describing her experience in high school compared to her college experience:

Obviously in high school you're there all day and then I was in theater, so I was there practically all day after school, sometimes until ten o'clock at night, so I'd be there basically 12 hours; whereas in college starting my first quarter, I was only here three days a week, no more than six hours a day, and it felt really empty, and I thought well you know, school always came really naturally to me, I can do school no problem, but I feel like I need to do something

more. I wanted to be involved, I missed having that feeling of being friends with people who I was involved with in school, so I saw flyers for the student center, and I thought, "I could get a job." And I never had a job before.

Catherine did not like the idea of merely coming to campus just to attend her classes. She needed something more to fill up her days. She found coming to campus only for classes demotivating. Finding ways to spend more time on campus would help her, she believed, so she decided to apply and take a job with the campus' student center. With a job on campus, she was able to spend more time amongst her peers and be involved in the life of the institution. Although this added more time and responsibilities to her schedule, this was actually a positive influence on her persistence:

I'm a kind of person who likes to keep busy. If I don't keep busy, I get lazy ... and if I'm not getting my schoolwork done, that's a big issue for me. So as long as I always have something to do, I'm gonna get it done. So that's why I didn't like having the downtime my first couple of months at [SUVC], when I was only taking classes, because it felt boring to me, and when I'm bored I'm not motivated. So, I always knew from day one that I wanted to graduate in four years no matter what, even though my degree is five, I wanted to finish it. So, I always tried to look for different ways

to keep myself motivated and having outside activities made sure that I never really had downtime to be distracted from my goals.

Though it sounds counterintuitive, Catherine's explanation of how keeping busy helped her motivation and persistence makes sense. Having a job on campus combined with her classes and her homework, enabled her make her whole life revolve around the institution. Outside influences were kept to a minimum. With spending so much time on campus, she was unable to place any focus on other areas. Catherine's experience parallels with Berger and Milem's (1999) research, which establishes the important role of social integration in persistence. In addition, it speaks to the literature on student employment as a potential High Impact Practice (McClelland, Creager, & Savoca, 2018), which needs to be further studied.

Similarly, during her time at the branch campus, Briana was able to get involved in different clubs and also was able to work as a student assistant for one of the campus' support departments. In describing her experience with the clubs, she said:

I feel like it broke me out of my shell. I definitely got to know people around the community. Whether it be more students on campus or just important people in the community. I feel like it opened a lot of doors for me, being involved on campus. It kind of just opens doors for you either by connections of people outside of the community or within the school itself.

Not only was Briana able to socially integrate through her involvement in campus organizations, but she was also able to make off-campus connections. Like the presentations that were conducted during the First Year Seminars in which students were exposed to possible career opportunities and become motivated by others' career and life experiences, Briana was able to become motivated by the different people she met, including donors, community leaders, and others who are in a position to make a difference in the lives of others. Additionally, she was able to expand her social skills and as she phrased it, break out of her shell.

In addition to her roles in the various clubs and organizations that she was a part of, Briana found value in working on campus. Being employed on campus, she was able to experience more understanding than if she had been employed off campus in a different environment:

I would definitely have to give credit to [name] my boss. I did work as student assistant to the [name] department, um, just, in general with all the faculty and staff here they're very understanding of that you know out of these four walls you do have life happening. So, any situation whether you couldn't attend a class, whether you had a problem, they were very understanding and that kind of helps.

Briana was able to be in a position where if she had a problem with a class or had an exam to study for, she was able to approach her supervisor and ask for some time off or to have her schedule adjusted. In a non-academic

environment, those opportunities may not have presented themselves because the main role of an academic institution is to ensure the education of its students. Having the chance to work on campus allowed Briana to persist in her studies as she had a supervisor who cared more about her educational success than whether or not she was going to be able to work a shift. This experience speaks to the role that on-campus employment has in the persistence of students and its possible inclusion as a HIP (McClelland, Creager, & Savoca, 2018).

Within the framework of Raquel's major at SUVC, there are opportunities for students to serve as peer tutors. Raquel was one of the students who was offered this position by the major's faculty advisor. Though the position was meant to assist and motivate other students, Raquel was able to find motivation for herself through the experience:

I was a tutor for [name of class] and at the beginning I didn't want to do it, I wasn't very confident that I was able to be a tutor. But I think it helped me a lot. I learned more of the material because I was teaching it to other students. And I guess it made me like my major more 'cause at some point I was having doubts about it; should I switch? But I think that being a tutor helped me stay in my major and graduate in four years, like my initial plan and stay here on campus because they provided me those opportunities. That job was offered to me, I didn't go look for it.

In her position as a peer tutor, she was able to teach the topic to her fellow students in her major. Raquel was granted to opportunity to fall in love with her chosen course of study all over again. It helped her feel sure in her decision to choose the major that she did and helped her stay on track and graduate in four years and not have her time extended at the university. The opportunity to serve as a peer tutor motivated her to complete her degree and persist in her studies. Otherwise, Raquel believes she may have ended up switching her major and taking more time to complete her bachelor's degree.

In Sam's case, becoming a peer tutor in mathematics was not driven solely by an academic need on his part; instead, it was financially driven with a philosophical element:

...that year, I didn't get many scholarships, so I kind of needed the money to be able to afford the rest of the stuff. I've had some experience tutoring. I've had some experience kind of, like, "teaching." So, I thought, if that was something I was gonna be able to help out with, then great, you know? Something I'm good at that I can actually get paid for, and hopefully, make a difference in somebody's life.

Being employed on campus for Sam was not an issue about filling up time or searching out opportunities for leadership. For him, it was about finding a way to supplement his income. That there was the motivating factor and being employed positively influenced his continued enrollment and persistence. If he

were not able to bring in some type of additional income, his studies would have ultimately suffered.

In regard to involvement on campus, Gabrielle did not get involved in the life of the branch campus until her last two years in school:

The first two years I wasn't as involved as my last two. The first two I was just trying to get into that new college life status. I was more into trying to figure out how to get around with going to school and actually getting a job and stuff like that. But my last two years I was more involved in clubs and in school.

For Gabrielle, for her first two years at SUVC, it was more important to find her footing on campus. She needed to be firmly planted academically and financially before she could turn her attention to the question of involvement. However, once she felt secure in where she was, she set her sights on ways to get involved and perhaps leave her mark:

So, the third year I was, I started joining clubs and by my last year I was an ambassador so then I started doing more community service. I felt like I did more for the school and I really enjoyed it. And then I joined the dreamers club, I joined the teaching club, and I also joined the psychology club. So, I started doing more community service. That's one thing I liked about being in clubs that we got more involved with the school. We did a lot for the

community and it was just a great way to interact with more classmates. Being in clubs really helped.

Gabrielle was able to find motivation for her persistence in serving her campus, her community, and by building relationships with her fellow students. She enjoyed the regular interaction with her peers and building relationships with other students who were outside of her major. With being involved on campus and in clubs that were able to serve the community, Gabrielle was able to feel as if she was leaving a lasting influence which helped drive her during her last two years studying at SUVC.

Small Campus Environment. Another experience that was shared by all of the students who participated in this study was the opportunity to attend classes and complete their degrees on a small university campus. Many of the participants mentioned their appreciation of this fact and how that experience played out for them personally. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the campus population of State University Valley Campus is only 1,400. The main campus, located 75 miles away, is much larger and serves an average of 16,000 students. That variance alone gave rise to a host of ways in which students who attended SUVC experienced university life differently.

Briana enjoyed the smaller class sizes at SUVC compared to the main campus. For her, that was one of the positive aspects of the campus that drove her to attend:

I didn't want to, um, go into like a big campus--so I kind of chose to come to [SUVC] for that same reason of the small intimate, how classes are, twenty students, smaller amount of students. I like to get one on one with professors so that was very interesting because I was scared to go into the bigger two hundred student classes. Because it intimidated me. I'm not like "let's go make friends." I'm more of a shy person so that big environment was like it's gonna be kind of hard or complicated for me to go out there and make new friends, meet new people.

For Briana, attending a campus in which she was not going to be lost in a crowd was important. With a shy demeanor, she felt as if she would be swallowed whole in an environment that contained thousands upon thousands of students. However, by attending a campus with merely a fraction of the size of the university main campus, Briana was able to work within her comfort zone and under her own terms, create relationships with faculty, and form friendships with her peers. As noted by Brianna, if she had attended a large main campus of a university, Briana would have become lost and her motivation would have dropped because she would not have been able to form those important relationships and friendships. These relationships allowed her to integrate both socially and academically. While Berger and Milem (1999) established the importance of social integration in persistence, Reason, et al. (2005) established in their research that support received by faculty during a student's first year of college is one the greatest influences in developing academic integration.

Both Raquel and Sam enjoyed the small campus for the way in which they were able to gain support and formulate relationships with their instructors, which allowed them to integrate more fully into the academic environment, as described by Reason, et al. (2005). This was something that they both felt would not have occurred if they took all their coursework at the main campus. Raquel described it like this:

Well, since it's a small campus, I feel like we got a lot of attention.

The professors were always there to help us out and they even learned our names. I feel like everybody's very polite and they ask you, "how is school going?" And they show that they care about you. For example, Professor [name], like right now, he still keeps asking me how I am doing and stuff like that. Although I graduated, they still ask how we are doing, if we're okay, and checking on us.

In Raquel's case, she enjoyed the way in which her professors and instructors took the time to get to know her and her classmates. She felt that she was able to receive a lot of attention from them. They each took a personal interest in her, her studies, and her success. She noted that even after her graduation from the university, she has a former instructor who still checks in on her and asks her about her graduate work. This personal attention allowed Raquel to persist in that she was able to form bonds with faculty who operated from an ethic of care (Noddings, 1984; Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011) and played an active role in ensuring her success. As noted by Rendón Linares and

Muñoz (2011), “simple actions such as calling students by name, expressing concern, and offering assistance can go a long way toward building caring, validating relationships with students” (p. 25).

Sam was also able to become close to several of his instructors. In his discussion of this fact, he mentioned how this would have been impossible if he were completing all of his coursework on the main campus. In his case, he was able to come to this conclusion because he had to attend a few courses on the main campus that were unavailable on the branch campus when he needed them. He spoke of his experiences in detail:

I really enjoyed the fact that since we are a fairly small campus, I really got to know a lot of my teachers. Some I'm on a first name basis. And I liked that because if I ever needed help or if I ever had a question, I felt more comfortable going up to them and asking them. Whereas if I was just one of hundreds in a class, I would kind of feel a little weird, but that wasn't my experience here so that was good. I really got to know people on a much better level than I feel like I probably would have over there at the main campus. 'Cause I had to do it my last year. So, it almost felt like I was back as a freshman again 'cause I didn't know anybody, really. I knew some people but not especially the teachers. Granted, some of the classes were still pretty small but I did have one class in particular where I was just one out of a hundred or so and it was in a big

auditorium. I didn't have the same kind of relationship as I did with other teachers here. So, I just felt like I was going there. I just felt like I was one of many faces and then after a while, they're just going to forget about me.

Like Raquel, Sam felt more comfortable on a smaller campus. He was able to form close connection with his instructors to the point where he was able to know them on a first name basis. Attending classes on the main campus made it difficult to form such relationships. He appreciated the ability to approach his instructors, if needed, and this helped him in his studies. If he had questions, he was not afraid to voice them. Instead he simply approached his instructors. He was not just another face in the crowd at SUVC and that positively influenced his persistence. On the other hand, he felt a sense of indifference and even perhaps became unmotivated for a time when he attended the main campus for some classes.

While Raquel and Sam recalled their experiences forming relationships with their instructors, Faith recalled a different aspect of the student-faculty dynamic, one in which there grew a sense of accountability, which helped keep her on her toes:

I think the fact that this campus was small enough, it impacted [me] 'cause the professors would be looking at you. So, you have to listen. I think the help is accessible if you need it, it's there for you, so that helped. I know on other campuses there's probably, maybe

150 students in classes and all that. I think I would have been a little more lazy to go and ask the professor something. And also, the fact that they know you by name. It would be more difficult for me to go speak to a professor that I probably think doesn't care about my education. While here we have the same professors, so it's kind of like how I told my sister, "oh, I had [name] for a class and she knows me by name" and she said, "isn't that kind of like pressure to keep going, you know? 'Cause they know who you are, they know how you work. So, I think that helped a lot.

Because of the small class sizes and the ability to not get lost in a crowd of students, Faith felt as if her instructors were holding her accountable for her performance and her actions. She felt a form of positive peer pressure to ask questions, because if she did not, instructor may have approached her about the same issue. Like Raquel and Sam, she felt as if her instructors cared for her personally and beyond their role as the academic at the head of the class. This form of pressure unloaded onto Faith a good measure of motivation to do well in her studies and persist.

While forming relationships with instructors was a positive influence on persistence, Sam, Faith, and Gabrielle also spoke about having a smaller campus allowed relationships between students to actively flourish and be cultivated and contributed to a sense of belonging. Because of the nature of the campus and the size of their respective class as a whole, Sam, Faith, and

Gabrielle were able to form close bonds with their peers. Each spoke of this aspect of campus life at SUVC and how that impacted them. Faith also spoke of how the small campus atmosphere allowed her form relationships with staff members, in addition to her peers and professors.

In Sam's case, he described how relationships were formed, or forcibly formed, as a result of his seeing his classmates every day and sharing classes with them. He also spoke of how this differed from his experience in taking classes at the main campus of the university:

I also got a chance to really get to know pretty much everyone in my classes 'cause whenever you were here since there's not that many people and you have the same major as somebody, [you're] more likely to see them over and over and over again. So, I really got to know a lot of my classmates and I got to befriend them. Some of them I'm still, like, friends with and I'm working with them at [name of company] right now. I got to really know everybody, it was really good. I lived really close by, so it wasn't like a problem for me to get over here. Over [on the main campus], I knew in my head, "okay, after these ten weeks, you're probably not going to see these people again." So, you might as well not even try. I almost isolated myself over there 'cause I didn't try to get to know many people. And some of the teachers too, that same thing, because I knew I wasn't going to see them again.

Though the branch campus and main campus are one university, Sam spoke as if it was a whole other world. On the branch campus, he found it easy to connect with his classmates. They would see each other regularly, either in the halls or in their other courses. However, connecting with his peers on the main campus was, in Sam's case, impossible to achieve and there was no motivation for it, either, since his time there was merely transitory. Sam was able to befriend his peers on the branch campus and those regular connections and contacts motivated him in the sense that there were others keeping him accountable. Sam spoke of not being lost in large classes by an instructor. In the same way, because of the connections he was able to make with his classmates, he unable to get lost amongst them, as well.

As Sam described his ability to get to know his peers and classmates because of the numerous classes that they were able to take together, Gabrielle also found comfort and motivation in sharing many of the same classes on the small campus. Gabrielle described the campus and her peers as one big family, one in which they were able to work regularly together and they were unafraid to approach each other:

I really like the small community we had. It felt like we were all one big family. So, any problem I had, I knew my classmates and especially since we had the same faces, so I felt like I could go to any of them and just ask them a question. As to when I sometimes

would take classes over there, I didn't feel comfortable asking questions because I didn't know them [on a] daily basis.

Just as Sam was unable to connect with his classmates on the main campus, Gabrielle also was not comfortable in forming relationships with her main campus peers. Because she did not know them on a regular basis, she felt like she could not approach them like she could with her branch campus classmates. Having peers that she was able to share common experiences with allowed Gabrielle to grow in her academics and encouraged her to continue.

Faith described the atmosphere amongst the students as one that was focused more on the academic life of the student. Student's social lives were not necessarily pursued. Friendships and relationships were based on common goals and experiences related to students' studies. This was Faith's view:

I think even students here are pretty determined, 'cause I know one of the big things is, "oh I'm gonna go to college, the college parties and all that" and I think the fact that we're staying here in [name of local area] kind of brings out the fact that we want an education. It's not about partying because there's really no partying out here and we focus on our education, and I think those mentalities around you kind of change your mentality 'cause I did have the "let's go have fun" mentality and it kind of changed into conversations about, "oh my gosh, I hope I get a good grade on my exam." It just kind of flipped everything.

Faith speaks of the way attending college or university is usually portrayed in the movies or on television, as a fun place where fun and partying is the focus and academics are on the back burner. In Faith's view, however, the students' focus at SUVC was academic. They did not have time to party and focus on socializing; education was the main goal. Faith spoke about how her own attitude changed. Her mentality, at first, was to have fun, however, finishing her education became her source of motivation and persistence and the conversations that she would have with her peers were more focused on how they were doing in their classes than what was going to be happening that coming weekend.

In addition to having peers and classmates who were academically focused, Faith also found a source of strength and support in the form of the staff who made up the branch campus. As a first-generation college student, Faith was nervous when she started attending SUVC. However, that nervousness fell away as she found help in the people that surrounded her, such as counselors:

Here I think these counselors, just everyone really, they step forward and make the first move, so that helps a lot. [It] helps you know there's people on campus that care and from the counselors to parking services, the janitors, everyone here is just more interactive and maybe it's 'cause it's a small campus and it's growing, but I think just the personalities out here are a lot more helpful. They're not, I don't know if this gonna sound wrong, but

maybe at the main campus, they don't really enjoy their jobs, 'cause there's so [many] people.

The interactions that Faith described with counselors and other staff members even played a part in Faith changing her plans to attend the main campus after two years:

I did want to leave in two years at the beginning. I said, "Two years here, and then I'll probably go to the main campus." But after seeing the support I had here, and the people I knew here, and the fact that I was actually getting things done, I think if I would have went to the [main] campus I would have probably lost a little interest in my classes.

Faith found a source of motivation for her continued enrollment in the staff of SUVC. She found them helpful, accessible, and friendly. Counselors making "the first move" aligns with Rendón's (1994) validation theory, in which she calls on faculty and staff to actively reach out to nontraditional students instead of waiting for them to take the initiative. Altogether, these aspects allowed Faith to lose her uneasiness about attending school. She compared the staff of the branch campus to the main campus and did not find the staff on the main campus to be nearly as helpful and kind. Indeed, she proposes that if she had left the branch campus and began attending the main campus, she would have lost interest in her academic pursuits. Instead, she stayed and continued her studies

at the branch campus because she found incentive in her regular interactions with staff, as well as her fellow students.

The Core of the Experience

In studies that utilize phenomenology, the core, or essence, of the experience is derived from the themes that were developed (Creswell, 2007). Themes revolve around *what* individuals experienced in relation to the phenomenon under study and *how* they experienced it. Through an analysis of the interviews and the data presented here, the essence of the student experience centers on *Influential Interactions*. All of the participants in this study discussed the role that different types of interactions played on their persistence. These types of interactions can be labeled and sorted as familial interactions, peer interactions, and campus personnel interactions. Though some interactions were not directly related to High Impact Practices, other interactions were facilitated, in part, through HIPs experiences. Interactions were central to both HIPs related and non-HIPs related experiences. Table 4.1 below displays some of the quotes that support this conclusion:

Table 4.1

Quotes Regarding Influential Interactions

Familial Interactions

SAM: 'cause I knew that if they [his sisters] could do it [attend college], I could do it, you know?

FAITH: ...financially I was able to stay home, didn't have to pay for rent or that much, and I had my parents there for the help that I needed.

RAQUEL: I'm a role model for my younger cousins.

RAQUEL: Because I have my parents' support, I can live at home for free. And I get to eat for free, and I was only focusing on just paying for my tuition and my books.

Peer Interactions

SAM: Yeah, every now and then, I ended up with somebody that didn't exactly pull their own weight. So, it was either me or it was someone else. Generally, we had to pick up their slack...

FAITH: I think what really helped was the group effort since we know a lot of these students already because of the four years. I think that really helped us stick together and not give up because I think on my own I would have just been like, you know, this course is hard.

CATHERINE: ...we were all motivated to do the same thing, under the same amount of time. We all knew we had a year to finish, we were all gonna get finished within a year, and we all grew really close together...Misery loves company. We were all suffering together but we all became really good friends.

GABRIELLE: After your second year you're mostly with the people in your same major. So, I was able to go to anyone and just get help whenever I needed, or they could come to me.

GABRIELLE: That's one thing I liked about being in clubs that we got more involved with the school. We did a lot for the community and it was just a great way to interact with more classmates. Being in clubs really helped.

RAQUEL: I was a tutor for [name of class] and at the beginning I didn't want to do it, I wasn't very confident that I was able to be a tutor. But I think it helped me a lot. I learned more of the material because I was teaching it to

other students. And I guess it made me like my major more 'cause at some point I was having doubts about it; should I switch? But I think that being a tutor helped me stay in my major and graduate in four years...

BRIANA: I didn't want to, um, go into like a big campus--so I kind of chose to come to [SUVC] for that same reason of the small intimate, how classes are, twenty students, smaller amount of students.

Campus Personnel Interactions

SAM: ...since we are a fairly small campus, I really got to know a lot of my teachers. Some I'm on a first name basis. And I liked that because if I ever needed help or if I ever had a question, I felt more comfortable going up to them and asking them.

FAITH: Here I think these counselors, just everyone really, they step forward and make the first move, so that helps a lot. [It] helps you know there's people on campus that care and from the counselors to parking services, the janitors, everyone here is just more interactive and maybe it's 'cause it's a small campus and it's growing, but I think just the personalities out here are a lot more helpful.

RAQUEL: ...I feel like we got a lot of attention. The professors were always there to help us out and they even learned our names. I feel like everybody's very polite and they ask you, "how is school going?" And they show that they care about you.

BRIANA: I like to get one on one with professors so that was very interesting because I was scared to go into the bigger two hundred student classes. Because it intimidated me.

Interactions took place between students and three main parties: families, peers, and campus personnel. Family interactions directly influenced student motivation. While Sam was not the first in his family to attend an institution of higher learning, he was motivated by the fact that his sisters had attended college or university before, setting the stage for his success. He actively

compared himself to them and their experiences and found comfort in knowing that if they could thrive, so could he. For Raquel, it was important to persist because she was setting an example for other family members to pursue their own education. If she failed to persist, she would be, in effect, letting them down. She needed to persist so that they, too, can succeed.

At the same time, the importance of family was made evident by how families facilitated success. Participants repeatedly discussed how they received support from their families in that they were able to continue living at home. This assisted the participants in focusing more on their studies instead of being constantly concerned about costs related to room and board. Overall, regular interactions with family and the support they offered were an important aspect of fostering student persistence.

Throughout my interviews with participants, interactions with peers were a regular topic that arose. Peer interactions were facilitated through several HIPs: common intellectual experiences; collaborative assignments and projects; and learning communities, whether by design or through unintentional means. The participants discussed how there seemed to be a group effort amongst the students attending SUVC. They were all in the same situation, which allowed them to support each other; they were not in the academic journey alone. As Catherine phrased it, “misery loves company” and for the students, knowing that others were struggling with exams, papers, and other hurdles was comforting.

Peer interactions were also facilitated by student involvement in clubs and organizations and other opportunities on campus. Through clubs and organizations, students were able to connect with others with similar interests. Students who served as peer tutors were able to work individually with other students in an academic setting, which, in turn, also had positive outcomes on their own learning and understanding of the material.

Since the campus was small in population, the participants also spoke of how they enjoyed the more intimate nature of the courses. This allowed them the ability to connect more easily with their peers. Several students mentioned how they seemed lost when they had to attend classes on the main campus. The small nature of the branch campus allowed them the opportunity to become more familiar with their peers and form more personal relationships.

The students also discussed, however, that sometimes peer interactions were not always so positive. When it came to group work, it was sometimes difficult to get everybody in the group to pull their own weight. However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, those situations did allow for the development of leadership skills, which were needed in order for the groups to succeed.

The final type of interaction that was experienced and had a positive influence on student persistence are what can be referred to as campus personnel interactions. As previously mentioned, the size of the branch campus is small and therefore allowed many opportunities for students to get to know their faculty members on a more personal level than if they completed their

coursework on the main campus. Students described how they felt comfortable approaching their instructors, that they knew their names and other details, and showed a genuine interest in their lives and in their success.

Faculty, though still important, were not the only members of the campus community that students interacted with. Staff members, such as counselors and advisors, were also mentioned when students discussed their campus interactions. Staff were described as helpful, caring, and supportive. Students were able to get to know campus staff and become familiar with them because, again, by virtue of the small nature of the branch campus. If they worked on campus or were involved in any way, such as through clubs and organizations, they also had additional opportunities to connect with them. The people who made up the university, from the faculty to the janitors, were collectively seen by the participants as an important element in their persistence. In sum, interactions are highly influential in the persistence of university branch campus students.

Summary of Results

In this chapter I outlined the findings of this study and made connections with the existing literature. This study was conducted in order to understand the High Impact Practice experiences of students who attend a public university branch campus and how these experiences influence their persistence, if at all. Although not an initial focus of this study, I also sought to understand non-HIPs experiences and how they influenced student persistence. I saw it as my

responsibility as a researcher to present the various elements that made up the whole of their experience.

From the data, I constructed five themes. These included a) Providing Foundational Support, b) Academic and Social Skill Building, c) Practical Connections and Application, d) Peer Support and Interaction, and e) Influential Experiences Beyond HIPs. The last theme was subdivided into a) Familial Motivations; b) Financial Motivations; c) On-Campus Involvement and Employment; and d) Small Campus Environment.

The first four themes indicate that student participation in High Impact Practices allow for effective student development and integration, both socially and academically, into the university. The study's participants' experiences illustrated that HIPs assist in developing familiarity with the campus and the university, develop skills that are useful and important for their persistence in their educational career, learn to make connections between the classroom and the real world, and HIPs help facilitate student contact with their peers. The fifth theme, Influential Experiences Beyond HIPs, revealed that though HIPs play an important role in student persistence, there are still non-HIPs related experiences that influence persistence.

The essence of the student experience centers on influential interactions. All of the participants in this study discussed the role that different types of interactions played on their persistence, including familial interactions, peer interactions, and campus personnel interactions. Though some interactions were

not directly related to High Impact Practices, other interactions were facilitated, in part, through HIPs experiences. Interactions were central to both HIPs related and non-HIPs related experiences.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of university branch campus graduates in relation to High Impact Practices. Additionally, this study sought to understand how their experiences with High Impact Practices influenced student persistence. For purposes of this study, persistence was defined as a “student’s postsecondary education continuation behavior that leads to graduation” (Arnold, 1999, p. 5). Broadly speaking, a student’s ability to persist is influenced by factors inside (internal) and outside (external) of the university (Arnold, 1999). I was particularly interested in examining their experiences in relation to HIPs given State University’s emphasis on institutionalizing HIPs at both the main and branch campus.

Two research questions guided this study: a) How do students who graduated from a university branch campus describe their experiences with High Impact Practices?; b) From the students’ perspective, how did these High Impact Practices experiences influence their persistence, if at all? For this qualitative study, I utilized a phenomenological approach. Specifically, this study is an example of transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994).

Branch campuses are an established, but expanding, institutional type within the field of higher education. Branch campuses help serve communities

and populations that may have no other methods by which to access higher education (Bebko & Huffman, 2011; Bird, 2011; California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1985; Douglas-Gabriel, 2016; Schindler, 1952). For example, as noted previously, State University Valley Campus is the only public four-year option within 75-100 miles.

However, branch campuses are largely ignored in higher education research and the experiences of students who attend such establishments have not been taken fully into account (Fonseca & Bird, 2007). Accordingly, contributions of this study include a better understanding of the academic and social experiences of branch campus students, an improved outlook on the contributions of branch campuses and their role in providing educational opportunities, and what institutional and non-institutional experiences exist that influence the persistence of branch campus students. Taken together, by providing further understanding of branch campus student experiences, this study contributes to the growing field of research that focuses on branch campuses and their unique position, and populations, in higher education. In addition, it will help inform policies and practices related to student affairs programming at branch campuses for the purposes of improving graduation rates.

In this chapter I discuss the results of this study and relate them to the existing research presented in Chapter Two. After connecting my findings with the established research, I present the final conclusions of the study.

Furthermore, I advance recommendations for university and branch campus leaders and suggest areas for future research with the study's limitations in mind.

Discussion of Findings

This study intended to create a better understanding of the experiences of students who attend the branch campus of a university. The focus of these experiences was High Impact Practices. Additionally, this study sought to learn how these experiences with HIPs influenced student persistence. The research also illuminated experiences outside the realm of High Impact Practices and explored how these experiences also influenced the persistence of branch campus students. There were six participants in this study who shared their HIPs experiences and personal thoughts and ideas in regard to other experiences that had an influence on their persistence.

The study's participants identified the High Impact Practices in which they participated. These included First-Year Seminars and Experiences, Learning Communities, Writing Intensive Courses, Collaborative Assignments and Projects, Undergraduate Research, Diversity/Global Learning, Service Learning or Community-Based Learning, and Capstone Courses and Projects. The only HIPs not identified by participants were Internships and Common Intellectual Experiences.

Eight out of the ten HIPs identified by Kuh (2008) were found on the branch campus attended by participants of this study. However, it is interesting to

note that several of the HIPs that students experienced or had access to were informal. In other words, that were intentionally adopted and implemented by the campus. They were not coordinated through the efforts of administration and staff. The only intentional HIPs, meaning they were accessed and accomplished through course enrollment, were: First-Year Seminars and Experiences, Writing Intensive Courses, Diversity/Global Learning, Collaborative Assignments & Projects, and Capstone Courses and Projects. One participant participated in Learning Communities formally because of their concurrent enrollment in a post-graduate program while still an undergraduate student. However, other participants' experiences related to Learning Communities were accomplished through the small nature of the university branch campus and the size of the class of which they were a part of.

The remaining HIPs - Undergraduate Research and Service Learning or Community-Based Learning - were all completed by participants through class activities and assignments, volunteer service, or through participation in a club or organization.

Some participants discussed their experiences explicitly in relation to just one or two HIPs. It was through reading, reviewing, and analyzing the interview transcripts that all of their HIPs experiences were identified. . Below is a table that showcases the HIPs experienced by each participant and if they were intentional or unintentional experiences.

Table 5.1

High Impact Practices Experienced by Students

High Impact Practice	Participant					
	Faith	Raquel	Sam	Catherine	Briana	Gabrielle
First-Year Seminar	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Intellectual Experience						
Learning Community	✗		✗	✓ / ✗	✗	✗
Writing-Intensive Course	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Collaborative	✓		✓	✓		✓
Assignments/Projects						
Undergraduate Research					✗	
Diversity/Global Learning		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Service Learning/Community				✓	✓	✓
Based Learning						
Internship						
Capstone Courses/Projects	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

Key	
Formal HIP Experience	✓
Informal HIP Experience	✗

The participants' discussion of their experiences with High Impact Practices resulted in four themes. These themes included a) Providing Foundational Support, b) Academic and Social Skill Building, c) Practical Connections and Application, and d) Peer Support and Interaction. In addition to the four themes related to HIPs experiences, a fifth theme entitled Influential Experiences Beyond HIPs was also developed and was related to non-HIPs experiences which also have an influence on persistence.

Providing Foundational Support captured experiences related primarily to the completion of the First-Year Seminar course. This course allowed participants to gain familiarity with their surroundings on a university branch campus and who and where to go to for support and assistance. This course motivated students in several ways. They were able to grow in their knowledge of

university policies and procedures, gain independence from advisors and counselors, and take charge of their own academic and social careers. Additionally, through the presentations of speakers and visitors to the course, students were able to gain additional motivation in seeing future career paths and jobs that could only be reached if they completed their respective degree programs.

Participants also described the way in which they were able to develop their skills, which are discussed in this study as *Academic and Social Skill Building*. Participants recalled how they were able to improve their writing and develop leadership skills through the completion of Writing Intensive Courses and Collaborative Projects and Assignments. For some participants, like Sam and Faith, developing their writing skills was merely a part of their chosen majors. For Briana, taking a WIC was necessary because she recognized she needed to improve her writing. In both types of instances, the experience of taking a WIC allowed these students to develop the skills they needed to complete their programs of study and allowed them to persist.

Both Catherine and Sam also had opportunities to build their leadership skills through Collaborative Projects and Assignments. While working in groups on projects and assignments they took charge of the work and delegated tasks, as necessary, because they did not want to fail. Catherine, through informal group study, enhanced her learning and developed teaching techniques as she served as an unofficial tutor to her peers. Catherine's experience being a group

leader and an informal peer tutor illustrates the impact that Topping (1996) identified in researching peer tutoring. Peer tutoring, according to Topping (1996), assists in the learning of the tutor themselves and is successful in integrating students academically. Raquel, too, had the opportunity to serve as a peer tutor, which was a position offered to her by the major's faculty advisor. She discussed the direct impact that tutoring her peers had on her persistence and how through teaching the material, she grew to like her major even more and felt satisfied with the academic path that she had chosen for herself.

Additionally, students were also able to build cultural competency through Diversity/Global Learning. Through coursework that focused on issues related to race and programming that celebrated multiculturalism, students were able to gain appreciation for cultures different than their own and helped to expand perspectives on a campus that was described by Sam, as largely homogenous. Though students were able to build skills related to cultural awareness and gain the ability to interact with those from different backgrounds, students did not attribute these experiences to their success.

Through service learning and capstone projects, several participants were also able to make *Practical Connections and Application* of learning. The theme *Practical Connections and Application* was identified as participants described how they were able to connect their learning in the classroom to their future careers or experiences outside the classroom environment. Briana was able to complete a research project that examined a problem in her local community.

Catherine was able to practice teaching methods learned in her coursework for her credential in a real school classroom. In Sam's case, he planned and coordinated his senior project which reflected the type of work in the industry that he plans to make his career. All three were able to make connections between the material learned in the classroom and practically apply that learning which allowed each of them to realize the real-world implications of their programs and motivated their persistence.

Participants in this study were also able to interact regularly with their peers and receive support as they completed their undergraduate studies. *Peer Support and Interaction* was instrumental to students' success. Sam described the branch campus as largely homogenous, as many of the students came from the same communities and racial/ethnic backgrounds. Yet, there were other students of different ages and cultural backgrounds who he was able to interact with and work together with in order to succeed. Sam's experience in what he identified as a mostly Hispanic/Latinx population, brings to mind Berger and Milem's (1999) findings which imply that students are more likely to be retained and persist when they attend an institution whose dominant peer group in relation to race are most like their own. However, as Sam, Briana, Raquel, and Catherine mentioned, their experiences with Global Diversity Learning let them explore different cultures within their own local community and assisted them in gaining a better understanding of other students that they encountered who may not have come from a similar background, religious or otherwise.

Catherine and Gabrielle also discussed peer interaction and support in the context of taking courses together with the same groups of students. Since they had so many classes together with their peers, Catherine and Gabrielle were able to form relationships, study together, work on projects together, and share general academic experiences. This also formed the basis of the unintentional High Impact Practice, Learning Communities. Because of the small campus environment, learning communities were not instituted by the university, but were, instead, formulated organically. Gabrielle especially appreciated the way in which this allowed her to develop a network, of sorts, that she was able to rely upon. Catherine and Gabrielle's discussion of building relationships through shared academic experiences illustrates Tinto's (1997) identification of the classroom as a space for academic integration and where supportive peer networks are formed. As Tinto (1997) discussed in his study, Catherine and Gabrielle were able to bridge the academic and social divide and were able to successfully transition and integrate into the academic environment.

Though participant's narratives surrounding HIPs identified these practices as a positive influence on their persistence, other experiences students identified other influential players and elements in their success and eventual completion of their degree programs. These experiences formed an additional theme, which I named *Influential Experiences Beyond HIPs*. These experiences included being the first in their families to attend college or university, financial motivations,

involvement on campus through clubs and organization and on-campus employment, and the small nature of the branch campus environment.

For several participants, being the first in their families to attend college or university was motivating factor for them. Raquel persisted in her studies to set an example for her younger cousins while Faith felt as if she was setting up a path for her younger sister. Sam was not the first in his family to attend college or university, as he had two older sisters who attended elsewhere, but he was still motivated and pushed along in the fact that he was a part of the first generation of his family to pursue higher education. The emphasis students' placed on their families, echoes existing literature that underscores the role of family in the development and support of educational aspirations, especially among first-generation students of color, which describes the majority of my participants (Gonzales, 2012).

While being the first in their families to attend a college or university was in and of itself influential in their persistence, financial motivations also played a role in students' persistence. As illustrated by Bird (2014) and Hoyt and Howell (2012), many branch campus students attend a branch campus based on the convenience of location and Bird (2014) further found that attending a local university branch campus is oftentimes a less expensive option for younger students who would not be able to afford to attend another university farther away from home. The availability of scholarships and continuing financial support was one reason cited for the decision to stay in the area and attend the university

branch campus. As Arnold (1999) identifies, many students fail to persist because of financial issues.

Many of the participants noted that they chose to attend State University Valley Campus because of its convenient location. Because of its location and the fact that it was local, all six of the study's participants were able to live at home and stay with their families for the duration of their studies at the university branch campus. This also helped the participants save on costs associated with attending the university. The fact that all six of the participants were able to persist and succeed without leaving their families, communities, and prior experiences directly contradicts Tinto (1975, 1993) who proposed that students must leave these influences behind to fully integrate into their chosen academic environment. Instead, this study serves to support the research completed by Berger and Milem (1999), Gonzales (2012), and Perna and Titus (2005), among other scholars, who found that students simply do not and should not be forced to leave behind their prior experiences and knowledges and those of friends and family once they begin attending an institution of higher learning. Coupled with the fact that the study's participants spoke of the importance of being the first in their families to pursue their education and setting an example for other family members, staying connected with their families and staying in their home communities had no negative impact on their persistence. Instead, it enhanced their motivation.

Engagement matters (Tinto, 2006) and as Braxton (2000) discussed, group associations and extracurricular activities are positive sources of social integration. Through successful social integration, Jones (2010) found that through social integration, student persistence is supported. With that in mind, being involved on campus was an important factor in many of the participants' levels of persistence but it was coupled with their previous experiences. This involvement took the form of being involved in clubs and organizations and campus employment, which has been identified as a proposed HIP (McClelland, Creager, & Savoca, 2018). Kuh (1995) identified the impact that student employment has on motivation as it develops interpersonal relations and cognitive abilities. Catherine mentioned how she needed to find ways to stay busy; if not, she knew that her motivation levels would decrease. Accordingly, she found a job on campus working in the student center which allowed her to stay on campus when she was not taking classes. In that position, she was also given the opportunity to socialize and connect with her fellow students. Like Catherine, Sam was also employed on campus. Sam was employed on campus as peer tutor. However, unlike Catherine and Raquel's experiences as peer tutors, this motivated his persistence in the sense that he was able to be employed on campus and he was able to earn a paycheck, which, in turn, allowed him to continue his studies.

Briana was active as both a student employee and as a member of clubs and organizations. Being a student employee allowed her to work with campus

administrators who understood if she needed time off for projects or exams. Regarding her campus involvement, Briana spoke of how being involved in campus clubs and organizations allowed her to break her “out of her shell.” She was able to meet other students outside the classroom and meet not only others on campus, but also people out in the community. For Gabrielle, performing community service through her club and organization membership motivated her to leave her mark and allowed her to build relationships with other students. This experience connects with the principle of service learning that holds that working with community partners as a student is good preparation for future citizenship (Kuh, 2008).

The ability for students to connect with their faculty and the motivational impact it has on students to academically integrate, gain competence, and persist is documented in the literature (Kuh, et al., 2006; Reason, et al., 2005) and is one of the goals of High Impact Practices (Kuh, 2008). These experiences were identified and discussed by the participants in this study and it was connected to the small size of the branch campus. Briana liked the smaller classes and more intimate environment in which she was able to get to know instructors one-on-one. Raquel and Sam also enjoyed the personal attention they received from their professors, such as checking in on them and asking about their studies and their personal lives outside the academic sphere. They remembered the regular interaction with their instructors with fondness and appreciation. With more familiarity, Faith recalled the greater sense of

accountability that was developed as personal relationships with instructors were built-

In addition to fostering the growth of faculty-student relationships, the small campus setting allowed students to take classes together with each other on a regular basis and form relationships. Again, this allowed for the creation of an informal learning community. Gabrielle described she and her peers as a family and noted that they worked together regularly. In the same vein, Catherine also discussed working on assignments and projects with friends on a regular basis and how they were able to lean on each other. Sam, when discussing his attendance on the main campus, found himself lost amongst his main campus counterparts and felt unable to form any type of meaningful relationship with them. This situation illustrates Tinto's (1997) assertion that common classes help increase academic integration in addition to building student relationships and leads to greater involvement on in the life of the institution.

Recommendations for Leaders

Branch campuses have been established and created in order to allow for increased access to higher education in communities in which choices are limited or completely absent. However, research that addresses issues of policy and practice in relation to these institutions of higher education and the students who attend them are elusive. Extant studies have examined the motivations that drive students to choose to attend a branch campus over a main campus and their

continued enrollment (Bird, 2014; Hoyt & Howell, 2012; Cossman-Ross & Hiatt-Michael, 2005). Studies have also examined branch campus demographics in relation to academic performance and retention (McClelland & Daly, 1991; O'Brian, 2007). This study sought to bring understanding of branch campus student experiences with High Impact Practices and the influence these practices have on persistence. Furthermore, this study was also able to examine other motivational elements and explore non-institutional experiences that also help to drive persistence.

High Impact Practices continue to be influential in the persistence of students. As illustrated in this study, they allow students the opportunity to gain familiarity with their chosen institution, gain new skills and improve others, make connections between their studies and their chosen careers and their surrounding communities, and allow students to interact regularly with their peers and faculty and create practical and valuable relationships. This study showcased that branch campus graduates believed HIPs were an influential factor on their persistence. Based on these findings, I recommend that HIPs should continue to be institutionalized on branch campuses or should be established, if they have not been already. Additionally, universities should also offer any and all opportunities that are present on a main campus to their branch campus students. This includes access to High Impact Practices.

While HIPs should continue to be valued and implemented on branch campuses, they are not the end all. While experiences related to HIPs were

mostly contained in the classroom or in the context of academia, there were non-classroom experiences on campus that played an active role in influencing persistence. Indeed, the influence of extracurricular activities should not be undervalued, as they provide non-academic motivations. Participants in this study mentioned at various times ways in which being involved on campus, whether through participation in a club or working in the administrative office, played a positive role on their persistence. It is recommended that branch campuses actively encourage the establishment of student clubs and organizations and provide the appropriate resources to allow these to flourish, such as funding and meeting spaces.

As discussed by Bird (2014), many university branch campus students are involved in their local communities. Through participation in High Impact Practices and community service, students are in a unique position to identify local problems and have an active desire to address them, as in the case of Briana who took part in undergraduate research to address a problem that she identified while volunteering in a classroom in her hometown. It is recommended that branch campus leaders utilize the concept of action research (Herr & Anderson, 2015) and encourage branch campus students through service learning and undergraduate research to identify problems and solutions in their own communities.

While non-academic experiences on campus helped students persist, there were other elements, as well, that influenced students. The role of financial

aid also played an important part in the persistence of the participants in this study. Various forms of aid are still a prime influence on continued enrollment, it impacts whether students can enroll and stay enrolled or not (Arnold, 1999). Branch campuses should ensure that their students are aware of any and all opportunities to receive financial aid and if they are able to, provide their own scholarships to students. School leadership may be able to accomplish this by mandating that financial aid advisors or departments hold regular workshops throughout the school year for students to receive information. In order to boost attendance, they may also encourage financial aid advisors to arrange classroom visits with faculty in order to notify students about such opportunities. Better yet, financial aid literacy should be worked in First-Year Seminar courses to help ensure familiarity. Academic advisors, as well, should be cross-trained in order to have some familiarity with financial aid and be able to direct student where and to whom they should speak or consult with. Additionally, providing institutional scholarships and grants dedicated to branch campus students would also assist in motivating students.

For branch campus students, familial motivations were also important to personal persistence. The participants spoke of how being the first in their families pushed them to succeed and finish their degree programs and the pride that they had that they were doing right by their families. As university branch campuses are small and universities are meant to assist the greater community which surrounds them, branch campus staff and administration should take the

time and the effort to reach out and see how they can support the families of their students. First generation students are often unfamiliar with what attending a university and studying at a higher-level entails (Penrose, 2002). Although their families are supportive of student aspirations, their families often do not understand the shifts in their student's goals, responsibilities, priorities, etc. (Longwell-Grice, et al., 2016).

Keeping in mind that students do not need to leave behind their families, cultural norms, and previous experiences, as described in the work of Perna and Titus (2005) and Berger and Milem (1999) and contradicting the findings of Tinto (1975, 1993), providing programs and services that are meant to help not only the student but also their families, such as parents or guardians, gain familiarity with the university and the branch campus itself will only serve to assist the student in their persistence. As this study highlights, many students continue to live at home after enrolling in degree programs at branch campuses and stay within the communities in which they have grown up in and are familiar with. Having parents, guardians, and other family members who a student may live with gain knowledge of where their student is studying, the processes and procedures that they may need to navigate college, and a better understanding some of the challenges that they may face while attending the university would only enhance family members' support of their student.

Programs that would encourage family familiarity with the university environment may consist of a concurrent orientation held for parents and families

while their student is completing their own orientation, campus information sessions held throughout the year, and regular invitations to campus events and programs. A concurrent orientation may cover topics such as student health services, library and research services, and campus resource centers. Introductions to campus leadership could also be included, as well as key staff members who students may interact with on a regular basis. A campus tour may also be helpful. Altogether, these elements would assist parents, guardians, and other family members in gaining a fuller understanding of the campus which their student will be attending, what services their students can make use of, and who their student will be meeting with and dealing with during their time at the university.

Regularly held information sessions could cover important subjects, such as grants and scholarships, internships, career services, etc. If parents and other family members are aware of different services and opportunities, they may be able to encourage their students to take part and pursue them. In this way, the role of families and their influence can continue to be a positive impact on student persistence. Inviting families to campus events and programs, such as theater, concerts, and other happenings would assist in strengthening the bond between students' families and the institution and help build community and connection. In sum, families of branch campus students should be welcomed as a part of the campus community.

Lastly, the importance of environment was also important to the participants in this study. Branch campuses, because they are smaller in size, have a type of intimacy that is absent on many main campuses. Students know staff on a first name basis, faculty are able to recognize and talk regularly with students, and there is more interaction overall between the students, staff, faculty, and administration on a branch campus (Hoyt & Howell, 2012; Wolfe & Strange, 2003; Nickerson & Schaefer, 2001).

With this in mind, a smaller population should be valued and sustained as long as possible on branch campuses. If branch campuses must grow, whether it is a result of demand or expansion, care should be taken to preserve an environment in which personal relationships and personal interest take center stage. Having events, such as mixers, campus-wide town hall meetings, and other opportunities that would bring together students with staff and faculty in non-academic centered settings would allow for relationships and familiarity to flourish. Encouragement by campus administration for staff and faculty to take on non-academic advisory roles, such as club advisors, would also assist in creating an intimate and familiar environment. This encouragement could take the form of stipends or adequately rewarded in the tenure and promotion, if a faculty member is on the tenure-track.

Limitations

There are some limitations to this study. These limitations are related to the timing of when the study took place and the composition of the sample. Also, although some critics may see the size of the sample as an additional limitation, it should be noted that State University Valley Campus' graduating class included 24 graduates, which greatly limited the number of individuals who were qualified to participate in this study. In total, six members of this graduating class were able to participate and contribute to this study, which equals 25%, or a quarter of the potential participants. When this study was approved and commenced, it was a little more than three months since possible participants graduated. In that space of time, several of the students had gained full time jobs, moved out of the area, were pursuing other studies, or were otherwise unable to participate or be reached in regard to possible participation. Recruitment for participation proved difficult and, in the end, I had to rely on the assistance of instructors and other higher education professionals through network sampling.

It is also important to keep in mind that the High Impact Practices at the branch campus that served as the setting of this study were also in different stages of development and implementation when participants began attending the university. Therefore, the experiences of the participants in this study may differ from those who entered the university and attended the campus in the years following the entrance of the sample group.

In addition, out of the six participants in the study, five were female and one male. All six also identified as Hispanic/Latinx. This limited the demographic diversity of the participants and did not reflect fully the population of the setting in terms of race/ethnicity. As a reminder, State University Valley Campus' student population is roughly 65% Hispanic/Latinx and 16% White, yet none of my participants identified as White. At the same time, my sample may be seen as a strength of the study given State University Valley Campus' Hispanic-Serving Institution designation.

Future Research

The limitations of this study help inform future research. Future research based on High Impact Practices and students' related experiences on branch campuses should attempt to include participants who experienced High Impact Practices that have been implemented for a longer period of time on campus. As the implementation of HIPs and related practices were in their infancy on the branch campus when this study's sample completed their education, students who may experience HIPs in an environment where they are established practices may have differing experiences and understandings related to their own persistence.

Future research should also use a larger sample size. Using a more diverse sample, in both gender identity and ethnicity, would also provide greater insight and increase the number of viewpoints. With both a larger sample size

and increased diversity, a better understanding of student experiences and perspectives would emerge in relation to HIPs on branch campuses.

A comparative study that examines multiple branch campus sites may also be interesting and useful to the research community. As High Impact Practices and their structure may vary from campus to campus or institution to institution, a study that compares the HIPs experiences of branch campus students to another set of students on another branch campus may reveal how institutional policies and procedures may influence HIPs experiences.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the findings of the study and the influence that High Impact Practices had on the persistence of students who attended a university branch campus. I also drew attention to how other experiences also played a role in their persistence. These results were connected to the literature presented in Chapter Two. The findings of this study found that though HIPs have a positive role in student persistence, other experiences, as well, play a large role in the persistence of students. I also presented a set of recommendations for branch campus and university leaders and outlined the study's limitations. Lastly, I highlighted topics for future research related to branch campuses and High Impact Practices.

APPENDIX A:
RECRUITMENT MATERIALS



**STUDENT EXPERIENCES WITH HIGH
IMPACT PRACTICES ON A PUBLIC
UNIVERSITY BRANCH CAMPUS IN
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AND THEIR
INFLUENCE ON STUDENT
PERSISTENCE**

Principal Investigator:
Jesse Neimeyer-Romero, Doctoral Candidate

The purpose of this research is to:

- Understand the High Impact Practice experiences of university branch campus students
- Understand how student participation in High Impact Practices (HIPs) has influenced their persistence, if at all.

To participate in this research, you must have attended

for the whole of your undergraduate career, graduated in the last 6 months, and complete a preliminary questionnaire.



If you complete the questionnaire and interview, you will receive a \$20 Visa gift card.

To find out more about this study, please contact:

Jesse Neimeyer-Romero

951-239-2476

jneimeye@csusb.edu



**STUDENT EXPERIENCES WITH HIGH IMPACT PRACTICES
ON A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY BRANCH CAMPUS IN
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON
STUDENT PERSISTENCE**

Principal Investigator:

Jesse Neimeyer-Romero, Doctoral Candidate

The purpose of this research is to:

- **Understand the High Impact Practice experiences of university branch campus students**
- **Understand how student participation in High Impact Practices (HIPs) has influenced their persistence, if at all.**

Social Media Caption:

To participate in this research, you must have attended [name of university branch campus] for the whole of your undergraduate career, graduated in the last 6 months, and complete a preliminary questionnaire. If you complete the questionnaire and are interviewed, you will receive a \$20 Visa gift card. To find out more about this study, please contact: Jesse Neimeyer-Romero, 951-239-2476, jneimeye@csusb.edu.

APPENDIX B:
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

(Date)

Dear (student),

Greetings! My name is Jesse Neimeyer-Romero and I am a doctoral candidate at CSU San Bernardino.

I write to request your assistance in completing a study entitled — *High Impact Practices Experiences on a Public University Branch Campus in Southern California and their Influence on Student Persistence*. The purpose of this project is to gain an understanding of how student persistence on a branch campus is influenced by participation in High Impact Practices. Persistence is defined as a student's behavior during their time in higher education that leads them to eventually graduate and receive a degree. I would like to learn about your experiences as a student at [name of university branch campus redacted] and how those experiences may have impacted you while studying and completing your degree.

You have been identified as a potential participant given your recent graduation from the university. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you will be sent a link to an online questionnaire. Based on the questionnaire, you may be asked to participate in one (1) interview. The interview would last approximately 45-60 minutes. The interview can be conducted on campus or at another location that is most convenient for you, including over the phone or even over Skype. With your permission, the interview would be audio recorded and transcribed. You could also be contacted via e-mail or telephone with any follow up questions or clarification after the interview. You and your university will be assigned a pseudonym, or another name, to protect your identify and privacy. Those who are interviewed will receive a \$20.00 Visa gift card as a token of appreciation.

If you are willing to assist and would like to participate, please e-mail me at jneimeye@csusb.edu and submit the signed Informed Consent (attached). I will follow-up with a link to the online questionnaire. Dr. Edna Martinez, Assistant Professor, is my dissertation chair. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact her at emartinez@csusb.edu.

Thank you for your time!

Jesse Neimeyer-Romero

INFORMED CONSENT

PURPOSE: Mr. Jesse Neimeyer-Romero invites you to participate in a research study titled *High Impact Practices Experiences on a Public University Branch Campus in*

Southern California and their Influence on Student Persistence. The purpose of this study is to understand the student experience with High Impact Practices at a university branch campus; additionally, this study seeks to understand how student participation in HIPs have influenced their persistence. The Institutional Review Board at California State University, San Bernardino, has approved this study.

DESCRIPTION: I would like to understand your experiences while attending (name of branch campus). There would be two parts to your participation: an online questionnaire and an interview. Based on the results of the questionnaire and number of participants identified, you may not be interviewed. If you are interviewed about your experiences as a student at (branch campus name), your participation in the interview will require approximately 45 -60 minutes. The interview will be conducted in a format preferable to you, either face-to-face, via telephone, or face-to-face remote conversation using Skype. Just the same, the time and location of the interview is of your convenience. With your permission, all interviews will be audio recorded.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation is completely voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You may skip or not answer any questions and can freely withdraw from participation at any time.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The university, campus, and participants will be assigned pseudonyms, or fictitious name. Audio recordings of interviews will be stored on a non-shared password protected computer. Audio recordings and transcripts will be destroyed three (3) years after the conclusion of the study.

DURATION: One (1) questionnaire will be completed. Completing the questionnaire should take no more than five (5) minutes. If inclusion criteria are met, one (1) interview will be conducted. The interview will be 45-60 minutes in length. The interview will be scheduled at the participant's convenience either on campus or off-campus.

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks to your participation in the research. Answering questions about your experiences as a student may cause discomfort. However, you and your institution will not be identifiable by name. You also have the option to skip questions or opt out of the study.

BENEFITS: There are no foreseeable benefits to you personally from taking part in this study. However, the general benefits resulting from this study would be a deepened understanding of branch campus student experiences and the influence of High Impact Practices on branch campus student persistence.

AUDIO: I understand that this research will be audio recorded. **Initials** _____

CONTACT: For answers to questions about the research and research subjects' rights, or in the event of a research-related injury, please contact Dr. Edna Martinez, Assistant Professor, emartinez@csusb.edu or 909-537-5676. You may

also contact California State University, San Bernardino's Institutional Review Board Office at 909-537-7588.

RESULTS: The results of this study will be published as a part of Jesse Neimeyer-Romero's dissertation. The dissertation will be available online as a part of CSUSB ScholarWorks, an online open access institutional repository showcasing and preserving the research, scholarship, and publications of California State University, San Bernardino faculty, staff, and students. The repository is a service of the John M. Pfau Library. Additionally, the results of this study will be disseminated through various outlets including conference presentations and publication. An executive summary of findings will also be provided to research participants and their respective institutions.

CONFIRMATION STATEMENT: I have read the information above and agree to participate in your study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C:
ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. I attended [name of branch campus] for my entire undergraduate career.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. I graduated from [name of university branch campus redacted] between January 1, 2017 and June 20, 2017.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. Are you the first in your family to graduate and earn a bachelor's degree?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. Did you receive Pell Grants while attending [name of university branch campus redacted]?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
5. What is your age?
 - a. _____
6. What was your major?
 - a. _____
7. As a student at [name of university branch campus redacted], I participated in the following classes or activities:
 - a. A Writing Intensive Class: in a writing-intensive class, students produce and revise various forms of writing and learn to write in styles across multiple disciplines and for various audiences.
 - b. A First-Year Seminar/Experience: a class in which student meet with a faculty or staff member on a regular basis; these classes place an emphasis on critical inquiry, writing, research, collaborative learning, and other basic skills that will allow students the opportunity to be successful during their academic journey
 - c. A Common Intellectual Experience: a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community.
 - d. A Learning Community: made up of groups of students who take two or more courses together and work in a cooperative fashion with each other and with their instructors.
 - e. Collaborative Assignments/Projects: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others and sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences.
 - f. Undergraduate Research: supervised by a faculty member, students help create new knowledge in their discipline.
 - g. Diversity/Global Learning: courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own.

- h. Service-Learning/Community-Based Learning: often a part of a course, students take issues and principles that they are studying and apply them to their surrounding community and help solve problems.
 - i. An Internship: internships are designed to provide students experience in the professional work setting.
 - j. Capstone Courses/Projects: culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they've learned.
8. Are you interest in participating in a follow-up interview?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
9. Thank you for your willingness to participate in a follow-up interview. Please provide your email so that I may contact you to schedule an interview.
- a. _____

APPENDIX D:
THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE
(NO INTERVIEW)

(Date)

Dear (student),

Thank you very much for completing the online questionnaire for my research study entitled *High Impact Practices Experiences on a Public University Branch Campus in Southern California and their Influence on Student Persistence*.

At this point in time, this concludes your participation in this study. Dr. Edna Martinez, Assistant Professor, is my dissertation chair. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact her at emartinez@csusb.edu.

Thank you for your time!

Jesse Neimeyer-Romero
CSU San Bernardino Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX E:
THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE
(INTERVIEW REQUEST)

(Date)

Dear (student),

Thank you very much for completing the online questionnaire for my research study entitled *High Impact Practices Experiences on a Public University Branch Campus in Southern California and their Influence on Student Persistence*.

I would like to schedule a time in which I may interview you to discuss your experiences attending (name of branch campus).

Please let me know when you may be available. We will be able to complete the conversation either in-person, over the phone, or even over Skype. If we meet in person, I would prefer to meet on campus, but if you cannot come to campus, another location that is convenient for you would be fine.

Thank you again for completing the survey. Dr. Edna Martinez, Assistant Professor, is my dissertation chair. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact her at emartinez@csusb.edu.

Thank you for your time!

Jesse Neimeyer-Romero
CSU San Bernardino Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX F:
THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE
(RESEARCH CLOSED)

(Date)

Dear (student),

Thank you completing the questionnaire.

Unfortunately, the research portion of this study has been completed.

Thank you again for completing the survey. Dr. Edna Martinez, Assistant Professor, is my dissertation chair. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact her at emartinez@csusb.edu.

Thank you for your time!

Jesse Neimeyer-Romero
CSU San Bernardino Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX G:
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Share purpose of study and review informed consent form to interviewee
- 3) Provide interviewee with the opportunity to ask questions and express concerns

- 4) Begin recording and proceed with interview

The following questions will guide the interview:

- Tell me about your experiences here at [name of campus].
- How would you describe your involvement on campus?
- What activities were you involved in?
- Could you tell me about your experiences with these activities?
- How did they impact you?
- What did these activities mean to you?

APPENDIX H:
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD LETTER



October 02, 2017

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Expedited Review
IRB#FY2017-206
Status: Approved

Mr. Jesse Neimeyer-Romero and Prof. Edna Martinez
Doctoral Studies Program
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Mr. Neimeyer-Romero and Prof. Martinez:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Student Experiences with High Impact Practices on a Public University Branch Campus in Southern California and their Influence on Student Persistence" has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The informed consent document you submitted is the official version for your study and cannot be changed without prior IRB approval. A change in your informed consent (no matter how minor the change) requires resubmission of your protocol as amended using the IRB Cayuse system protocol change form. **Your application is approved for one year from October 02, 2017 through October 01, 2018. Please note the Cayuse IRB system will notify you when your protocol is up for renewal and ensure you file it before your protocol study end date.**

Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee include the following 4 requirements as mandated by the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 listed below. Please note that the protocol change form and renewal form are located on the IRB website under the forms menu. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in disciplinary action. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years. Please notify the IRB Research Compliance Officer for any of the following:

- 1) Submit a protocol change form if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your research protocol for review and approval of the IRB before implemented in your research,**
- 2) If any unanticipated/adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research,**

3) To apply for renewal and continuing review of your protocol one month prior to the protocols end date,

4) When your project has ended by emailing the IRB Research Compliance Officer.

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required. If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the IRB Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Caroline Vickers

Caroline Vickers, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

CV/MG

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