

**Involuntary major changes: Student narrative about what helped and hindered their adaptability**

by

Billie Streufert

B.S., Dordt College, 2001  
M.S., Minnesota State University, 2003

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Special Education, Counseling, and Student Affairs  
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

2023

## **Abstract**

Career services professionals and academic advisors support students as they pursue their goals. Yet, scholars know little about the lived experiences of students placed into alternative degree programs after they fail to secure admission or are rescinded from a selective or regulated professional program such as nursing, teaching, or social work. This narrative inquiry study examines the critical events of participants who survived unplanned academic loss included in stories about their undergraduate education. Individual interviews with participants humanized and brought voice to their coping strategies, barriers, career decision-making, and persisting toward graduation. Higher education leaders can use the findings to foster policy revisions, cross-departmental well-being collaboration, and strategic support during individual conversations with students coping with change.

Involuntary major changes: Student narrative about what helped and hindered their adaptability

by

Billie Streufert

B.S., Dordt College, 2001  
M.S., Minnesota State University, 2003

A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Special Education, Counseling, and Student Affairs  
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

2023

Approved by:

Major Professor  
Dr. Wendy G. Troxel

# Copyright

© Billie Streufert 2023

## **Abstract**

Career services professionals and academic advisors support students as they pursue their goals. Yet, scholars know little about the lived experiences of students placed into alternative degree programs after they fail to secure admission or are rescinded from a selective or regulated professional program such as nursing, teaching, or social work. This narrative inquiry study examines the critical events of participants who survived unplanned academic loss included in stories about their undergraduate education. Individual interviews with participants humanized and brought voice to their coping strategies, barriers, career decision-making, and persisting toward graduation. Higher education leaders can use the findings to foster policy revisions, cross-departmental well-being collaboration, and strategic support during individual conversations with students coping with change.

## Table of Contents

List of Figures .....	vii
Acknowledgements .....	viii
Dedication .....	x
Chapter 1 - Introduction to the Study .....	1
Chapter 2 - Literature Review.....	25
Chapter 3 - Methods.....	56
Chapter 4 - Findings.....	88
Chapter 5 - Integration of Literature and Findings .....	146
Chapter 6 - Discussion & Implications.....	160
References.....	189
Appendix A - Email Invitation and Reminder .....	227
Appendix B - Informed Consent.....	231
Appendix C - Interview Guide.....	233
Appendix D - Preparation Worksheet.....	237
Appendix E - Demographic & Background Information Form.....	239
Appendix F - Thematic Analysis Memo Writing .....	240

## **List of Figures**

Figure 1.1 Directions and Dimensions of Narrative Inquiry .....	61
---	----

## Acknowledgements

It is difficult to express fully the gratitude I have for my family, friends, and faculty as I finish my dissertation. I first thank Kansas State University and NACADA for recognizing the need for a distinct doctoral degree that would prepare individuals for academic advising leadership. Our cohort is the first, and we are inspired to be agents of change. My faculty and classmates at Kansas State University transformed my thinking about advising approaches, administration, diversity, research, and leadership.

My cohort and committee members also offered distinctive support. From shared challenges in our advising practice to critical questions or encouraging notes, my classmates offered a sense of community that I never experienced or imagined. Dr. Wendy G. Troxel served as the chair of my committee and spent considerable time talking through my dissertation. Dr. Craft also offered encouraging words when I was tired. I would not have finished if it were not for their support. Dr. McGill strengthened my writing, inquiry, and confidence. He waited patiently for me to come around to narrative study, and his relentless pursuit of the advising profession is infectious. Dr. Feller first called me out as a leader when he served as president of the National Career Development Association. Without his phone call, I would have remained a wallflower or neglected the intellectual giants that grounded me theoretically.

I am also grateful for others among my professional communities of practice as I learned through co-curricular engagement during my studies. Dr. Kyle Ross shared my desire to support students who were coping with involuntary academic changes and co-hosted multiple presentations with me over the last three years. Ashley Thomas and Dr. Oscar Wijngaard validated my voice as a scholar when I wrote for the *NACADA Review* in 2019. Dr. Stephanie Kraft-Terry mentored and supported me as an emerging leader. Dr. George Steele and I had



several conversations about career advising and Dr. Virginia Gordon, who was a bridge builder. Melanie Reinersman, *NCDA Web Magazine* editor, also strengthened my writing and amplified the joy of mentoring when I served each month as associate editor. Advising communities and the NCDA Ethics Committee challenged me to think critically and collectively about the complexities of our work. My dedicated colleagues (Augustana University, Southeast Technical Institute, University of Sioux Falls) also inspired me. I am grateful for the gift of collaboration, hallway conversations, and innovative pilot projects that improved students' lives. Librarians at Augustana University and Kansas State University helped me navigate the nuances of my literature review. (Yes, you were right. We should use Zotero.) Most important, I am thankful for my students and participants who bless me with their stories. May I amplify their voices and continue to consider the unique context of their lives.

Finally, my family — I am thankful to my parents, Joe and Dixie, for teaching me to serve others, work hard, and humbly love learning. Their wisdom grounds and guides me. Other extended family (Dale, Deanna, Erica, Rhonda, Phil, and Tim) offered respite or restoration and made sure we still made memories through it all. Sam and Briella gave up countless hours with their mom — but never complained. I will forever treasure the notes or drawings they would slip into my books or onto my desk. To my husband Dan, I can simply say that there are no words. I taste and see God's goodness through you (and I don't just mean the endless coffee you brought me). Thank you for walking alongside me as I learned life's most important lessons.

As I prepare now to enter the higher education community as a doctoral graduate, I have a renewed understanding of my vocational responsibility. I praise God for enabling, equipping, and empowering me to complete my calling. May I walk faithfully and serve with excellence. *Soli Deo gloria!*

## **Dedication**

To Sam and Briella: When life does not go as you planned, have faith and hope. You are a blessing to me, and I love you very much! (syih)

## **Chapter 1 - Introduction to the Study**

A variety of programs of study exist in higher education. Although academic programs immerse students in a specialized discipline, professional programs often prepare students for specific occupations or careers immediately after graduation (Goyette & Mullen, 2006; Lattuca & Stark, 2009). According to the Bureau of Labor, 26% (bachelor's degree) to 31% (associate degree) of undergraduate alums work in occupations with clearly defined training requirements affiliated with specific professional programs, such as education, dental hygiene, nursing, radiology, or social work (Torpey, 2016). Licensure is especially common for healthcare and education professionals.

Government agencies require a license to enter specific occupations. To demonstrate competency in their respective profession, individuals must earn a degree or pass a state licensure exam, such as the Praxis or NCLEX (Torpey, 2016). If they do not earn a degree or pass the state licensure exam, graduates usually cannot participate in field experiences required for the program or enter the field after graduation. Given licensure requirements and competency standards, institutions often require admission into professional programs and outline performance criteria to progress within the major.

### **Admission and Progression Requirements for Professional Programs**

Although students may secure initial admission into an institution, they could be denied secondary admission into selective majors intended to prepare them for their chosen careers. Two subsets of students emerge across the individuals who are denied access to the careers associated with professional programs: proficient and not proficient. Some students are denied access to their careers when they fail to satisfy admission requirements or cannot meet the criteria needed to persist within their chosen professional programs. These students fail to

demonstrate the competencies required for the program. Other students are competent but cannot secure admission into professional programs and, subsequently, their careers because the program has only a limited number of spots available regardless of the number of qualified applicants.

### **Qualified Applicants Who Demonstrate Competency**

Some students satisfy the academic criteria required for admission, yet the professional program cannot admit every qualified applicant because the administration cannot locate an adequate number of clinical sites or professors (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2021; Menser, 2015; Weissman, 2021). It is common for qualified applicants to be denied admission to professional programs such as nursing. Over the past 20 years, the rate that nursing programs denied eligible students admission increased (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2021). In 2021, institutions denied 76,000 applications. Some programs reported declining 70% to 76% of applicants (Florida State University, 2021; Reynolds, 2020).

Institutions use various methods to determine who can enter professional programs. Many professional programs rely on standardized exams and grade point averages (GPA) to determine who is admitted. When the number of qualified applicants exceeds the spots available in the program, institutions may use a lottery process to determine who secures admission (Smith, 2021). Institutions that can evaluate individual applications engage in holistic admission and consider nonacademic factors (e.g., character, leadership) through reference letters, essays, or interviews.

### **Students Who Fail to Demonstrate or Maintain Competency**

Some students do not meet the admission requirements or fail courses later once they advance within the program. As a part of admission, many professional programs consider

students' academic performance in prerequisite courses needed to progress or advance within the program (Barr et al., 2010; Drysdale et al., 2015). Some students are ineligible for admission during the first few semesters of college because they fail to pass initial prerequisite classes, often called *gateway courses* (Weston et al., 2019). Completion rates are low in developmental classes or courses such as accounting, biology, chemistry, and physics (Gardner & Koch, 2020; McNair et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020).

Given the low pass rates of gateway courses, the prevalence of involuntary educational change is likely higher than the percentage of students formally denied admission into their chosen professional programs. Admission denial rates do not include the individuals who never applied because they did not pass gateway courses. Students who are struggling in gateway courses, however, exhibit distress due to anticipated involuntary major changes. When scholars have assessed students' major selection concerns, a group emerges who are anxious about their abilities or GPA and often cope with decision-making difficulty (Astin & Panos, 1969; Breckner, 2022; Jaensch et al., 2015).

Admission is only the first step in the process of successful degree completion within professional programs. Students must satisfy specific policies (e.g., number of repeated courses, grade point average) to maintain timely progression or future enrollment in the program. (Habley et al., 2012). Some students secure admission but are later rescinded or removed from the program because they fail upper-level courses or do not demonstrate professional acumen or technical skills during field experiences such as student teaching, internships, or clinicals (Johnson, 2007; Vacha-Haase et al., 2004; Wissel, 2015). These students may also be prohibited from progression within a program if they fail to exhibit professionalism during a field experience or pass an entrance exam (Praxis II content exam) required to begin field experiences,

such as student teaching (Johnson, 2007; Vacha-Haase et al., 2004; Wissel, 2015). Professional programs also often require students to demonstrate and maintain proficiency as they care for constituents (patients, students) to avoid harm to others during field experiences (clinical, student teaching). Accreditation agencies charge professional programs as gatekeepers to the professions they represent (Twale & De Luca, 2008). As gatekeepers, they create and administer practices or policies to assess the suitability of students for the profession before graduation. However, providing feedback about the suitability of students' goals is complex and problematic.

### **Background to the Problem**

Faculty academic advisors and *primary-role academic advisors* (individuals who serve in a full-time advising role) teach students how to make decisions and pursue their educational, life, and vocational goals (Gordon, 2006; Hughey & Hughey, 2009; Lowenstein, 2005; NACADA, 2006; O'Banion, 1972). When students cannot achieve their academic goals, academic advisors are often the first to know because they have a personal relationship with students and access to their grades or admission status (Chan, 2021; Drysdale et al., 2015). Academic advisors are uniquely positioned to help students respond to feedback they receive about the feasibility of their goals because academic advisors often meet individually with students each term.

Students who cannot achieve their goals may also contact *career services professionals* who can help them choose an alternative vocational goal. These practitioners may be housed in career services offices or exploratory academic advising departments. Regardless of their location within the organization structures of higher education, they offer support to students who are coping with involuntary career changes based on their specialized career development training.

When career specialists and academic advisors support students who must change their educational and vocational goals, they align their practices with specific competencies and core values, such as empowerment, inclusion, and caring (NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advisors, 2017a, 2017b; National Career Development Association, 2015). The pillar values and standards of career and academic advising encourage advisors to take an interest in the scholarship of involuntary educational and vocational changes. Without critical reflection and evidence-based responses, academic advisors may cause more emotional distress among students (Church & Robinson, 2006; Lutz et al., 2016; Panke Maklea, 2006).

If academic advisors critically reflect and act upon how they support students who need to navigate involuntary educational changes, they exhibit career and academic advising leadership (Hill et al., 2021; Lowenstein & Bloom, 2016). Students need academic advisors to provide effective advising to avoid the negative effects of unplanned academic changes (Gordon & Polson, 1985; Schlossberg, 2008). Denied admission or progression diminishes equitable student outcomes and student well-being (i.e., financial, emotional, vocational, and academic), which I now examine.

### **Equitable Student Outcomes and Access**

First-generation, low-income, and racially marginalized students are denied admission and progression into professional programs more often than dominant groups. Underrepresented populations are less likely to pass gateway rates courses than non-marginalized groups (Alexander et al., 2009; Center for Education Statistics, 2005; Koch & Drake, 2021). Disparities remain regardless of academic background. In multiple studies, differences in general chemistry and biology completion rates remained when prior high school academic preparation was held constant (Alexander et al., 2009; Harris et al., 2020). Racial minorities often earn lower scores

and fail to pass national licensure exams than White students (De Lima et al., 2011; Grimes-Crump, 2001; Tyler, 2011).

Scholars identified myriad reasons for differences in goal attainment rates between marginalized and non-marginalized groups. Marginalized students are less likely to have access during high school to coursework that prepares them for gateway courses (Hinojosa et al., 2016; Toretsky et al., 2018). Unlike dominant student groups, underrepresented students have less access to study materials and co-curricular or applied-learning opportunities that advance students' applications to competitive programs (American Psychological Association, 2015; Ardoin, 2020; Jacoby, 2020). If they have less income, underrepresented students may also be reluctant to modify their goals or change majors given the appealing earning potential of many professional programs (Blustein et al., 2022; Duffy et al., 2021; Thiry & Weston, 2019). First-generation students are also less aware of high school courses they need to complete to prepare for college and campus resources they can use once they arrive at college. Limited knowledge about college-going behaviors and success strategies reduces the grades of first-generation students in gateway courses (Poynton et al., 2019; Strayhorn, 2016). Marginalized students also report they find the pedagogical practices of some professors to be unhelpful (Gasman & Nguyen, 2019; Malcom, 2018). They often describe the broader campus community as hostile and anxious due to stereotype threats or imposter syndrome, which hinders their academic performance (Rouland, 2017; Stachl & Baranger, 2020; Windchief, 2018). Bias also exists in standardized exams and admission procedures (Ford & Helms, 2012; Lewis, 2019; Oyewole, 2001; Ross et al., 2017).

Despite the extensive literature on the barriers marginalized students encounter, academic advisors may not be aware of obstacles within their policies, practices, or procedures (ASN:



Advising Success Network, 2020). Career specialists or academic advisors perpetuate the status quo if they are unaware of the obstacles marginalized students experience and fail to advocate for changes that enable students to persist within their chosen degree programs (Clark, 1960; Lee, 2018). If advisors engage in continuous assessment, gather ongoing feedback, and listen to the lived experiences of students, however, they will be better positioned to embody the field's core values and competencies as they advise students who are coping with involuntary educational or vocational changes (NACADA 2017a; NCDA, 2015).

### **Well-Being Concerns**

Academic and career advisors must ensure the well-being of students (Blustein, 2009; Church & Robinson, 2006). There are immediate and long-term consequences when students are denied admission or progression into professional programs. Students' financial, emotional, vocational, and academic well-being are impacted when they can no longer pursue the vocational endeavors associated with their educational goals.

### ***Financial Well-Being***

If students do not earn an alternative degree and elect to leave higher education after they are denied admission or progression in their chosen professional programs, their annual and lifetime earnings are reduced (Ma et al., 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2022b). Students who change majors after they are denied admission or progression into a professional program may also lose future earnings, depending on the alternative program they select. If students initially major in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math majors) but change to social sciences or humanities programs, their decision may affect their earning potential (Bradburn et al., 2021; Gatta et al., 2021). STEM graduates typically yield the highest immediate and lifetime earnings (Carnevale et al., 2020; Gatta et al., 2021). Business and accounting majors

earned median wages of over \$45,000, but education majors earned a median salary of \$33,500, and psychology majors earned \$34,750 (Ma et al., 2019).

Differences in pay and stability also impact graduates' mental health (Allan & Kim, 2020). Although humanities alums who responded to a survey reported they were as satisfied in their jobs as alumni from other programs, they also shared that they experienced more financial anxiety and concern about advancement opportunities than graduates in other majors (Bradburn et al., 2021). Less than half of the humanities, fine arts, and social sciences survey respondents reported they had enough money to do everything they wanted (Bradburn et al., 2021).

### ***Emotional and Vocational Well-Being***

Students' career and emotional well-being are intertwined (Tang, 2019). When students realize they can no longer pursue their education goals, they experience identity disruptions, grief, trauma, and distress (Barlow et al., 2019; Lent & Brown, 2013; Savickas, 2002; Schlossberg, 2008). If students must disengage from desired goals without committing to or pursuing alternative endeavors, they are at risk for depression and suicide (Barlow et al., 2019; Boudrenghien et al., 2012). However, individuals who participate in goal reengagement or the exploration and pursuit of alternative endeavors before or after involuntary changes may discover a renewed sense of meaning and emotional health (Wrosch et al., 2003). Scholars validated the relationship between reengagement and well-being through meta-analysis and during COVID-19 (Barlow et al., 2019; Hamm et al., 2022).

### ***Academic Well-Being***

Students denied admission or progression into their initially chosen professional programs lose academic momentum or leave college often. Students may endure academic penalties or time-to-degree delays when they move to alternative programs (Ledwith, 2014).

When students change programs, multiple variables can constrain their persistence, such as prerequisite courses, repeat class policies, number of transfer credits accepted, expiration of credits, and a limit on credit for prior learning. As many as 40% of students at two-year institutions incur academic penalties when they switch programs (Schudde et al., 2020). Changing majors can impede students' degree completion and increase their debt due to accumulating unnecessary credits (Liu & Kopko, 2020). Average time-to-degree rates are higher for racially marginalized and older students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

Students may also experience diminished motivation when they change majors if their new academic programs do not align with their interests to the same extent as their former professional pathway. When students' personalities and interests align with the activities embedded within their academic field of study, they are more likely to report higher motivation and exhibit persistence (Allen & Robbins, 2010; Habley et al., 2012). Students who reported that they selected their major due to extrinsic influence or demands were more likely to report symptoms of depression or helplessness, which can reduce their persistence in college (Holding et al., 2017). If career or academic advisors teach adaptability, they can cultivate persistence and academic satisfaction (Duffy et al., 2015).

### **Problem Statement**

Vocational psychologists have historically argued that people modify, construct, or develop their careers throughout their lives (Dawis, 2005; Super, 1953). People may revise their career goals based on the requirements of an occupation, the likelihood of goal attainment, or input from their environment (Gottfredson, 2005; Holland, 1997). The thoughts students hold or the narrative students construct influence their career development (Sampson et al., 2004; Savickas, 2002). Vocational psychologists argue that everyone needs to adapt given the volatile,

uncertain, chaotic, and ambiguous labor market (Driscoll, 2014; Krumboltz et al., 2008; Lent & Brown, 2020; Richards & Dede, 2020; Savickas et al., 2009).

Savickas (2002) situated career construction and adaptability in a hypothetical case example of a pre-medicine student struggling academically. Other scholars considered the effectiveness of class-based support for students who elected not to teach late in their college careers (Fong, 2018; Koen et al., 2012). Scholars have also examined how adapting resources relates to academic satisfaction and how students respond to hypothetical situations about unplanned changes (Carroll et al., 2009; Duffy et al., 2015; Fonteyne et al., 2018). No studies, however, could be found that examined the lived experiences of students who graduated despite needing to change majors involuntarily after being denied admission or progression in their initially chosen academic programs.

Like vocational psychologists, academic advising scholars routinely describe various approaches advisors can use when they meet individually with students (Champlin-Scharff & Hagen, 2013; Gordon, 2007; Grites, 2000; Mayhall & Burg, 2002; Miller & Moyers, 2017; Schreiner, 2013; Varney, 2013). Like Savickas (2002), academic advising researchers often apply their recommendations to hypothetical case examples of science students who are struggling in their classes (Drake et al., 2013; Grites, 2000; Gordon, 2007).

Researchers also describe ways administrators can effectively design institutions to foster early change of majors or avoid delayed degree progression when students modify their academic plan of study. Institutional design strategies include parallel planning, guided pathways, technology-enabled proactive advising, and integrated career advising (Bailey et al., 2015; Gordon, 2006; Jenkins et al., 2018a; Jordan, 2015). *Parallel planning* occurs proactively and prepares students to pursue multiple endeavors simultaneously so that they are poised to

pivot to new possibilities (Bloom as cited in Johnson, 2015). These proactive interventions are intended to foster voluntary movement into different degree programs instead of specific support strategies for students enduring involuntary educational changes, which is the purpose of this study.

Academic advisors use *alternative advising* once institutions officially notify students that they have been denied admission or cannot progress in their chosen majors (Gordon & Polson, 1985). Scholars have examined the relationship between alternative advising supports and future grade point averages (McKenzi et al., 2017; Steele et al., 1993). They also surveyed students to understand their advising experiences after they were denied transfer admission (Neault et al., 2014). Previous scholars have not, however, interviewed students who were admitted into their chosen programs, but later experienced involuntary academic changes yet still went on to graduate.

Psychologists have also argued that students' unique situation, self, support system, and strategies influence how they cope with transitions (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2008). If involuntary changes occur, Schlossberg and Robinson (1996) proposed a dream reshaping process. Professionals can help students reframe their perceptions and grieve the loss when the events they hoped for do not unfold as they imagined (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2008). While incredibly helpful, transitional perspectives put the responsibility for navigating change squarely on students' shoulders instead of acknowledging the institutions or higher education systems. When scholars focus exclusively on students' role or responsibility in adaptability (Berzonsky, 1985; Salinas & Ross, 2015; Savickas, 2002; Schlossberg, 2008; Shaffer & Zalewski, 2011b), they minimize the ways institutional design influences students' ability to modify their goals or adapt to vocational change.

Sociologists criticize the role of higher education for how they sort or move students into various academic programs (Clark, 1960; Gardner & Koch, 2020; McNair et al., 2020). In a landmark publication, Clark (1960) noted how practitioners replicate social stratification and sort students into alternative programs of study. Criticism has only increased with predictive analytics (McNair et al., 2020). Ecological and system-based theoretical perspectives emerged because traditional theorists overlooked the lived experiences of marginalized groups (Stead, 2004). These scholars acknowledged the role of discrimination and called for advisor training (Cruzz, 2022; Frieze et al., 2018; Golbeck et al., 2016; Selzer & Khan, 2022). They also called on academic advisors to seek broad changes to public policy and institutions (e.g., implicit bias training) so all students could freely pursue and achieve their educational and vocational well-being (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2018; Blustein et al., 2019; Hooley, 2018; Hooley et al., 2018; Puroway, 2016; Sultana, 2022).

Despite sociologists' criticism of higher education, they have not heard from actual students about the actions they would suggest institutions take to respond to students who cannot achieve their initial academic goals. Students who have completed their degrees have valuable stories about what fostered their persistence, adaptability, and well-being. If academic and career advisors are to assist students who must navigate unforeseen education changes, they must hear from students about what higher education practitioners did that helped or hindered their transitions into new majors or careers. Without this study, the voices of students who persisted and positively coped with involuntary changes will be unheard.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study uses narrative inquiry to understand the lived experiences of college graduates who were denied admission into or progression within their chosen major after completing at

least three semesters of college. This study focuses on students who the institution explicitly notified that they must select an alternative program of study and removed by the institution from their existing major.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guide this study:

1. What critical events or activities do participants who survived unforeseen academic loss include in their stories or recall as a part of their experiences?
  - a. How did students who coped with unplanned educational changes interact with higher education professionals before, during, and after the event?
  - b. What barriers (if any) do students name related to their identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, class, ability, or gender) as they recall the events that occurred before, during, and after their involuntary change of major?
2. How did students who are placed into alternative majors arrive at new career goals?
3. How did participants cope and persist to graduation after they experienced unplanned educational changes?
4. How did students who endured involuntary academic and career transitions during college perceive their current post-graduation activities?
5. What are the implications for higher education professionals who support students as they navigate unforeseen educational or vocational changes?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Social cognitive career self-management model serves as the primary framework for this study. Lent et al. (1994) first suggested social cognitive career theory after they observed an interaction between individuals and their environments, which shaped a) their educational and

vocational plans and b) their educational and occupational persistence. Experiential learning provided input feedback to students. When tasks became unattainable, they recommended goal regulation or adjustment as an effective career management adaptive behavior (Lent & Brown, 2013).

Goal adjustment includes two tasks: goal disengagement and goal reengagement, which are distinct constructs. To *disengage*, students must decrease their effort and cease their commitment to the goal (Wrosch et al., 2003). *Goal re-engagement* is the ability to “identify, commit to, and pursue alternative goals” (Barlow et al., 2019, p. 309). Students can cease to have goals and then reside in a place with none. Students could also identify and pursue multiple alternatives before they no longer commit to an initial goal. *Meta-regulation* describes the management or modification of one’s goals. Goal disengagement and re-engagement theorists describe both the process that students undergo when they modify their goals, as well as the moderating variables that predict their experiences (Brandstätter & Schuler, 2013; Creed et al., 2015; Heckhausen & Wrosch, 2016; Herrmann & Brandstätter, 2015; Hu et al., 2017; Krott & Oettingen, 2018; Kruger & Dunning 1999; Moskowitz & Gesundheit, 2009; Oettingen & Stephens, 2009; Vohs et al., 2013; Wee, 2013).

Scholars have engaged in quantitative research to understand the variables that foster goal regulation, goal disengagement, and goal reengagement (Ghassemi et al., 2017; Hu et al., 2017; Krott & Oettingen, 2018). This research has indicated that students often move toward alternative goals if they engage in early reflection, process negative feedback, and perceive a new program as both valuable and possible (Heckhausen & Wrosch, 2016; Herrmann & Brandstätter, 2015; Hu et al., 2017; Krott & Oettingen, 2018; Wrosch et al., 2003). Scholars have applied goal disengagement and re-engagement research to individuals who struggled to locate



employment, were denied admission into a competitive program, were unable to obtain an athletic contract after college, or decided against a medical career after they failed a course (Chan, 2022; Ghassemi et al., 2017; Hu et al., 2017; Meara et al., 1995; Niedenthal et al., 1992; Wee, 2013). Much of the other scholarship has been situated in healthcare with individuals who lost limbs, endured cancer, or coped with other severe medical conditions (Wrosch & Scheier, 2020). Only one article used quantitative methodology to examine the relationship between socioeconomic status and goal revision (Hu et al., 2019). No researchers, however, have examined the lived experiences of students who graduated after being placed into alternative majors and told they must disengage from their academic goals.

### **Significance of the Study**

Further examination of the lived experience of students who have endured involuntary educational or vocational changes holds practical value for career and academic advisors because gaps exist in how advisors can advance students' adaptability, well-being, persistence, and employability.

### **Advance Adaptability**

Most students enroll in college to secure good jobs (Higher Education Research Institute, 2017). As they prepare to graduate or grow in their careers, however, they will encounter a volatile, uncertain, chaotic, and ambiguous labor market that requires them to adapt (Driscoll, 2014; Feller & Whichard, 2005; Krumboltz et al., 2008; Lent & Brown, 2020; Richards & Dede, 2020; Savickas et al., 2009). Students must exhibit positive uncertainty or a flexible mindset that tolerates ambiguity and is open to change (Gelatt, 1989). Currently, students may not understand the relationship between majors and occupations or the need to adapt because academic advisors do not consistently discuss career topics or the purpose of the core curriculum (Lowenstein,

2000, 2015; Troxel & Kyei-Blankson, 2020). Academic and career advisors have an opportunity to teach students ways to cope with transitions and formulate adaptable goals that enable them to navigate the rapidly changing labor market throughout their lives (Shaffer & Zalewski, 2011a). A cohort of students offers unique input about how higher education currently teaches students adaptable goal formation and regulation. It remains unclear how students who experience involuntary educational transitions perceive the resources institutions provide before, during, and after educational and vocational changes. If institutions hear from students or graduates who navigated unplanned educational changes during college, they can evaluate how career or academic advisors helped and hindered vocational adaptability.

### **Advance Student Well-Being**

Higher education is currently navigating an unprecedented student well-being crisis (Eisenberg et al., 2021; Kafka, 2021). If institutions are to respond effectively to the needs of students, they must scale support and implement comprehensive strategies that involve all faculty and staff (Kafka, 2021). Academic advisors are premier partners with counseling agencies because they can identify students' distress early, foster help-seeking behaviors, and implement crisis management procedures if needed (Chessman & Taylor, 2019; MacPhee et al., 2021). When students must disengage from desired goals without committing to or pursuing alternative endeavors, they are at risk for depression and suicide (Barlow et al., 2019; Boudrenghien et al., 2012). It remains unclear how students perceive higher education's support and the ways institutions can better assist individuals who must disengage from their goals. If career or academic advisors understand how to foster exploration and pursuit of multiple or alternative endeavors, students may discover a renewed sense of meaning and emotional health (Wrosch et al., 2003).

This study advances the well-being of communities. Professional programs such as medicine and nursing aspire to increase the diversity of practitioners because patients are more likely to seek out and self-disclose when medical professionals share their racial or ethnic backgrounds (Ibrahim, 2019; Marrast et al., 2013; Ripp & Braun, 2017; Talamantes et al., 2019). If higher education understands the barriers encountered by marginalized students who left healthcare professional programs, they can design the environment differently and offer support to foster admission and progression.

### **Advance Persistence**

Opportunity gaps remain in higher education (Carnevale et al., 2020; Habley et al., 2012; McNair et al., 2020). Marginalized groups endure involuntary transitions more than their dominant counterparts. Scholars have an ethical obligation to respond to disparities and advance students' access to their pursuit of educational and vocational goals, particularly given the United Nation's emphasis that career well-being is an inalienable human right (Blustein et al., 2019). Scholars have historically argued that advisors engaged in career guidance currently perpetuate the status quo because they sort students into alternative programs (Acevedo, 2020; Clark, 1960; Ortagus & Hu, 2019; Pretlow et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2020). Examining students' lived experiences enables advisors to understand the barriers students currently encounter and ways they can continually improve advising (Advising Success Network, 2021).

### **Advance Employability**

Finally, people's stories impact their employability (Law, 2015). Scholars have acknowledged involuntary changes (Lent & Brown, 2013; Gordon, 2006; Pizzolato, 2007; Savickas, 2002; Schlossberg, 2008), yet none have described ways to support students as they prepare to graduate and interview with employers. If nursing students are rescinded from the

program and moved to an interdisciplinary degree during their final semester, employers may ask about the specific focus of their degree. Many employers begin interviews by asking students to describe themselves, often eliciting responses about one's educational background. Further research can support the work of career practitioners who assist students in their job search or graduate school admission process after they are denied access to their initially chosen field.

### **Definition of Terms**

This study advances the understanding of different constructs described in the literature. Aligned with previous literature, the following terms are used in this study:

*Action Crisis*: "The state in which an individual is considering disengaging from a goal they are currently pursuing" (Light & Chodos, 2022, p. 868).

*Adaptive Career Behaviors*: Action individuals take to manage their career development and respond to "routine career tasks and unusual career challenges, both within and across educational/vocational fields. This process dimension is primarily concerned with such questions as how, under varying environmental conditions, people make career-related decisions, negotiate the transition from school to work, find jobs, pursue personal goals, maintain vitality, manage multiple roles, and respond to career setbacks." (Lent & Brown, 2013, pp. 557-558).

*Alternative advising*: the pursuit of different goals after students are officially notified that they are unable to pursue their current goals (Gordon & Polson, 1985)

*Belonging*: the belief that one is welcomed, accepted, and connected to others (Strayhorn, 2016)

*Career Advising*: The proactive and ongoing integration of career conversations into academic advising and institutional design to ensure student success and well-being

*Career Self-Efficacy*: perceptions about one's abilities or competencies (Lent, 2020)

*Career Goal:* An aspiration to achieve a specific outcome (e.g., entering a particular profession) after taking specific actions (e.g., completing college courses)

*Career Barrier:* An internal or external obstacle that impedes students' well-being, degree progression, choices, or development

*First-generation students:* individuals whose parents did not earn a two or four-year degree (Kouzoukas, 2020)

*Gateway courses:* the initial courses required in their program during the first two years of college enrollment that often serve as prerequisites for advanced classes (Weston et al., 2019)

*Goal disengagement:* the decrease of effort and commitment to a goal (Wrosch et al., 2003)

*Goal re-engagement:* The ability to identify, commit to, and pursue alternative goals (Wrosch et al., 2003)

*Goal Shelving or Goal Freezing:* temporarily withdrawing energy from a goal (Kappes & Schattke, 2022; Mayer & Freund, 2022)

*Imposter phenomenon:* beliefs that one does not belong or is not competent, which results in feeling like a fraud (Deemer et al., 2014; Ewing et al., 1996;)

*Involuntary education changes:* movement to alternative majors after the institution explicitly notifies students that they cannot remain in their existing program because they were denied admission or are unable to progress due to a policy of the institution

*Meta-majors or guided pathways:* the intentional design of early academic programs that contain overlapping curriculum that allows students to maintain their degree progress while they confirm or change their major

*Meta-regulation:* the management of goal pursuit by monitoring and responding to the feedback one receives about the feasibility of one's goals (Haase et al., 2013; Heckhausen et al., 2010)

*Outcome Expectations:* students' beliefs about the value and probability of events unfolding as the result of the actions they take (Lent, 2020)

*Parallel planning:* the proactive pursuit of multiple endeavors simultaneously so students are poised to pivot to new possibilities and navigate uncertainty about their goals (Bloom as cited in Johnson, 2015)

*Progression:* the timely enrollment, pursuit, and advancement of one's chosen program, which often aligns with traditional students' year(s) of attendance in college (Habley et al., 2012)

### **Assumptions and the Role of the Research**

Reflexivity is required of all researchers. The mindset is an ongoing and reflective habit of considering how one's background, assumptions, and behaviors may influence their scholarship. When done well, this process is uncomfortable and yields new insights that enable researchers to manage their biases or prevent them from misinterpreting their data (Peshkin, 1988).

Reflexivity includes both subjectivity and positionality. Although scholars engage in subjectivity if they thoroughly examine the perspectives they have acquired because of their lived experiences, they practice positionality when they reflect on how diverse dimensions of their identities (e.g., race, religion, gender) influence their research (Roulston & Shelton, 2015).

#### **Positionality**

I am a first-generation student from a working-class family in rural Iowa. Watching my parents toil to meet our basic needs cultivated a desire to advocate for universal access to career

well-being. Although I have not endured discrimination as a White cisgender American, I acknowledge that discrimination exists and may have caused some of the involuntary transitions endured by participants. Understanding that I am not an expert, I asked my participants for their permission and ongoing input as they shared their stories.

Having endured involuntary transitions, I believe students are often not to blame for their predicament. Unforeseen changes happen to everyone. They are a part of life. I did not approach participants with a stigma or deficit-based language. Having provided career and academic advising for over a decade, I understand how institutions could better design their environment to facilitate student success. I did not, however, assume that I would capture any negative narrative about the shortcomings of colleges and instead surrendered the study's findings to students. Participants' stories spoke for themselves.

My spirituality causes me to associate adaptability with faithfulness, yet I have been trained to separate my Christianity from my work to prevent imposing my beliefs on others. I remained mindful, however, that I also must not omit spirituality from my research. I stayed open to participants discussing how involuntary transitions influenced or were informed by their religious beliefs. From Buddha to Mohammed, atheism, and Confucius, spirituality takes diverse forms. I honored all faith traditions of participants and welcomed these topics into our conversations.

Also, in my culture, individuals find healing through tears and talking. I entered this study, however, also understanding that others may not find narrative approaches and emotional expression beneficial or culturally relevant. I asked students during the interview how their culture or faith tradition informed the ways they processed or made sense of experiences. If this does not include emotionally expressive techniques, I did not deem them deficient. Similarly,

prior to the study, I acknowledged that some participants may not desire a close relationship with their academic advisors or consider them the best source of support or information.

### **Subjectivity**

As emerging scholars embark on research, they clearly articulate what personally and professionally motivated them to select their research topic (Roulston, & Shelton, 2015).

Initially, I chose alternative advising to expand on a rewarding master's thesis on grief, which focused on how colleges should respond if a student dies (Streufert, 2003). My interest in students who endured involuntary educational or vocational transitions primarily unfolded after I worked with students who navigated unplanned changes. Walking alongside students has been an honor as they actively discovered hope or renewed well-being. The complexity of their predicament and the diverse competencies I needed to respond challenged me to learn more about their experiences. Alternative advising was also rewarding because it resided at the intersection of academic advising and career counseling. Case conceptualization required integration and leveraged my competencies as a career counselor and academic advisor.

Some may argue I am interested in this topic because of my involuntary transitions. Nearly 15 years ago, motherhood came through adoption, not birth. I also have been denied admission into graduate programs. Despite this involuntary transition, I do not claim myself as an insider (Johnson-Bailey, 2004). Although my transitions were difficult and may cultivate compassion, the changes were not involuntary. I did not endure failed IVF and freely moved toward adoption. Although I was denied admission into graduate school, I secured spots in several other very selective programs and could still achieve my professional goals. I do not oversimplify the ease that others can navigate alternatives. I could effectively navigate my transitions because I had access to alternatives and privileges. I did not need to worry about



discrimination or harassment as I applied or entered a new endeavor. When I was denied admission into graduate school, I never wondered if I failed because my race was perceived as inferior or worried that others judged my entire race based on my single admission portfolio. My finances granted me access to mentors and resources (e.g., application fees, study aids) needed to pursue alternatives. I did not face insurmountable obstacles due to a disability. Given the potential for bias, I continuously examined my assumptions, identity, and lived experiences throughout this study.

### **Summary**

Professional programs are distinctive in their association with and requirements for specific occupations. Many professional programs have limited space, requiring institutions to create admission and selection practices. Many consider the grades students earn in gateway courses. Once admitted, institutions often require students to remain in good academic standing and to exhibit minimum professional competencies given the accreditation standards of the professional program.

Admission and progression requirements are problematic because marginalized students are less likely to persist in and graduate from professional programs. Denied admission or progression diminishes students' well-being and persistence. Given the disparities across involuntary educational transitions and the negative impact of unplanned career changes during college, this study examines the lived experiences of students who were denied admission or progression in their chosen professional program. To prepare for narrative interviews with participants, this study will social cognitive career theory in the context of goal adjustment and social systems. I will practice ongoing reflexivity to avoid bias in the study. Practitioners can use

the results to enhance how they teach adaptability, partner with mental health counselors, and advance equity.

## Chapter 2 - Literature Review

This study aims to understand the lived experiences of former college students or recent college graduates who were denied admission or progression within their chosen majors and placed by the institution in alternative programs but went on to graduate. Additional research is needed because students who encounter unplanned academic or career changes experience diminished well-being (Barlow et al., 2019; Schlossberg, 2008). Inequities in admission and progression rates across marginalized student groups also remain and need to be remedied (Hill & Albert, 2021; Koch & Drake, 2021; McNair et al., 2020). Future research is also required because all students must prepare to adapt to a rapidly changing labor market after graduation (Lent, 2020; Savickas, 2020).

Scholars offer insight on how students individually experience unplanned academic changes and interact more broadly with their institutions before, during, or after involuntarily education changes. A literature review will also reveal what is already known about how students who are placed into alternative majors arrive at new goals, persist to graduation, and perceive their current post-graduation activities. If career and academic advisors understand how they help or hinder students who find themselves in the throes of alternative educational programs, they can proactively design individual interventions and collective environmental designs that advance student well-being.

This chapter includes a review of the literature as it relates to involuntary educational or vocational changes during college. Multiple databases such as PsychInfo, Ebsco, and Eric were searched using terminology such as career choice and adaptability. This revealed thousands of documents. To reduce the volume, college students and occupational choice and change revealed 251 articles, all of which I reviewed. I also searched NACADA publications for terms such as

major and chang\* and dismissal. As I reviewed the publications I selected, I paid particular attention to the number of times the authors cited specific scholars. Once anchor references emerged, I conducted new searches. For example, I used terms such as goal adjustment and goal reengagement to capture articles specific to goal regulation once I located these constructs in the literature.

The literature review initially resulted in the realization that academic advising literature focused on ways to support students who might need to change their majors involuntarily instead of the individuals who endured undesired academic major changes. Advising scholars also include strategies such as parallel planning, guided pathways, and technology-enabled advising to proactively promote seamless and voluntary major changes. Given gaps across academic advising research, I used social cognitive career theory and goal adjustment to understand what events scholars anticipated before, during, and after involuntary educational changes. I also integrate sociological scholarship related to students' barriers before, during, and after their transition into alternative academic majors. The use of interdisciplinary frameworks aligns with the literature. Scholars applied and called for the integration of diverse perspectives to understand the meta-processes associated with adaptability or unplanned educational changes (Brown & Lent, 2019; Fonteyne et al., 2018; Grites, 2000; Marttinen et al., 2018). I now highlight the results of this literature review and scholars' recommendations to provide a context for this study.

### **Academic Advising Research**

Since academic advising emerged as a formal professional community of practice, scholars have stated that academic advisors empower students to achieve their academic, career, and life goals (O'Banion, 1972). Although the purpose of advising has evolved over time and

now includes teaching as its cornerstone, decision-making and goals are explicitly included by the authors of NACADA's (2006, 2017a, 2017b) pillar documents.

Given the emphasis on decision-making, several authors have integrated vocational and educational planning. Known as *career advising*, these advisors proactively incorporate career topics into individual advising conversations to advance students' career development as they make decisions about their curricular and co-curricular learning. Career advisors also collaborate with their colleagues across their institutions to design environments that remove barriers and validate the vocational meaning students prescribe to their degrees (Streufert et al., 2023). Across the advising research, scholars describe ways academic advisors can support students individually during advising sessions and collectively as advisors design institutional environments.

### **Individual Academic Advising Approaches**

Several authors in the book *Academic Advising Approaches* (Drake et al., 2013) described strategies advisors can use when students need to change their goals. Other authors described ways to introduce alternatives (Freedman, 2017; Salinas & Ross, 2015). Gordon (2007) suggested a 3-I process, which consists of inquiry, information, and integration, and applied the model to a pre-medicine student struggling in a course. She suggested advisors help students examine possible options, such as withdrawing from and repeating the course, remaining in the course, meeting routinely with a tutor, or exploring other majors or careers (Gordon, 2007).

As an alternative to Gordon's 3-I process, other academic advisors applied chaos theory to their advising conversations (Beck, 1999; Landon & Hammock, 2010). Grounded in vocational psychology, chaos theorists acknowledge that people's careers unfold in

unpredictable ways (Pryor & Bright, 2011, 2019). Rather than trying to match individuals to specific occupations, they suggest that practitioners teach students how to monitor their environment for opportunities. Planning and adaptability are not mutually exclusive (Stowe, 1996). Despite the unpredictable nature of the postmodern labor market, patterns emerge that students can consider (Pryor & Bright, 2019). Individuals are prepared to navigate the chaos of the current labor market when they anticipate and plan for change or perceive chance events as positive opportunities. Individuals need to remain open to alternatives instead of focusing on a single path (Pryor & Bright, 2019). Students can combine their interests, pursue multiple pathways, and engage in lifelong learning to diversify their skills (Pryor & Bright, 2019). Like Virginia Gordon (2007), however, gaps remained. These authors (Pryor & Bright, 2019) also did not distinctly study the lived experiences of students who had successfully navigated unplanned changes. Research on chaos theory (Beck, 1999) instead focused on preparing students for change.

### **Collective Academic Advising Approaches**

Besides individual approaches, scholars describe broad strategies academic advisors can use to design institutional environments and proactively support students who are not achieving their educational goals, including early career exploration, parallel planning, guided pathways, technology-enabled advising, and alternative advising.

#### ***Early Career Exploration***

Researchers recommended advisors introduce career exploration early during new student orientation, workshops, courses, or common experiences for students with these concerns (Gordon, 2006, 2007). Advisors can also engage students in early career exploration or major confirmation in first-year seminars, gateway classes, and introductory courses of majors

(Buyarski, 2009). Early introduction of career exploration or major selection may encourage students to explore other academic interests outside their major and permit early experiential learning to broaden students' occupational literacy, commitment, and confidence (Grace, 2019).

### ***Parallel Planning***

Academic advisors also engage students in *parallel planning*, so they are prepared to navigate any future educational or vocational changes. Jennifer Bloom introduced the formal term during a regional NACADA conference (as cited by Johnson, 2015), noting that academic advisors can invite students to simultaneously identify and pursue multiple pathways. Academic advisors need to introduce the concept of parallel planning in a group setting and frame the practice as a universal necessity so that all graduates can respond to the rapidly changing labor market. If academic advisors only introduce and discuss the concept of alternatives during individual advising appointments, students who have low self-efficacy may personalize or internalize the message and unnecessarily move away from their currently chosen occupation or educational program because they feel fraudulent or perceive that others view them as under-prepared (Streufert, 2019).

### ***Guided Pathways or Meta-Majors***

*Guided pathways* are another approach institutions use to support students as they choose and change majors (Jenkins et al., 2018a). To avoid credit-bearing or degree progression penalties for students who changed majors, some scholars (Bailey et al., 2015; Bures & Sujuda, 2015; Complete College America, 2019; Haskins, 2016; Jenkins et al., 2018a, 2018b) argued that institutions should reduce or manage the number of disciplines presented to students at the point of entry. In another similar approach known as *meta-majors*, institutions often merge the plan of studies available in academic programs, so the first semesters overlap and maintain students'

degree progress. Although pathways and meta-majors are popular at two-year institutions, they are less common at four-year institutions. There also is mixed evidence about the effectiveness of meta-majors, as 40% of students switch between meta-programs and may encounter the same academic penalties the programs are intended to avoid (Schudde et al., 2020).

### ***Technology-Enabled Advising***

A third collective enterprise-wide practice is *technology-enabled proactive advising*. Proactive advising emerged to anticipate students' needs based on developmental milestones and normative theories (Glennen, 1975; Jordan, 2015). In this model, academic advisors initiate contact with students because they believe that students who need support or information the most may not be aware of the existing resources, understand the need to see assistance, or possess the readiness to use support services. To locate students who may need to change academic programs, institutions use historical data to predict and respond to students who are not achieving success markers or courses required to progress within their chosen majors (Gose, 2020; Tyton Partners, 2020, 2022). Early interventions are intended to foster persistence within their chosen degree program or college (Adelman, 2006; Preston, 2017; Zhang et al., 2020).

Some practitioner-scholars have proactively supported engineering students who encountered academic difficulty, discussing campus resources, learning strategies, and potential alternative programs (Chen & Upah, 2020). One academic department sent a letter to students outside their program who were struggling in one course but thriving in another required for their major and invited them to join their discipline (Jenkins et al., 2018b).

To summarize, academic advisors use parallel planning, guided pathways, and technology-enabled proactive advising with the hopes that they will empower students to move voluntarily to alternatives. These proactive interventions are intended to foster voluntary



movement into different degree programs instead of specific support strategies for students enduring involuntary educational changes. The present study examines students' experiences as they involuntarily moved into alternative degree programs. Parallel planning, guided pathways, and technology-enabled proactive advising are suitable for students preparing for change, but this study examined the lived experiences of students who have already endured and responded to involuntary changes.

### ***Alternative Advising***

Given the diminished relevance of advising strategies that emphasized preparing for and fostering voluntary educational changes, I focused the literature on alternative advising. Unlike parallel planning, *alternative advising* occurs when academic advisors officially notify and assist students who cannot persist in their chosen degree program (Streufert, 2019). Gordon and Polson first coined the term in 1985 when they invited NACADA members to estimate the percentage of students that likely may need such intervention. Steele et al. (1993) advanced this research by identifying that students' grade point averages increased after academic advisors implemented group-based alternative advising curriculum using proactive advising strategies and matching career counseling techniques. Researchers of another quasi experiment (McKenzi et al., 2017) examined the grade point averages of students needing to reselect their major after they could not continue their current academic program.

Other authors (Neault et al., 2014) surveyed students to understand advising experiences after they were denied transfer admission. Grites (2000) also described how academic advisors could help students who scored low on standardized graduate admission exams. These students were denied admission but not rescinded from a currently enrolled or existing chosen degree program, which is the purpose of the present study.

More recent scholarship (Nix et al., 2021) also continued to examine if and how academic advisors introduce alternatives with struggling students by observing the practices of eight academic advisors and conducting focus groups. The participating academic advisors outlined future course requirements, used metaphors, self-disclosed, and explicitly introduced the topic of alternative options. Although Nix et al. (2021) is informative, the research is about advisors' behaviors with students experiencing academic difficulty, not about the lived experiences of students who had already coped with involuntary academic changes, which is the focus of this study. This dissertation aims to focus on the lived experiences of students placed by their institutions into alternative degree programs after they failed to achieve their initially chosen educational goals, not about the experiences of students who might need to make changes in the future.

### **Social Cognitive Career Theory Self-Management & Goal Adjustment Theories**

Given the subsequent gap in academic advising literature, I broadened the search criteria of the literature review to apply constructs from social cognitive career theory. Social cognitive career theory is relevant to this study because these authors identify a reciprocal relationship between the individual and the environment (Lent et al., 1994). The authors also examined the variables influencing persistence in academic and career programs. Social cognitive career theorists argue that input from the environment shapes students' self-efficacy and outcome expectations. *Self-efficacy* includes students' beliefs about their competencies in specific domains, while *outcome expectations* relate to students' beliefs about the value and probability of events unfolding as the result of the actions they take (Lent, 2020).

Lent and Brown (2013) introduced the concept of career adaption/career adaptive behaviors, defining it as the process individuals deploy to manage their careers when they

encounter career challenges. Founded on Bandura's (1986) general social cognitive theory, the researchers argued that individuals take specific actions to direct their careers when they encounter unpredictable challenges. Self-regulation was an adaptive behavior named by Lent and Brown (2013). People need to monitor, evaluate, and respond to the feedback they receive. The authors also acknowledged that the environment enables and constraints these choices or actions, accounting for the influence of social identities such as gender, class, and race.

In the context of involuntary career transitions and this study, researchers (Lent & Brown, 2016) observed that adaptive behaviors influence career outcomes. When individuals receive repeated feedback in their environment, they engage in goal adjustment. Goal adjustment consists of two tasks: goal disengagement and goal reengagement, which are different processes. To disengage, students need to decrease their effort and cease their commitment to the goal (Wrosch et al., 2003). Goal re-engagement is the ability to "identify, commit to, and pursue alternative goals" (Barlow et al., 2019, p. 309). Students can disengage but not reengage their goals once the institution notifies them that they cannot persist in their chosen academic program.

Both goal disengagement and re-engagement are necessary for students' functioning (Neely et al., 2009). Although goal disengagement is associated with greater well-being (Wrosch et al., 2003) and higher work satisfaction (Haase et al., 2012), disengagement needs to be coupled with re-engagement. Disengagement alone often results in depression. A meta-analysis of 31 studies verified that individuals who did not reengage experienced a greater risk for suicide and diminished subjective well-being (Barlow et al., 2019). Goal reengagement is associated with well-being across the life span (Barlow et al., 2020). This empirical finding can be verified by reading social media posts that signaled suicidal ideation made by students who were unable

to achieve their educational or vocational goals (Non-existent-problem, 2019; PotOfPlants, 2017; Tywin\_gets\_killed, 2014). Given the diminished global well-being that coincides with chronic failure, disengagement and reengagement can be adaptive and healthy coping strategies (Boudrenghien et al., 2012). To understand and apply goal disengagement and reengagement to the context of this study, we now review the process that unfolds and moderating variables that influence the outcomes of goal regulation.

### **Goal Regulation Process**

When students exhibit goal disengagement and reengagement, they use adaptive career behaviors to regulate their goals (Lent & Brown, 2013). To modify their goals, individuals often implement specific regulation processes and capacities (Wrosch & Scheier, 2020). People vary in the extent that they can implement these behaviors (Wrosch & Scheier, 2020).

**Discrepancy Goal Feedback & Action Crisis.** Individuals decide to disengage or persist toward their goals based on feedback they receive. Known as *feedback loops* (Miller et al., 1960), people routinely benchmark information they gather next to their goals. If their performance exceeds their expectations, they experience positive emotions. A gap or goal discrepancy occurs when students receive negative feedback and are not advancing toward their goals (Creed & Hood, 2015). Negative feedback can come in the form of low-test scores and comments from a work supervisor, professor, or academic advisor. Negative feedback initially causes people to aggressively pursue their goals (King, 1975). When the feedback reoccurs, however, they begin to wonder if their effort is inadequate and if the goal is attainable. This disequilibrium causes an *action crisis*. People re-evaluate their current goals objectively and consider the possibility of ceasing effort and commitment to their goal (Brandstätter & Herrman, 2016).

Researchers confirmed that an action crisis occurs before goal disengagement in various studies (Ghassemi et al., 2017; Herrmann & Brandstätter, 2015; Heerman et al., 2019). In one between and within-subjects longitudinal study over a single term, researchers observed that individuals began to question the attainability of their goals right before they indicated an action crisis occurred (Ghassemi et al., 2017). Researchers also monitored college students' self-reported experiences as they pursued academic goals over 18 months and discovered that individuals who reported an action crisis on a standardized assessment during the first data collection were more likely to later report disengagement from their academic goal during follow-up reporting periods (Herrmann & Brandstätter, 2015).

When individuals experience an action crisis, they consider the feedback they receive. The feedback influences their assessment of their competencies, the value they prescribe to potential outcomes, and how likely they think they will attain these goals. Social cognitive career theorists argue these attributes vary based on how people perceive their self-efficacy and anticipated outcomes.

**Assessment of Self-Efficacy.** Individuals engage in a more realistic self-appraisal during an action crisis than when striving for their goals (Heckhausen et al., 2010). Typically, people protect their goals, which is known as *goal shielding*. Vocational psychologists have confirmed the relationship between feedback, self-efficacy, and modification of one's goals (Hu et al., 2017; Hu et al., 2018). In longitudinal studies with moderately academically achieving students, participants reported distress and reduced self-efficacy if they received negative feedback about their competency. This group was more likely to move toward alternative goals, especially if they exhibited high degrees of optimism, compared to the group that did not receive negative

feedback (Hu et al., 2017, Hu et al., 2018). Negative feedback often results in diminished self-efficacy and goal disengagement (Hu et al., 2019).

Students' perception of the accuracy of feedback they receive influences how it impacts their self-efficacy (Fonteyne et al., 2018). At one post-secondary institution in Belgium, students received the results of a standardized aptitude test designed to assess the probability that they will graduate in their chosen degree program. Using these results in a quasi-experiment, researchers measured students' reaction to these results a month after receiving the report. One group with very low scores (i.e., the assessment predicted would likely fail) reported lower self-efficacy and motivation than a high-achieving group predicted by the fake aptitude test to succeed. Participants' self-efficacy later correlated with self-reported rates of goal disengagement, but only if the respondents perceived the test as valid.

**Assessment of Outcome Expectations.** When an action crisis occurs, people shift from implementing their goal to engaging in a cost-benefit analysis to assess their goals' feasibility and desirability. Researchers have verified the existence of cost-benefit analysis in laboratory settings using academic goals as examples (Brandstätter & Schuler, 2013). Individuals were more likely to be satisfied if the new goal exceeded the number of positive attributes of the previous option or if the benefits outweighed the costs (Liem & Liem, 1999).

As practitioners support students in their cost-benefit analysis, they need to be mindful of both process and content. Content includes variables students should consider (e.g., values, interests, skills), but the process examines the decision-making methods (Lent & Brown, 2020). Decision-making strategies that invite students to examine the benefits of alternatives are especially beneficial given people's natural tendency to identify reasons not to change (Lent, 2005). Academic advisors may remind students to focus on the positive attributes they are

moving toward instead of fixating on the attributes they are leaving behind (Wrosch et al., 2003). Cost-benefit analysis reduces a sense of loss or regret when students make career decisions because students can better conceptualize their choices (Gati, 1993; Lent & Brown, 2020; Wee, 2013). However, not everyone responds equally to interventions like a cost benefit analysis. Students' response to involuntary goal changes varies based on several moderating variables.

### **Moderating Variables Related to Goal Regulation**

Several variables influence how students perceive their self-efficacy or outcome expectations (Kappes & Schattke, 2022). These variables include autonomously motivated goals, self-control, implementation intentions, mindfulness, availability of alternatives, and social relationships.

#### ***Autonomously Motivated Goals***

Goal adjustment researchers have provided evidence that students who exhibit *goal self-concordance* are more likely to exhibit adaptive career behaviors (Holding et al., 2022). Concordance exists when students choose their interests based on intrinsic interests or values instead of external pressure (e.g., labor market). If students freely choose their goals based on how they derive joy or meaning or what they value given their unique identities, they are *autonomously motivated* and more likely to reengage (Holding et al., 2022). Goal self-concordance is an adaptive behavior because it honors the volition of individuals, aligns with students' outcome expectations, and foster a sense of connectedness or support. These three elements move students beyond the paralyzing action crisis associated with goal disengagement (Holding et al., 2022).

#### ***Self-control***

Although autonomous motivation correlates with adaptative goal striving, it is often more predictive when it is paired with perceptions of control goal striving (Hortop et al., 2013). Self-control varies based on students' social identities. Scholars offer initial evidence that families with lower subjective socioeconomic status report less openness to alternative goals (Hu et al., 2019). Researchers hypothesize that students with lower socioeconomic status perceive less control and fewer options available. Individuals who set autonomously motivated goals and perceive high control show the most significant gains in emotional well-being (Hortop et al., 2013). Students from affluent families are more likely to make their interests the focal point of their career selection, enabling them to seek feedback or engage in goal suitability assessment (Hu et al., 2019).

### ***Implementation Intentions***

Students may also obtain new insight if academic advisors ask students to describe when (the number of times they repeat a course, reapply, etc.) they envision themselves specifically moving toward an alternative, which is known as *implementation intentions* or *if-then intentions* (Henderson et al., 2007; Moskowitz & Gesundheit, 2009; Oettingen & Stephens, 2009; Shaffer & Zalewski, 2011b). Individuals often construct if-then intentions by reflecting before the action crisis occurs. Participants who had proactively constructed implementations found reengaging easier if an action crisis occurred (Gollwitzer & Oettinger, 2019).

### ***Mindfulness***

When an action crisis signals distress and pain, people often engage in different information processing than when they are simply pursuing their goals. Psychologists use *assimilation* or *accommodation* to describe individuals' options during an action crisis (Brandstadter & Rothermund, 2002). Informed by early research by Piaget, individuals can either



increase their effort (assimilation) or alter their goals (accommodation). Convergent, top-down procedures are necessary for assimilation, while divergent mental capacities are needed to identify and examine alternatives. Divergent thinking requires cognitive energy. People's capacities are limited when they experience career distress. Besides depression or sadness, anxiety can also occur, which is taxing.

Researchers suggest practitioners can disable implicit goal activation by teaching action orientation (Heckhausen & Wrosch, 2016; Jostman & Koole, 2009). *Action orientation* is linked to mindfulness or thinking aloud, which reduces intrusive or impairing internal thoughts that prevent students from having the capacity to examine the suitability of their goals. Anxiety management and action orientation improve prefrontal executive functioning and predict students' well-being (Baumann et al., 2005; Gilbert, 2005; Neely et al., 2009).

Mindfulness also fosters emotional regulation during an action crisis (Marion-Jetten et al., 2021). Students must manage or reduce negative emotions while increasing positive affective experiences (Herrmann et al., 2019). Rumination hinders goal regulation (Brandstatter et al., 2013; Hubley & Scholar, 2022). Positive emotions reinforce the need to disengage (Wrosch & Scheier, 2020). Mindfulness allows individuals to slow down, identify the feedback they receive, and reflect on the central values that inform their autonomously motivated goals (Marion-Jetten et al., 2021). This reflective practice can reduce the severity of an action crisis should it unfold in the future.

### ***Social Relationships***

The role of social support is mixed in the literature. People often experience strong sadness or depression during an action crisis. These emotions may cause them to rely on others for support or new insights (Wrosch & Scheier, 2020). However, unsolicited help is sometimes

offered, which individuals may find hurtful (Kappes & Schrouf, 2011). Scholars also offer evidence that students may perceive or interpret support differently during an action crisis. They may be less able to recall instances others supported their aspirations or fear that others will force them to either retain or surrender their goals (Light & Chodos, 2022).

### ***Availability of Alternatives***

People's ability to move to alternative goals also varies based on how readily available alternatives are (Aspinwall & Richter, 1999). People may also move toward different goals to avoid boredom (Bieleke et al., 2022). If they have formed multiple goals, disengaging may also be easier (Timar-Anton et al., 2022).

Besides disengagement or withdrawing from the pursuit of their goals, some individuals choose to shelf or freeze their goals. To disengage, individuals need to cease commitment cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally (Kappes & Schattke, 2022). Known as *shelved goals* (Mayer & Freund, 2022) or *frozen goals* (Davydenko et al., 2019), people remain committed cognitively and affectively but do not commit to action or behaviors that advance their goal. They perceive the delayed action or interruption as temporary. For example, people who dislike their major or jobs may mentally and emotionally disengage but may (at least for some time) continue to exhibit commitment behaviorally to the programs or positions they intend to leave. Personal and professional frozen goals were common during COVID (Hubley & Scholer, 2022). Individuals who shelf or freeze their goals are less likely to regret than goal disengagement (Mayer & Freund, 2022). Frequent rumination on frozen goals negatively correlates with diminished well-being (Hubley & Scholer, 2022).

### **Sociological Perspective**

In addition to examining research questions related to how students coped with unplanned educational changes, this study examines the barriers (if any) students name related to their identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, class, ability, or gender) as they recall the events that occurred before, during, and after their involuntary change of major. To identify common barriers scholars identified as students perceive their goals, I examined the literature for sociological perspectives on involuntary educational and vocational changes.

As an alternative to focusing on individual students, sociologists examine involuntary academic or career changes through a systems lens, noting the ways some students have privilege or access to their goals compared to marginalized groups (Gardner & Koch, 2020; Koch & Drake, 2021; McNair et al., 2020). Historically, higher education leaders associated access with equal opportunity or equality, believing everyone could succeed if they worked hard enough. Perceptions of equal chance overlooked external influences or barriers within the environment that constrained individuals' choices. Equal access is instead founded on the acknowledgment of ecological systems and variance in capital. Based on a framework first outlined by Bronfenbrenner (1979), ecological systems theorists assert that students' choice and pursuit of any program of study are situated in a context that cannot be removed from their decisions. The student interacts within micro, meso, exo, and macrosystems that influence their beliefs and behaviors (McMahon & Patton, 1995; Patton & McMahon, 1999, 2006).

*Microsystems* include the isolated interactions between students and professors, students and classmates, and advisors and students. Individuals also interact with a *mesosystem* within and across the institution. These variables include the institution's policies, practices, and procedures, as well as faculty and staff collaboration. A broader *exosystem* consists of the broader external

environment, such as the city, state, or federal regulations. The *macrosystem* are external systems such as public perceptions, national economy, or dominant culture.

The ways students interact within ecological systems vary based on their capital. Individuals acquire various degrees of cultural, social, and economic capital that influence their access and choices (Bourdieu, 1986). People's capital reproduces and maintains society. Affluent families have more capital, which results in greater success and status and enables them to maintain their position of power and privilege.

Students' identities and behaviors change based on how they interact with their environments. People look to others to know they belong (Strayhorn, 2016). Belonging influences persistence and diminishes when students wonder about or are notified that they cannot remain in their chosen program (Barber, 2014; Nunn, 2021; Soria & Stebeton, 2013; Strayhorn, 2019). Belonging is the belief that one is welcomed, accepted, and connected to others (Johnson & Wiese, 2022; Rubin, 2012; Zhang, 2016). Students are constantly evaluating the extent that they belong in specific settings (Strayhorn, 2016, 2019). Students may believe they belong within their peer groups or the student body, more broadly (social belonging), but not within their classes or their program of study (academic belonging) and vice versa (Eniko & Stefan, 2016; McAlpine et al., 2009; Nunn, 2021). Scholars connect students' majors to their academic sense of belonging and identity or sense of self in the academy (Denice, 2021; Oyserman & Lewis, 2017; Montgomery et al., 2000; Rouland, 2017; Smith et al., 2014). Students are more likely to believe they belong when the environment validates who they are (Rendón, 1994). Students who believe they belong are more likely to engage with others within that specific environment and persist (Astin & Panos, 1969; Tinto, 1983).

Belonging has been associated with retention (Davis et al., 2019; Stachl & Baranger, 2020), resilience (Ang et al., 2022; Grüttner, 2019), self-efficacy (Maryam & Anastasia, 2021; Wurster et al., 2021), emotional distress (Maryam & Anastasia, 2021; Rice et al., 2016; Soria & Alkire, 2015; Strayhorn, 2016), academic engagement (Herridge, et al., 2020), academic performance (Strayhorn, 2019), motivation (Strayhorn, 2019), persistence (De Clercq et al., 2019) and choice of major (Cheryan et al., 2009; Cheryan et al., 2009). Belonging serves as a protective factor against imposter syndrome (Grüttner, 2019; Stachl & Baranger, 2020), stereotype threat (Estrada et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2015), and anxiety (De Clercq et al., 2019). Individuals' perception of the campus climate also predicts their reported degree of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). If students perceive the campus environment negatively, they are at greater risk for depression (Arbona & Jimenez, 2014).

In the context of these conceptual frameworks (i.e., ecological, capital, and sense of belonging), researchers ask critical questions of higher education for the differences in admission and progression rates of marginalized students. To understand potential causes of inequities encountered by under-resourced and marginalized students who aspire to pursue licensed occupations after graduation, sociological theorists offer evidence that pre-college academic under-preparation, economic disparity, diminished cultural or social capital; teaching practices, hostile campus climates, and bias embedded in the admission process negatively impacts students' ability to progress in and secure admission into professional programs. They also call for public policy changes and implicit bias training. Each of these recommendations is now examined.

### **Pre-College Academic Preparation**

Scholars argue that the academic achievement rates of racially marginalized groups are due to perpetual and historical poverty that resulted in poorly funded school districts. Limited access to economic resources, racism, and colonialism throughout history entrapped generations into poverty. Native American, Black, and Hispanic households are more likely to have incomes below the poverty line than non-Hispanic White households (United States Census Bureau, 2017, 2020). Redlining practices and segregation isolated racially marginalized groups to certain neighbors, which created lower-quality schools because many districts drew and continue to receive their funding from property taxes. The poorest regions of the United States continue to have the lowest-funded school districts (Camera, 2018). While White families experienced poverty, they have historically been permitted to spread out and not funneled to a single neighborhood school (American Psychological Association, 2015; McNair et al., 2020). Native American nations encountered federal bureaucracy that prevented community leaders from recruiting new companies that could have brought economic growth to their region and school districts (Carney, 2009).

As a result of individual and collective poverty, marginalized families and districts cannot afford preschool programs, stimulating toys, private schools, personal tutors, supplemental textbooks, additional teachers, or assistive technology (American Psychological Association, 2015; Falkenstern & Rochat, 2018; National Indian Education Association, 2016). The size of secondary education classrooms is associated with persistence in STEM majors during college (Hinojosa et al., 2016). Families also have less access to other resources (food, homes, healthcare, etc.), further exacerbating students' well-being and academic success (American Psychological Association, 2015).

Limited district funding reduces the vocational guidance and college readiness available to students in high school. School counselors provide career exploration and advisement about the courses to take to prepare for the rigorous gateway courses often required of professional programs. Yet, many school counseling programs are under-resourced or supported (Dann-Messier & Greenburg, 2014; McFadden & Curry, 2018; Mulhern & Steiner, 2022; Savitz-Romer & Nicola, 2022). One in five students does not have access to adequate school counseling. Less than half of high school graduates connect with a school counselor (Velez, 2020). Access rates are lower among racially marginalized groups and students in urban areas (Education Trust, 2014; Savitz-Romer & Nicola, 2022). Time scarcity and limited funds also stunt school counselors' ability to collaborate with local colleges or state higher education agencies (Reid, 2022; Solberg et al., 2022). School counselors may not be aware of the need for science coursework during high school. Racially marginalized students typically take fewer preparatory courses like math and science courses in high school (Hinojosa et al., 2016; Toretzky et al., 2018). Without sufficient guidance counseling, students may arrive at college with less developed career goals or prior academic knowledge, reducing their chances of passing the gateway courses required by professional programs or proactively declaring alternative majors.

### **Economic and External Influence During College**

Financial disparities during college reduce marginalized college students' global well-being and bandwidth to compete for selective admission in professional programs. Under-resourced or low-income college students often experience distress due to food scarcity and homelessness, which diminishes students' ability to concentrate when they are studying. Low-income students are twice as likely to seek counseling in college than individuals with higher incomes (Duffy et al., 2021). Under-resourced students often must work part-time jobs to meet

their basic needs, which results in less time to study or limited ability to use academic support services, such as meetings with professors, librarians, tutors, or study groups outside of class (Seymour et al., 2019). Success resources such as tutors, laptops, summer courses, textbooks, licensing test preparation courses, interview attire, admission essay writers, and multiple application fees are expensive (American Psychological Association, 2015; Falkenstern & Rochat, 2018; National Indian Education Association, 2016).

Some students may also be reluctant to change majors if they do not enjoy or excel in gateway courses or encounter academic difficulty. First-generation students have shared that their parents encouraged them to choose majors affiliated with prestige and security (Mcdossi et al., 2022). Marginalized families also may struggle to understand the value of the liberal arts, healthcare careers, or alternative courses (Johansson et al., 2020; Keene, 2022). First-generation and low-income students prioritize financial security over their interests in a program of study (Jehangir et al., 2015). Similarly, adult learners and Black students are more likely to encounter financial disparity and prioritize earning potential over other aspects as they gather information about their educational options (Duffy et al., 2021; Trejo, 2016). Marginalized students may remain in some programs of study despite low interest or negative feedback given the status or income associated with the occupations often related to these majors (Blustein et al., 2022; Thiry & Weston, 2019).

Students may not be aware of alternative occupations outside of traditional programs, especially if school counselors are under-resourced and rely exclusively on career interests. Exclusive use of self-reported interest inventories may reinforce or reduce students' occupational literacy because middle school and high school students often develop interests based on their geography, stereotypes, or ability to pay for activities (e.g., books, summer camps, afterschool



events, hobbies). Measured interests may often reflect only students' past experiences (Mitchell et al., 1999). Students in rural communities may have limited access to occupations outside of traditional professional programs, such as nursing and teaching (Feller & Leard, 2017; McCloy et al., 2020). Students who do not understand their options may not regulate their goals and change programs when they receive feedback that admission or progression into a professional program is unlikely.

### **Cultural & Social Capital**

Students vary in their cultural capital or knowledge about the college environment and social capital or access to people who can connect them to valuable resources or opportunities. (Bourdieu, 1986; Yosso, 2005). First-generation students or individuals whose parents did not earn a two or four-year degree may know less about the common language or behaviors expected by colleges (Kouzoukas, 2020). If professional programs admit students before their college enrollment, first-generation students may be less able to compete for spots in selective majors because of their diminished awareness of college-going behaviors. When directly tested on their pre-college knowledge, first-generation high school students exhibited less knowledge of AP credits, early admission decision deadlines, or the value of contacting colleges to demonstrate interest compared to continuing-generation students (Poynton et al., 2019). Enrollment in AP credits not only gives students more prior knowledge of a discipline or lightens their credit load when they arrive at college but also provides early academic feedback about their interests and abilities, which can enable students to clarify their major further and regulate their career goals (Avery et al., 2017; Reid & Moore, 2008).

The influence of relational and cultural capital continues once students arrive at college. Given their awareness of the college environment, family members of continuing-generation

students may encourage students to speak with alums, current students, or faculty members of professional programs. These individuals may then serve as advocates who provide guidance or insight that advances students' candidacy. Continuing-generation family members may also advise students to use campus resources as they encounter academic difficulties or prepare their application materials (Jehangir et al., 2015; Strayhorn, 2016). Career service professionals can coach students on their responses to interview or admission questions (Nunn, 2021). First-generation students often do not receive guidance from family members because they are less aware of campus resources or the admissions process. As a result, first-generation students are less likely to use the support available through career services or participate in co-curricular activities (i.e., campus leadership roles, study away) that may advance their admission candidacy than continuing-generation students (RTI International, 2021). Institutions may offer academic advising to students, but caseloads are often high (Lawton, 2018; Mitchell et al., 2018; Walker et al., 2017). Marginalized students have reported they perceive that advisors are too busy to assist them (Gasman & Nguyen, 2019; Hall, 2020; Lancaster & Xu, 2017; Loftin et al., 2012; McGee, 2021; Schudde et al., 2021; Wang, 2020). Some institutions do not require advising conversations and instead assume students will know that they need assistance and how to seek it out. When poor academic advising exists, first-generation students are often the most impacted because they often cannot receive guidance from family members and are unable to navigate the hidden curriculum of college environments (Cox, 2020; Jett & Davis, 2020; Winterer et al., 2020; Yosso, 2005).

### **Teaching Practices in Gateway Science Courses**

The learning environment of college gateway courses often does not align with the cultural values of racially marginalized students, which reduces their academic achievement and

subsequent ability to compete for spots in selective professional programs. The pervasive individualist learning environment of most colleges contradicts the relational, collectivistic, and communal values of many marginalized students (Gasman & Nguyen, 2019; Malcom, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2021; Seymour et al., 2019). Instructors (who may often be less experienced teaching assistants) usually deliver a high volume of complex content through passive lectures in large gateway courses (Harper et al., 2019). Marginalized students value hands-on and engaging activities (Hill & Albert, 2021). Given the number of enrolled students, professors often expect students to independently master the material and self-direct their learning (Gasman & Nguyen, 2019; Seymour et al., 2019). Large lectures prevent faculty from actively engaging students or checking for understanding (Nunn, 2021). Students not only struggle to master the content, but professors also cannot teach metacognitive skills, such as the synthesis or regulation of learning (Weston et al., 2019). Some professors do not know students by name (Gasman & Thai-Huy, 2019). Fewer professors share with students that they struggled academically or acknowledge that learning is difficult. Professors do not create norms or communicate that learning is a collaborative endeavor. Consequently, students do not perceive that it is common or expected to help each other (Gasman & Nguyen, 2019; Nunn, 2021; Strayhorn, 2019).

Due to the overall performance of students, professors often grade on a curve, which creates a culture of competition within classrooms that is distressing (Nguyen et al., 2021; Seymour et al., 2019). Students are aware that many grading systems plot students against other students' grades, which hinders their desire to collaborate and help each other. Grading on a curve also causes some students who did not fully master the class material to advance into other gateway courses without the prior knowledge they need to excel (Malcom, 2019; Seymour et al.,

2019). Limited scaffolding prevents students' subsequent success in upper-level courses required by professional programs.

### **Campus Climate**

Racially marginalized students often report hostile campus environments that diminish their sense of belonging (Rouland, 2017). Known as *incidental assimilation*, marginalized students have shared that they perceive the only way to persist or participate in the academy is to surrender their cultural traditions, values, goals, languages, or culture (Windchief, 2018). General education courses emphasize the perspectives of White writers and researchers. Professors may expect Indigenous students to deliver formal speeches in a manner not common across Native American nations (Burk, 2007). Faculty and staff may not support Native American students' participation in grieving rituals, which are longer in duration than dominant society (Falkenstern & Rochat, 2018). Students of color often perceive that faculty members expect or want them to fail or change majors and are reluctant to mentor them (Hadinger, 2015; Manuéliot-Kervliet, 2015; McCoy et al., 2017; Stitt & Happel-Parkins, 2019; Solóranzo et al., 2000). Everyday events or objects can convey that students belong. In one study, female students who were underrepresented in their discipline and exposed to generic items in an office (e.g., nature poster) reported greater belonging than females placed in offices with stereotypical artifacts, such as a Rubik Cube (Cheryan et al., 2009).

Besides experiencing diminished belonging in the classroom or from faculty, marginalized students often perceive that they do not belong or are not welcomed by their peers (Holland, 2019). Marginalized STEM students often report that classmates are reluctant to offer support, academic assistance, or invitations to study groups (Davis, 2017; Gasman & Nguyen, 2019; Jantzer et al., 2021; Madden et al., 2020). In gateway science courses, students are often

reminded of purported White superiority in front of their classmates when they learn about the historical practices and racist beliefs entrenched in eugenics (Slaton, 2010).

Marginalized students also are required to cope with continual emotional distress when they hear about racially motivated shootings, police brutality, racially charged athletic mascots, and other inequities in the news (American Psychological Association, 2011; Wimmer Schwarb, 2016). Undocumented students must also cope with the shame of lying to others about their citizenship and the chronic fear of loved ones being deported (Schmalzbauer & Andrés, 2019; Szelenyi & Chang, 2002). The ongoing navigation of identity conflict, historical trauma, and micro-aggressive comments can induce exhaustion and depression, hindering the academic achievements of marginalized students competing for spots within selective professional programs (Mutegi, 2020).

### **Anxiety and Use of Campus Resources**

Lack of academic preparation leaves many marginalized students discouraged and distressed (Thiry, 2019). Although underrepresented students experience greater distress and diminished academic achievement due to the unique barriers they must navigate, they are less likely to seek help (Szelenyi & Chang, 2002). Sometimes students do not seek help because they do not understand what resources exist. In other instances, they know that society holds prejudicial beliefs about their aptitude and do not want to confirm stereotypes (Fries-Britt et al., 2001). Known as *stereotype threats*, marginalized students often fear that others will evaluate them against a prejudicial belief or use their performance to confirm the erroneous assumptions of society (Spencer et al., 1999; Steele & Arnson, 1995). Marginalized students also internalize the prejudicial beliefs others impose on them early in life (Clark & Clark, 1947). *Imposter syndrome* occurs when students doubt if they belong and believe they are a fraud (Cokley et al.,

2013; Deemer et al., 2014; Ewing et al., 1996; Grüttner, 2019; Stachl & Baranger, 2020).

Stereotype threats and imposter syndrome have been associated with debilitating test anxiety and procrastination, as well as diminished self-efficacy, persistence, and help-seeking (Bosson et al., 2004; Beasley & Fischer, 2012; Berg, 2010; Dika & D'Amico, 2016; England et al., 2019; Fryberg, 2002; Gasman & Nguyen, 2019; Hsu & Goldsmith, 2021; Jaramillo et al., 2016; Osborne, 2007; Schmader et al., 2008).

### **Bias Embedded in Admission**

Some professional programs may use standardized exam cut-off scores to determine who is admitted into the major and who is not. Marginalized students are disadvantaged in admission if professional programs use standardized exam scores such as the ACT or SAT. Bias exists within standardized exams (Bazemore-James et al., 2016; Hurtado et al., 1998; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Discrimination also occurs if programs use holistic review criteria (e.g., essays, letters of recommendation). Admission committee members often rate essay components of marginalized students' applications more negatively than they do applications for White students (Lewis, 2019). Individuals who write letters of recommendation are more likely to use positive language to describe dominant groups than underrepresented populations (Iwen, 2019; Madera et al., 2009). The quality of letters of recommendation more often reflects the time and writing ability of teachers instead of the merits of students (Boeckenstedt, 2016). Teachers at under-resourced schools have less time to engage in quality writing. Supervisors during field experiences may also exhibit bias in their ratings or descriptions of marginalized students (Ross et al., 2017).

Bias is also introduced in the ways institutions present information about standardized exams. Some scholars argue that marginalized students secure medical residency at lower rates

than majority or dominant groups because schools release students' specific exam scores to residency placement sites. Scholars speculate that English Language Learners students may have scored lower on the exam simply due to language barriers instead of their actual competency. Nonetheless, residency sites penalize marginalized students and select them at lower rates than their counterparts (Williams et al., 2020).

Social scholars also argue that institutions prevent goal regulation to preserve the standing of their programs. Programs with competitive selection rarely publish adequate information that students need to assess their candidacy. Scholars call institutions to publish profiles of students who experienced some academic obstacles but secured admission to dispel the perception that one needs perfect grades to apply (Oyewole, 2001). Profiles of marginalized students may also increase students' perception of admissibility. Instead of only framing minimum entrance requirements, institutions also need to share profiles and the range of scores of admitted students (Albanese et al., 2006; Ballejos et al., 2019; Christophers & Gotian, 2020; Oyewole, 2001; Robertson et al., 2014).

### **Public Policy and Social Education**

Although they praise the adaptability movement given the rapidly changing labor market, scholars with a sociological perspective equally call practitioners to advocate against the oppressive practices of employers who benefit from involuntary career changes and expect individuals to accommodate their demands (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2018; Hooley, 2018; Hooley et al., 2018; Sultana, 2022). Choosing occupations based on one's interest should not be a luxury afforded to only a few elites. Adaptability also places the responsibility for career well-being on the individual instead of systems or society (Hooley et al., 2018). Critical scholars also encourage advisors to teach students to expand their definition of career, so they no longer

associate it exclusively with capital and instead include family, volunteer, and community work (Hooley, 2018). Expanded career guidance aligns with other holistic or integrative perspectives of careers but is less common in pop culture and broader society (Hansen, 2011; Super, 1953). Not all advisors agree that they need to discuss social justice with students (Winham, 2017).

### **Summary**

This chapter examined scholars' current observations about the process that unfolds when students must change educational programs and end the enrollment behaviors they had taken in the past related to their previous goals. Although academic advising scholars have written extensively about how to prepare students for educational change proactively (Gordon, 2007; Jenkins et al., 2018a), this study focuses on the lived experiences of students who actually endured such changes. Social cognitive career theorists articulate that individuals make career decisions based on their perceptions of their abilities, the value they prescribe to their outcomes, and the likelihood of attaining their goals (Lent et al., 1994). When they experience insurmountable challenges, they may need to regulate or modify their plans (Lent & Brown, 2013). An action crisis usually occurs when students must examine whether they should hold on or let go of their goals (Wrosch et al., 2003). Their autonomous motivation, self-control, previous implementation intentions, mindfulness, social relationships, and the availability of alternatives influence students' goal adjustment (Kappes & Schattke, 2022).

Although scholars have included college students as the participants in quantitative studies (Herrmann & Brandstätter, 2015; Hu et al., 2017; 2018), no scholars have examined the lived experiences of students who endured involuntary educational changes and went on the graduate. Similarly, only one article used quantitative methodology to examine the relationship between socioeconomic status and goal revision (Hu et al., 2019). Higher education has not yet



examined the other barriers graduates have endured and overcome outside of limited financial capital. Scholars have validated the role of academic advisors related to athletic goal disengagement, but not vocational goals (Garver et al., 2021). Little application exists related to career development (Hu, et al., 2017, 2018). None of the scholars situated their constructs in the context of academic advising or named specific implications for academic advisors.

Given the gaps in the literature, the next chapter includes the methodology this study can use to examine students' lived experiences. In the next chapter, I will outline the study's sample, data collection, and data analysis, as well as ethical integrity and trustworthiness. Clear research design will ensure effective inquiry and advancement of scholarship (Durdella, 2020a).

## **Chapter 3 - Methods**

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology and research design for this qualitative narrative inquiry study. Narrative inquiry enables researchers to examine participants' stories about their lived experiences and the events they encountered or endured (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). When researchers examine the narratives participants construct, they understand individuals' meaning-making and environmental interactions (Kim, 2016). Themes also emerge across participants' stories, which scholars can use to inform their practice (Loseke, 2022).

Narrative analysis is appropriate for this study because it permits researchers to examine how students construct the story of their education after they endure disruptive academic transitions and changes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Through storytelling, participants also reveal unique and common elements of human experiences that may differ from scholars' commonly held beliefs about involuntary transitions during college (Loseke, 2022). Narrative methods also amplify the voices of participants who are often silenced, cultivating empathy and mobilizing others to change any harmful aspects of the external environment (Kim, 2016).

To further examine narrative inquiry as the chosen method for this study, I provide a rationale for qualitative research and, more specifically, narrative inquiry. Then, I will describe the participant selection process, data collection, and data analysis. I end by acknowledging ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the study. By examining the design and methods of this study, I will evaluate its feasibility (Durdella, 2020d).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study used narrative inquiry to understand the lived experiences of college graduates who were denied admission into or progression within their chosen major after completing at

least three semesters of college. This study focused on students who the institution explicitly notified that they must select an alternative program of study and removed by the institution from their existing major.

### **Research Questions**

This study examined the following research questions:

1. What critical events or activities do participants who survived unforeseen academic loss include in their stories or recall as a part of their experiences?
  - a. How did students who coped with unplanned educational changes interact with higher education professionals before, during, and after the event?
  - b. What barriers (if any) do students name related to their identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, class, ability, or gender) as they recall the events that occurred before, during, and after their involuntary change of major?
2. How did students who are placed into alternative majors arrive at new career goals?
3. How did participants cope and persist to graduation after they experienced unplanned educational changes?
4. How did students who endured involuntary academic and career transitions during college perceive their current post-graduation activities?
5. What are the implications for higher education professionals who support students as they navigate unforeseen educational or vocational changes?

### **Rationale for Research Design**

Before describing the techniques of narrative methods, researchers must examine the purpose and suitability of the study's design as it relates to their specific research questions (Durdella, 2020d). For this reason, I situated narrative inquiry in the context of my study to

confirm its appropriateness in addressing my research questions. I started this analysis by considering the merits of qualitative research in general and then examined narrative inquiry more specifically.

### **Rationale for Qualitative Research**

Scholars deploy qualitative methodologies to examine individuals' experiences of a phenomenon. Founded on beliefs articulated by Giambattista Vico in the seventeenth century, qualitative inquiry assumes people construct knowledge instead of discovering it (Bhattacharya, 2017). Reality is based on people's perceptions of their experiences. Qualitative research relies on the rational analysis described by Aristotle, who argued that patterns exist and can be identified when individual human experiences are collectively analyzed (Clandinin, 2013; Hartung, 2013; Kim, 2016).

Qualitative research brings the complexity and uniqueness of human experiences front and center. Some experiences, such as academic loss or involuntary identity changes, are challenging to measure mathematically. I selected qualitative methods for this study because it humanizes participants and amplifies the voices of students who were denied access to their initially chosen goals (Kramp, 2014). Students who cope with transitions encounter unique and multi-dimensional experiences based on their diverse backgrounds, perceptions, and resources (Blustein et al., 2013; Schlossberg, 2008). Through a qualitative humanizing approach, the higher education field will understand participants' lived experiences and how these individuals responded to involuntary educational transitions or events.

Qualitative design also restores agency because the methods use participatory methodology (Frank, 2000; Fyer & Fagan, 2003). Qualitative techniques represent "research with people rather than on people" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 45). Positioning participants in an active

role is especially important in this study because these students already endured a sense of loss and diminished control due to the inherent nature of involuntary changes (Schlossberg, 2008). By describing what they found helpful or harmful, participation in this study may have experienced a greater sense of control, which advanced their well-being (Chen, 2002).

### **Rationale for Narrative Inquiry**

This study used narrative inquiry, which has become more prevalent in education and healthcare over the past 30 years (Andrews et al., 2013; Loseke, 2022). Narrative research became more popular in the 1980s as memoirs, technology (e.g., video cameras), and political protests became prevalent. Individuals also moved away from realism and began to embrace contextualism (Riessman, 2008). Narrative qualitative research is also grounded in social constructionism and interpretivism (Durdella, 2020d; Loseke, 2022). Building upon Dewey's (1934, 1938) beliefs that experiences are both social and personal (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), people construct reality based on social interactions and exchanges. Individuals' interpretation of reality varies based on one's background and previous events or experiences. Meaning resides in experiences, not people or objects (Loseke, 2022).

Narrative analysis is a method "for interpreting texts that have a common storied form" (Riessman, 2008, p. 11). Like case-study research, a group of individuals provides pieces of the puzzle that together create a coherent picture of an experience (Riessman, 2008). Narrative methodology was an appropriate form of inquiry for this study because the research questions sought to examine the lived experiences and events told by students who cope with involuntary educational or vocational changes. Narrative techniques enabled the examination of events (i.e., human action), experiences, and encounters with the campus environment (Riessman, 2008).

This study's research questions focused on examining the activities or events of participants who navigated unforeseen educational change, which is why narrative techniques were beneficial. Narrative inquiry is intended to provide “an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected” (Creswell, 2007, p. 54). Narrative techniques are especially suited for this study because the research questions examined events (i.e., involuntary educational changes) that were “unwilled, unpredicted, and often unwished by the actors” (Mattingly, 1998, p. 8). While phenomenology examines everyday experiences (Vagle, 2018), stories include “some kind of rupture or disturbance in the normal course of events” (Riessman, 2008, p. 6). Narrative inquiry brought readers into a world they might not otherwise experience. It was not intended for ordinary experiences, but disruptive events (Kim, 2016).

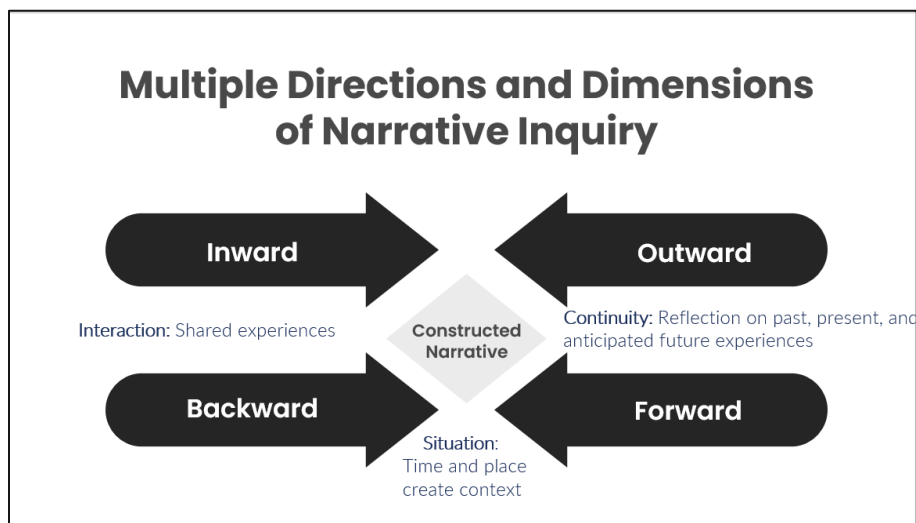
Denial of admission or progression in one's major is an example of an unforeseen disruptive event suited for narrative inquiry (Mertova & Webster, 2020). Involuntary educational or vocational transitions impact students' sense of belonging (Barber, 2014), routines (Schlossberg, 2008), social support (Schlossberg, 2008), and degree progress (Severy & Slinger, 1996; Barr et al., 2010). Given the inherent ability for unplanned vocational changes to interrupt or intrude on students' lives, storytelling was the best methodology to capture participants' lived experiences.

The research questions of this study also called for information about participants' experiences. Researchers use narrative inquiry to understand participants' *lived experiences*, which are "people in relationship with others and their environment" (Ntinda, 2020, p. 6). When researchers examine participants' lived experiences, narrative inquiry engages in deep, multi-dimensional analysis. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) offer three dimensions and four directions of narrative analysis, which are depicted in Figure 1. This narrative methodological framework

examines participants' experiences by inviting them to look backward and forward, inward and outward, and within time and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2007). These dimensions and directions reflect the ways individuals transition through time and events as they live and tell the stories of their lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

**Figure 1.1**

Directions and Dimensions of Narrative Inquiry



Adapted from the description provided in *Narrative Inquiry* by Clandinin & Connelly, 2000.

Copyright 2000 by Jossey-Bass.

When disruptions occur, people create meaning and bring order to their lives through storytelling. Stories contain a character who takes action to achieve a goal. This goal serves as a plot of the story, which the main character pursues within a setting or context (Hartung, 2013). Lived experiences include "personal, social, and temporal elements of experience and also the context in which experience takes place" (Ntinda, 2020, p. 6). Given the contextual nature of narrative inquiry, researchers can examine the ways participants perceive and interact with their campus environment during involuntary change. Narratives “do not merely describe what someone does in the world but what the world does to that someone” (Mattingly, 1998, p. 8). By

inquiring about their interactions within the college environment, researchers capture what others did that helped or hindered their understanding or meaning making (Mertova & Webster, 2020).

Narrative methods are also predicated on “storied ecology” (Cochran, 1997, p. 133), which requires researchers to situate participants’ lived experiences in the context of their worldview, time, culture, and place (Bhattacharya, 2017; Kramp, 2014; Mertova & Webster, 2020). Since narrative inquiry captures social and cultural dimensions (Mertova & Webster, 2020), its use could also enhance practitioners’ understanding of the experiences of non-dominant groups.

Finally, narrative inquiry is both a research methodology and a discipline-specific supportive technique. Scholars have argued that students reconstruct their educational and vocational identities through narrative storytelling interventions (Baxter Magolda, 2004; Hagen, 2018; Savickas, 2002). As they tell their stories, participants will continue to construct meaning and advance their understanding of events (Riessman, 2008). If participants discover new insights during this study, the learning or meaning making could foster healing or hope (Schlossberg, 2008). Given the educational and restorative nature of participation in narrative inquiry (Baxter Magolda, 2004; Hagen, 2018; Savickas, 2002), the methodology is not optional but an essential ethical imperative.

To summarize, researchers must use narrative methods if the higher education is to understand how participants experience and make sense of unplanned educational or vocational events (Kim, 2016; Mertova & Webster, 2020; Riessman, 2008). Telling a story “is the primary way we express what we know and who we are” (Kim, 2016, p. 9). Narrative methodologies examine in unison multiple elements (e.g., events, experiences, and contextual encounters with the environment) of students’ stories, which results in deep multi-dimensional qualitative



analysis. Given this dynamic, scholars within the vocational (Savickas, 1997) and academic advising disciplines (Hagen, 2018) suggest narrative techniques as ways to support and educate students. Participants discovered a renewed sense of agency and a deeper understanding of their lived experiences or events by sharing their stories. Researchers identify themes within and across the narratives of participants that may or may not confirm commonly held beliefs about involuntary transitions (Loseke, 2022). For these reasons, qualitative narrative inquiry was best suited for this study.

### **Research Design**

To design narrative research effectively, scholars must define what qualifies as data and how the researcher will collect the data (Flick, 2018). Narrative inquiry involves the intended sample, data collection, and data analysis procedures. While data collection and analysis are examined separately in the subsequent pages, this study relied on emergent design, with collection and analysis occurring concurrently (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Saldaña, 2011).

### **Participants**

Researchers use purposeful criterion sampling to achieve depth in their data collection by interviewing individuals who represent the experience under examination (Durdella, 2020c; Schreier, 2018). It also focuses on the individuals who will benefit from participation or who could be helped in the future (Durdella, 2020c). I anticipated needing 4 to 6 participants for this study.

Scholars debate the number of participants necessary for a valid qualitative study (Loseke, 2022; Schreier, 2018). Qualitative research is predicated on in-depth case analysis and intended to amplify the voice of often overlooked individuals. Yet too many participants introduce complexities to a study that prevent the holistic examination of participants' lived

experiences (Loseke, 2022). Oversampling occurs when researchers have adequate data but continue to engage with new participants (Schreier, 2018). Despite the lack of agreement about a specific required number of participants, some narrative scholars have suggested that *sample saturation* must be included in narrative research design. Predicated on the use of thematic analysis, this technique permits researchers to evaluate the suitability of their sample during (as opposed to before) the study. The emergence of themes during the study signal that the sample size is adequate because common experiences have been captured (Schreier, 2018; Vasileiou et al., 2018). Once researchers identify that they have enough data to identify themes and produce information-rich descriptions, they interview a few more individuals to confirm the depth and breadth of their results, which signals they may cease data collection (Roulston & Choi, 2018; Loseke, 2022). Known as *sample adequacy* (Vasileiou et al., 2018), the study's size, demographics, and information redundancy influence the generalizability of the results (Schreier, 2018; Vasileiou et al., 2018). I deemed the sample adequate, given the common themes that emerged after the interviews with each participant.

I identified participants by reviewing the contact information of former students known to me and my colleagues across our practice at four different institutions. I invited eight participants via email and LinkedIn (Appendix A). I also offered a \$75 Amazon gift card for participating in all three interviews to thank individuals for their time (Durdella, 2020c). Among the eight individuals I invited to participate, four opted into the study.

As individuals participated in the study, I continuously considered the extent that the sample fully embodied the various forms of the phenomenon being examined (Schreier, 2018). Every participant of this study shared the common experience of being notified by a post-secondary institution that they were unable to achieve their educational goals and must change

their academic major or aspirations. Differences existed regarding their programs of study (nursing, education) and when participants were notified. Some were informed during their sophomore year, particularly due to policies related to repeated courses within the program. Others were not informed of the need to change paths until they were approaching graduation. This variance increases the transferability of the findings (Schreier, 2018). All participants, however, were united by the need to move toward a new pathway after their initial goal was no longer possible. Every participant graduated despite enduring unforeseen educational changes. Participants graduated five to two years prior to the study.

Every participant also represented a marginalized group. All participants were first-generation college students. None of their parents had earned a four-year degree. Some of the participants also represented racially minoritized groups or were students with documented disabilities. All participants encountered barriers in their environment because of these socially constructed identities. I deemed the sample adequate because their lived experiences embodied the phenomena I was studying.

### **Story Sourcing and Data Collection**

Narrative analysis differs from other qualitative traditions because it involves collecting and curating stories (Loseke, 2022). While researchers may look for general categories or themes, researchers do not isolate or fragment parts of participants' stories like they do during other qualitative techniques such as grounded theory (Loseke, 2022). To honor the coherent components of participants' stories, Clandinin (2013) uses the term *field text* instead of data to describe the collection of comments, notes, and transcripts co-constructed by researchers and participants. The method of field text collection is known as *story sourcing* (Loseke, 2022, p. 51).

I employed semi-structured interviews for data collection and story sourcing (Durdella, 2020b; Rolston & Choi, 2018). Interviews were suitable for this study because I could not observe the experiences of participants, given the intrapersonal and unpredictable nature of involuntary transitions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Semi-structured interviews were suitable because less structure elicits more disclosure, and participants can share information whenever they wish (Kim, 2016). While I defined questions in advance, I also remained open to permitting participants to set the agenda. This flexibility honored their agency and restored a loss of control common among individuals who endure involuntary transitions (Schlossberg, 2008). Open-ended questions focused on lived experiences and invited participants to reflect on the meanings they prescribed to the events that occurred. I now describe the questions, non-verbal collection, and transcription of these interviews.

### *Field Text Questions and Interview Guides*

Before the interviews started, I exhibited transparency and shared a formal consent form, emphasizing that their participation was confidential. A draft of this consent form is included in Appendix B. To foster trust with participants and invite them to validate my interpretations, I conducted three interviews with each participant (outlined in Appendix C). Scholars suggested a single interview is too shallow to capture the breadth and depth of participants' experiences (Fiddler, 2022; Kim, 2016). Summaries of the objectives for each of the three semi-structured interviews are below.

**First Interview: f.** The objective of the first session was to explain the purpose of the study, confirm they endured an involuntary educational change, answer any of their questions, and build rapport. Like other narrative studies, I noted that the interviews would last one hour (Adler et al., 2017). I reviewed the informed consent form and verbally reinforced the study's

purpose. For example, I stated, “I am studying how students make meaning from major changes in their educational or vocational plans. I am interested in hearing your story and personal experiences.” I also included a warning, acknowledging that they may relive or reexperience distressing aspects of their stories when they shared personal information with me, including suicidal thoughts or racial trauma. In the informed consent form, I shared that it was equally possible that they may discover new insights from their storytelling and participation (Schlossberg, 2008). I asked participants to either sign a physical form or state “I consent” so their verbal affirmation was recorded on the Zoom session.

Once I secured informed consent, I began the interview. A full interview guide is available in Appendix C. I started by asking questions about their pre-college and early college experiences, which included some of the following questions:

- Tell me about how your high school prepared you to attend and apply to college. What process did you use to select your initially chosen major?
- What attributes did you especially find appealing about your initially chosen career?
- Describe your experiences during your first year of college.
- What went well during college, and what would you change if you had a magic wand?

This format aligned with scholars’ suggestion to focus on general broad inquiries before I funneled them down to their lived experiences and disruptive educational change (Roulston & Choi, 2018). I saved questions that may provoke an emotional or distressed response for the second interview, so I could focus on establishing rapport during the first part of the study.

Building an initial relationship during the first interview increased the likelihood that participants disclosed personal information during subsequent interviews (Durdella, 2020b).

I ended the interview by confirming they changed their major and asking participants to identify briefly the event(s) that led to the involuntary educational change (e.g., institutional policy, denied admission, failed practicum). I invited them to meet again to describe their experiences during and after the unplanned change of majors. If they elected to meet again, I provided guided prompts on a worksheet (Appendix D) that collected information about their experiences before, during, and after they were notified of the involuntary educational change and without alternative career goals, as well as the process they used to arrive at new career goals (e.g., how long it took, what variables they considered, what process they used to make decisions, what helped/hindered career clarity). I structured the worksheet using a three-scene story sequence to deepen participants' reflection. Event-based lifelines or three-scene storyboards are popular narrative assessment strategies career practitioners use to capture how people perceive and prescribe meaning to past events that influenced their careers (Fritz & Van Zyl, 2015; Hicks & Rush, 2016; Law, 2015). The narrative questions included in the worksheet were suitable because the questions elicit implicit narrative beyond traditional fact-finding questions. When people construct stories, they draw from episodic memories that contain both conscious and subconscious experiences (Law, 2015). Participants provided responses that capture both the context and people who influenced their career decisions and involuntary transitions (Fritz & Van Zyl, 2015).

Regardless of whether they elected to participate in the second wave of interviews or not, I discussed a pseudonym to preserve their anonymity outside of our conversation and discussed

the demographics that will disclose. A copy of the demographic questions is provided in Appendix E.

**Second Interview: During and After the Change.** I began the second interview by revisiting the informed consent that we discussed earlier. I reminded participants that we would discuss previous distressing events, that they were not obligated to answer every question, and that they could end their participation at any time.

Aligned with the first set of research questions (1a, 1b) and the prompts on the worksheet I provided at the conclusion of the first interview, we discussed the critical events that stood out to them when they were notified to change their major but had not yet formed career goals. Although they used different terminology (e.g., action crisis, provocative moment, or crossroads), scholars agreed that the moment students realized they need to cease the pursue of their goals was distressing (Brandtstadter & Rothermund, 2002; Carroll et al., 2009; Ghassemi et al., 2017). I further unpacked the events they described in the worksheet by asking some of the follow-up semi-structured questions below, depending on their responses.

- When, if at all, did you first become aware that you might not be able to pursue your intended major?
- What barriers prevented you from securing admission or remaining in your initially chosen major?
- What campus resources did you use before the involuntary educational change?
- What type of feedback did you receive about the suitability of progressing within your chosen major prior to the major change?
- What was the hardest part about changing majors involuntarily? How did changing your major impact other areas of your life (e.g., relationships, routine, sense of belonging)?

- Some theorists (Savickas, 1997; Schlossberg, 2008) speculate that people who must change their majors for reasons outside of their control experience a sense of trauma, grief, depression, or suicide. To what extent was this true for you? If so, what helped or hindered your coping?
- Can you recall an instance(s) you considered leaving college because of the major change? If so, tell me about it. What helped you persist to graduation despite the change of major?
- Who did you interact with at the college (e.g., academic advisor, career services, professors, resident assistants) after the involuntary major or career change? What did these individuals do or say that helped or hindered your transition into a new major and/or an alternative career?
- How does your experience in your new major compare to your experiences in your first major? What meaning did you derive (if at all) from your new educational program both during and after college? How did you initially perceive the change of major, and how did your understanding of your situation change over time?
- How would you describe the person you were prior to changing your major compared to the person you are now?
- What else would you like me to know that we have not already discussed?

Throughout the second interview, I engaged in *narrative thinking*, which included the initial consideration, comparison, or arrangement of participants' stories (Kim, 2016, p. 156). I exhibited immediacy by linking various components of participants' lived experiences. For example, I asked, "How did your experience in your new major compare to your experiences in your first major?" I also used the two-sentence format technique that linked questions to previous



scholarship (Kim, 2016) by including a statement before the question to provide a context or purpose to the inquiry. I also engaged in *broadening* (evaluating the broader context of the story), *burrowing* (gathering more specific information about the story), and *storying* or *restorying* (examining the meaning or relevance of the lived experience) to probe further and invite participants to expand on their responses (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Kim, 2016).

Like the other interviews, the second conversation occurred via Zoom. Participants received a \$50 gift card for participating in the first and second interviews. I carefully considered the timing of my questions (Knapik, 2006). To empower and honor the voice of participants, I permitted individuals to introduce topics or tangents, understanding they have the most expertise about their experiences. Their perspectives were both unique and valuable. Tangents may have also reflected points of dissent (Riessman, 2014). When participants began recounting another event, I considered how it might be connected to the event they were initially describing. This attentiveness enabled me to identify contradictions, inconsistencies, or turning points within their stories (Kim, 2016; Riessman, 2008). I also ended the interview by inviting participants to describe whatever else they wanted to share or wanted me to know (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I reinforced the invitation to disclose any of their reflections in a follow-up thank-you note.

**Third Interview: Member Checking and Debriefing.** The final interview consisted of member checking and follow-up questions. I shared the initial text I constructed and invite their feedback on my findings (Durdella, 2020b; Schwandt, 2007). Participants validated or revised my findings by sharing my results and member checking (Kim, 2016). Given the emergent qualitative research design, I also asked follow-up questions to validate interpretations and analytic inductions. New insights or questions emerged after I interviewed other participants (Schwandt, 2007).

I also asked participants to describe their post-graduation educational and vocational goals or activities. I invited them to share how they responded if employers or graduate schools asked them to describe what inspired them to choose their major during interviews. This question captured the fourth research question of this study and the ways participants construct the story of their education (Hagen, 2013). I also used the devil's advocate question, which Merriam and Tisdell (2015) reported enables interviewers to question the assumptions of scholars. To capture the fourth research question, I asked the following: "Some people use language such as "plan B" or "back-up plan" to describe your career. What do you think about this language? What would you want scholars who use this language to know about your current experiences now?" As our third interview ended, participants also reflected on the advice they would share with helping professionals in higher education and other students who shared their experiences, which enabled me to examine the final research question of the study.

I continued to exhibit sensitivity during the third session because participants relived their events when they read their stories. I also reinforced the confidential nature of their participation and confirmed that they found the study beneficial (Kim, 2016). Participants also received the \$25 Amazon gift card at that time. Outside of three interviews, I had no other interactions with participants (Durdella, 2020a).

### ***Non-Verbal Data Collection***

Narrative inquiry includes but also transcends questioning. To enter the world of participants, researchers must convey empathy, which is "a cognitive phenomenon (taking the perspective of another) as well as an affective one (vicariously feeling another's inner experience)" (Josselson, 2013, p. 80). Empathetic statements invite participants to elaborate. Josselson (2013) described three strategies for empathetic statements, including "summarizing

(What I've understood from what you said is...), paraphrasing (The essence of what I am hearing is...), and mirroring (It sounds like you were feeling\_\_\_ when that happened.)" (Josselson, 2013, pp. 83-84). Often complex emotions are present that I must contain in tension in my empathetic responses. For example, grief often manifests itself as both anger and sadness (Schlossberg, 2008). Students may describe both their distress and coping in a single section of the interview. During the interviews, I acknowledged dynamic experiences in my responses and reflected the diverse elements of students' experiences (Josselson, 2013).

I also was attentive to the intentions implied in participants' responses. Conle (2000) applies John Dewey's (1934, 1938) framework to narrative analysis, arguing that researchers make participants' implicit purpose or goals explicit. These goals or meta-objectives are known as telos and are unique to each participant. I refrained from evaluating participants' responses and instead reflected on what they have shared or normalized the commonalities of people's experiences (Josselson, 2013). I also acknowledged that no two events were the same and each participant had a unique story.

Active listening was also critical. I remained emotionally present and exhibited immediacy to build rapport with participants. I was cognizant of their comfort level and communicated nonverbally that I was genuinely interested in their experiences. I remained attentive to my responses to avoid bias or implicit assumptions. I was also observant and examined their nonverbal cues, such as shifting posture, eye contact, fidgeting, or self-soothing motions. I both trusted and doubted the participants in this study, believing the merit of their narrative but also validating it by looking for nonverbal incongruencies or inconsistencies within their stories (Kim, 2016). Notations of non-verbal data were especially relevant because these behaviors were not included in transcripts (Josselson, 2013). I also recorded participants' tone by

mirroring it in my own response. For example, if I sensed the individual was angry or sad, I depicted it in my voice, too.

I also carefully observed participant reactivity or shifts in their behaviors and reactions that signaled doubts or disruptions in trust (Durdella, 2020a). While longer pauses signified disagreement, whispers or silence may have signaled participants were about to make sensitive disclosures (Roulson, 2013). Minimal, thin, or flat responses also revealed resistance to societal stereotypes (Riessman, 2014). If participants cried, I remained silent to allow space for expressing their pain and to invite them to continue sharing their stories. A holding environment captured the essence of participants' stories (Winnicott, 1960).

### ***Transcription***

Transcription is the process used to record participants' narratives (Schwandt, 2007). Researchers accurately depict participants' intentions, thoughts, affect, and behaviors within a social context. Thorough transcription is necessary because narrative inquiry uses thick descriptions and restorying procedures to analyze participants' responses (Riessman, 2008; Schwandt, 2007). To transcribe the narration, I used contrasting transcriptions. As described by Riessman (2008), I recorded everything said during the interview using Zoom transcription. Before each recording, I asked for permission. After the interview concluded, I engaged in the second transcription, during which I integrated my non-verbal notations and line-by-line number statements for coding purposes. I also took notes or memos after the second interview for each research question so I could begin to connect participants' comments with the inquiry of this study.

To invite further elaborate on their comments, I provided the participants with a copy of their narrative sketch during their third interview. When I drafted the results, I included their

quotes verbatim. I also used these quotes in my analysis to capture the coherent spirit of narrative inquiry and bring credibility to my findings (Loseke, 2022).

### **Story Selection: How did I analyze the field text?**

Field text analysis includes describing, comparing, and explaining the information I collect. I aimed to draft generalized statements that framed questions, interpretations, or hypotheses as research findings (Flick, 2013). In narrative inquiry, field text analysis are known as *story selection* (Loseke, 2002, p. 51). I reduced and segmented field texts to capture the essence of participants' stories (Durdella, 2020a). Researchers move from field text to interim or tentative text to published or public research texts. Narrative researchers "look for patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes either within or across an individual's experience and in the social setting" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000 p. 132). While there is not a single method for field text analysis in narrative inquiry, stories contain universal elements that researchers can identify after narrative interviews (Andrews et al., 2013; Mertova & Webster, 2020; Riessman, 2008), including thematic analysis, structural analysis, and dialogic/performance analysis (Riessman, 2008, 2013). These three units of analysis textualize narrative inquiry by capturing participants' implicit hopes, beliefs, and values, while also incorporating the individual participant's social, ecological, cultural, and institutional traditions (Clandinin, 2013; Schwandt, 2007). Excellent analysis engages all three elements of participants' stories (i.e., thematic, structural, and dialogic), creating space for dynamic discussion and practical implications of the field text. I now examine these three dimensions.

#### ***Thematic Analysis***

Researchers most often use thematic analysis, which includes both narrative analysis and analysis of narratives (Kim, 2016). *Narrative analysis* brings a central plot, meaning, or

coherence to the field text (Kim, 2016). Narrative analysis is distinct because it preserves the coherence of individual cases or participants' stories. Instead of exclusively analyzing individual parts, aspects, or categories of participants' stories, researchers examine the entire case or central themes of the narrative (Riessman, 2008). In the first phase of my analysis, I presented the entire narrative of each participant to align with this practice.

After I presented the coherent narrative of the participants, I looked for themes throughout participants' stories. My *analysis of narratives* examined common elements across individual interviews and occurred deductively, moving from theory to concepts embedded in participants' responses. It also unfolded inductively, starting initially with the data/text and identifying common recurring elements as the categorizing unfolded (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2022; Kim, 2016; Schwandt, 2007). Induction was especially powerful for persuasive statements associated with surprising elements of conversations (Huffman, 2022).

After interviewing my first participant, I proceeded to interview other individuals who expanded on the initial elements expressed during our first conversation (Rapley, 2020). Theoretical sampling permitted me to develop codes and integrate them inductively into subsequent interviews after that (Rapley, 2020). Through analytic induction (Schwandt, 2007, p. 7), I validated and benchmarked each interpretation against other data I collected (Schreier, 2018).

Thematic analysis is founded on *narrative reconstruction* (Riessman, 2008, p. 55), a process of analysis that captures how people restore their identities and sense of meaning when their lives unfold differently than they planned. Scholars (Brunner, 1996; Savickas, 2002) argued that problems or conflict are embedded in stories, with protagonists seeking solutions. Narrative analysis explores the implicit purpose and meaning intended by participants, not only the isolated

or explicit examination of the words they used. Participants shared their perception of events in the context of their spiritual beliefs and interactions with others or broader society. By analyzing participants' perceptions, I transcended dominant inaccurate rationales for life events or incidents (Riessman, 2008). As Riessman (2008) recommended, I did not count how often each participant associates their stories with different dimensions but instead considered and compared common central themes or purpose of each story. Researchers also compare stories of participants to identify common elements of their narrative (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2022). Scholars then share their claims with participants so they can validate them or look for counterevidence to refute tentative conclusions (Huffman, 2022), which is known as *member checking*. Shared dimensions of participants' stories may include stories of changed perspectives, resistance, or marginalization (Riessman, 2008). To identify common dimensions, I created graphic organizers (e.g., mind maps), applied schematic hierarchies in the literature, or placed participants' events on a timeline (Riessman, 2008; Saldaña, 2011).

Sometimes themes emerged by considering the concepts embedded in the text or repeated during individual interviews. Patterns emerged across interviews (Kim, 2016). While coding was an abbreviated note on a section of field text, categories reflected responses to my research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The categories I created grouped data in a meaningful way (Saldaña, 2011). Excellence in categorization required brevity and relevance without redundancy or outliers. The thematic focus of the categories must be compelling, coherent, and comprehensive (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

I used open coding by trying different analytical groupings of the text (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I continued to revise and refine my categories as my interviews continued to unfold instead of waiting until I had all my data to begin analysis. To increase my ability to

retrieve field text, I relied on computer assistance (e.g., MAXQDA) and considered initial categories to prepare for immediate analysis after my first interview. Immediate analysis prevented me from being overwhelmed and allowed for constant comparison (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

To identify themes specific to narrative analysis, I initially considered using Labov's (1982) six-part narrative analysis technique, which other researchers applied (Patterson, 2013; Riessman, 2008; Roulston, 2013). To identify each of the parts Labov (1982) identified, I populated each portion of an individual's narrative on a table like the one constructed by Riessman (2008, p. 92) and noted in Appendix F. Portions of the text were only assigned to one of the six areas (Patterson, 2013). Each dimension of Labov's (1973) approach answered a question (Patterson, 2013). These six areas included the following: the abstract (summary and/or point of the story; what is it about?), orientation (to time, place, characters, situation; who, what, when), complicating action (the linear event sequence, or plot, usually with a crisis or turning point; then what happened?), evaluation (the outcome of the plot; so what?), resolution (outcome of the plot; what finally happened), and coda (ending the story and bringing it back to the present) of the presenting narrative.

Patterson (2013) criticizes Labov's approach because it does not consider the impact of the environment and is based exclusively on narrative provided by men. For these reasons, I deployed other techniques to engage in thematic analysis. As Kim (2016) described, I flirted initially with the data to evaluate other strategies that might be effective. For example, I pondered each of the three dimensions (temporality, sociality, and place) of narrative inquiry to ensure I had engaged in a holistic analysis of my findings. Elements of each of these dimensions are noted below:



- Temporal: People continuously construct reality, making sense of the past and moving towards a future (Kim, 2016). When participants told stories, they typically organized events based on time. Even if the events were not structured in chronological order, there was a beginning, middle, and end to their stories (Kim, 2016). Participants chose, connected, and considered the various events that occurred based on the meaning and relevance they prescribe to their experiences (Riessman, 2008). As they shared their stories, participants also linked their past, present, and future (Chen, 2002; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Brown et al., 2013; Hartung, 2013; Hagen, 2018). A plot or central theme emerged (Riessman, 2008).
- Social: Narratives unfolded in a social context. Participants co-construct narratives as they interacted with families, friends, faculty staff, or societal systems. They also engaged in introspection when they told their stories, considering their thoughts and feelings (Clandinin, 2013; Lieblich et al., 1998).
- Place: My narrative inquiry was influenced by participants' physical surroundings, such as one's home, school, religious organizations, or community.

Besides considering temporal, social, and place-based dimensions of participants' stories, I also considered various themes used by other narrative scholars to consider how participants make sense of unplanned educational or vocational changes (Adler et al., 2017). The four themes I considered to bring organization to my findings included the following:

- Motivational Themes: Narrative that reflects agency, intentions to grow, and relationships with others.

- Affective Themes: Movement from a positive to negative state (contamination), moving from a bad to a positive state (redemption) or moving on after an event (positive resolution).
- Integrative Meaning: Participants shift their understanding (accommodation), analyze their situation (exploration), or learn something (meaning making).
- Structural Elements: Participants contextualize their story in time or place (coherence) or deepen and breadth of their disclosures (complexity)

### **Deductive Assertions**

In my final analysis of the data, I connected my implications and claims to evidence, which Saldaña (2011) called deductive assertions. After I presented participants' narratives and themes across their stories, I situated the field text in the context of the broader populous and literature. I tentatively formulated explanatory statements grounded in the field text, which Saldaña (2011) termed abductive arguments. Whenever possible, I preserved the voice of participants by using their narrative as the title of categories, which is called "in vivo coding (Saldaña, 2011).

Previous scholarship enabled me to identify potential themes, such as Schlossberg's (2008) 4s (i.e., self, situation, support, and strategies) or the 4c (i.e., curiosity, control, concern, confidence) that Mark Savickas (1997) prescribed to career adaptability. I also relied on heuristics commonly used by researchers as they construct their analytic arguments (Huffman, 2022). One technique I tried was to imagine various scholars (Hagen, 2018; Gordon, 2007; Schlossberg, 2008; Savickas, 2002) in a discussion at a cocktail party and the arguments I would make based on the field text. It was also helpful to treat each statement as if it were an answer provided on Jeopardy and engage in backward thinking to identify the research question it

answered or the surprising observation embedded in it. I also used previous literature to disconfirm any claims (Huffman, 2022). I reviewed previous scholarship to assess whether my analysis had flaws or biases. I also spaced the interviews out to permit me to compare the data as I collected it and create visual aids to enhance my ability to see patterns or big-picture categories. I also played “with metaphors, analogies, and concepts” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 198). As the relationships between constructors or thematic patterns emerged, I gradually reduced the number of categories in consultation with my major professor to confirm data collection was complete.

### ***Structural Analysis***

Researchers engage in structural analysis when they consider how participants share their stories. While thematic analysis focuses on content, structural analysis examines forms and methods of communication. Narrative researchers critically examine the text, addressing tone, tensions, inconsistencies, and irony (Riessman, 2008). The story’s grammar or structure may signal shifts in participants’ identities. For example, people’s use of first-person or different verb tenses may convey changes in participants’ understanding of their agency. The use of story structure and non-verbal field text triangulates or validates the information researchers gather through thematic analysis.

Lobov (1973) argued that people engage in social relationships and context when they share their narratives. They select unusual or reportable events and, as they tell their stories, answer the question “and then what happened” for listeners. This event sequence is known as a complicating action (p. 225). Evaluating clauses signal the point or outcome of the story, which reflects the abstract of the story. Researchers can isolate events embedded in participants’ narratives by looking for temporal injunctions that link statements. If statements cannot be

switched without losing the meaning of the text, a temporal injunction exists. Sometimes participants may defend their rights or posture for power. Other times they validate the merits of others' claims.

### ***Contextual Analysis***

Contextual analysis (Loseke, 2022, p. 56) or dialogical analysis (Riessman, 2008) occurred when I considered who was telling the story, what audience was intended, and the bias or assumptions the storytellers and listeners made. Researchers consider who speaks, when, and why (Riessman, 2008). Contextual analysis brought a social and political context to stories by examining “spaces between teller and listener, speaker and setting, text and reader, and history and culture” (Riessman, 2008, p. 105). Critical analysis was needed to “transform oppressive structures and discourages that disenfranchise and marginalize” (Huffman, 2022, p. 314). Social structures were reproduced in the collection and curation of participants' stories. For example, changing verb tenses could signal the empowerment of participants. To identify contextual statements, I examined who had privileges and power within participants' stories, and what practical implications or calls to action existed as the result of my findings.

### **Ethics & Trustworthiness**

Researchers do not discover participants' stories but instead construct them (Riessman, 2008). As a part of their field text analysis, scholars create *narrative sketches* (Mertova & Webster, 2020, p. 73) that examine the significance of participants' perceptions and stories. Researchers' construction of narrative sketches introduces ethical dimensions that must be considered as a part of research design. The methods of field text collection and analysis also impact the quality or *trustworthiness* of this study (Durdella, 2020a). While each participant's story is unique, other researchers should be able to confirm a study's results when given the

same transcripts (Schwandt, 2007). The trustworthiness of narrative sketches is in jeopardy if *narrative smoothing* or subjective and overly positive interpretations occur (Kim, 2016; Mertova & Webster, 2020). As an alternative to narrative smoothing, *verisimilitude* or approximation of truthfulness enables readers to experience participants' lived experiences (Schwandt, 2007). Verisimilitude influences the trustworthiness of narrative research. Trustworthiness exists if field text collection and analysis are dependable and credible (Barbour, 2013; Durdella, 2020a).

### **Dependability**

Dependability exists when the field text does not change over time and can be confirmed by others. I invited participants to audit my transcription and notes to ensure accuracy (Mertova & Webster, 2020; Schwandt, 2007). Before concluding field text collection, I consulted and invited some of my dissertation committee members to evaluate if the data are comprehensive and complete (Durdella, 2020a).

Narrative inquiry was not merely self-reported information but instead served as a unique form of data construction and collection. Narrative scholars differentiate reconstruction and remembering (Adler et al., 2017; Durdella, 202a). Participants did not report stories. They instead enacted or constructed stories. Storytelling required participants to connect their internal processing of events with their external context, connecting their experiences to sociocultural or historical contexts. By making sense of their experiences, participants constructed their identities during the interviews. The meaning they made and articulated in the story-telling process was the focus of narrative inquiry, not the actual events themselves (Adler et al., 2017). The narrative participants provide was inherently subjective because the story was theirs (Adler et al., 2017).

### **Credibility**

Researchers are responsible for confirming the merits and implications of participants' narrative (Loseke, 2022). My interpretations were accurate and plausible (Mertova & Webster, 2020), resulting in new insights that were relevant and meaningful (Schwandt, 2007). Huffman (2022) argued that qualitative scientists enhance their interpretations by engaging in claim-making and claim deepening (p. 315). I made my field text relevant by both constructing effective arguments (i.e., claim making) and critically connecting arguments to a social context (i.e., claim deepening). I also provided evidence and reference specific segments of participants' interviews without making any revisions or edits (Mertova & Webster, 2020). Quotes from participants grounded and confirmed my interpretations (Mertens, 2018). The best statements reflected the coherent nature of participants' lived experiences, including their values, emotions, beliefs, and objectives (Durdella, 2020a; Riessman, 2008) Quotes also demonstrated common experiences or consistent themes across the field text. Mertova and Webster (2020) wrote, "Like events, by their very nature, will record similar experiences and act as a confirming source of critical events" (p. 83).

Prolonged engagement with participants over the duration of three interviews also enhanced the credibility of this study. Participants were able to further consider their comments, while I had more time to establish and deepen our relationship. Prolonged engagement was also paired with persistent observation. I continuously scanned the environment for relevant information from participants (Given, 2008; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).

### **Transferability**

Findings from narrative cases have transferability when the results remain from one case to another (Mertens, 2018; Schreier, 2018, Schwandt, 2007). Transferability is often achieved through *theoretical propositions* (Riessman, 2008, p. 13) or *analytic generalizations* (Schwandt,

2007, p. 127). Researchers connect participants' specific observations to broader concepts and constructs, framing tentative hypotheses and questions for further or future research (Barbour, 2013; Durdella, 2020a). For these reasons, I grounded my claims in existing literature as I sequenced and retold the events that unfolded as participants moved to alternative degree programs. During the interviews, I also exhibited *procedural immediacy* (Mertova & Webster, 2020, p. 82), which is the ability to formulate an interpretation and ask a follow-up to explore it further. When I asked these questions, I began by describing the theories that informed the question. Two-statement questions are valuable because they invite participants to be co-investigators with me. Instead of covertly attempting to validate existing knowledge or assumptions in the literature, I invited participants to co-examine or question commonly held beliefs together with me (Knapik, 2006).

### **Reflexivity**

My access to participants' stories and interpretations was influenced by my research methodology and varied based on participants' backgrounds and my own lived experiences. Scholars (Kim, 2016; Schwandt, 2007) exhibit "narrative ethics in practice" (Kim, 2006, p. 103) when they enter a covenant or relationship with participants. As I navigated ambiguity, I exhibited integrity and maintained a strong trusting relationship that benefitted participants. In accordance with the Belmont Report (National Commission, 1979), I ensured beneficence (i.e., advance good and avoid harm) by exhibiting reflexivity and continually examining my thoughts, feelings, and assumptions throughout this study. I entered the interviews with an open mind, asked open-ended questions, and made no assumptions, known as *bracketing* (Roulson, 2013; Schwandt, 2007). I maintained a field log and critically reflected on my assumptions, interactions with participants, and interpretative decisions (Durdella, 2020a).

I also exhibited great care and acknowledged the power dynamics embedded in the co-investigative of our research questions. Without this reflexivity, I could "conflate consensus for understanding" (Knapik, 2006, p. 88). Through ongoing critical reflection, my position and privileges did not influence the types of stories I could tell (Loseke, 2022). Participants immediately saw several visible aspects of my identity, such as my race and gender (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). To check in and evaluate this impact, I asked participants how their comments would be different if I was not White (Mertova & Webster, 2020). The potential for bias always exists, but I did my best as the research to address and manage it.

Participants must remain the owners of the stories in this study. My role was not to "think about stories --- that makes us the owners of them." Instead, I wanted to "think with stories" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 30), which was a relational process founded on the care and well-being of participants. I entered not as an expert but as someone who made the implicit meaning of their stories explicit by situating their narratives within the context of their lives. The participants and I connected their past and futures (Clandinin, 2013). I honored participants' lived experiences by using present participle verbs that acknowledged the active development of participants and their continual construction of their stories. Present tense language avoided framing participants as deficient and instead emphasized that people are constantly "becoming rather than being" (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 145). Participants reconstructed lived experiences and did not merely remember (Durdella, 2020a). I also ensured ethical methodology and participants' role as co-investigators by inviting them to confirm my interpretations throughout the study (Knapik, 2006).

## **Conclusion**



This study used narrative inquiry to examine how participants experience and make sense of unplanned educational or vocational events because these incidents are inherently disruptive (Kim, 2016; Mertova & Webster, 2020; Riessman, 2008). Using purposeful criterion sampling, I collected stories on the lived experience of four participants via three semi-structured interviews each. I began with one individual and continued to collect field text until I achieved saturation. Both verbal and non-verbal responses were recorded. Story selection consisted of three dimensions: thematic, structural, and contextual analysis (Riessman, 2008). The trustworthiness of this study was achieved through constant comparison, member checking, prolonged engagement, bracketing, reflexivity, and data audits. Empathy, transparency, and active listening will establish rapport with participants.

As I prepared for this study, I remembered that “research texts do not have final answers because narrative inquirers do not come with questions. These texts are intended to engage audiences to rethink and reimagine the ways in which they practice and the ways in which they relate to others” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 51). I was honored to walk alongside participants and humbled to be the custodian of their lived experiences. I entered the dialogue ready and open to the power of the participants’ narrative.

## Chapter 4 - Findings

This study uses narrative inquiry to understand the lived experiences of college graduates who were denied admission into or progression within their chosen major after completing at least three semesters of college. This study focuses on students who the institution explicitly notified that they must select an alternative program of study and removed by the institution from their existing major.

I invited nine individuals to participate in the study; four responded. Over the course of three interviews with each participant, I captured the stories of four individuals who endured involuntary educational or vocational changes but graduated within the last five years. Three different institutions notified them that they could no longer persist in their chosen program of study and must pursue alternative goals. Each participant selected a pseudonym and represented a marginalized group. “Remy” and “Grace” had disabilities. “Lena” identified as a Black English language learner and an adult learner. All the participants (i.e., “Eddie,” Grace, Lena, and Remy) were first-generation college students.

All the participants were denied admission because they failed a course required in their program or an entrance exam needed to advance in their program. Although Lena was a qualified applicant the first time she applied, she was rescinded from the program because she could not pass a course within the program. Grace also was unable to persist in the program because she performed poorly in advanced nursing classes. Remy was unable to apply to her chosen professional program and later unable to advance within a graduate program because of her academic performance. When Eddie failed the Praxis II content exam, he could not enroll in student teaching and, subsequently, could not graduate with a degree in his intended program.

In this chapter, I sketch the narrative each participant shared about the events that unfolded before, during, and after the change are included in this chapter. Thereafter, I present the common themes across all the participants' stories. I presented their narrative verbatim without edits to preserve the participants' voices. I conclude by presenting the theoretical constructs or concepts I deductively identified in participants' responses.

### **Narrative Analysis**

Narrative analysis includes the examination of an entire case besides the exclusive consideration of individual aspects or dimensions of participants' stories. To sketch a coherent picture of participants' lived experiences, I now share the stories they told and validated via member checking.

#### **Eddie**

Eddie enrolled in college in the Northeast immediately after graduating from a public high school. As a first-generation student whose parents and extended family never attended college, he selected a local private college after his high school teachers shared positive memories from their own time at the institution. He excelled in high school, earning a 3.5 GPA in the school's rigorous honors program and AP courses.

#### ***Pre-college and First Year Experiences***

During his junior year in high school, he confirmed his career interests by mentoring middle school students. He enjoyed the relational aspects of teaching and recalled wanting to be a teacher since he was in kindergarten. One teacher especially inspired him to pursue the profession. When he first arrived at high school, the teacher took a personal interest in him and asked how he could support him as he prepared for college. The teacher then helped him gain experience by mentoring a middle schooler who was struggling academically. As he described,

the experience “really opened my eyes to what goes on behind the scenes of a teacher. Like, it’s not just lesson planning. It is creating relationships.” He stayed in touch with the teacher during his first year of college and connected nearly every month with him. Looking back, he believed the individual inspired him to choose the teaching profession.

Although he had selected secondary education as his major, he was unsure what subject he wanted to teach. He enjoyed and was actively involved in band in high school, but he eliminated music education before going to college because he found himself “reflecting on ‘how do I see myself in the future? Is this something that I could do for the rest of my life?’ And the answer that was no.”

He began college as a declared secondary education history major with ambitious aspirations that he now understands were not attainable.

The goals that I set for myself at the beginning of college I feel like were very --- like not like unattainable but very hard to reach. Like, ‘Oh, I’m going to have a 4.0 every semester. I’m going to get 8 hours of sleep, be socially active’ ...um, but some semesters it was trying too hard and not attaining those goals which made me feel bad at the time, but looking back I am very proud of how things went.

He appreciated the social support his institution provided during orientation because he formed many lasting friendships because of these activities. When asked what he might change about his first year, he named “the stress of starting over. High school is so regimented that during free time I didn’t really know what to do. I just like kinda fluffed off some aspects where I could be working towards my future.”

Eddie also experienced ongoing roommate conflict throughout his first year. When he spoke with his RA, they encouraged him to find a way to make it better. At the encouragement of

his RA, he had a conversation with his roommate, but the discussion ended their friendship. Although they continued to share a room, he learned his roommate's schedule so he could avoid him and went home every weekend. His "dorm wasn't even like a safe space that I could go to in a way, so I just avoided it all costs."

Ongoing roommate conflict was paired with academic disappointments. His history advisor enrolled him in an upper-level history course in anticipation that he would study abroad and have limited time in the future. (His advisor also instructed the upper-level class.) He was one of only two first-year students in the course and suddenly found himself reading 300 pages a night. The volume "was nothing compared to what I did in high school" in honors and AP courses. His first exam was a C-, which he had never experienced. He also worked diligently on a paper, but "when I got it back, and it was D-, I went home, ate ice cream, and cried. It is kind like demoralizing. Like, am I cut out for this level of college? I contemplated like dropping out." Although he was struggling, he was reluctant to meet with the professor because

Part of me was scared to utilize them for fear of like –feeling like I'm not succeeding in the way that I should be. Like, how do I, in a way – like how do I say that? It's like I was scared to ask for help in a way.

Eddie finished his first-year history class with a B but found himself frequently feeling like a failure. His advisor had affirmed him and shared he could secure premier opportunities, such as the Fulbright. These opportunities interested Eddie and he appreciated his advisor's confidence in him. Yet when he continued to earn average grades, Eddie felt like he was letting himself and his advisor down.

Although his advisor talked about applied learning, he never asked Eddie about his transition to college. He was unaware that Eddie was enduring a difficult roommate situation.

When another professor invited Eddie to reflect on his transition, Eddie avoided disclosing his struggles because he was embarrassed. He also did not share his difficulties with his parents, noting that “It was hard for me since they never experienced it. Like, how do I explain ‘Oh, I’m like really struggling academically. How do I portray that to them?’”

As a first-year student, Eddie was not aware of the common experiences of first-generation students. Looking back, he wishes the institution would normalize the challenges and invite first-generation students to “interact with each other in a way...just so you’re not going through that on your own.” He remembers the institution affirming legacy students and welcoming their parents with signs on their residence hall doors during move-in day. As Eddie transitioned to his second year, he would have benefitted from validation.

### ***Sophomore Year: Initial Goals Emerge***

As his sophomore year unfolded, he continued to be disappointed by his academic performance. “I was a high achieving student and the goals that I set for myself at the beginning of college weren’t very attainable.” Despite working hard and forming a study group, he earned a B in his second history course, which was taught by the same professor as his freshmen year. Even when he earned an A on an exam, he struggled to be proud of it because he “could not describe what I had done differently compared to when I received a B.” He never struggled with procrastination or wondered if he had a documented disability. He was studying diligently and not seeing the grades he wanted.

Around the same time that he was taking a history class, he was enjoying and excelling in language courses. He also began to serve in a mentorship role during a summer bridge program and gave tours to prospective students for the Admissions Office during summer orientation events. He enjoyed supporting students during their transition to college and continued to give

admission tours during the Fall semester. During a conversation with his supervisor, the enrollment manager encouraged him to attend a career exploration event hosted by the college. After he participated, he began to wonder if he should declare language as his emphasis area instead of history. When he enrolled in courses for the Spring 2020 term, he made the change official. Although he was initially nervous to update his parents, they were supportive. Other challenges, however, loomed.

### ***Junior and Senior Years: Barriers Unfold and Notification Occurs***

His first language practicum was rewarding and confirmed his desire to enter education. He enjoyed the relationships with students and discussing lesson plans together with his practicum teacher. He began the Spring semester of his junior year excited to study away so he could immerse himself in the language he had been studying and preparing to teach. He arrived in Europe in March 2020. Within 10 days of his arrival, COVID hit. His professors called him to see how he was doing, and they made the difficult decision that he needed to come home. Thereafter, the institution enrolled him in two education courses and two general education courses.

Like it wasn't the same experience of being there in way. It was just like busy work. I would wake up at 8, and I would just like finish at 3 – doing nothing but sitting at my desk doing like, yeah, pretty much busy work. This like was kind of disheartening that, like I was supposed to be there [abroad] for 8 months, and it turned out to be only 10 days.

When he returned to campus in the Fall of his senior year, he remained interested in a teaching career. He was required to pass the Praxis II content exam prior to student teaching. The school shared study resources and practice tests to prepare him for the language Praxis test.

When I was studying, I just like didn't feel like my skills were up to par for what the test was testing over, so I just like kept on pushing it off. 'Oh, I'm taking classes and creating a schedule' that made it in a way so that I was too busy to study and take the test – in a way just like to self-sabotage in a way.

Unfortunately, he failed the exam.

It was disappointing. I met with my advisors and their like, 'we don't really have anything for you to do. So you might as well retake the test when you can, which the next time was in June, so you will have to take them then and student teaching in the Fall.

Eddie could not recall anything else about how he was notified. He described it as short, simple, and unsupportive.

### ***Last Semester: Distress and Further Academic Difficulty Ensues***

After his plans changed, Eddie immediately pulled away from his friends and family. "I shut down. I didn't talk to my family. I rarely talked to them. I felt like I was a disappointment." His friends were semi-informed of the situation.

I kind of disassociated from the situation to like make it less – I felt like I was withdrawing away so I wouldn't hurt them in a way, as weird as it sounds. Um, like I'd spent so much time like planning and preparing for it that to finally fail – actually fail, I felt like I was disappointing them in a way.

He recalled a pervasive sense of disorientation. "Like, some of my friends would say, Eddie, you're doing it again, like just zoning out when I'd be with them." He did not, however, remember having any suicidal thoughts, but acknowledged he was depressed and felt hopeless.



After um failing the Praxis. I felt like my life was over. It's like, 'Why plan for the future when I don't even see myself like continuing on?' Like thoughts were there, but never actions. I felt like depressed and I didn't want to be there at the moment.

In his final semester, he began to withdraw academically and "skipping more often than I typically would have" Mid-semester he began ill and missed class for a week. He struggled to return. "I mentally checked out after that point. I didn't open my computer for the rest of the semester." He had finally informed his family that he could not participate in student teaching, but they responded by letting him know that he "ruined your future — in a way that really does hurt."

Given his class attendance and missing assignments, someone in Student Affairs contacted him around the graduation. He described the exchange as follows:

The staff member said, we know you aren't doing the best academically. Is everything okay?' And me being me, trying like to say 'Oh, yeah, everything's good.' Um, that's basically what I did, and I was like, yeah, 'I'm just kind of struggling this semester. Here's the assignments.' And, yeah, I basically said I was sorry. I feel like I'm letting people down.

Some of his professors accepted the late work. Others gave him an incomplete, but he does not remember either the Student Affairs professional or the faculty member broadly asking about his well-being beyond academics. Nobody mentioned counseling resources.

For like my family, counseling is like the last step before serious trouble, not like trouble, but like you need help — help. In my mind, I didn't want to reach out um for feeling, not like weak, I feel like I should have done more on my part.

He retook the Praxis exam when it opened again in June but failed again. He had spent a significant amount of time studying but remembers being extremely anxious because he knew everything was riding on the exam. Thereafter, the Education Department officially rescinded him from the program.

So I met with them, and they were like, based on your action from the past, from like not communicating when we needed you to, and like failing the Praxis and not doing well academically last term, we've decided to cut you from the program... They didn't see me fit to be a part of the education program, and basically, we're like, how do we expect you to student teach and be a role model for the institution if we can't even trust you?

Looking back now, he understands why the faculty were upset with him. He wishes he would have been able to contact them instead of shutting down and skipping classes, but he could not find the energy. Avoidance was a way of coping. Looking back, he is grateful for the denied progression.

As weird as it sounds, it was the 'no' I needed because mentally, I was still not great. So, I basically took that 'no' and decided to live with my parents, pay off debt, work insane hours, at one point 15 hours every day for two months.

Eddie kept busy to occupy his mind and avoid the reality of his educational predicament. He was proud of his productivity during this time.

### ***Persistence and New Perspectives Emerge***

While he was working at a coffee shop and trying to finish his incomplete coursework, nobody from the college contacted him. Eddie expressed no anger or frustration at the college. Instead, he repeated what he had shared moments earlier. "I feel like I let people down, and I'm

still trying to work through that.” When asked who specifically he let down, he shared, the following:

I shut a lot of people out that second semester - like family and professors. Not answering if they like, ‘Hey, where’s this?’ I would like ignore it. There was one final paper for um one of my classes. I finished it five days after um graduation. And you needed like two advisors to like grade it and I like didn’t even do that. My professor emailed me, I want to say, October, he reached out and was like ‘Hey, you still don’t have your diploma. Hmmm, what is --Is everything okay? Like, I don’t.. hmmm (looks up and his voice cracks as if he is about to cry). Sorry. [Moment of Silence] He just like cared for me, when I felt like nobody else really did (voice cracks again).

Eddie described that moment in October as a turning point. When asked what was different about that interaction compared to others he had with other faculty and staff, he agreed that they were procedurally communicating about policies or asking for assignments. “In a way, like I know the professors care, but um but in a way... it was something that I could relate to just like not like a bond, but I felt seen in a way.”

After the positive interaction with his professor, Eddie renewed his motivation and finished the course that had incomplete work. Satisfying this remaining course requirement enabled him to graduate.

### ***Post-Graduation: Career Well-Being is Restored***

Shortly after graduation, Eddie secured a teaching assistant position but then the principal assigned him to a new student success program that provides academic support and arranges internships for students. He is not “not teaching as in content wise but more life skills in a way,

so preparing them for life after high school whether that be workforce or college...I like where I am at right now in a way.”

When asked about his current perceptions about failing the Praxis, he stated, “It’s something I’m trying to work through. Like, if I didn’t fail, I would not be where I am today, and I absolutely love where I am.” He went on to state, ““Looking back now [pause], how do I say this. I’m glad where I am at now. I don’t see myself going into education into a teacher more as a mentor role, if that makes sense.”

While he wonders if he would have scored better on the Praxis had he had an immerse language study away experience, he also understands he is freely choosing to remain in his current position. He knows he could teach English abroad, return to college, or participate in alternative teacher programs or pathways. Yet, he also affirms the following:

My dream has shifted in a way, just like opened my mind to new perspectives. I’d love to live abroad some day and come back and be a part of the culture here, I don’t know. The high school aspect of language learning is so complicated here that I don’t – looking it now from like a school employee. I don’t know if I would like it in a way.

Eddie was also able to articulate that what he liked most about teaching remains in his current role.

Like leading up to it is terrifying to like be so like adult in a classroom like providing content. And I feel like what I’m, what I’m looking for is the interaction with students and I’m getting that where I’m now, which is also to say, like I would be getting that regardless.

He likes being with students individually instead of in a group setting and acknowledged his own journey enabled him to support students because he had navigated academic difficulty, too.

I feel like that is what makes me relate to them. One student in my classroom ended up coming from like very low socioeconomic background, high-achieving, but like COVID affected her just as much as it did for me...just like seeing that resiliency is something that not like resonate with, but I respect in a way.

He also stated he appreciates the ways he replicated aspects of the mentoring positions that he enjoyed most about his high school and college experiences. While he may teach abroad after he retires, he has no intention of pursuing teaching as a profession. Instead, he sees himself in his current position long term. He recently began to research future goals and is pondering the possibility of a school counseling or counseling degree.

When asked if he thought the language (e.g., terms like plan B, contingency plan, exit plan) scholars sometimes use to describe his new career is suitable, he shared “I feel like this job has made me happier than I would have been in like a foreign language setting, as weird as it sounds. It’s not what I went to school for, but it’s everything that I hoped for and enjoyed in college.” Eddie is not living a secondary life or pursuing subpar backup career goals. He instead adapted and modified his goals after he gained experience and identified essential elements of his career that were preserved (individual mentoring relationships), which permitted him to claim the possibility of a different but equally satisfying life.

### **Grace**

Grace identified as a traditional-aged White first-generation low-income student who enrolled at a college in the South. An NCAA coach actively recruited her from her rural Southwest community where she graduated from public high school. She participated in athletics throughout her time in college. Multiple family members served as nurses, and she found the possibility of helping others in a similar fashion appealing. Having earned a 3.7, she was pre-

admitted into the nursing program at her institution. This pre-admission, along with her athletic recruitment, was the primary reason she selected that school.

### *Navigating the Nuances of the First Year*

Prior to college, Grace completed four dual credit courses that fell under the core curriculum. Looking back, she wondered if those “intro classes would have been good to gradually introduce me into like the process of college.” She also remembers hearing that a Trio program and discipline-specific learning communities existed at her school, but did not know enough about these programs to enroll during summer registration days. In hindsight, she now wonders if the support available through Trio would have been helpful. Once college started, she found the popular lecture format of her courses to be difficult.

Lectures were hard for me to focus, and then, you know, I was exhausted from other things, and I would just kind of zone out. Like social anxiety, wise, it was really hard for me to go up to a professor and like, tell them I'm struggling when I really didn't know why I was struggling or like why I wasn't getting what they said. When I was in class like it would make a little sense, but then it wouldn't make sense later, when I was like studying or something.... I had not been diagnosed, but I feel like I definitely have some attention deficits. That's not how I learn best. I need hands-on; I need like repetition and being involved.

Although she experienced little difficulties due to homesickness or roommate arrangements during her first semester, she experienced a sense of loneliness and found herself longing for close friendships. Her teammates served as her friends, but she sometimes wondered if the relationship “was situational due only to our shared athletic experiences.”

Grace experienced several time constraints during college. Her practice schedule was rigorous, resulting in at least 15 of hours each week for weight training, team meetings, and practices. Additionally, she worked part-time to pay her tuition balance. The limited time resulted in sleepless nights.

Freshmen year, I think my average night's sleep was three hours. I would say up, which now, like it was probably just anxiety. I couldn't sleep, but like I would try and study. I would go, sit out in like a common area and try to study, but really, I just like stared at something and then, like eventually fall asleep.

She understood that the courses would be difficult and made her studies a priority, but she didn't know how to self-direct her own learning. "I knew it was hard, but I didn't know what to do."

Time constraints also hindered her participation in other activities.

In college, my mom always wanted me to go to church. I always went to church, and so I felt like that was something I always lied about because I was like, I'm not going to waste an hour of time sitting there, you know, getting nothing out of this.

During her first semester, her advisor encouraged her to enroll in only one science course (Chemistry) during the Fall and Spring semester of her first year. She took an introduction to biology course during Interim term in January. She caught up with the degree requirements by completing anatomy and physiology during the summer.

### ***Sophomore Year: Awareness of Academic Difficulty and Potential Career Changes***

She passed every nursing prerequisite but failed microbiology during her sophomore year. She repeated this course during the summer and earned a C. Sensing that her GPA was low, she also enrolled in other courses simply to "try and boost my GPA," which was below a 3.0 at that point. Her GPA never dropped low enough, however, to be placed on academic probation.

Grace often struggled with her educational and vocational difficulties in isolation. Having excelled during high school, she was embarrassed and reluctant to talk to her parents and ignored their phone calls whenever she was struggling with school. Her parents also had not earned a four-year degree and she was not sure if they would understand her experiences as a first generation student. Sometimes she would go to her friends' house "when I didn't want to be alone. I would sit and try to do homework with them. They were other majors, such as education and psychology. I would talk to them about nursing things and teach them things." Other times, however, she would drink alcohol. "I did a lot of drinking. I would drink wine when I didn't want to think about something mostly school or my other feelings. It was kinda a coping thing because I didn't want to think about things. Drinking helped quiet those intrusive thoughts."

When asked to describe her advising interactions, Grace struggled to remember key support or meaningful conversations. She reviewed her previous emails and discovered she had three advisors across her studies. She only recalls talking with her advisor "when I was in trouble --- like I was already past the point of helping. I mean she was the department head, so she was busy with other things." Her advisor asked her if she truly wanted to be a nurse, but Grace wished the advisor would have instead focused on the reasons she was struggling. Her advisor did not ask her if she thought she might have a disability or assess her global mental well-being. She also never discussed a reduced courseload or parallel planning. Grace shared that a discussion about parallel planning or something like it would have been helpful because it at least would have acknowledged the dissonance she was experiencing.

I think that probably would have helped. No, I had nothing like that. I probably would have went [sic] to that other option, you know, when I was struggling in those courses, I probably would have went to that parallel plan.



Besides her advisor, she also felt disconnected from her coach, particularly because the head coach told her during one of their first interactions that “I've only had one other person or maybe it was like just a couple of people who have done nursing and athletics like —it's a very, very hard thing to do because of those time restraints with clinicals in labs and simulations.” As her journey continued to unfold, she believed that “I got a lot of doubt from her [the coach], and I was failing in that aspect as well, even though I was doing pretty good.” On one occasion, she made a mistake and did not complete a task assigned to her. What unfolded thereafter made a strong impression on Grace.

After the team had accepted the mistake and were joking about it, my coach walking behind me said, ‘I would be scared to have you as my nurse. I would never want you to be.’ This was in reference of me forgetting things and not being responsible. Those words tore me to pieces and brought all the doubt and thoughts of me being the failure I was to the surface.

Looking back, she wished the institution focused on the mental health of student athletes. “They talked about the anxieties of being an athlete and trying to do everything, and I mean, I think that’s great, but it is really hard to seek help.” Grace also acknowledged some of her reluctance to seek help stemmed from the mindset of her rural Southwest community and growing up on a farm where counseling was stigmatized and being strong was valued.

### ***Junior Year: Emotional Distress and Suicidal Thoughts***

When Grace began her junior year, she was coping with continual emotional distress. She was aware that her academic performance was weak and tried to do something about it.

By year three, I was still really like barely passing, and mentally I was feeling, you know, depressed. I was not feeling good...like I didn't want to shut down and not do anything,

so I did try to go to the therapist that the school provided, which would didn't really help me, but I did like try and get tested [for ADHD]. I think I started the process, but mentally it was just like I felt like I was trying to prove something, and it was really hard that I couldn't allow myself to like....I don't know why, but it was really hard, mentally, and I couldn't like get through it.

She was hopeful the counselor would help her identify why she was struggling or provide a diagnosis of ADHD, but began to wonder “What's the point of this like? How are they going to help me with this by just talking about this?” In her words, counseling...

felt like another burden to add to my busy schedule. My only hour between class and practice I was supposed to spend talking with someone about myself. My social anxiety and introverted personality did not agree with this. I felt like I was being forced to prove there was something wrong instead of getting assistance or answers why I was feeling the way I did.

Despite seeking assistance from the institution, she failed a nursing course at the end of the term. She began to wonder about alternative careers and enrolled in an introduction to computer science course, thinking it could permit her to remain in healthcare. She had taken a couple of technology courses earlier because she “thought it would make me a more valuable nursing having advanced knowledge on the technology side and maybe eventually advance my career with that.” She failed the introductory computer science course.

Failure in another discipline-specific course only compounded Grace’s sense of failure and hopelessness. Thoughts of suicide crossed her mind. “I felt like I didn't belong that if I was gone no one would miss me, that there wasn't really a point and living. I was failing at

everything, so that was really hard.” She wanted the pain to end and wished “I wouldn’t wake up.”

The depression and suicidal thoughts continued throughout the next term and into her senior year. She kept “waiting for the shoe to drop” and anticipated she would fail. At one point, she remembers “taking like a handful of ibuprofen, but it wasn’t enough to do anything.” She continued to consume alcohol to cope. Nobody at the college offered her encouragement or asked about her well-being.

### ***Senior Year: Notification and Initial Adjustment to the Change***

In the second to last semester of her senior year, she earned a C- in another nursing course, missing a C by only a single percentage point. The department required a C or better, which puzzled Grace. Other professional programs at the institution accepted a C-. Regardless, the department chair officially shared with Grace that she was rescinded from the program. Immediately thereafter, the department chair introduced Grace to an exploratory academic advisor. When the department chair made the referral, she indicated that Grace needed to be removed from all the nursing courses during the next term and expected to find a new major before classes began in 10 days.

When asked to describe the conversation with the exploratory academic advisor, Grace shared the following:

I really just wanted to shut down and do nothing. Quit. I didn’t know what to do. She provided hope. She was a saving grace because she was able to kind of give a path.

Something like I told her at that point I just needed to make something out of my classes, something that was still healthcare related, so I could use it in the future. But basically, I just needed to get out of there...She brought me so many tears with the hard facts but

also gave me some happy tears because somebody believed in me. I don't remember her exact words, but she said that like this does not affect the kind of person I am and that I can still do great things. I can still help people. Somebody believed that I could do something good in the world.

The exploratory academic advisor acknowledged the loss and scheduled a follow-up conversation a few days later to discuss some of the options they considered. Between appointments, Grace worked through the shock. "I went back to my dorm and stared, just trying to like figure out what just happened." She notified her mom and was relieved that "it went better than I thought it would...she didn't really judge me and say all the things I should have done."

During the second conversation with the advisor, Grace decided to pursue an interdisciplinary liberal arts degree. She had only a single semester remaining, and the interdisciplinary degree was the fastest way to preserve her graduation date and finish her degree. Paperwork, however, was required. "In order to make the degree I had to get nursing to sign off and sociology." It was awkward to return to the very department that had just rescinded her from the nursing major and request their endorsement for a new degree. She remembered "going to the head of sociology and I was like, I don't even know you."

In her final semester, she enrolled in sociology courses and interned at a senior living center to explore the possibility of a career in healthcare administration. Through this occupation, she would "still get the nursing side but also the business side. Maybe I'd work more with computers." She did not, however, "jump right into it" because she understood the career would require more schooling and experience. She tried to secure related employment in healthcare administration after graduation and was a finalist for a position. Ultimately, however,

she was not selected because her religious beliefs did not align with the faith traditions of the local healthcare organization.

Besides being unemployed, graduation was also a difficult time because she was reminded of her loss. She remembers the following:

pulling away from friends and teammates at the end. I think it was a lot because I was so unsure of my future and it seemed like they knew exactly what they were doing, which, looking back, none of my friends really did. They all changed their majors as well, or they kept their majors but aren't doing anything related to their majors now.

In hindsight, she understands that chance is a part of life, but struggled to understand this during graduation. Like previous terms, she felt alone.

### ***Post-Graduation: New Perspective and Goals Emerge***

After a failed job search, Grace went home to live with her parents. She started working nights as a CNA at an assisted living facility and serving tables at a local restaurant to make money. Within her first year after college, she knew she wanted to return to nursing. When she looked at the nurses who were working alongside her at the assisted living center, she thought, "I could do that. I like I knew how to apply nursing knowledge." She began to look at diverse options and selected an accelerating nursing program near her hometown. None of her nursing courses from undergraduate transferred, but her parents encouraged her to persist. Her mom, who also was an LPN, said, "You just have to get through these classes and take the boards, and you'll do fine, like she never doubted." She also discovered that she knew how to study better than before. She completed practice tests and watched videos to understand course concepts.

She graduated from accelerated nursing and now serves as an RN on a palliative care floor at a premier hospital. Her supervisors have lauded her with praise and tapped her for

leadership roles. Most recently she was asked to “be a hyperdrive user and help test out a new charting system rolling out. I’m also the tech guru for my unit, which is mostly just helping my coworkers whenever they are having computer issues.”

When she looks back, she would still participate in athletics, but she wished she would have selected “a program where the coach really wanted me.” She came to understand that she could take her coach’s “words and use them as motivation to prove her wrong. That obviously is not the reason I went back to nursing school but it was a reason that kept me going.”

At the time of graduation, she thought the degree change “was proof that I failed.” Today, she describes the situation as follows:

When someone I know asks me, because I have two degrees, like what my first degree was, and I know the me well enough and we are friends, then I’ll tell them that like I just wasn’t ready for the nursing program. In the end I made my own degree.

If employers ask her during interviews, she shares the following:

I kinda made it sound like it was my idea to switch out of nursing. I said, ‘You know, I was pre-accepted into the nursing program, and I realized that I wanted to do more of the administrative said, and use my nursing knowledge in that area. So, I kinda spun it like it was a way for me to avoid, and it was my idea.

Grace incurred significant debt as the result of the unforeseen change, which caused additional anxiety. She picked up a waitressing job on top of her nursing position after she graduated. She is debt free now but acknowledged that the financial disparity was an ongoing reality throughout her studies. She wished the Federal government would acknowledge in their FASFA calculations that family members cannot cover the amount they estimate.

Although she does not look back fondly when she thinks about the nursing program, she harbors no resentment toward the institution. Her faith also remains, and she continues to believe that “God put me on this earth so that I could help people.” Overall, the experience enabled her to help people in ways that were not possible prior to the loss. She began to restore the narrative of her career in a paper she wrote for an accelerated course on her nursing philosophy. In the paper she described the importance of “engaging in a holistic assessment when she meets with patients” and articulated a desire to “identify their pressing needs and not pretend to know how they are feeling. Patients are not able to voice their wants or needs effectively. They need us to identify individualized interventions.” Although she “misplaced my sense of purpose” she now sees that

I couldn't go through with ending my life is because I needed to help other people. I could give people hope and comfort I didn't have. I could help them get better and had to be there for them. Palliative care is focuses on comfort and symptom management. A lot of times patients and families are at the worst part of their life and need my team's support or just a listening ear and open heart. Someone to help them through this grieving process. I don't think I could do that without going through my own trauma and loss.

She also discovered her voice as an RN and is not afraid to advocate for patients.

I am able to talk to provides and, like straight up, I'm like, ‘Okay, this isn't working. Like, we need to do something else.’ And I think I just kind of realized like that's probably from not being able to say that before. And just, you know, putting my voice out there.

She also believes the degree transition enabled her to teach other nurses effectively.

I know that there are so many different ways to do things. There's many different ways to be a great nurse. That someone's not going to learn the same ways as me, and that is okay. I'm also open to helping and I like learning different things or jumping into new opportunities. I think my first degree kind of opened me up to that...I also realized how much I did enjoy working with the older population --- mostly because of my gerontology sociology course and my internship.

The experience also cultivated deep empathy. "You kinda realize that everyone has their own problems, their own issues." The transition also enabled her to cope more effectively with COVID.

My COVID patients were relatively stable, but like, of course, we were short staffed and policies were changing every other day. But, like my biggest strength at that time was, I could thrive under a high amount of stress because I had been through that. I was able to adapt and find ways to make the environment more livable for my co-workers by trying to find the bright side.

She lives life less afraid and understands now that "if I can survive that, then I can do whatever else is ahead of me."

Although she was tearful during portions of the interview, she was also at peace with her journey and proud of her accomplishments.

I mean, sometimes, you think like that failure is like really shaped who I am you know. Even though it altered my route, it was, you know, a lot harder, you know. Maybe I had to go through that to be the kind of nurse I am.



Like Eddie, Grace restored her well-being and vocational sense of purpose despite the initial distress of the involuntary change. She also expressed gratitude for the transition and articulated new insight as the result of the transition.

## **Lena**

Lena immigrated to the United States after she completed three years of nursing school in Somalia. Her parents and brother were already residing in the United States, but her two sisters remained in Somalia. Although her parents had not earned a four year degree, her brother had enrolled in college before she did and often provided helpful encouragement. As a dual citizen of both the U.S. and Somalia, she applied to a public institution in the Midwest.

### ***First-Year Academic Difficulty***

When Lena enrolled, she shared her international transcripts with the Registrar's Office. Only a math course was applied toward her four-year degree in nursing. The academic advisor placed Lena in general education courses, one of which was a communications course. Lena had never taken a speech class in Somalia and found the format of formal presentations different from her culture.

Lena worked incredibly hard to pass every course. She spent all her time listening to recorded lectures, translating her papers, meeting with tutors, and visiting with professors during office hours. She sometimes was frustrated that she had to work incredibly harder than the English-speaking students who were also competing for selective spots in the nursing program. She found support in a study group of other English language learners who shared her experiences (many of whom were international students).

Despite the sense of belonging she experienced among other English language learners, she felt invisible and unseen among English speaking students, particularly during group projects in her courses.

[My classmates] just communicate with each other more...it seems like your word doesn't exist. I can point out some point nobody even mentioned and be ignored. They're more focused on talking with each other and....instead of like, you see that I'm here but it seems like you don't exist. You know — that hurts because I understand the point. That's what I always I try to talk to the teacher. Please, can I do anything individually, instead? Like, I'm begging so many times. Teacher, I can simplify anything. Just don't let me put me in group. Let me do individual work. That was very challenging. I get very emotional [about] hurting my grade in something. You know — I feel like I don't belong here....in that class...and then after [isolating group experience] happens it just makes me want out of that class too. They sit in different places and then, even when we pick time or location, they don't always communicate. They don't say, oh, like does that work for me? She could not name a single friendship that she had among her classmates, noting that I don't even remember one because I always feel like a stranger. I feel like spend that much time there. Just traumatic for me. It's always something – a challenge... a cold feeling. I just have to get over it.” Over time, Lena learned to ignore her peers' behavior because she understood she “don't need their acceptance. I don't need that to give me value. We know that's not gonna change.”

She earned a B+ in the communications course and passed biology and chemistry courses. When she started the Spring semester of her first year, her sister in Somalia was murdered. She returned home for a week for the funeral and met with her advisor, who helped

her drop all but two courses. That same semester her mother was undergoing treatment for breast cancer. She appreciated her advisor's suggestion to reduce her credit load but does not recall her advisor sharing information about counseling or offering ongoing support beyond the funeral.

Lena remembers her advisor sharing that admission into nursing was selective and that not all of them would be admitted. Given the number of applicants, students were ranked based on their GPA. Lena expressed frustration because the department did not acknowledge the barriers she encountered and worked hard to overcome.

As much as you try to keep up, it's still challenging. I do my homework. I go there and give it, but it's never enough, you know. They want you to be maximum qualified. I don't think any professor gets the point. I wish they understand the point that I have weaknesses, like knowing English. It's not about knowledge deficiency.

Lena remembers being penalized on exams simply because she did not know a word in the questions. She recalled an instance she asked the professor to reword a question when the exam was returned to her. She understood the question and answered correctly. On other exams, she asked professors to clarify questions, but she would often make these inquiries only after the other students were finished with their exams. Some professors permitted her to stay longer in the classroom to finish her exams, but not every instructor granted her this extra time.

### ***Sophomore Year: Initial Notification and Goal Modifications***

She formally applied to the program during her second year of enrollment but was denied admission. When asked to describe how she was notified, she shared the following experience, which occurred in a classroom before one of her classes began:

I remember that day very clearly. Everybody was given a big envelope with everything they were supposed to do in it....Only a few students got the packet. I was like, 'Oh, my

God! Where's my paper?' I was so sad because I knew I was working so hard, and I didn't get that big envelop...A few days later I get just one small white envelope in the mail that said we got your nursing application. Unfortunately, we're not taking you at this time. That's all they said.

Nobody from the institution contacted her to help her formulate next steps. She felt like she let her family down because that was "the big day, I felt so much pressure, and you feel lost -- that was the day I was waiting for. I didn't know where to go anymore. You just feel so lost and stuck." When she ultimately told her family, they were supportive and encouraged her to persist. She kept going because she knew she needed to be a nurse, noting "I never had a plan B. There is no way for me to look back and forth like that." It was especially difficult for Lena to imagine alternatives because she had been a practicing nurse in Ethiopia. She knew she could do it and enjoyed it.

It was difficult for Lena to share the news with her husband and parents. As a first-generation student, she also was working really hard for her family. "They [her parents] never had an education. They came here to let us have a good education and then, I didn't want them to be disappointed." Her parents and husband were supportive. Together, they decided she should not extend her graduation date or risk being denied a second time. She decided to seek admission into the nursing program of a private institution. After she spoke with the transfer specialist at the new school, she was elated to learn that she was admitted into the nursing program.

### ***Junior and Senior Years: Academic Difficulty Continues and Notification Again***

Although Lena enrolled at a new school, she continued to have academic difficulty. During her first semester at the new institution, she earned a C- in Pharmacotherapeutics, which she immediately retook and earned a B+. The following Fall, she passed all her courses, but she

earned a C- in two nursing courses the subsequent term. In one of these nursing courses, a professor deducted her for grammatical errors on a paper. She was passing the class but struggled on the final exam because she ran out of time. When the professor wanted to visit with her shortly after the final exam, she anticipated she had not passed the course. During the conversation with the professor, the instructor informed her she would not be able to persist in the program because she earned a C- in the course and was only permitted to retake one course. She subsequently met with the department chair, the instructor, and another department chair who told her that the program had an obligation to keep patients safe and that some patients might be harmed because “she would need to take more time reading materials on the screen than other nurses.” Lena appealed the decision, but the institution ultimately stood by the department’s recommendation.

She met with the Dean of Students who informed her of a general studies degree program that would accept all her credits and preserve her graduation date. To be admitted into the program, however, she needed to meet with the faculty in biology and psychology to obtain their signature and endorsement of the interdisciplinary degree proposal. Although she filed the paperwork for the new major and considered fields like genetic counseling and Air Force biomedical training, “it was just going through the motions of declaring something.”

### ***Final Semester: Spiritual and Emotional Well-Being Diminishes***

Three months unfolded as she navigated the appeals and interdisciplinary degree paperwork process. While she was between degree programs, she relied on her husband and father for support. They continually told her that she could go on to earn an accelerated nursing degree or enroll in a similar program.

After the initial shock wore off and she realized the institution's decision was final, sadness set in. Her world "went dark – dark because I wasn't sure what I'm going to do. What I'm saying. I am graduating but I kept saying what now." She lost her energy and interest in typical activities or routine tasks she enjoyed. She did not, however, experience suicidal thoughts, which she attributes to her faith.

Every time this happened, I kept praying. I think that's the only thing that helped me. I grew up in church and I studied the Bible a lot. Everything - when things happen, I think my strength always is praying. Even if you have a dark situation, I pray. I pray. After I pray, I feel some light, you know. Like, relief. I can't tell people, but I can talk to God and feel like he understands me. He knows me. He knows my strengths. He will get me through somehow, someday.

She remembers crying out and being angry with God.

Why me...I cried to God, like 'why?' Because nobody else but him knows how much I worked. Seriously, I don't have to prove it to him. People can see only a few times studying, but he saw me make sacrifices everywhere I go. I wanted him to take something else – not my dream.

Over time, however, she realized that God "understands me, and knows my work, my strengths. I don't have to prove it to him."

Graduation was especially difficult. On another occasion, she saw a picture of the graduating nursing class. It was a picture the cohort had taken a year prior when she was still enrolled in the program. The faculty simply cut her out of the picture. When she saw the photo, she re-experienced the notification and realization that she was removed from the nursing program. Her classmates also were posting images on social media and celebrating their

participation in graduation --- “the things that I was dreaming about.” All she could think was “I don’t have anything to say. I don’t even know what I’m studying or what I’m going to do after graduation.” Lena had disengaged, but not yet reengaged, which was distressing.

***Post-Graduation: Self-Efficacy is Restored and New Pathway to Career Emerge***

When she met with a career counselor shortly after graduation, she found that writing her resume and cover letter was restorative. She began to affirm the merit of her background and was able to “light up and open the door.” She finally “felt seen” and validated as a talented individual.

She began to wonder if social work might preserve some of the elements she liked most about nursing, such as bringing hope and healing in a healthcare setting, but she was not interested in going on to earn a master’s degree. She accepted a patient care position at the local hospital. After observing other nurses practice in the field, she remained resolved to become an RN.

One of her friends had also immigrated from another country and practiced as a nurse before relocating. She advised Lena to work with the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools and contact the state board of nursing to see if they would accept her credentials from her own home country. Lena remembers hearing about this alternative pathway around the time she enrolled at her first institution, but she was not sure how the credential would impact her employability or credibility, particularly because she “did not have any experience in the United States.” Across all the college officials Lena encountered --academic advisors, career counselors, Registrar, student affairs staff, or admission counselor -- ever suggested she had sufficient experience or that international verification or credential assessment was an option.

When Lena called the state board, they informed her that nobody else in the state had petitioned the board to consider their international coursework before, but they were willing to consider it. Lena persisted, and they ultimately granted her request, provided she pass the NCLEX exam. Lena studied for three months and passed.

She was overjoyed that she secured her RN license, but when she entered her first nursing position, she found herself less confident. Other nurses had internships as a part of their formal study, but this applied learning was lost as a part of her degree change. Her supervisor, however, affirmed her competency and ended her onboarding early because they believed she was ready to enter the field. Two years into her practice, they continued to affirm her quality patient care and recommended her for a nurse training position. Her supervisor continued to compliment her on her patient charting and rated her exemplary in multiple performance areas.

### ***Appreciation For and Acceptance of Transition***

As she looks back broadly at the experience, she is not bitter. "I don't regret my bachelor's degree because that's good preparation for me. I feel like I am more open-minded because of this background." She also was grateful for the persistence, strength, and agency it cultivated. She now "I don't think anything is going to scare me off anymore. I am not afraid anymore. I can do anything." She also now remains open to other adventures besides nursing. When we last met, she described how she and her husband were pursuing a small business that she can manage on the side after she's done working at the clinic. "I've found something else that makes me happy. And I told my husband I am going to add one other thing to my career. It is going to be hard, but I'm not afraid anymore. I guess, I can do what I love. I am going to follow my heart and go for it." Lena attributes the involuntary transition to her newfound understanding that she can pursue multiple careers simultaneously. She perceives that she is in



control and is confident that she can navigate whatever comes her way. Adaptability is no longer something she exhibits when it is required of her but is instead a mindset she practices and applies to her career.

## **Remy**

Remy was the first in her farming family to earn a four-year degree and from a rural community in the South. She identified as White and was a high-achieving public high school student who earned a 3.7 and participated in multiple co-curricular activities. Prior to enrolling in college, she completed two dual credit courses (i.e., composition and literature). She attended college career fairs, but only applied to one school because she found their co-curricular activities and nursing program attractive. She selected nursing because she enjoyed her science courses in high school and she “always knew that I liked helping others, so I wanted to go into a career or major, that would be in this industry of serving other people and their needs, and so you know, nursing is the first one that always comes to mind for people.” She did not work as a CNA or shadow a nurse but instead previewed the profession by visiting routinely with her stepmother, who served as a registered nurse.

### ***Difficulties During the First Year***

Once she arrived at college, she appreciated the support professors and co-curricular staff provided but wished she went “into college with a more realistic view of how difficult it would be.” As a high-achieving student, she anticipated that her existing success strategies from high school would be sufficient. Initially, she focused her attention on her science courses instead of general education classes. She was surprised when she failed the first exam in Spanish during her first semester. She had completed only two classes (the equivalent of one year) in high school and now wonders if this coursework adequately prepared her for college. When it came time to

write her first lab report, she also had no prior experience to draw upon. While her family was very supportive, she felt she couldn't go to them and share struggles or concerns. People in her hometown also "passively aggressively made comments that I couldn't do it – couldn't graduate from a private college like that."

Remy perceived an implicit spirit of competition across her nursing peers. She knew there were a limited number of spots in the program.

I don't know if they have like a number that they cap the nursing acceptance on, but I feel like there's just a little bit of competition of like who was going to get you know, the best grades, who was maybe going to qualify for like a scholarship during the nursing program based on their grades, and who was going to get accepted in the program when the time came to apply." She recalls one instance her classmates shared their test scores and asked her how she had done. She earned a 65%. She noted the peer exchange "kind of shaped you. Obviously, I already felt bad about the poor score on the test. And then it just...like made me more upset with myself and feel more disillusioned of the fact that maybe being the nurse wasn't what I was supposed to do." Later she earned a B or B- on exams, but she understood her grades might not enable her to secure admission give the performance of her classmates. She took the initiative to meet with a tutor but associated a stigma with the service, noting "Well, you know, I don't have to tell them [her classmates] that I went to a tutor. You know, they do not know what I'm doing.

Her confidence was further undermined by a roommate who "wanted to be a doctor because being a nurse wasn't good enough." After continual conflict regarding the temperature of the room and a chronically open window, she changed roommates halfway through her first

year. She roomed with a friend who participated in the same co-curricular activity, which blossomed into a strong friendship.

Remy exhibited persistence and reminded herself that she “could prove people who doubted her wrong” and graduate with a bachelor’s degree. When she failed a science course that was a prerequisite to nursing in the Spring, she repeated the course successfully during the summer. It would not, however, be enough to ensure admission into the program.

### ***Sophomore Year: Awareness of Looming Career Changes and Notification***

As her sophomore year began, Remy enrolled in her first nursing course. Intended to serve as an orientation and introduction to the profession, she remembers the following:

I didn’t really feel connected with it, like I tried to put myself in the shoes of like a nurse.

If this happens, this is what I would do – and I’m like, yeah, I mean I can problem solve and figure that out, but I didn’t want to. I was like, Oh, it just doesn’t sound like something I’d want to do.

She continued to wrestle with questions about her major while she also navigated academic difficulty in another science course. She also set out to repeat a language class to improve her GPA. Besides the language and science course, she also was enrolled in mathematics. She does not recall why she was enrolled in math the same time as these courses, especially because she had not completed a math course in two years and had forgotten much of the concepts. She wished she would have enrolled in something different.

At the end of the term, she failed the science class. Her advisor informed her that she could repeat the course, but it would mean extending her graduation date. She also was ineligible to apply because her GPA was too low to satisfy the admission criteria. She would not be

permitted to advance in the nursing program that Spring and would need alternative courses or a different major that following semester. Remy was very disappointed.

That was, of course, extremely difficult for me to hear because I absolutely loved being at my institution, and I loved the people that I was there with, and my sorority. I just did not – I know I didn't want to leave.

The distress she experienced lingered. “I remember I was so stress like I felt like physical stress. I remember like I struggled to — I couldn't sleep, my like neck, my shoulders hurt all the time because I was so tense.” She also found herself often ruminating on her future and the situation. Her distress was global. It manifested itself emotionally, cognitively, and physically.

### ***Declaration of New Academic Goals***

Remy's advisor “kind of suggested, potentially switching majors to something else and suggested meeting with a career counselor who could help me identify some options.” Remy met with the career advisor, who helped her weigh the pros and cons of various possibilities and look for elements she liked most about nursing that existed in other majors or occupations. They also registered for different courses the following term.

I remember the day I left the career office, I was like, ‘Okay, I don't know exactly what my major is going to be, but I know I no longer want to pursue nursing, and it felt, like, I literally walked straight for the first time in like a month. Because I felt like I finally released some of that tension I had been carrying around.

Although the weight of letting go of nursing was gone, Remy remembers continual distress because there was nothing to hold on to. She had declared pre-occupational therapy as a major and enrolled in the courses but was ambivalent about the change.

I felt like I was having an out of body experience. Like I was going through motions of like my classes and my sorority, but like I feel like I wasn't there all the time because I was constantly thinking about like these things are just constantly running through my mind about changing my major.

Declaring an alternative major and committing to it were distinct experiences for Remy.

Remy delayed telling her roommates about the major change for two weeks because she felt embarrassed. When she ultimately shared what was going on, her friends supported her. Her parents, however, expressed disappointment. This was surprising to Remy because the career advisor had encouraged her to speak with family and shared with Remy that she anticipated they would be supportive. The career advisor was wrong and overlooked the possibility of complex family dynamics. This only exacerbated Remy's distress.

### ***Junior Year: Depression and Reengagement***

As her junior year unfolded, Remy found herself coping with depression, especially because her closest friends were studying away and no longer living with her. Time alone caused her to ponder everything that had happened to her.

For the first time, like I had my own room, and I just had to like sit with my thoughts, and my feelings and again with the anxiety of you know, that was after I changed my major, my dad had told me he was disappointed with me. Right before parents came to college parents divorced. In high school, I was in involved in so much stuff, I never really took time to process any of the things that happened. Like one thing, was like she [her mom] attempted suicide, and then had to be admitted into a mental hospital - stuff like that. I never really coped with that. I just kind of was like 'Yeah, it happened, and then I was like, I'm just gonna keep myself busy with these 12 different activities that I'm in' and

then freshmen year I started college and same thing. I had a roommate, and I was in all of these things. Well, then junior year we moved into a house my friends and my roommate, who was my best friend and lived with me my sophomore year - they went to London for a year to study abroad, and so I felt like, because I didn't, I mean I was friends with all the girls that I lived with, but she was kind of like my rock. And so all of a sudden, like, she wasn't there for me to like deflect things on or, you just kind of ignore these feelings. it was the first like I had my own room and I just had to like sit with my thoughts and my feelings and again with the anxiety of you know, that was after I changed my major and you know my dad told me I was a disappointment. And I questioned myself. You know, I just had a lot of time on my own and I hadn't since my parents got a divorce. I definitely went through like "I hate myself. I'm like not a good person.

Even though it had been a year, she continued to desire her father's approval and felt unconfident. Instead of offering support, he instead asked questions about securing admission or financing graduate school and made it clear he could not help her fund it. She understood the challenge of securing graduate admission but believed in herself.

Getting into grad school was going to be difficult. Like, that's not like these things that I've already talked to myself about. He's just kind of always been that voice in the back of my head that says like, 'no, you can't do this, and so part of it is I wanted to prove him wrong.

She went on to share the following: "In just in his own way, he thought that he, I think, was doing what was best for me, and he didn't want to see me fail. But it really kind of hurt me more."

Despite providing adequate career advising, the career advisor primarily focused on major selection and careers. She did not assess if other campus resources, such as mental health counseling would be helpful. The omission of her global well-being stood out to Remy because she later was diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder. She remembers having panic attacks throughout her undergraduate studies, but dismissed the experiences as being inherent to the college environment. However, when the incidents continued after college, she met with a mental health counselor and identified difficult family trauma that unfolded during high school. Nobody ever asked about the difficulties she coped with in high school. The career advisor also never followed up with her to see how she liked her new major. Remy continued to cope with distress a year after she ceased her pursuit of nursing.

I knew that our institution had like free mental health counseling services, but again, I don't want to say I was like ashamed because I don't think that you know, I was. I like had friends that,, your know, went to therapy on campus to help with some of their depression and things. I was supportive, but I always just thought like 'oh, not me.' But I think if somebody had reached out and say 'Hey, how are you doing? Do you think a therapist would help with that?' You know, maybe just getting that nudge from a trusted adult might have helped. The adults in my life or my family weren't going to do that.

She wishes the college would have

given an option of 'Hey, you know I've had students who have, you know, had success with seeing a counselor and helping them go through some of the things that I necessarily can't help with beyond like 'What do you like to do? What do you know about other majors?'

Remy never experienced suicidal thoughts, which she attributes to the supportive friends in her co-curricular activities.

There were always people there. They didn't necessarily know what I was going through, as far as the issues with changing my major, but you know everybody you knew lifted you up. When we met as a group, it would be like, you know 'tell us about your day. How are you feeling – stuff like that.

Although the college offered limited assistance, Remy found support across her friends, which fostered persistence.

### ***Restoration of Career Goals***

Remy acknowledged her spirits lifted and her career goals were restored as she began to take courses in her new major. "I took my first class in my major, and I really enjoyed it, and then I was like, Okay, maybe this is what I'm supposed to do. And I finally started feeling happy with where I was at." She appreciated the academic advisor of her new major. Initially she realized she may have to extend her graduation date due to some course sequencing technicalities, but her academic advisors arranged for her to complete an independent study. Her faculty advisor also gave her cell phone number and encouraged her to contact her anytime. "I think, just really feeling the embrace of my peers, classmates, and advisor of my new major, and having friends who supported me, it kind of helped me realize that I'm not in this alone."

Unlike her freshmen roommate, her friends also acknowledged the complexities of her academic discipline and validated the merits of her program of study.

I think for a while I thought they looked down on me because I wasn't in most science classes, and then I would like discuss stuff in my communication classes just for fun and they were like, 'Wow, like, that sounds really like difficult. I don't think I could do that.'



And I was like, 'Oh, you know, like I guess my classes are like difficult in their own way, and like some people wouldn't understand some of the things that like I do or be able to like learn and help.

Validation from her peers about the merits of her newly chosen profession sustained Remy's motivation.

### *Coping and Construction of New Perspectives*

Remy's worldview also helped her cope.

I feel like everything kind of happens for a reason. There are different things that happen, and when these things happen, you kind of have 2 options. Right? You can either keep doing what you're doing, or you can take like the path that's like the other option away from what you've been doing. And I think that when you're presented with that opportunity that's happening for reason, because maybe you are supported to keep doing what you're doing and you know, learn and look back and you like while I persisted through that so I can you know do this thing that comes up later in my future that's really hard. Or maybe you take the path that you walk away from what you were doing in you're like, oh, I'm really glad that I did that, because if I would have kept on my path, look at what could have happened? So that's how I kind of look at it. So I think that you know, failing that, science class happened because in the back of my mind I had it been unhappy with being a nursing student, honestly since like Spring of my freshman year in another science class.

Although she continued to cope with the disappointment of her parents' response, she has no regrets about her decision.

Looking back now, I'm just like so happy. Even if I wouldn't have failed that science class, I wouldn't have been happy as a nurse thinking about things that have happened like COVID and stuff like that. I do pretty well in like high stress situations, but I'm like, I think I just would have absolutely hated it...I enjoy having weekends off, and I enjoy only working until 4 o'clock, and I don't have to long shifts or anything like that.

When asked what she wished her advisor would have done, she expressed a desire for her academic advisor to explicitly ask her if she wanted to be a nurse.

Maybe I would have been like, 'Oh, it's fine! I was just stressed. It was just my freshman year. I'm totally still gonna be a nurse.' I don't know what I would have said to her, but I think, having those questions and even if I didn't necessarily meet with her, if it was somebody like you who could say you know is this, 'are you sure?' Like if I would have written out that pro and con list of, and looked ahead at oh, these are the classes you're going to take next to, you know, 'You struggled in this class. Are you sure you're going to be able to be successful in this class?' Just kind of breaking it down, because as an 18-19 year old as well, you're not necessarily thinking about those future ramifications either. We think we're invincible.

Later, she elaborated on other desire for advising.

People who kind of grow up in more rural communities, you they sometimes struggling with having support and having options, if that makes sense, you know. I guess it's kinda of my experience is coming from like a family in a rural town. It was very much like, 'These are your options to do these things,' and like, you know, I was...I didn't know about other jobs, you know, about other things.

Instead of suggesting what students cannot do, she wished her advisors would have shared what they could do.

Encourage people to dream big because I think it's a scary thing when you've been told your whole life you can only do X, Y, and Z. And then you have that kind of replaying in your head, and especially if you have anxiety or depression, and then, you know, these thoughts of 'I can't do this,' or 'I'm too dumb' or blah, blah, blah, you know. I wanted to change. I thought, I don't really like what I'm doing, but it's a job, and it's what I've been told I could do.

She remembered being told what she could not do instead of hearing that she was talented and had lots of options.

### ***Senior Year: Adaptability and Subsequent Involuntary Career Changes***

As her senior year unfolded, she began to apply to graduate programs. She approached is with an open mind, now understanding she did not need to be

single-minded, like black and white, but I feel like I very much used to be – thinking the world is black and white, and now I'm like, no, there's definitely shades of gray, and you know, there's people are allowed to change their minds, and people are allowed to feel different things, you know, ever minute, ever hour. Nothing is as concrete as I thought it was.

She remembers being asked “tell us about an adversity you've overcome, and “to me, that was a big, you know, it was. That was a big thing I had overcome.” She was proud not only of the GPA she went on to earn after her sophomore setback but also of how she had persevered.

She applied for six programs and was wait-listed for two programs. Around the same time, her advisor had spoken about opportunities to work in an adjacent state under a practicing

occupational therapist as an aide. Remy decided to pursue this avenue and secured an assistant position. She is grateful that her advisor was aware of this alternative avenue and shared information proactively with her. She also, however, remembers an instance her advisor invited the graduating cohort to go around the room and share their post-graduation plans. She was the only one among her peers who had not secured admission, which left her feeling embarrassed.

When she reapplied the following year, she was admitted. She “felt so relieved, and like – all of the things that I had overcome finally were worth it.” She discovered, however, that the structure of the graduate program did not align with her needs as a working professional. She was juggling a full-time job and two or three courses. Then, the pandemic unfolded. It was exhausting to look at a screen all day. This fatigue was exacerbated when she got COVID herself. A few months later, she broke her ankle and needed to stack on top of an already busy schedule three hours a week for physical therapy. Uninterrupted or focused time was scarce. The competing priorities and time constraints took a toll. She passed all her classes with Bs or Cs, but her professors became concerned when her cumulative GPA dropped below a 3.0. They placed her on academic probation. Although she earned a B- in another course, the grade was not high enough to increase her overall GPA. The department afforded her the opportunity to write a letter to justify why she should be permitted to stay enrolled, but the faculty who reviewed her appeal ultimately decided to end her enrollment in the program.

She described her transition toward alternative goals differently compared to when she was a sophomore.

I was in therapy and on some medication to help with my anxiety and depression. And so, I, you know, talked about it with my therapist, and talked about the feelings that I was having. They were like, ‘well, why do you feel like this?’ And I said ‘because of

something that this person said to me, or this person said. I mean, they were like, “No. Like that’s not your truth. Like, look where you are. Look how far you’ve come. And so, that was different, I mean, of course, I was sad and upset, but I handled my emotions a lot better.

Few know she was rescinded from the occupational therapy program. She elected not to tell her family “because I was embarrassed.” As she pondered her next steps, she found support among an older colleague at work who spent time considering her options with her. She realized she always enjoyed individuals with disabilities. She recalled writing about it in her classes and spending her time with students who had learning disabilities. Through her job, she was introduced to the field of applied behavior science. She pursued multiple master’s programs and was accepted to several. At the time of the interview, she was enrolled, succeeding, and satisfied.

If she had any advice to share with students who are navigating unanticipated transitions, she would offer the following:

It will be okay. It may not feel like it right now, but you will get through it. This may feel like the biggest struggle in your life right now (and it probably is), but you’re at this point in time for a reason. Maybe you need to transition to something new because you’re not happy at your current major/position in life, or maybe you just need to confirm that this is where you want/are meant to be. However, don’t shy away from the questions. Embrace it, learn about yourself in this season of life, and know that whatever choice you make is the right one for you.

Like the other participants, Grace moved from academic difficulty through academic difficulty to hope and restored sense of purpose. She made meaning of the transition and encouraged others to plan for and pursue change. Each of the participants exhibited vocational maturity, courage, and

adaptability, but noted gaps in the institutional support available to them throughout their journey.

### **Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis is founded on narrative reconstruction (Riessman, 2008, p. 55), a process of analysis that captures how people restore their identities and sense of meaning when their lives unfold differently than planned. I constructed the themes by reviewing the transcribed notes, initial categories, and descriptive notes I recorded during the interviews. The emerging themes enabled me to address the research questions of this study, which I now examine.

The analysis and integration of the stories resulted in multiple themes for each respective research question of this study. I now present the findings of my thematic analysis and highlight themes under each area of inquiry of this study.

### **Critical Events Before, During, and After the Change**

For the first research question of this study, I examined how students who coped with unplanned educational changes interacted with higher education professionals before, during, and after the event. Several patterns emerge across the narratives participants provided, which I now examine.

#### ***Before the Change***

Participants described initial success and career conversations, but early barriers resulted in self-doubt, anticipation of the change, and distress.

**Initial Success and Career Conversations.** Participants were successful and high achieving prior to college. Lena graduated with a degree in nursing from a school in her home country. Eddie enrolled in the honors program at his high school. Grace and Remy graduated with honors and high-grade point averages in high school.

All the participants had early access to professionals in their chosen field of study. A high school teacher mentored Eddie while he actively volunteered as a mentor himself in a leadership program at his high school. Grace and Remy had family members who worked in healthcare. Lena had already practiced in her home country as a nurse. None of them anticipated involuntary academic changes were ahead of them when they began college.

**Early Encounters with Barriers.** The second research question of this study examines the barriers students named related to their identities. Participants named several early barriers that impeded their academic performance and persistence in their initially chosen program. In many ways, the transition happened to them, not because of them. COVID prevented Eddie from immersing himself in the language, so he was prepared to complete the Praxis. Lena had to advocate for extra time on exams and often perceived that the faculty did not understand or acknowledge the extensive effort she had invested in her studies. She desired holistic admission procedures that considered the language barriers she needed to navigate. Once she secured enrollment, her professors expressed concerns about her language proficiency. Both Grace and Remy were diagnosed with disabilities after graduation but did not receive accommodations during college because they did not have documentation to support their requests. Anxiety impeded Remy's test performance, while Grace struggled to concentrate and learn during passive lectures. Time constraints may have impeded the academic performance of three students. Grace was a student-athlete. Both Lena and Remy worked part-time.

The academic advising program also introduced barriers. Grace perceived her academic advisor did not have time for her or care due to competing priorities as department chair and multiple handoffs across advisors. Remy's academic advisor enrolled her in a math course (which had a lower course completion rate compared to other general education courses) while

she was repeating a language course and completing a nursing pre-requisite. She may have been more successful if she only had one or two challenging courses instead of three.

Interpersonal and health challenges also occurred. Loneliness was also common. Grace never experienced an authentic sense of belonging and felt like friendships with her teammates were superficial, while Remy and Lena described a spirit of competition across the nursing program. Remy broke her ankle in graduate school, while Lena coped at her first institution with her sister's death. Grace coped with discouraging comments from her coach. Roommate conflicts also reduced students' support and coping capacity.

Three of the four participants perceived that others did not believe in their abilities when they arrived at college, which diminished their self-efficacy. Remy's peers at home thought she was not smart enough for college and her roommate believed nursing was less rigorous. Grace's coach thought juggling athletics and nursing coursework was too difficult. Both Remy and Grace mentioned they aspired to prove others wrong. Lena expressed ongoing frustrations about disbelieving or unhelpful professors and classmates but ultimately found peace when she realized that God "understands me, and knows my work, my strengths. I don't have to prove it to him." All three ultimately reconciled any self-doubt and restored their sense of confidence, but recovery was not immediate.

**Academic Difficulty and Reluctance to Ask for Help.** As college unfolded, several participants found themselves underprepared. Three of the four participants wished they had been better prepared for the rigor or pace of college. Remy, Eddie, and Grace thought their high school study strategies would be effective but were surprised when they received low exam scores. Grace found the format of lectures unhelpful and passive. Eddie was overwhelmed by the volume of reading.



All of the participants were reluctant to ask the professors for help. Eddie feared they would perceive that he wasn't "succeeding in the way that I should be" and Grace wasn't sure how to "tell them I'm struggling when I really don't know why." Grace was also passed around to three different academic advisors and perceived that one of them (also the department chair) was too busy to invest in their relationship. Grace and Eddie described that staff members or advisors shared progression or procedural feedback (e.g., information about required GPA, rest test dates) but asked fewer questions about their values, well-being, or holistic experiences.

**Anticipated Change and Action Crisis.** Every participant anticipated needing to modify their goals and experienced a distressing action crisis before notification. Eddie suspected he might fail the exam when he was preparing for it. The other three anticipated they might not be able to persist in their chosen program as a result of the grades they were earning. Given their feedback, they experienced an action crisis and began considering alternatives. Remy began to wonder if she even enjoyed nursing and downgraded the goal. Eddie had stopped attending class. Grace enrolled in a course outside of her degree plan to explore an alternative career. Nobody at the institution, however, asked Grace why she had deviated from her plan of study.

Lena anticipated but did not accept the change. Lena knew she was passing all her courses at her first institution, but also understood that the minimum scores were likely insufficient to secure admission. Although her professor provided input about her proficiency once she was officially admitted into nursing, Lena did not find this feedback accurate and instead perceived the professor as discriminatory.

**Early Emotional Distress.** Students' emotional and educational well-being were intertwined. The distress or action crisis occurred before they were officially notified of their new educational program. Both Grace and Eddie shared that they experienced depression before

they were officially removed from their initially chosen degree program. Eddie continued to stop going to class. When he failed the exam again during the summer, he ceased his studies entirely. Grace began to consume a lot of alcohol and experienced suicidal thoughts during her final semester as a nursing student. She was overcome with anxiety and unable to locate alternatives.

Remy did not experience depression leading up to when she was notified to change majors, but she felt a sense of relief when the institution notified her that she could no longer remain in the pre-nursing program and needed to become an exploratory studies major. She did not fully commit to or claim the new program of study she had been pursuing for nearly a year. Although she understood that she needed to enroll in the courses to confirm her interests, she described this transition period as distressing. She was behaviorally committing to her goals by going to new classes, but still fostering cognitive and emotional commitment to the program.

#### ***During the Change: Notification and Initial Responses***

Institutions used various means to notify participants. In one situation, Lena figured out she was denied after her classmates waived their admission paperwork around in class. In another, Lena was personally notified during a department judicial hearing, which the institution later reinforced after a failed appeal. The department chairs informed Remy and Eddie. Grace was personally introduced to career services after a meeting with the department chair, which she found helpful. Several participants struggled to remember what was said but actively recalled being overwhelmed with emotions and numb. As Lena described, she was “going through the motions.”

To pursue the alternative interdisciplinary major demanded by the institution, Grace and Lena had to obtain the signatures of department chairs of the academic areas they wanted to apply to their new degree before moving into the major. One of the departments they needed was

nursing because that was one of the areas they had completed sufficient upper-level coursework. Both Grace and Lena agreed that it was incredibly awkward to revisit the same department that had deemed them deficient and request their support as they persisted in their new major. They had no interest in the new program required in the degree and perceived the faculty had no authentic care for them because it was their former major.

Several themes emerged immediately around notification. The participants responded differently to their situation, but all acknowledged they experienced depression, distress, or grief. Their narrative included changed relationships, minimal faculty or staff support, isolation, and increased distress around graduation.

**Changed Relationships.** Immediately after the institution notified them that they needed to change majors, all the participants were reluctant to share the news with their family members because they were embarrassed or feared they had let them down. Participants often coped in isolation. Grace and Eddie began to ignore their parents because they did not know what to say and wanted to avoid causing them pain. When their loved ones did not support them, it exacerbated their distress. Remy and Eddie needed to cope with the disappointment of their parents. The ripple effect of this changed relationship lingered even today. Besides rapport with family members, one participant's spirituality and relationship with God was also disrupted. Lena prayed but sometimes found herself angry at God.

**Minimal Faculty and Staff Support.** Despite their depression and distress, participants did not recall faculty or staff encouraging them to meet with a counselor. Participants met with diverse individuals, including professors, academic advisors, career counselors, athletics, and the dean of students. Nobody generated referrals or shared information about campus counseling services. The finding is also perplexing because the students were in professional programs (i.e.,

nursing, education) with faculty who were trained to provide holistic educational or well-being support. Grace was advised to meet with a counselor, but only in the context of qualifying for disability accommodations. The transactional interaction left her feeling even more discouraged. None of her professors or advisors conducted a suicide assessment or knew she was considering self-harm. Multiple participants (Remy, Grace, Eddie) indicated that it would have been helpful if someone had contacted them to see how they were doing and acknowledged the difficulty of the situation.

**Isolation.** Like before the involuntary change, participants suffered in silence after being notified of the modification to their academic major. Across both the institutions she attended, no college officials advised Lena to contact the state licensing board to consider transferring the license from her home country. Although someone followed up with Eddie after he failed to complete all of his classes, Eddie was reluctant to disclose his difficulties to the staff member who contacted him because the conversation seemed procedural or transactional. He sensed the staff member was simply checking the box to indicate Eddie had been notified of academic policies. Instead of linking his class absences with his distress about his first failed exam score or acknowledging the disruptive nature of COVID, the faculty attributed Eddie's behavior to his character (i.e., trustworthy). Eddie internalized their disappointment. Unlike Lena, he could not construct counternarrative to refute this message. He continued using present tense language during the interview, indicating he still believed he had let his faculty down.

**Increased Distress Around Graduation.** Students' distress resurfaced or was compounded by college officials' decisions around graduation. Grace struggled to understand what she was celebrating and why she was not sad to leave like many friends. Remy had to publicly acknowledge in front of her classmates that she was the only one who had not secured

admission into graduate school. Lena saw several celebratory photos of her classmates on social media and missed being a part of the cohort she had belonged to. In one post, she stumbled on a formal picture of her nursing classmates and noticed where she had been standing in the cohort photograph and was cut out. She also struggled to answer her friends and family when they asked her what she would do after graduation. Grace also acknowledged that graduation was difficult. She felt like her friends “had everything figured out.” She was unaware of how often everyone changes or adapts in their careers. Years later, she can now name the vocational transitions her peers endured and perceive career changes as common. She wished she was aware of the nuances people all navigated back then.

### ***Pathways to Persistence***

Every participant was officially forced to disengage from their educational goals when the institution notified them that they could not persist or secure admission in their chosen programs. All four were also enrolled in professional programs needed to achieve their vocational goals. Subsequently, the pathway to their careers also shifted when their educational goals were modified. Every participant, however, graduated in alternative degree programs and reported that they had located satisfying work at the time of this study. Several themes emerge related to the resources and mindset they used to persist and restore their career well-being.

**Engagement in Other Courses.** Pathways to graduation varied across participants. Shortly after the involuntary change, each participant began to take courses in their major. This action may signal that they had re-engaged in their new academic major. The participants, however, described their experiences differently. Although the institution moved them into their new majors, Grace and Lena did not embrace these programs of study as their own. Grace struggled to articulate in her own words what her new major (interdisciplinary studies) was or

meant. Lena and Grace both acknowledged they remained in their new major simply because it was the fastest route to graduation — as a means to an end. Each only had one more semester remaining before they graduated. Graduation became their pursued goal instead of meaningful study. They persisted as the result of supportive families. Lena also found strength in her faith traditions.

Remy remained in college during her sophomore year because she liked the institution and had formed strong friendships she did not want to lose. She was relieved when she let go of her first major but encountered distress when her father was not supportive, and she was still ambivalent about her second major. Introductory courses cultivated a commitment to the alternative program, and she learned to look to her advisor and friends for support instead of her father. Her friends and new advisor conveyed she was “not alone in this.” Although she did not rely upon faith traditions or religious beliefs per se, she existentially relied upon a worldview founded on the understanding that multiple pathways exist and that “everything happens to lead you to a satisfying destination.” She experienced a sense of pride in her resiliency and shared it with employers whenever they asked for evidence to demonstrate her persistence.

Eddie immediately experienced diminished motivation and disengaged academically after he failed the Praxis. He took incompletes at graduation and did not touch his assignments for several months after failing the Praxis a second time. He was ready to quit, but a caring professor contacted him, which restored Eddie’s sense of belonging and motivated him to wrap-up his remaining incomplete coursework.

**Restoration of Career Well-Being.** When participants had new educational goals thrust upon them after they disengaged from their former programs, they remained without a vocational plan to achieve their career goals. None of the participants had parallel plans before the abrupt

ending of their goals. Participants relied on others within their support system and engaged in experiential learning to restore their career goals.

**Reliance on Support.** Some (Grace and Remy) discussed their new goals with career services professionals, but others (Lena and Eddie) formulated new vocational goals on their own. None of the participants received ongoing support from their institution to restore their career well-being. Grace and Lena found support in their families. Remy relied on her friends for support and a mental health counselor when the second transition unfolded in graduate school. This counselor helped her reframe and construct “her truth” or perception of the events. Everyone described having a supportive individual within their work environment who mentored, encouraged, and validated them.

**Shared Values or Attributes.** Remy and Eddie shared that they selected their alternative careers because of continuity in the attributes or values across both occupations. Lena and Grace identified distinctive values in nursing that they could not replicate in other healthcare positions and located alternative avenues to pursue them.

**Experiential Learning.** Both Lena and Grace returned to their former goals after they observed nurses working within their jobs immediately after graduation. Grace explored healthcare administration over six months but ultimately returned to nursing after working as a CNA at a senior living center for the following year after graduation. Lena initially considered genetic counseling, but only for a week or two. Both Lena and Grace returned to their former goals after they observed nurses working within their jobs immediately after graduation. They also had supportive supervisors and family members who encouraged them and affirmed that they could persist. Grace’s mother was a nurse herself. Lena also had close friends that had practiced as nurses before they immigrated to the United States and navigated the licensure

system. They coached and encouraged her to persist within the nursing occupation and to contact the state's licensing agency.

Access to the work environment also restored Eddie's vocational identity and goals. Once he began to work as a teaching assistant, he identified that individual mentoring relationships replicated the joy he encountered during his co-curricular activities, and he realized that he was freely choosing not to pursue teaching. He did not miss being in an instructional group setting. Similarly, Remy needed time to complete her courses and practicum hours before her anxiety fully diminished.

To summarize, although participants described how faculty or staff hindered their coping, they also shared ways college officials helped them persist. Grace reported that she was ready to quit and unsure what to do but was relieved to hear that a career advisor believed in her and that she could replicate her desire to help others in other occupations. The appeal to these autonomously motivated values gave her hope and the initial strength to finish her final semester at the institution. She also appreciated that the career advisor acknowledged the loss. Eddie turned a corner when a professor contacted him to listen instead of lecture. Unlike his professional program professors, this instructor signaled that he knew Eddie could do it and that Eddie had not let him down. The support encouraged him to focus on his academic goals even if he did not know his vocational goals. Lena felt her confidence was restored when she authored her resume with a career service professional and heard her strengths validated. Remy could pursue an alternative pathway to a profession after being denied admission into graduate school because a professor had already researched alternative certifications and proactively shared the information with her.

### **Perception of Current Post-Graduation Activities**



All four participants perceived their post-graduation activities positively. While their major was removed involuntarily, they all enjoyed their current positions or (in Remy's case) program of study. They each linked their past to their present and future goals. Although the institution involuntarily moved them into alternative educational programs, they exhibited their agency and voluntarily chose their career goals. Both Remy and Eddie moved to alternative careers and optimistically observed commonalities across their former and new goals that preserved their sense of purpose. Neither believed they would be happier in their initially chosen goal. Eddie articulated gratitude for the transition because it introduced him to an area of education he was unaware existed. Remy learned that career satisfaction existed across multiple occupations and that no right or wrong options existed. She was now less afraid of what life would give her. Both Remy and Eddie were still actively reconstructing their stories but expressed hope and optimism about their futures.

Like Eddie and Remy, Grace and Lena routinely paused to ponder the possibilities. They discerned their next steps through inward and outward reflection. Over time, the understanding of their situation shifted, and their pursuit of former goals returned. They did not internalize or believe that they did not have something to offer nursing and continued to appreciate specific attributes of the profession. When they realized other avenues to pursue their initially chosen goal, they persisted (i.e., Lena by petitioning the state board and Grace through an accelerated program).

### ***Distinctive Vocational Leadership***

The transition enhanced their practice. Every participant described instances that they exhibited more empathy or excellence in their positions due to their transition. As Lena noted, "Every patient is unique. That's how they have to treat their patients. That's how they should care

for students. They come from diverse communities, diverse countries, and everything else, you know." She also articulated that she is more patient with student nurses than her colleagues, which her supervisor appreciates. She was recently selected to train new nurses for her department. Grace also acknowledged engaging in a holistic assessment to ensure she is responding to any emotional needs they might present. She understands what it feels like when this is missing, given her reductionistic advising experiences and wants to avoid this herself as a practitioner. She also applies her brief time in healthcare administration and the computer science course she completed. Her supervisor recently asked her to serve on a hospital-wide committee that is implementing new case management software.

### ***Future Adaptability***

Eddie, Lena, and Grace remained open to future changes in their career. Eddie is considering an advanced degree. Grace remained open to administrative opportunities within nursing while Lena was beginning to pursue a small business on the side. Remy also acknowledged that future change was likely possible and that she was poised to navigate whatever opportunities or challenges unfolded.

### ***Lingering Losses***

Implicit in their stories, however, are remaining losses. Their grief was a dynamic process, not an event. Even today, they continue to navigate the vocational transition. Several participants used present tense verbs or exhibited strong emotions to indicate they continued to wrestle with challenging aspects of their stories. Grace often cried during the second interview. Lena showed anger and raised her voice.

Lena continues to cope with the chilling environment her classmates created for her. Remy and Eddie still experience broken relationships with their parents. Remy is reconstructing

and claiming “her truth” in therapy. Eddie explicitly stated he is “working through it.” When I asked him what he thought was lost or what he was grieving as a part of the transition, he shared it was his relationships with his professors. At three different points in the interview, he shared he felt like he let them down. He knows he should have communicated better with them but understands this was not possible because of the depression he was enduring.

### **Conclusion**

Participants illuminated that educational and emotional well-being are intertwined. Not every academic advisor engaged in holistic assessment or proactive support, which is surprising given the professional training of the faculty involved. Students reported distress, including depression and suicidal thoughts, leading up to official notification and continual adjustment thereafter. Except for disability accommodations, nobody referred participants to counseling. None of the participants remembered discussing vocational adaptability or proactively creating parallel plans prior to the change. Some relied on their family members for support, while others changed their relationships forever. Some participants also perceived a culture of competition among their classmates and described hurtful incidents or comments made by faculty or staff. Although participants declared alternative majors immediately after they were denied access to their existing program of study, it took each individual months or years to restore their career engagement fully. Each participant, however, graduated and achieved career well-being. Participants persisted because they wanted to prove others wrong, found hope in their worldview beliefs, and discovered support among their friends, supervisors, or colleagues. Each participant also described the positive impact of a professor, advisor, or career specialist, indicating the critical role faculty and staff play in mental health.

## Chapter 5 - Integration of Literature and Findings

When the literature is benchmarked against the themes that emerged in this study, the findings of previous scholarship are validated. New observations also emerged. I now situate the results of each research question in the context of previous scholarship.

### **Research Question #1a: Interactions with Personnel Before, During, and After the Change**

Support is a moderating factor that can enable or constrain goal adjustment (Kappes & Schattke, 2022). Students' interactions with faculty and staff before, during, and after the action crisis helped and hindered their well-being. However, the support offered by family, friends, and mentors was equally powerful.

#### ***Faculty and Staff***

**Before the Action Crisis.** Aligned with the literature (Haase et al., 203), students perceived discrepancies between their performance and program requirements before they were officially notified (Creed & Hood, 2015; Ghassemi et al., 2017). Although they were experiencing an action crisis, they had not disengaged. The chronic disequilibrium diminished their self-efficacy, hoped-for career outcomes, and well-being (Herrmann & Brandstätter, 2015; Neely et al., 2009).

Participants initially increased their effort when they perceived that they were not performing adequately (Kruger, 1975). They enrolled in summer courses and completed full credit loads to repeat courses with the hopes that they would increase their GPA. They met with professors and tutors outside of class. However, they remained anxious because they sensed disappointment looming when they did not see the desired results (Carroll et al., 2009).

Students also did not receive high-impact advising that was proactive, sustained, or offered by a consistent individual (Bharadwaj et al., 2023). Two participants endured changes in

advising assignments. One participant believed her current advisor was too busy because she was department chair. Despite follow-up questions during the interviews, no participants named scaled advising initiatives, such as first-year exploration programs, parallel planning, and implementation intention conversations (Creed & Hood, 2015; Jordan, 2015; Kappes & Schattke, 2022; Lent, 2020; Savickas et al., 2009). They were not encouraged to double major, enroll in courses outside their major, construct an if-then narrative, or name an alternative path they would pursue (Jordan, 2015; Kappes & Schattke, 2022; Lent & Brown, 2020). None of the institutions created meta-majors or guided pathways (Jenkins et al., 2018a).

Participants also struggled to remember instances where they linked their liberal arts curriculum to relevant transferrable skills that qualified them for multiple occupations. This omission was surprising given advisors' opportunity to explain the purpose of the core curriculum and the American Association Colleges & Universities' emphasis on the benefits of a liberal education and vocational psychologists' recommendation that career services prepare for a rapidly changing labor market (Krumboltz & Levin, 2010; Lowenstein, 2015; Pryor & Bright, 2019; Schneider & Siegelman, 2018). The omission of intentional career advising, scaled career interventions, and liberal arts amplification, students struggled to have alternatives readily available, which may have hindered their goal adjustment (Kappes & Schattke, 2022).

Despite scholars' suggestions for integrated career and academic advising (Buyarski, 2009; Gordon, 2007), few advisors proactively supported students vocationally before the change of majors, which Pizzolato (2007) also reported. This finding is not surprising given the evidence scholars have shared that academic advisors rarely discuss their careers or collaborate with career services (Troxel & Kyei-Blankson, 2020; Tyton Partners, 2019). Career services also

remain underutilized (Gallup, 2017). Some students do not know career resources exist (Bharadwaj et al., 2023).

**During the Action Crisis.** As the situation escalated, participants did not recall conversations about coping strategies, previous transitions, or cost-benefit analysis (Lent & Brown, 2020; Savickas, 2002, 2020; Schlossberg, 2008). Participants did not actively seek assistance or support. Avoidance coping may not have been entirely maladaptive. Early scholars of coping strategies report that initial avoidance can reduce stress and permit normalcy while they channel energy to solve the problem long-term (Roth & Cohen, 1986).

Multiple participants also shared they were reluctant to disclose to their academic advisors or professors that they were distressed. Like another study (Fong, 2018), participants believed they were letting others down and were hesitant to share that they were considering alternative majors. Imposter phenomenon or mistrust against the institution may have made it difficult to seek help (Beard, 2018; Felten & Lambert, 2020). Like other students, they also wondered if their advisors had too high of a caseload or had not developed significant rapport with their advisor (Bharadwaj et al., 2023; Gasman & Nguyen, 2019; Loftin et al., 2012; McGee, 2021)

When college officials contacted them, they generally received progress or procedural feedback (e.g., policies on or timing of repeating courses, retest dates, deadlines for incompletes, improvements needed) instead of integrated career advising or support, which could have validated value-based continuity across their goals or their volition (Carroll et al., 2009; Gati et al., 1998).

The lack of engagement with career practitioners may have delayed participants' adaptive behaviors. Grace started to disengage a year before she was rescinded by enrolling in a computer

science course. Nobody, however, contacted her to provide decision-making support (Lent, 2020). As the action crisis intensified and became prolonged, one participant began to experience chronic anxiety and rumination. She found the distress and depression overwhelming and unbearable, which resulted in heavy alcohol consumption and suicidal thoughts. Her advisor and department never knew. This lack of referrals to mental health counselors in this study is surprising because three out of four academic advisors who responded to a survey reported that they generated referrals to mental health professionals (Bharadwaj et al., 2023).

**After Notification.** Notification strategies varied across participants but did not always unfold as scholars recommended (Hammond, 2017; Rodriguez & Kolls, 2010). In some instances, participants were notified privately and personally by faculty. In other instances, they found out haphazardly or during a formal adjudication hearing. Grace and Lena behaviorally accepted the new majors assigned to them simply because they were readily available options that preserved their graduation dates (Kappes & Schattke, 2022). They each, however, needed to chase down the signatures of department chairs before they were permitted to move into alternative programs, which they described as exhausting and demoralizing.

Staff and faculty support remained mixed after notification. Although Eddie was hurt by the feedback his faculty shared about his character when he was notified that he was rescinded from the education program, he felt cared for when both another professor and career services contacted him. When Grace and Remy met with a career services professional, they appreciated that the individual acknowledged their loss. They then completed a pro/con analysis and identified congruent values across their options, which preserved a sense of autonomously chosen goals and reminded them that salient attributes they valued remained present in their newly formed goals. They also were introduced to faculty and alumni in the field. The practices

of these career services professionals align with the literature (Gati et al., 1998; Lent & Brown, 2020; Wee, 2013). A single conversation with a professor, advisor, alumni, or staff member can positively impact students, which some scholars call “mentors of the moment” (Felten & Lambert, 2020). Other college personnel, such as the career services individual Lena met with and Remy’s faculty, also fostered goal adjustment after the unplanned educational change because they validated the achievements exhibited during class or on a resume. These strength-based practices were effective for these students (Duffy et al., 2015; Creed et al., 2015; Schreiner, 2013; Schutt, 2018; Wrosch et al., 2003).

### ***Other Support Besides Faculty and Staff***

Every participant confirmed their careers when other people external to the institution validated their pursuit of these paths. Every participant had a work supervisor who confirmed that they were talented and offered something valuable to their newly chosen professions. Experiential learning enabled individuals to reappraise their self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Lent, 2020). One participant navigated two unforeseen educational changes and shared that the second was far easier because she had already connected proactively with a counselor helping her reframe her thinking before the transition. This mindfulness or thinking aloud resulted in new perspectives and orientations that fostered adaptive coping (Baumann et al., 2005; Gilbert, 2005; Neeley et al., 2009).

Before and during the action crisis, participants coped in isolation. Participants struggled to talk to their parents about their experiences and kept them at a distance. They doubted if their parents would understand their new degree options and were unsure what to say to them. Like other first-generation students, one acknowledged their family had limited occupational literacy



or understanding of the college curriculum (Jehangir et al., 2015; Keene, 2022; Mcdossi et al., 2022).

After the event, the impact of the family was mixed. Scholars suggest that individuals may perceive support from others negatively because it is unsolicited or incongruent with their desires (Light & Chodos, 2022). Two participants had family members that worked in their aspired industry, and they relied on them for support. Their goal aspirations aligned with their family's desires. The other two participants never received support from their parents, who had different goal aspirations than them, which negatively impacted their relationship. The lingering effects of this remain today and may have been more distressing than the involuntary educational change.

#### **Research Question #1b: Barriers Encountered Before, During, and After the Change**

Multiple barriers existed across participants' stories. Participants described difficulties they endured due to documented disabilities, COVID, language barriers, and being the first in their family to graduate from college. Like other first-generation students, several participants felt underprepared when they started college despite being high achieving in high school (Gable, 2021). Course lecture formats prevented participants from checking for understanding or engaging with the faculty (Gasman & Nguyen, 2019; Nunn, 2021). Like other first-generation students, some of the participants were less acquainted with the idea of talking to their professors and unsure how to navigate the power dynamics of instructor relationships (Daily, 2023; Horowitz, 2019; Jack, 2019). Some may have perceived that students only meet with their professors when they are in significant academic jeopardy or breakdown (Jack, 2019). Part-time jobs were necessary given participants' income, but the positions created time constraints (Ardoin, 2020; Mehta et al., 2011; Housel, 2019). Two participants requested accommodations

given language barriers or undocumented disabilities but were denied. Grace found it embarrassing and exhausting to advocate for herself, given everything she was juggling and her beliefs about self-reliance. Lena knew she understood the concepts of nursing and perceived her deficient grades as only reflective of her English abilities. She stopped asking for extra time but never internalized the feedback the faculty shared with her. Alternative testing procedures may have embedded equity in the assessment practices of her program and recognized her potential as a nurse (Jankowski & Lundquist, 2022). However, she remained linguistically invisible (Bazner & Lopez, 2022).

Like participants in other studies, students reported diminished academic belonging and wondered if they were good enough for college (Denice, 2021; Gable, 2021; Nunn, 2021; Strayhorn, 2016). Their academic success reflected their self-worth or belonging (Vaccaro & Newman, 2022). Belonging is a fundamental goal and human need (Strayhorn, 2016; Rühls et al., 2022). It is unclear which failed goal or action crisis created more distress: a) the desire for and omission of validating classmates, coaches, and faculty or b) the inability to achieve one's educational goals. Participants coped with *belonging uncertainty* (Felten & Lambert, 2020, p. 46) or ambivalence about whether they were fully embraced by others at the college. Like other goals that they had, they needed others in and out of the classroom to validate their potential (Rendón, 2021). None of these students participated in first-generation programs, such as learning communities, Trio, or summer events (Moody et al., 2023). It remains unknown if these students could have persisted in their chosen programs if these barriers were removed. The environment sustained pre-college perceptions of fraudulence (Felten & Lambert, 2020). Three of the four participants endured micro-aggressive comments and chilly environments. These

experiences only compounded students' existing distress and risk for depression (Arbona & Jimenez, 2014).

Both Grace and Remy named their age as a barrier, articulating they were “just a kid” who believed they were “invincible” or “not necessarily thinking about future ramifications” of their decisions or the probability of securing admission. They had less experience with metacognition and goal regulation than they have now that they are older. Emotional regulation is also necessary for effective goal adjustment (Kappes & Schattke, 2022), which is often a skill that traditional-aged college students are developing (Chickering & Reisser, 2005). This also was the first transition several students encountered. Although it was a new experience and they were only just beginning to acquire effective coping strategies, they were supported, which made the difference (Anderson et al., 2012).

Despite the barriers they encountered, only two of the participants expressed anger at their institutions. Remy wished she would have been warned their family might be disappointed with her so she could have prepared better for the conversation. Lena shared several times she believes she was discriminated against. Grace and Eddie, however, exhibited embarrassment and shame. It was not the ending they wanted. They internalized sole responsibility for the situation. Every graduate was proud that they persisted but exhibited more enthusiasm when they described their career goals and achievements, which we now explore.

### **Research Question #2: Process Used to Arrive at New Career Goals**

Overall, the results of this study indicate that educational and vocational goals are intertwined but also separate. Participants did not disengage from their career goals simply because the institution put them into new academic majors. Information about one's degree options was necessary but not sufficient for well-being. Intrinsic adoption of career decisions and

goal adjustment were tasks that remained. In the context of their career goals, each participant's experience after the action crisis was unique. The moderating variables embedded in their stories shaped their response.

### ***Grace: Inaction Crisis and Reengagement of Former Goal***

Grace initially disengaged and pursued healthcare administration. When she was not hired (which also required goal disengagement), she worked as a nurse assistant in a senior living center and searched for a healthcare administration job. Over time, she experienced an *inaction crisis*, which scholars report occurs when individuals experience disengagement relapse or reevaluate their former goals (Holding et al., 2022). Revisiting her initial goal led her to enroll in an accelerated nursing program. She was able to persist because she had supportive family, was aware of accelerated nursing programs, and had a job in a healthcare setting, which may have implicitly restored her self-efficacy, validated her outcome expectations, and sustained her goals (Kappes & Schattke, 2022; Krisehok et al., 2009; Lent, 2020).

### ***Lena: Frozen Goal***

Lena *shelved* or *froze* her goal. Although she was not pursuing or participating in her vocational goal during her final semester or immediately after graduation, she remained emotionally and cognitively committed to it. She never stopped wanting to be a nurse (Davydenko et al., 2019). The pathway may have changed, but the goal remained.

Scholars would point to a variety of moderating variables that fostered Lena's vocational persistence. Lena did not perceive the feedback she received as accurate, so it did not diminish her motivation (Fonteyne et al., 2019). Lena exhibited critical agency or an awareness of her social context. She perceived she was being discriminated against and constructed a counternarrative that enabled her to persist toward her initial career goal. Her perceived sense of

control and autonomously motivated desire to be a nurse served as a protective factor that preserved her initial goal of becoming a nurse (Hortop et al., 2013). Although she experienced an action crisis and questioned her goal to become a nurse, a career professional validated her self-efficacy when she prepared her resume for a hospital job after graduation. She also likely had high career decision self-efficacy because of her supportive family (Peraza & Nguyen, 2019). Lena's spiritual beliefs also enabled her to faithfully pursue her aspirations, which aligns with the findings of other scholars who studied the relationship between students who perceive their careers as a calling and their response to career-related feedback (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2012; Hu et al., 2023).

#### ***Remy: Goal Disengagement and Reengagement***

During Remy's first transition as a sophomore, she was relieved and experienced the least amount of distress. Scholars might hypothesize that it was easier for her to commit to an alternative because she had fewer credits and realized the goal was unattainable earlier in her academic career than Grace, Eddie, and Lena (Ntoumanis et al., 2014). She relied on the lessons she learned when she was denied admission into graduate school. She also found support in her friends and faculty advisor, who was aware of alternatives and made the pathway readily available. The early introduction of this information reduced her distress during this transition (Kappes & Schattke, 2022). When her graduate school action crisis unfolded, she was already connected to a therapist who was actively supporting her as she constructed the "truth" she was giving and breathing into her life, which aligns with career construction theory (Savickas, 2002).

#### ***Eddie: Goal Disengagement and Goal Reengagement***

Eddie's educational goals were restored when he returned to his studies and finished his incompletes. Later, he re-engaged his vocational goals after he met with a career specialist and

began to pursue employment in a school district. Boredom and underemployment may have motivated him to meet with the career specialist (Bieleke et al., 2022). His depression was prolonged because the reengagement of each goal unfolded separately over many months. Eddie benefited from the mindfulness he practiced together with a career specialist who helped him understand his options and assets (Kappes & Schattke, 2022). He continued to engage in this reflection with individuals at work, which was also beneficial.

### **Research Question #3: Coping and Persistence to Graduation**

After the action crisis, every participant earned a degree. Participants reported that they persisted because they wanted to prove others wrong, found hope in their worldview beliefs, and discovered support among family, friends, or faculty/staff. The desire to demonstrate one's ability is common across first generation students (Gable, 2021). Three participants completed their new coursework without disruptions, but one struggled to cope and withdrew after taking incompletes. The nudge of a caring professor who offered encouragement instead of advice or information restored his academic engagement. Among the three individuals who were notified during their final semester, they transitioned more seamlessly because their institutions had already created alternative degree programs that avoided delays in their degree progress.

Despite the degree attainment of every participant, two cautionary warnings are in order. First, being placed in an involuntary major does not translate to affective or cognitive commitment to the educational endeavor. Although institutions placed students into new majors at the end of their college careers, all three struggled to commit to these goals fully. They all attended class, but they could not make sense of or find meaning in their new degree at the time of graduation. Although they behaviorally signaled their commitment to it by attending classes

and finishing their degrees, they affectively and cognitively did not commit to it (Brandtstädter & Rothermund, 2002).

Secondly, simply because students achieved their vocational goals and graduated may not mean that their educational goals were resolved or attained. Colleges offer more than a diploma. This distinction is illuminated in Grace's story. Grace graduated and achieved her vocational goals as a practicing RN during this study, yet she remained tearful through several parts of the interview. Discussing the disengagement from her educational goals was difficult, even today. She derived a sense of belonging and self-worth from her major and athletic participation (Strayhorn, 2019). The lost sense of community among her teammates and classmates could not be restored or reengaged. She graduated, and there were no additional opportunities to experience an academic or athletic sense of belonging.

The narrative Grace provides illuminates that educational and vocational goals are interwoven but also distinct endeavors. Grace achieved her vocational goals, but the educational environment and changes she endured were traumatic. Students derive an academic sense of belonging from their educational programs, which is different than their social belonging (McAlpine et al., 2009; Means & Pyne, 2017).

Fortunately, Grace concluded during the interviews that she found the study helpful and decided it would be beneficial to speak further with a counselor about her journey, which validates one of the benefits of this narrative study (Riessman, 2008). Mental health counselors should not use the attainment of vocational goals or graduation as the exclusive marker of well-being. Educational disruptions or diminished belonging may still have occurred and remain unexamined.

#### **Research Question #4: Perception of New Career**

Participants perceive their goals as their own. They moved from involuntary change to autonomously chosen goals that they freely chose (Holding et al., 2022). They also exhibited a sense of accomplishment and strength when they shared their current activities. Remy and Eddie highlighted how their experiences enabled them to support struggling students they would encounter in their own work. Lena and Grace each named how they used the transition to enhance their delivery of care to patients or students. Every participant articulated how it refined their worldview, fostered authenticity, and gave them confidence as they navigated or pursued other changes.

Over time, participants learned to reframe unhelpful beliefs about the transition. Two participants realized they could exhibit control and navigate uncertainty, which made them less apprehensive about future transitions. Others reported that they no longer associate happiness with external events and now instead perceive joy as internal and unwavering based on one's perspective (Noble & Winkleman, 2016).

These results challenge the dominant language (i.e., commonly called plan B, contingency plan, escape plan, back-up plan, emergency exit) that scholars often use to describe these participants' careers (Hallqvist & Hyden, 2012; Henderschiedt, 2009; King & Pittman, 2013; Lent 2013; Robertson et al., 2014; Steele & McDonald, 2008; Schlossberg & Robinson, 1996). Participants offered no evidence that individuals who endure involuntary transitions use secondary titles or alternative language to describe their careers. As Remy shared, "that's not my truth." They are not living a plan B life. They were thriving. Every participant reported that they found this language unhelpful and inaccurate. Secondary language did not honor their persistence, resiliency, or adaptability.

## **Chapter Summary**



This chapter revealed findings embedded in participants' narrative. Participants received feedback from the environment, began to wonder if they might need to let go of their goals (i.e., disengage), and then experienced distress (i.e., action crisis) because there were no new goals to hold on to (re-engage). They often navigated the goal change in isolation. Faculty, staff, friends, or family helped and hindered their coping. Participants' responses varied based on variables present in their environment. One revisited or returned to her initial goal after a brief hiatus. Another never let go of it and behaviorally resumed her pursuit of it after graduation. Two other individuals pivoted to or re-engaged in alternative goals. Every participant graduated, but some never achieved a sense of belonging or the full college experience they aspired to have when they first arrived at their institutions. Despite the academic loss they endured, they were all satisfied with their current careers.

## Chapter 6 - Discussion & Implications

Diverse types of programs of study exist in higher education. Whereas academic programs immerse students in a specialized discipline, professional programs prepare students for a specific occupation or career immediately after graduation. Although two out of three undergraduates secure employment in a non-licensed or certified field, a third will work in an occupation with clearly defined training requirements often affiliated with a specific professional program, such as education, social work, or nursing (Torpey, 2016).

Professional programs often require admission and are selective based on core competencies needed by the licensed occupation or upper-level courses associated with the professional program. Historically, professional programs have used diverse methods to determine who has access and is admitted into the program. Some programs rely on standardized exams and grade point averages. Others may also engage in holistic admission and consider nonacademic factors (e.g., character, leadership) through reference letters, essays, or interviews. Many programs consider students' academic performance in prerequisite courses or field experiences (Barr et al., 2010; Drysdale et al., 2015). Programs also assess students' academic and professional performance as they advance within the program and will rescind students who they deem are not competent to practice in the field (Twale & De Luca, 2008; Wissel, 2015).

Students who cannot pursue their educational goals may experience diminished career, financial, and emotional well-being. Some students are denied admission or progression within their major leave college (Seymour et al., 2019). Others change majors but are consequently limited to occupations with lower pay than their initial goals (Bradburn et al., 2021; Gatta et al., 2021). More immediately, students experience identity disruptions, loss, trauma, and distress (Lent & Brown, 2013; Savickas, 2002; Schlossberg, 2008). If students must disengage from

desired goals without committing to or pursuing alternative endeavors, they are at risk for depression and suicide (Barlow et al., 2019). Individuals who explore and pursue different goals before or after unplanned changes, however, may discover hope and well-being (Wrosch et al., 2003).

### **Overview of the Study**

Career services professionals and academic advisors often support students pursuing admission or progression but may be denied access to competitive programs (Chan, 2021). Scholars have examined strategies academic advisors can deploy to support students who are denied admission or progression in their chosen major (Gordon, 2006; Pizzolato, 2007; Schlossberg, 2008). However, it remains unknown how students perceive the support provided by institutions and how they interacted with the college environment as they coped with unplanned changes. If institutions learn from students who resiliently coped with the distress associated with unanticipated educational or vocational changes, advisors can support other students and design the college environment more effectively in the future.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study used narrative inquiry to understand the lived experiences of college graduates who were denied admission into or progression within their chosen major after completing at least three semesters of college. This study focused on students who the institution explicitly notified that they must select an alternative program of study and removed by the institution from their existing major.

### **Research Questions**

This study examined the following research questions:

1. What critical events or activities did participants who survived unforeseen academic loss include in their stories or recall as a part of their experiences?
  - a. How did students who coped with unplanned educational changes interact with higher education professionals before, during, and after the event?
  - b. What barriers (if any) did students name related to their identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, class, ability, or gender) as they recall the events that occurred before, during, and after their involuntary change of major?
2. How did students who were placed into alternative majors arrive at new career goals?
3. How did participants cope and persist to graduation after they experienced unplanned educational changes?
4. How did students who endured involuntary academic and career transitions during college perceive their current post-graduation activities?
5. What are the implications for higher education professionals who support students as they navigate unforeseen educational or vocational changes?

### **Research Design and Methodology**

This study used narrative inquiry to examine the lived experiences of students who were denied admission into or progression within their chosen major and forced to enter alternative educational programs. Narrative inquiry was a suitable methodology because it amplified the voices of often overlooked or marginalized participants. Narrative methodology also produced stories that preserved the human element of participants' shared experiences before, during, and after unplanned educational changes (Kim, 2016; Loseke, 2022). Participants could also restore hope by reconstructing the narratives they used to give meaning to their lives.

### **Participants**

Purposeful criterion sampling was used to ensure depth in data collection (Durdella 2020c). Participants were selected if they had endured involuntary educational change. Four participants agreed to participate in two or three interviews across four weeks. Every participant was denied admission or progression within their chosen majors but went on to graduate and pursue satisfying careers. Participants represented different institutions, academic programs, and demographics. Differences existed when they changed majors, but all participants shared the common experience of adapting academically during their college experience. They also represented a marginalized group, including first-generation students, students with a disability, women in STEM, and immigrating racial minorities.

### **Summary of Findings**

This study provided information on several key research questions, including the following:

#### **1. What critical events or activities did participants who survived unforeseen academic loss include in their stories or recall as a part of their experiences?**

Participants were generally successful before high school, but several questioned their ability to succeed in college. As their college journey unfolded, they experienced language barriers, unhelpful lecture formats, unaccommodated disabilities, and COVID restrictions. They perceived discrepancies between their aspired competency and actual performance but received little support from faculty or staff as they navigated the dissonance that occurred in response to the negative feedback they received. Although the situation worsened and they experienced distress, they struggled to seek help from others. Their sense of belonging further diminished. For three of the four participants, this was the first involuntary transition they experienced. As they continued to receive negative feedback about their academic or standardized exam

performance, they became embarrassed, distressed, and depressed. One participant began to have suicidal thoughts. Another stopped attending class. Nobody from their institutions assessed their mental well-being or referred them to a counselor. Official notification strategies varied during the change but resulted in shock and disorientation. Several shut down and isolated themselves from others. Graduation exacerbated their distress.

## **2. How did students who were placed into alternative majors arrive at new career goals?**

The process they used to restore their sense of purpose varied based on the moderating variables embedded in their environment. Grace revisited her goal because of the support of family, awareness of options, and encouragement of individuals who worked in healthcare. Lena never wavered from her goals because she deemed the feedback inaccurate, discriminatory, and incongruent with her spiritual sense of calling. Eddie and Grace disengaged and reengaged due to the support of faculty, a career professional, a mental health counselor, and mentors at work.

## **3. How did participants cope and persist to graduation after they experienced unplanned educational changes?**

Participants completed their degrees due to the support of family members, resolve to prove others wrong, and a sense of hope founded on their existential beliefs. The individuals who endured the transition during their senior year also had an alternative general degree program available to them. Although all the participants reported they were satisfied with their vocational goals at the time of this study, three of the participants reported a lost sense of belonging that was not restored by the alternative academic majors. Several participants struggled to articulate the value or purpose of the new degree program. They now perceived their program of study as a means to an end (graduation) instead of courses to be enjoyed. Their connections to the program and its faculty were minimal.

#### **4. How did students who endured involuntary academic and career transitions during college perceive their current post-graduation activities?**

Every participant reported that they were satisfied and fully engaged in the pursuit of their career goals. Although they expressed anxiety and tears when they described the disruption, they equally articulated a sense of pride in their resiliency and their current vocational accomplishments. Several expressed gratitude for the transition and noted valuable lessons they learned through the process. Some participants articulated that the circumstances enhanced the care they now provide to others or their ability to cope with other disruptions, such as COVID. None of the participants used language like “plan b” or “contingency plan” to describe their current careers.

#### **Implications for Policies and Practices**

Individuals agreed to participate in this study because they exhibited *critical hopefulness* (Christens et al., 2013, p. 170). They acknowledged that higher education could have done more to remove the barriers they encountered and aspired for institutions to mobilize to improve the lives of others who share their experiences. They optimistically believed institutions could transcend passive reflection about their practices and instead foster educational and vocational change together. Higher education cannot fail its students or these participants. It is time for higher education to combine their awareness of life-threatening distress and inequitable outcomes with action. In the context of change, this study has implications for national accreditation policies, institutional design, and individual student support strategies.

#### **National Accreditation Policies**

Accreditation agencies ask professional programs to serve as gatekeepers to the professions they represent (Twale & De Luca, 2008). In a historical publication, Clark (1960) argued that practitioners such as career professionals or academic advisors acted as cooling agents who institutions hired to replicate the status quo and move students into alternative degree programs. More than 50 years later, accreditation agencies have articulated that they aspire to embed equity into their practices (Busta, 2020). This study sparks questions about accreditation agencies' role in sorting students and preserving student well-being.

Like the professions they provide training for (nursing, social work, teaching), individuals who represent accreditation agencies need to honor every dimension of student well-being when they define measurable indicators of effectiveness. Some accreditation agencies, such as the ACEN: Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing, recognize that institutions are responsible for program participants' financial well-being or default rates (ACEN, 2017a). Yet, these governing bodies should also hold institutions accountable for the well-being of students participating in the program. Accreditation agencies currently define outcomes in such a way as to remove program responsibility for students who complete pre-requisites but leave before program admission. For example, the ACEN (2017a) does not include pre-nursing students or students who complete pre-requisite courses but do not secure admission in current program completion rate calculations. Institutions financially benefit when they enroll excessive numbers of students under pre-nursing, knowing full well they have more students than there are spots. Students like Remy and Grace perceive the scarcity or selectivity of admission, which creates a culture of competition. Students denied admission are often harmed financially, emotionally, academically, and vocationally.



Program completion rate calculations are defined only for students who are permitted to enroll in nursing courses, not prerequisites (ACEN, 2017b). Disaggregate retention and graduation rates from the point of entry into college are missing. Institutions likely replicate these accreditation practices or methodology in their assessment program review procedures. At its best, accreditation and assessment should advance equity and well-being (Jankowski & Lundquist, 2022). Outside of a public notice for feedback (ACEN, 2017c), accreditation agencies do not hear the voices or barriers encountered by students like these participants. Accreditation agencies offer little accountability for how institutions may sort students into alternative degree programs, perpetuating and replicating what Clark (1960) called the cooling agent function of higher education.

Accreditation agencies must also consider how they create systems that reward institutions for the early removal of students who are low performing but hold promise as practitioners. Some institutions embed practice exams and review materials into their courses, providing early feedback to students and faculty about their ability to pass licensure exams before or after graduation (Nettles et al., 2011; Wedge, 2013). Although practice exams are intended to help students, institutions could use pre-test information to preserve their program's licensure pass rates or employment rates by removing students who are close to passing but a risk to the program because they may or may not pass professional exams. How accreditation agencies monitor or mitigate the risk of institutional bias in their program review standards or outcomes remains unclear.

Administrators of accreditation agencies should compare Lena's academic advisor's support when her sister died against the care academic advisors exhibited when her career was dying. In both instances, a faculty member of the program that was accredited served as the

academic advisor. The academic advisor offered Lena holistic support in the first scenario but little support in the second. Lena met academic standards when her sister died but failed in the second. Students' academic success should not dictate the ethic of care programs and institutions offer students. Institutions should be able to provide due process to students who are failing without exacerbating the suicidal risk of students. Yet, when accreditation agencies define due process, they only call out "free of improper influence" and do not name distress or student welfare as an equally important objective (ACEN, 2017d, para. 1).

Accreditation agencies further minimize the importance of academic advising and students' role when defining academic engagement. For example, ACEN (2017e, para. 2) notes the following:

Academic Engagement –Does not include, for example: 1) Living in institutional housing; 2) Participating in the institution's meal plan; 3) Logging into an online class or tutorial without any further participation; or 4) Participating in academic counseling or advisement.

It is unclear why accreditation agencies minimize the importance of engagement during advisement. How do they define the purpose of advising? Is advising simply a clerical task associated with registration? What does this language convey to the professional programs that and institutions who participate in this accreditation? What culture does this create? Regardless, the consequences remain. Neither students nor institutions are expected to provide information about academic advising outcomes as a part of the accreditation review process. National organizations (Achieving the Dream, Advising Success Network, Complete College America, JED Foundation, NACADA, NCDA) should engage in conversations with accreditation agencies about how to support institutions as they advance equity and well-being.

## **Institutional Design**

Given the disinterest of accreditation agencies, such as the ACEN, institutions shoulder the responsibility of responding to students in distress. Higher education leaders must claim their important role as they design their institutions, especially as it relates to equity and comprehensive, collaborative coordinated care for students who are in distress.

### ***Institutional Design: Equity Based Audit***

As they (re)design their institutions, administrative leaders should focus on proactive practices that avoid disruptions in the first place. Every participant in this study was first-generation. They also represented other marginalized groups (English language learners, students with disabilities). Like other underrepresented groups (Bazner & Lopez, 2022; Gasman & Nguyen, 2019; Seymour et al., 2019), all the participants encountered barriers that were distressing and prevented their persistence in their initially chosen professional program. Large lectures, hostile learning environments, and diminished student support exist at institutions. Higher education needs to “clear the path to college but also clear the path through college” (Beard, 2018, p. 319). As they remove obstacles within their environments, leaders must listen and learn from students at their institutions. This analysis can begin with a review of aggregate and disaggregate gateway course completion rates and conversations with faculty to understand the teaching tools they need to invest in student success (Gardner & Koch, 2020; McNair, 2020). Disparities may also exist across applied learning, which hinders students’ ability to identify alternatives (Van Grop, 2020; Zilvinkis et al., 2022). The examination of change of major rates is also beneficial. Senior leaders should also engage in qualitative evaluation (e.g., interview, focus groups) to understand students' lived experiences after they left their chosen majors. Campus

climate surveys may also explain how institutions can redesign their environments so all students thrive.

### ***Institutional Design: Comprehensive, Collaborative, Coordinated Care***

Like others who endured goal disengagement (Barlow et al., 2019), participants in this study coped with depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation prior to reengagement. The findings indicate that emotional, academic, and career well-being are entangled. Students coping with emotional distress may struggle to engage in academic or career planning, which they often need to restore their well-being, while individuals navigating academic or career difficulties may exhibit mental health concerns that impede educational or vocational decision-making (Hinkelman et al., 2007; Saunders et al., 2000). Mental health counselors, career professionals, and academic advisors need to acknowledge the intersection of students' presenting concerns. Cross-departmental collaboration, regardless of institutional types or structures, is essential to provide proactive, wrap-around support to students. Working together with each other and with students, institutions can create an ecosystem of support that includes integrated events, resources, technology, and care (Achieving the Dream, 2021). To provide coordinated and comprehensive care for students who cope with involuntary educational changes, institutions need to audit their existing collaboration, assess the campus climate, define the roles of various practitioners, manage caseloads, and provide ongoing training.

**Audit Existing Collaboration.** Institutions can begin to create an ecosystem of care by assessing current collaboration practices and validating everyone's role in coordinated care. Only half of advising and career services offices collaborate (Tyton Partners, 2019). Integrated support in any capacity (e.g., co-hosted events, shared technology, co-authored publications, co-located offices) reduces delays or redundancies in support.

Many institutions have examined the purpose and structures of counseling centers (Alonson, 2023). In a national survey of administrative leaders in higher education, only 4% of respondents described existing mental health services as strong, and 84% expressed the need for additional resources (NASPA & Uwill, 2023). Respondents also linked academic concerns with distress almost equal to other emotional well-being concerns, reporting that students present educational needs as their most significant concern in 67% of cases (NASPA & Uwill, 2023).

Despite higher education leaders' identification of academic concerns and desire for additional counseling resources, few authors validate the role of career specialists or academic advisors (King et al., 2022; Kussin, 2023). Less than half of institutions include academic advisors as members on their behavioral intervention teams (NABITA, 2020; Schiemann & Van Brunt, 2018). The authors of a rubric used by institutions to prevent suicide also made no reference to academic or career distress in its risk assessment methods (Sokolow et al., 2019). Academic advising administrators need to advocate for advisors' role in student well-being and suicide prevention (Taylor & Hapes, 2023).

Although some advisors hindered students' well-being and ignored students' distress in this study, some professionals helped participants cope with change. Career and academic advisors are positioned to offer hope. Institutions must see career and academic advisors as key referral and support agents who can direct students to resources. The validation of academic advisors and career professionals is absent in the reviewed literature. Both the academic advising and the career services Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS, 2023a, 2023b) publications notes the value of collaboration with their respective counter parts, but the case management publication omits the role of career services. The case management authors noted the importance of viewing advising case notes, but said nothing about collaboration with career

services professionals (CAS, 2023c). Even in publications issued by the JED Foundation exclusively focused on collaboration between mental health counselors and college career services, the authors do not name proactive support for students enduring involuntary career goals as an issue or priority (Golden et al., 2021). When partnerships between counselors and faculty are described, the alliance focuses on their role as professors but overlooks their value as academic advisors (Alonson, 2023). Many administrators do not understand the role of advisors or purposes of advising (Menke et al., 2020). Scholars may also be confused. In one publication, leading social cognitive career theorists noted that advising is typically “associated with teachers and professors, is usually limited to selection of coursework and fulfillment of academic requirements but may include advice regarding career options (Lent & Brown, 2020, p. 15). They did not include primary role advisors or call for collaboration and only tentatively acknowledged career dimensions found in developmental advising approaches since academic advising was a formal topic of study (ASN: Advising Success Network, 2022; O’Banion, 1972). Scholars and senior administrators must collaborate to build a bridge across advising, counseling, and career development.

Clarification of roles and celebration of cross-functional responsibilities is imperative because when Gordon and Polson (1985) surveyed institutions to inquire about their advising alternative practices, 52% of respondents were not sure who on their campus served as the primary point of contact for students who needed to move to alternative academic programs. Everyone has an important role to play. Students’ first interaction with faculty or staff can shape their future engagement with institutional support (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2016). Vocational psychologists validate the role of career specialists, academic advisors, and mental health counselors, noting that practitioners’ roles vary based on the complexity of students’

concerns, the student's readiness, and the practitioner's training (Sampson et al., 2004). The readiness of students and the complexities of their concerns will vary based on the intensity or duration of the action crisis and the moderating factors present (Kappes & Schattke, 2022).

Clarifying roles is also important because none of the practitioners' participants in this study referred students to a mental health counselor during moments of distress or inquired about their global well-being. Career and academic advising professionals offer critical connections to counseling services (Thompson et al., 2019). Institutions should consider the proximity of career services, advising offices, and counseling centers to ensure seamless referrals (Kussin, 2023). Students who responded to a national survey exhibited less awareness of support services if various departments were housed in various locations (Bharadwaj et al., 2023). Working closely together, institutional leaders should also design screening tools and protocol for students who exhibit academic distress and have not yet reengaged (Barlow et al., 2019; Thompson et al., 2019).

Academic advisors offer distinctive academic planning and degree progression information students need to reengage their goals. They also may be the first to notice distress given their routine conversations with students (Taylor & Hapes, 2023). Career services staff provide meaningful connections to supportive mentors, occupational information resources, and applied learning. At a minimum, all academic advisors and career professionals can assess students' needs and generate referrals given their close relationships with students.

**Assess the Campus Climate.** Institutional leaders should also consider the percentage of students aware of resources and the current perception of help-seeking (Chen et al., 2016). In one national survey, less than two-thirds of college students who responded to a survey reported they were aware of career or mental health resources (Bharadwaj et al., 2023). Students who were

concerned about their ability to pass their courses reported less awareness of campus resources (Bharadwaj et al., 2023). Students may not disclose that they are experiencing suicidal thoughts because they fear they will be forced to leave the institution (Hatch, 2023). Counseling centers, career services, and advising offices can collaborate to co-develop psychoeducation, outreach, and social norm campaigns that reduce the stigma and shame associated with major changes (Brennan & Gorman, 2023; Wu et al., 2017). They can also collaborate with student organizations, such as academic clubs, to raise awareness about the pressures of competitive admission (Fulmer et al., 2021).

Students' social identities influence their help-seeking behaviors and response to referrals (Glickman et al., 2023). Students often disclose concerns with academic advisors or career professionals or welcome referral to counseling because of the strong relationships they develop with these practitioners (Niles et al., 2000; Multon et al., 2001). Given their rapport with students, academic advisors and career specialists are positioned to normalize common challenges and reduce hesitations about using campus resources.

**Manage Caseloads.** If advisors are to integrate career topics into their conversations with students, conduct mental health screenings, and partner with mental health counselors, senior administrators need to remove barriers for academic advisors. Even when advising is mandatory, academic advisors may not integrate career topics into their conversations because of high caseloads and limited time (Steele & White, 2019; Vespia et al., 2018). Nearly half of students in one study perceived their advisors' caseloads were too high (Bharadwaj et al., 2023). Faculty advisors are often pressured to focus on research given the publish or perish structures of higher education. Excellence in advising may not be included in tenure review. Primary-role advisors may be expected to assume additional responsibilities that reduce time allocated to advising.



Faculty and primary-role advisors need to be recognized and rewarded for the strong relationships they build with students (Felten & Lambert, 2020). Time for self-care is also necessary given the high degree of compassion and care needed to support students in distress.

It is not enough for institutions to mandate advising. They must monitor the percentage of students who meet with their advisors. In one survey, advisors reported that they only met with 85% of their caseload (Bharadwaj et al., 2023). Institutions must also evaluate the quality of support advisors provide and measure their relational competencies against students' sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2022). Underserved populations reported the least engagement with advisors, possibly because students wanted advisors who shared their lived experiences and reflected their identities (Bharadwaj et al., 2023).

**Provide Ongoing Training.** Practitioners also need access to professional development and ongoing training on mental health resources, risk assessments, suicide prevention, and interventions (Choompunuch et al., 2022; Kussin, 2023; McKay et al., 2023; Pérez-Roja et al., 2021). NACADA should partner with other national organizations, such as JED, to co-publish materials and co-offer events to bring attention to the important role of academic advisors, given the distress common across involuntary educational and vocational changes. Mental health counselors and career advisors also can co-host local professional development sessions at their institutions for other faculty or staff on how to support students who might be coping with involuntary educational or career changes. Advisors desire career training and find professional development beneficial (Moore, 2020; Vespia et al., 2018).

As associations or institutions offer professional development related to career or major changes, they need to include bias and diversity in training agendas (Pargman et al., 2021; Zhang & Zhou, 2021). The use of predictive analytics data could create a culture of surveillance or

misconstrue students' potential (Pargman et al., 2021). Academic advisors have expressed concerns about the ethical use of this data and the ways it may minimize students' potential (Jones, 2019). Yet, some scholars have overlooked advisors' concerns and stated that most practitioners are unfamiliar with the statistical analysis that supports the use of predictive analytics (Zhang & Zhou, 2021). Academic advisors, however, are best positioned to engage in contextualized decisions given their 360-view of the institution and students' lives. They can holistically assess students' potential and collaborate with others (including the student) to formulate success plans. These institutional approaches set the stage for effective individual interventions.

### **Individual Student Support Strategies**

Besides informing accreditation policies, assessment practices, and institutional design, the findings of this study influence the strategies higher education practitioners use when they deliver individual support to students. Academic advisors have historically delivered individual alternative advising with students who are officially unable to persist in their chosen programs. This study revealed that students often experienced an action crisis and distress before they were notified that they could no longer continue in their chosen program. This finding supports several other studies that indicate an action crisis precedes goal disengagement, which is linked with diminished global well-being, depression, and suicidal ideation (Barlow et al., 2019; Brandstätter & Herrman, 2016; Ghassemi et al., 2017; Herrmann & Brandstätter, 2015; Heerman et al., 2019). An action crisis likely occurs before official notification, so career advisors must a) foster early exploration, b) articulate the benefits of the liberal arts, c) practice metacognition, d) provide proactive outreach and screening, e) convey empathy, share comprehensive information about

alternatives, f) advocate for students, and g) inquiry about family dynamics when they engage in individual conversations with students.

### ***Foster Early Exploration***

Career services and academic advisors need to expand students' awareness of alternatives and foster early exploration or curiosity so they are prepared for change during college and throughout their lives. Practitioners should view career development and management as a lifelong skill instead of a single decision (i.e., declaring a major). Ongoing and early exploration may enhance students' understanding of themselves and introduce them to equally satisfying options, which could serve as a protective factor later should an action crisis unfold (Kreibich et al., 2022).

One effective method of early career exploration is course-embedded career curriculum. Career services or academic advisors can present during first-year seminar classes, welcome week events, or residence hall programs. Many professors may not include guest professional speakers, employer excursions, case scenarios, or project-based learning in their courses (EAB, 2018). Participants in this study benefitted from validation from others during experiential learning. Institutions need to hardwire applied learning into their academic programs and prompt meaningful reflection on these experiences (CERIC, 2021, 2022). Work-based projects embedded in a course or program are beneficial because working-class students may have less opportunity to seek career education or traditional internships on their own due to time constraints associated with their jobs (Ardoin, 2020). International students also have limited opportunities unless institutions intentionally create experiences that are integral to their curriculum. Ongoing exposure to the work world enables students to learn continuously about

themselves and their options, which may prompt them to move voluntarily to alternative programs.

As students explore career options and frame alternatives, practitioners should focus on shared attributes or values across their options instead of presenting the options globally (Gati et al., 1998). Unless they engage in value clarification or decision-making exercises, students may overlook continuity in the values or aspects they find important across their options (Carroll et al., 2011; Vohs et al., 2013). Advisors should also engage students in direct skill assessments using evidence from their courses, feedback from past supervisors, or standardized assessments, such as YouScience (Feller & Leard, 2017).

### ***Articulate the Professional Benefits of the Core Curriculum***

People now work for multiple employers throughout their lives as they collide with a volatile, uncertain, chaotic, and ambiguous labor market (Driscoll, 2014; Krumboltz et al., 2008; Richards & Dede, 2020). Adaptability and navigating transitions are developmental skills that all students need to cope with change (Beck, 1999; Lent & Brown, 2013; Savickas et al., 2009; Schlossberg, 2008).

Employers also repeatedly report that they value the broad skills (e.g., critical thinking, communication, problem-solving, cultural competency) that students develop through the liberal arts (Finley, 2021; Hart Research Associates, 2015; NACE, 2019; Schneider & Sigelman, 2018). Like the participants in this study, however, few students understand how occupations align with their academic qualifications (Denice, 2021; Feller & Whichard, 2005; Schneider & Sigelman, 2018). Participants in this study reframed their understanding of their career qualifications, but only after they disengaged. Career advisors are distinctly suited to explain the professional benefits or objectives of the curriculum and the number of occupations that do not require a

specific major or license before students experience distress (Feller & O’Bruba , 2009; Lowenstein, 2000, 2015). If all students understand the merits of the liberal arts and employers’ appreciation for the essential competencies they cultivate, students may realize that they are qualified for multiple occupations and prepared to move fluidly within the labor market. Students coping with an action crisis may experience diminished anxiety when they start to shift their understanding of their options and circumstances (Shin & Lee, 2019).

Practitioners should also encourage students to take courses in different disciplines beyond the core curriculum to continue to cultivate diverse expertise and interdisciplinary interests. Students formulate self-efficacy beliefs in specific domains (Lent, 2020). When they perceive that they are only competent in one area, students may exhibit greater distress when difficulties occur. Theorists hypothesize that individuals who explore or participate in alternative endeavors early are better able to adapt because they possess high self-efficacy in multiple areas and identify positive benefits of change (Praskova et al., 2013). *Multipotentiality* exists when students believe and demonstrate their talents or abilities in multiple areas. Higher education can expand students’ options and self-efficacy by encouraging students to double major, earn a minor, or complete various elective courses that develop diverse competencies (Lent & Brown, 2020).

### ***Practice Metacognition***

Besides linking the curriculum to multiple careers, metacognition needs to be an essential learning outcome of academic advising because self-regulation is connected to academic success, quality career decisions, emotional management, learning, and help-seeking (Fong et al., 2023; Sampson et al., 2004; Zimmerman, 2000). Well-being and metacognition need to be integrated into the core curriculum. Students need metacognition whether they need to focus on success in

their current program or move voluntarily to new educational goals (Haase et al., 2013; Heckhausen et al., 2010). Students who monitor their goals are more likely to engage in goal attainment and adjustment, but only when they can effectively monitor their progress and evaluate the credibility of the information (Fonteyne et al., 2019; Ghassemi et al., 2021; Harkin et al., 2016). Metacognition is especially important because individuals tend to overestimate their skills, especially when they do not have normative information, are unfamiliar with the college environment, or struggle with imposter phenomena (Fonteyne et al., 2018).

When career or academic advisors meet with students, they can also foster metacognition by asking students to assess their progress toward their degree (Spence & Scobie, 2013). Critical questions about one's degree progress embeds goal reflection and regulation into advising (Creed & Hood, 2015). It also invites students to disclose distress if they are coping with an action crisis. Mindfulness and emotional regulation are also important, given the link between anxiety management and goal adjustment (Brandstätter et al., 2013; Heckhausen & Wrosch, 2016; Marion-Jetten et al., 2021).

Mental contrasting, implementation intentions, and parallel planning also enable students to prepare for obstacles and plan when they will move to or implement alternatives (Krott & Oettingen, 2018; Lent & Brown, 2020; Moskowitz & Gesundheits, 2009; Ntoumanis & Sedikides, 2018). However, none of the participants in this study recalled that their advisors used these strategies. Academic advisors need to implement these initiatives further across their institutions, given the participants' experiences in this study. As academic advisors continue to adopt these practices, they may not want to introduce parallel planning during orientation because students, like these participants, may not anticipate the transition and could tune out the practitioner's message. In general, an emphasis on well-being and self-regulation may also be beneficial. In

one study (Haase et al., 2020), student well-being behaviors predicted individual differences in their ability to reengage in new goals.

### ***Provide Proactive Outreach and Screening***

Career professionals and academic advisors should monitor and follow up with students who deviate from their plan of study or repeat classes because they may be coping with an action crisis or looming goal disengagement. Whenever students ask how their grades align with educational or occupational requirements, academic advisors should inquire about students' reactions to the information (i.e., their emotional experience) and needs. Well-being inquiries should be standard practice across academic advising.

### ***Convey Empathy and Share Comprehensive Information About Alternatives***

As students continue to gather and respond to feedback about the suitability of their goals, career advisors must exhibit strong relational competencies and acknowledge the loss students endure during educational and vocational change. Naming the loss is important because others do not often recognize students' grief (Doka, 1989;). Excellent advisors understand the meaning, self-worth, and sense of community individuals derive from academic programs and vocational goals (Blustein, 2009; Savickas, 2002; Schlossberg, 2008). Advisors must also be armed with information about alternative programs and occupational pathways to avoid delayed re-engagement (Kappes & Schattke, 2022).

The narrative practitioners provide during notification is important. In this study, institutions served as gatekeepers of their programs, but not students' professions. Although the faculty intended to serve as gatekeepers when they rescinded two of the participants from their programs, both participants went on to enter the field. Participants perceived that they were told they were not suited for their chosen professions instead of only being advised that they could

not remain enrolled in that specific program given the current behavior or disposition they exhibited at that time. Advisors or individuals involved in notification should not communicate that individuals will never work in their field. State licensing agencies determine who entered their profession, such as nursing, teaching, or social work — not the program faculty or accreditation agencies. All the participants had options and other avenues to their initially chosen goals.

Considering the results of this study, practitioners must evaluate their current communication practices and ensure they are fully aware of alternative educational or vocational pathways. Grace knew accelerated nursing was an option because the exploratory career specialist she met with understood it was a pathway available to her. Remy had a professor who knew about alternative pathways to her profession. Lena, however, delayed her entry into the field because the career specialist she met with did not know about how to petition the board of nursing. Practitioners need to proactively include alternative information related to their current goal in their conversations and notification procedures. Students have a right to know all the vocational options available to them.

### ***Advocate for Students***

Practitioners also have an important role in empowering students to evaluate the credibility of the feedback they are receiving and informing students of their rights or due process procedures if students believe they are being discriminated against (Hu et al., 2019). Students have shared examples of other instances of micro-aggressive comments made by advisors (Madden et al., 2020; Manueliot-Kerkvliet, 2015; Solóranzo et al., 2000). Practitioners also need to embed counternarrative and intercultural competency into the curriculum or advising, so all students have critical agency and counternarrative, like Lena, if needed. Advisors



should ask meaningful questions whenever students share that they may want to change their majors to confirm they have engaged in quality decision making and are not leaving the profession unnecessarily (Lent, 2020).

### ***Inquire about Family Dynamics***

Finally, as they support students who are navigating involuntary changes, practitioners also need to ask students who might be difficult to tell, and how they plan to approach that conversation. This enables advisors to assess students' social coping and support system, which influences their well-being (Schlossberg, 2008). External conflict increases the complexity of career decisions, especially if there are cultural expectations that students need to respect and defer to others when they select their aspirations (Anderson et al., 2012; Sampson et al., 2008). Students may experience guilt or shame if their goals do not align with their families' desires. Practitioners may need to refer students to others who specialize in cultural conflict or family dynamics. They also could reframe family members' reactions. Family members grieve changed dreams just like students (Schlossberg, 2008).

To summarize, national accreditation agencies influence the policies and practices of institutions that offer professional programs. Some agencies, such as the ACEN, do not inquire about academic advising practices or pre-admission program persistence rates. As a result of the disengagement of accreditation agencies, higher education leaders must take the lead and design their institutions carefully. Institutional leaders can advance equity by disaggregating gateway course completion rates and listening to the lived experiences of students like participants in this study. They must also provide comprehensive collaborative care that validates everyone's role in student well-being and creates an environment that encourages individuals to seek help. Low caseloads also enable practitioners time to participate in training, engage in holistic assessment,

and provide caring referrals to mental health professionals. Practitioners who facilitate individual conversations with students need to foster early exploration, articulate the benefits of the core curriculum, practice metacognition, and screen for distress. If students need to move to unplanned program changes, practitioners convey empathy, proactively share information about alternatives, and inquire about family dynamics. When accreditation agencies, institution leaders, and frontline practitioners reimagine their current support, the industry will better support students who endure involuntary academic changes.

### **Limitations**

Readers should consider the results and implications of this study with several limitations in mind. This study used interviews to collect narrative data from four participants who endured involuntary educational changes during college but went on to graduate. No research design is infallible. The findings of this study are limited because it relied on the interpretative lens of participants and me, as a researcher. This study was retrospective. All of the participants had graduated more than a year ago.

This study only included four participants. One individual did not participate in the third interview despite multiple invitations. Nursing majors were over representative. Other undergraduate (dental hygiene, business, engineering) and graduate (medicine, law, physical therapy) programs with admission criteria were not represented. Adult learners, undocumented, non-binary, Veterans, and LGBTQIA+ students were also not included. Further research is needed to capture the lived experiences of these individuals.

I took multiple steps to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. I fostered openness and exchange with participants by conducting multiple interviews over an extended period of time. I routinely reminded them of confidentiality and preserved their identities through pseudonyms

and modifications to various portions of their story. I also triangulated information participants provided (interview narrative, transcripts), conducted member checks, and routinely reflected on my assumptions as I construct participants' narrative to bring accuracy to the findings.

Understanding that I could never be neutral as a researcher, I copied unedited narrative delivered by participants as much as possible to reduce the risks of imposing myself into students' stories (Reismann, 2002).

### **Future Research**

Several recommendations can be derived from prior research given the themes and gaps that emerged. First, future research can examine the ways academic advisors and career professionals teach students to acquire an adaptable mindset. Multiple theories emphasize the role of students' self-efficacy or anxiety (Hu et al., 2019; Marion-Jetten et al., 2021). Do students who engage with the adaptable advising curriculum, such as value affirmation, cost-benefit analysis, and mental contrasting, report varying degrees of pre/post anxiety, self-efficacy, or openness to goal disengagement on standardized assessments?

Future research could also consider if the timing of when academic advisors introduce alternatives varies based on their personality attributes. People's personalities influence their readiness to adapt or self-regulate (Savickas, 2020). Ruldolph et al. (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of 16 studies and discovered that the Big Five personality traits accounted for 52% of the variance in adaptivity, which is often measured with the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale. They also discovered interactions across several variables and age. How do these personality attributes influence when and how advisors introduce alternatives during advising? If advisors have coped with involuntary loss themselves, does it make them more likely to talk to students' alternative career paths?

The replication of Gordon and Polson's (1985) survey would also verify the frequency of involuntary academic transitions and use of alternative advising strategies today. Using national datapoints available from the National Clearinghouse, how many students who are denied admission persist at other institutions? What does persistence and degree completion data look like when it is disaggregated by race, ethnicity, or income? When Gordon and Polson (1985) deployed their survey, only 27% offered specialized training focused on supporting students who are coping with unplanned major changes. Does this trend remain the same today?

The experiences of subgroups are also valuable. Students who perceive that they have more resources, including energy, are more likely to persist when they experience challenges (Herrmann et al., 2019). Further research could examine if working class students who have less time, and subsequently less energy or capacity, may be more likely to disengage. Researchers should also examine the lived experiences of students who were moved into alternative degree programs but left higher education. The participants in this study overcame the barriers they encountered, but that is not the case for all students.

Studies on the effectiveness of various strategies would also be beneficial. What do exemplary advising training programs look like, and what pre/post data exists to support their efficacy (Koen et al., 2012)? Are certain approaches (appreciative, strength based, narrative based) to advising more effective than others at reducing students' anxiety or fostering openness to alternatives? Are students more likely to disengage if students engage in mental contrasting, behavior-based item specific skill assessment, or name implementation intentions or if-then scenarios during advising (Callender et al., 2016; Handel & Dresel, 2018; Miller & Geraci, 2011; Moskowitz & Gesundheit, 2009; Oettingen & Stephens, 2009; Shaffer & Zalewski, 2011b). Also, how does notifying students in person impact students' anxiety and use of career resources

compared to students who are only notified of denied admission in an email? The role of peer support or student-led programs is also worth consideration and may also hold promise as potential support structures for students who navigate involuntary career transitions (Davis, 2023).

Meta-regulation occurs when students move voluntarily to new educational goals or away from former endeavors (Haase et al., 2013; Heckhausen et al., 2010). Goal theorists suggest that assimilation and accommodation not only exist but that individuals, such as career or academic advisors, can activate these processes by engaging students in divergent thinking (Leipold et al., 2014). In the future, researchers should examine if students are more likely to regulate their goals if they exhibit metacognition and responded to performance feedback elsewhere in the academy through practices such as exam wrappers, clickers, practices tests, problem sets, or flashcards (Cooper et al., 2018; Pate et al., 2019; Walck-Shannon et al., 2019).

Besides focusing on goal reengagement, how can advisors invite upward aspirations and dreaming (Carroll et al., 2009)? Does the introduction of parallel planning diminish students' academic identity and persistence in their initial degree program? Further research can examine how the gambler's or planning fallacy relates to admission wait lists (Buehler et al., 1994). For example, are students who reapply more likely to overestimate the odds of getting admitted the following year instead of remembering the odds remain the same or worse, depending on the number and quality of applicants?

### **Summary**

Unplanned change is a part of life. Students who encounter involuntary educational change offer insight into how academic advisors and career services professionals currently support and teach students to cope with transitions. Participants in this narrative study shared

stories about events that influenced their coping and barriers that impeded their success. They also described how they made career decisions and persisted to graduation. Every participant secured a satisfying career. These were stories of triumph, not tragedies. Practitioners can use participant information to revise policies, collaborative well-being practices, and the strategies they deploy during individual student conversations.

## References

- ACEN: Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing. (2017a). *ACEN Accreditation Manual 2017 standards and criteria - baccalaureate*. <https://www.acenursing.org/acen-accreditation-manual-standards-b/>
- ACEN: Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing. (2017b). *Program completion rate*. <https://www.acenursing.org/acen-accreditation-manual-glossary/#Outcome>
- ACEN: Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing. (2017c). *Policy #20: Complaints against an accredited program*. <https://www.acenursing.org/acen-accreditation-manual-policy-20/>
- ACEN: Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing. (2017d). *Manual glossary*. <https://www.acenursing.org/acen-accreditation-manual-glossary/#DueProcess>
- ACEN: Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing. (2017e). *Academic engagement*. <https://resources.acenursing.org/space/AM/1829371939>
- Acevedo, N. (2020). “Hopefully I can transfer:” Cooling out postsecondary aspirations of Latina/o/x students. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 53(4), 465–481. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2020.1791281>
- Achieving the Dream. (2021). *Commitment to mental health support requires a deep understanding of our students*. Advising Success Network. <https://www.advisingsuccessnetwork.org/engagement-and-communication/commitment-to-student-success-requires-a-deep-understanding-of-our-students-mental-health/>
- Adelman, C. (2006). *The toolbox revisited: Paths to degree completion from high school through college*. U.S. Department of Education. <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/toolboxrevisit/toolbox.pdf>
- Adler, J. M., Dunlop, W. L., Fivush, R., Lilgendahl, J. P., Lodi-Smith, J., McAdams, D. P., McLean, K. C., Pasupathi, M., & Syed, M. (2017). Research methods for studying narrative identity: A primer. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 8(5), 519–527. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1948550617698202>
- Albanese, M., Dottl, S., Mejicano, G., Zakowski, L., Seibert, C., Van Eyck, S., & Prucha, C. (2006). Distorted perceptions of competence and incompetence are more than regression effects. *Advances in Health Sciences Education*, 11(3), 267–278. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10459-005-2400-7>
- Alexander, C., Chen, E., & Grumbach, K. (2009). How leaky is the healthcare careers pipeline? Minority student achievement in college gateway courses. *Academic Medicine*, 84(6), 797–802.

- Allan, B., & Kim, T. (2020). Unemployment and underemployment: Prevent and counseling implications. In S. D. Brown, & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work* (pp. 769–788). Wiley.
- Allen, J., & Robbins, S. (2010). Effects of interest-major congruence, motivation, and academic performance on timely degree attainment. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 57*(1), 23–25.
- Alonson, J. (2023). Restructuring counseling centers — and ousting directors. *Inside Higher Education*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2023/03/13/universities-are-ousting-their-mental-health-directors>
- American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2021). *Nursing schools see enrollment increases in entry-level programs, signaling strong interest in nursing careers*. AACN News. <https://www.aacnnursing.org/News-Information/Press-Releases/View/ArticleId/25183/Nursing-Schools-See-Enrollment-Increases-in-Entry-Level-Programs>
- American Psychological Association. (2011). *Summary of the APA resolution recommending retirement of American Indian mascots*. <https://www.apa.org/about/policy/mascots.pdf>
- American Psychological Association. (2015). *Intersections with subjective social status*. <https://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/class/intersections>
- Anderson, M. L., Goodman, J., & Schlossberg, N. K. (2012). *Counseling adults in transition: linking Schlossberg's theory with practice in a diverse world*. Spring Publishing Company.
- Andrews, M., Squire, C., & Tamboukou, M. (2013). *Doing narrative research* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Arbona, C., & Jimenez, C. (2014). Minority stress, ethnic identity, and depression among Latino/a college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 61*(1), 162–168. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0034914>
- Ardoin, S. (2020). Engaging poor and working-class students. In S. J. Quaye, S. R. Harper, & S. L. Pendakur (Eds.), *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations* (3rd ed., pp. 307–324). Routledge.
- ASN: Advising Success Network. (2020). *What we believe — our point of view to the field*. <https://www.advisingsuccessnetwork.org/about-the-network/>
- ASN: Advising Success Network. (2022). *About the network*. <https://www.advisingsuccessnetwork.org/about-the-network/#network-questions>
- Aspinwall, L. G., & Richter, L. (1999). Optimism and self-mastery predict more rapid disengagement from unsolvable tasks in the presence of alternatives. *Motivation and Emotion, 23*(3), 221–245. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021367331817>



- Astin, A. W. & Panos, R. J. (1969). *The educational and vocational development of college students*. American Council on Education.
- Avery, C., Oded Gurantz, M. H., & Smith, J. (2017). Shifting college majors in response to advanced placement exam scores. *Journal of Human Resources* 53(4), 1016-8293R.
- Bailey, T. R., Jaggars, S. S., & Jenkins, D. (2015). *Redesigning America's community colleges: A clearer path to student success*. Harvard Press.
- Ballejos, M. P., Schmitt, C. L., McKinney, K. L., Sapien, R. (2019). Post-application advisement for U.S. medical school reapplicants: One school's program, *Academic Medicine*, 95(4), 688–691. <http://doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000002538>
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice Hall.
- Barber, C. E. (2014). *The disillusionment of students denied admission to a preferred major viewed from the perspective of a psychological theory of alienation*. *College Student Journal*, 48(1), 153–165.
- Barbour, R. S. (2013). Quality of data analysis. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis* (pp. 495–509). SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Barlow, M. A., Wrosch, C., & McGrath, J. J. (2019). Goal adjustment capacities and quality of life: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Personality*, 88(2), 307–323. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12492>
- Barlow, M. A., Wrosch, C., & McGrath, J. J. (2020). Goal adjustment capacities and quality of life: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Personality*, 88(2), 307–323. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12492>
- Barr, D. A., Matsui, J., Wanat, S. F., & Gonzalez, M. E. (2010). Chemistry courses as the turning point for premedical students. *Advances in Health Sciences Education*, 15(1), 45–54. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10459-009-9165-3>
- Baumann, N., Kaschel, R., & Kuhl, J. (2005). Striving for unwanted goals: Stress-dependent discrepancies between explicit and implicit achievement motives reduce subjective well-being and increase psychosomatic symptoms. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 89(5), 781–799. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.89.5.781>
- Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2004). *Making their own way: Narratives for transforming higher education to promote self-development*. Stylus.
- Bazner, K. J., & Lopez, J. (2022). Language unheard, voices silenced: The role of language minoritization in sense of belonging. In E. M. Bentrin & G. W. Henning (Eds.), *The impact of sense of belonging in college* (pp. 138-146). Stylus.

- Beard, T. (2018). Toward a local student success model: Latino first-generation college student persistence. In A. C. Rondini, B. N., Richards, & N. P. Simon (Eds.), *Clearing the path for first-generation college students; qualitative and intersectional studies of educational mobility* (pp. 319-342). Lexington Books.
- Beck, A. (1999). Advising undecided students: Lessons from chaos theory. *NACADA Journal*, 19(1), 45–49. <https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-19.1.45>
- Bergmo-Prvulovic, I. (2018). Conflicting perspectives on career: Implications for career guidance and social justice. In T. Hooley, R. G. Sultana, & R. Tomsen (Eds.), *Career guidance for social justice* (pp. 143–158). Routledge.
- Berzonsky, M.D. (1985). Diffusion within Marcia’s identity-status paradigm: Does it foreshadow academic problems? *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 14, 527–38. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02139525>
- Bharadwaj, P., Shaw, C., Condon, K., Rich, J., Janson, N., & Bryant, G. (2023, July 19). *Driving Toward a Degree 2023*. Tyton Partners.
- Bhattacharya, K. (2017). *Fundamentals of qualitative research*. Routledge Publishing.
- Bieleke, M., Wolff, W., & Keller, L. (2022). Getting trapped in a dead end? Trait self-control and boredom are linked to goal adjustment. *Motivation and Emotion*, 46, 837–851.
- Bingham, A. J., & Witkowsky, P. (2022). Deductive and inductive approaches to qualitative data analysis. In C. Vanover, P. Mihás, & J. Saldaña (Eds.), *Analyzing and interpreting qualitative research: After the interview* (pp. 133–148). Sage Publishing.
- Blustein, D. (2009). *The importance of work in an age of uncertainty*. Oxford University Press.
- Blustein, D. L., Erby, W., Meerkins, T., Soldz, I., & Ezema, G. N. (2022). A critical exploration of assumptions underlying STEM career development. *Journal of Career Development*, 49(2), 471–487.
- Blustein, D. L., Kozan, S., & Connors-Kellgren, A. (2013). Unemployment and underemployment: A narrative analysis about loss. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 82(3), 256–265. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2013.02.005>
- Boeckenstedt, J. (2016). Letters of recommendation: An unfair part of college admission. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2016/03/03/letters-of-recommendation-an-unfair-part-of-college-admissions/>
- Boudrenghien, G. & Frenay, M., & Bourgeois, E. (2012). Unattainable educational goals: Disengagement, reengagement with alternative goals, and consequences for subjective well-being. *Revue Européenne de Psychologie Appliquée/European Review of Applied Psychology*, 62, 147–159. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erap.2012.04.002>

- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood Press.
- Bradburn, N. M., Townsend, R. B., Fuqua, C., Taylor, J. (2021). *State of the humanities 2021: Workforce & beyond*. American Academy of Arts & Sciences.
- Brandstätter, V., Herrmann, M., & Schüler, J. (2013). The struggle of giving up personal goals: Affective, physiological, and cognitive consequences of an action crisis. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 39(12), 1668–1682.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167213500151>
- Brandtstädter, J., & Rothermund, K. (2002). The life-course dynamics of goal pursuit and goal adjustment: A two-process framework. *Developmental Review*, 22(1), 117–150.
- Breckner, L. (2022). How can you increase success with second-year and transfer students? Ruffalo Noel Levitz. <https://www.ruffalonl.com/blog/student-success/how-can-you-increase-success-with-second-year-and-transfer-students/>
- Brennan, K. M., & Gorman, K. S. (2023). Expanding counseling center use through campus engagement and social norming. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 41(1), 105–122.  
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1375934.pdf>
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.
- Brown, S. D., Lamp, K., Telander, K. J., & Hacker, J. (2013). Career development as prevention: Toward a social cognitive model of vocational hope. In E. M. Vera (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of prevention in counseling psychology* (pp. 374–392). Oxford University Press.
- Brown, S., & Lent, R. (2019). Social cognitive career theory at 25: Progress in studying the domain satisfaction and career self-management models. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 27(4), 563–578.
- Brunner, J. (1996). *The culture of education*. Harvard University Press.
- Buehler, R., Griffin, D., & Ross, M. (1994). Exploring the "planning fallacy": Why people underestimate their task completion times. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67(3), 366–381.
- Bures, K. & Sudja, S. (2015, December). Students benefit from early dual-path intervention. *Academic Advising Today*, 38(4). <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/Students-Benefit-from-Early-Dual-Path-Intervention.aspx>
- Busta, H. (2020). *CHEA president: As accreditation rules change, colleges can benefit from choices*. Education Dive. <https://www.highereddive.com/news/chea-president-as-accreditation-rules-change-colleges-can-benefit-from-ch/585940/#:~:text=Q%26A-,CHEA%20president%3A%20As%20accreditation%20rules%20change%2C%20college>

s%20can%20benefit%20from,rules%20can%20help%20institutions%20innovate.&text=College%20accreditation%20is%20in%20the%20spotlight.

- Buyarski, C. A. (2009). Career advising with undecided students. In K. F. Hughey, D. Burton Nelson, J. K. Damminger, & B. McCalla-Wriggins (Eds.), *The handbook of career advising* (pp. 35–43). Jossey-Bass.
- Callender, A. A., Franco-Watkins, A. M., & Roberts, A. S. (2016). Improving metacognition in the classroom through instruction, training, and feedback. *Metacognition and Learning, 11*(2), 215–235. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11409-015-9142-6>
- Camera, L. (2018). *In most states, poorest school districts get less funding*. U. S. News. <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2018-02-27/in-most-states-poorest-school-districts-get-less-funding>
- Carnevale, A. P., Cheah, B., & Van Der Werf, M. (2020). *The ROI of liberal arts colleges: Value adds up over time*. Georgetown University: Center on Education and the Workforce. <https://1gyhoq479ufd3yna29x7ubjn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/Liberal-Arts-ROI.pdf>
- Carney, C. M. (2009). *Native American higher education in the United States*. Transaction Publishers.
- Carroll, P. J., Arkin, R. M., & Shade, C. K. (2011). Possible selves and self-doubt: A poverty of desired possibility. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 2*(2), 190–198. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550610386246>
- Carroll, P. J., Shepperd, J. A., & Arkin, R. M. (2009). Downward self-revision: Erasing possible selves. *Social Cognition, 27*(4), 550–578.
- CAS: Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education. (2023a). *CAS Self-assessment guide: Academic advising program*. <https://www.cas.edu/standards>
- CAS: Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education. (2023b). *CAS Self-assessment guide: Career services*. <https://www.cas.edu/standards>
- CAS: Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education. (2023c). *CAS Self-assessment guide: Case management services*. <https://www.cas.edu/standards>
- Center for Education Statistics. (2005). *First-generation students in post-secondary education: A look at their college transcripts*. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/2005171.pdf>
- CERIC. (2021). *Reflective practice on experiential learning and how to unlock its career development value*. One Life Tools. <https://ceric.ca/wpdm-package/literature-search-abstract-approach-findings-and-results-2/?wpdmdl=53809&refresh=635c69ac13de21667000748>

- CERIC. (2022). *Unlock the career development value within experiential learning*. One Life Tools. <https://ceric.ca/projects/unlocking-the-career-development-value-within-experiential-learning/>
- Champlin-Scharff, S., & Hagen, P. L. (2013). Understanding and interpretation: A hermeneutic approach to advising. In J. K. Drake, P. Jordan, & M. A. Miller (Eds.), *Academic advising approaches: Strategies that teach students to make the most of college* (pp. 223–239). Jossey-Bass.
- Chan, C. (2022). Analyzing factors influencing college athletes' career actions using social cognitive career self-management model. *Journal of Career Development*, 1–18.
- Chan, J. (2021). *Preprofessional advising: A qualitative inquiry into the core practices, competencies, organizational structure and career development of premedical advisors*. [Unpublished dissertation]. University of Pennsylvania.
- Chen, C. P. (2002). Enhancing vocational psychology practice through narrative inquiry. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 2002(11), 14–21.
- Chen, J. I., Romero, G. D., & Karver, M. S. (2016). The relationship of perceived campus culture to mental health help-seeking intentions. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 63(6), 677–684. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000095>
- Chen, Y., & Upah, S. (2020). Data analytics and STEM student success: The impact of predictive analytics-informed academic advising among undeclared first-year engineering students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 22(3), 497–521. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025118772307>
- Cheryan S., Plaut V. C., Davies, P., & Steele ,C. M. (2009). Ambient belonging: How stereotypical environments impact gender participation in computer science. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 97, 1045–1060. <http://doi.org/10.1037/a0016239>
- Chessman, H., & Taylor M. (2019). College student mental health and well-being: A survey of presidents. *Higher Education Today*. <https://www.higheredtoday.org/2019/08/12/college-student-mental-health-well-survey-college-presidents/>
- Chickering, A. & Reisser, L. (2005). The seven vectors. In M. E. Wilson & L. E. Wolf-Wendel (Eds.), *ASHE reader on college student development theory*. Pearson Learning Solutions.
- Choompunuch, B., Lebkhao, D., Suksatan, W., & Suk-erb, W. (2022). A development of counseling competency for academic advisors in higher education. *Sustainability*, 14(16), 9907. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14169907>
- Christens, B. D., Collura, J. C., & Tahir, F. (2013). Critical hope-fulness: A person-centered analysis of the intersection of cognitive and emotional empowerment. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 52(1–2), 170–184. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-013-9586-2>.

- Church, M., & Robinson, A. (2006). Ethics in academic advising. *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*. <https://dus.psu.edu/mentor/old/articles/060523mc.htm>
- Clandinin, D. J. & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry*. Jossey-Bass.
- Clandinin, D. J. (2013). *Engaging in narrative inquiry*. Routledge Press.
- Clark, B. R. (1960). The "cooling-out" function in higher education. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 65(6), 569–576.
- Cochran, L. (1997). The storied ecology of career development. In L. Cochran (Ed.). *Career counseling: A narrative approach* (pp. 133–152). Sage Publishing.
- Complete College America. (2019). *College, on purpose*. [https://completecollege.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/PurposeFirst\\_Report\\_Full.pdf](https://completecollege.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/PurposeFirst_Report_Full.pdf) Links to an external site
- Conle, C. (2000). Thesis as narrative or "what is the inquiry in narrative inquiry?" *Ontario Institute for Studies in Education*, 30(2), 189–192.
- Cox, M. F. (2020). Show me your papers: When racism and sexism trump credibility in STEM. In E. O. McGee & W. H. Robinson (Eds.), *Diversifying STEM: Multidisciplinary perspectives on race and gender* (pp. 53-69). Rutgers University Press.
- Creed, P. A., & Hood, M. (2015). The development and initial validation of a scale to assess career goal discrepancies. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 23(2), 308–317. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072714535175>
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Cruz, A. (2022). Overcoming systemic racism in health professions advising. Handbook of Research on Development Competencies for Professional Students, Advisors, and Programs. IGI Global Publisher. <https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/overcoming-systemic-racism-in-health-professions-advising/305103>
- Daily, M. (2023). University of Portland summer launch initiative. In Troy, C., Jackson, K., Pearce, B., & Rowe, D. (Eds.), *Developing and implementing promising practices and programs for first-generation college students* (pp. 28–42). Routledge Publishing.
- Dann-Messier, B., Wu, P., & Greenburg, M. (2014, May 30). *Dear colleagues [Letter on career counseling]*. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cte/may-30-2014-dear-colleague-letter-career-counseling.pdf>
- Davis, A. M. (2017). "Can't I be black and smart?": Examining the experiences of black high-achieving college women inside and outside the classroom [Unpublished dissertation]. Temple University. [https://scholarshare.temple.edu/bitstream/handle/20.500.12613/1059/Davis\\_temple\\_0225](https://scholarshare.temple.edu/bitstream/handle/20.500.12613/1059/Davis_temple_0225)

E\_12871.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

- Davis, K. (2023). *Peer support in college mental health initiatives*. Mental Health America. <https://mhanational.org/sites/default/files/reports/College-Peer-Support-Report-2023.pdf>
- Davis, G. M., Hanzsek-Brill, M., Petzold, M. C., & Robinson, D. H. (2019). Students' sense of belonging: The development of a predictive retention model. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 19(1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.14434/josotl.v19i1.26787>
- Dawis, R. V. (2005). The Minnesota theory of work adjustment. In S. D. Brown & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Career development and counseling* (pp. 3–23). Wiley.
- De Clercq, M., Michel, C., Remy, S., & Galand, B. (2019). Providing freshmen with a good “starting-block”: Two brief social-psychological interventions to promote early adjustment to the first year at university. *Swiss Journal of Psychology/Schweizerische Zeitschrift Für Psychologie/Revue Suisse De Psychologie*, 78(1-2), 69–75. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1024/1421-0185/a000217>
- De Lima, M., LaJune London, Ellen Manieri, (2011). Looking at the past to change the future: a retrospective study of associate degree in nursing graduates' national council licensure examination scores. *Teaching and Learning in Nursing*, 6(3), 119–123, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.teln.2011.01.001>.
- Deemer, E. D., Smith, J. L., Carroll, A. N., & Carpenter, J. P. (2014). Academic procrastination in STEM: Interactive effects of stereotype threat and achievement goals. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 62(2), 143–155.
- Denice, P. A. (2021). Choosing and changing course: Postsecondary students and the process of selecting a major field of study. *Sociological Perspectives*, 64(1), 82–108. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0731121420921903>
- Dewey, J. (1934.) *Art as experience*. G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- Dewey, J. (1938.) *Experience and education*. Collier Books
- Doka, K. J. (1989). *Disenfranchised grief: recognizing hidden sorrow*. Lexington Books.
- Drake, J. K., Jordan, P., & Miller, M. A. (Eds.). (2013). *Academic advising approaches: Strategies that teach students to make the most of college*. Jossey-Bass.
- Driscoll, D. L. (2014). Clashing values: A longitudinal, exploring study of student beliefs about general education, vocationalism, and transfer of learning. *Teaching and Learning Inquiry*, 2(1), 21–37.
- Drysdale, M. T. B., Frost, N., & McBeath, M. L. (2015). How often do they change their minds and does work-integrated learning play a role? An examination of "major changes" and career certainty in higher education. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 16(2), 145–152.

- Duffy, R. D., Douglass, R. P., & Autin, K. L. (2015). Career adaptability and academic satisfaction: Examining work volition and self-efficacy as mediators. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 90*, 46–54. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2015.07.007>
- Duffy, R. D., Kim, H. J., Boren, S., Pendleton, L., & Perez, G. (2021). Lifetime experiences of economic constraints and marginalization among incoming college students: A latent profile analysis. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000344>
- Dumke, E. K., Tyndall, C., Naff, D., & Crowder, A. (2018). A qualitative exploration of pre-health students' perceptions of academic success and persistence. *NACADA Journal, 38*(2), 5–19.
- Durdella, N. (2020a). *Qualitative dissertation methodology: A guide for research design and methods*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Durdella, N. (2020b). Developing data collection instruments and describing data collection procedures. In U. Flick (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data collection* (pp. 213–260). SAGE Publications.
- Durdella, N. (2020c). Working with data sources: Selecting research participants and forming research samples. In U. Flick (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data collection* (pp. 177–212). SAGE Publications.
- EAB. (2018). *Reimagine experiential learning: Skill-building opportunities outside the classroom*. <https://eab.com/research/student-affairs/study/reimagining-experiential-learning/>
- Education Trust. (2014). *Equality isn't equity: every student needs a great school counselor*. <https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Equality-Isnt-Equity-Every-Student-Needs-a-Great-School-Counselor.pdf>
- Eisenberg, D., Lipson, S., Heinze, J. (2021). *The healthy minds study: Fall 2020 national data report*. Health Sciences & Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board. <https://healthymindsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/HMS-Fall-2020-National-Data-Report.pdf>
- Estrada, M., Woodcock, A., Hernandez, P. R., & Schultz, P. W. (2011). Toward a model of social influence that explains minority student integration into the scientific community. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 103*(1), 206–222. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0020743>
- Ewing K. M., Richardson, T. Q., & James-Myers L. (1996). The relationship between racial identity attitudes, worldview, and African American graduate students' experience of the imposter phenomenon. *Journal Black Psychology, 22*(1), 53–66.



- Falkenstern, C., & Rochat, A. (2018). *Native-American-serving, nontribal institutions (NASNTIs) survey of American Indian/Alaska Native students in higher education*.  
[https://www.wiche.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/NASNTI\\_survey\\_070518.pdf](https://www.wiche.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/NASNTI_survey_070518.pdf)
- Feller, R., & O’Bruba, B. (2009). The evolving workplace: Integrating academic and career advising. In K. F. Hughey, D. Burton Nelson, J. K. Damminger, & B. McCalla-Wriggins (Eds.), *The handbook of career advising* (pp. 19–47). Jossey-Bass.
- Feller, R., & Leard, J. (2017). YouScience aptitude assessment moves career science beyond self-reported interests. *Career Development Network Journal*, 33(4), 22–32.
- Feller, R., & Whichard, J. (2005). *Knowledge nomads and the nervously employed: workplace change & courageous career choices*. Pro-Education.
- Felten, P., & Lambert, L. M. (2020). *Relationship-rich education*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Fiddler, J. L. (2022). Listening deeply: Indexing research conversations in a narrative inquiry. In C. Vanover, P. Mihas, & J. Saldaña (Eds.), *Analyzing and interpreting qualitative research: After the interview* (pp. 259–275). Sage Publishing.
- Finley, A. (2021). *How college contributes to workforce success*. American Association of Colleges and Universities. <https://dgm81pnhvh63.cloudfront.net/content/user-photos/Research/PDFs/AACUEmployerReport2021.pdf>
- Flick, U. (2013). Mapping the field. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis* (pp. 3–18). SAGE Publications, Ltd.
- Flick, U. (2018). Doing qualitative data collection. In U. Flick (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data collection* (pp. 2–20). Sage Publications.
- Florida State University. (2021). *BSN admission statistics*.  
<https://nursing.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/upcbnu411/files/pdf-files/BSN/BSN%20Fall%202021%20Stats.pdf>
- Fong, R. (2018). *Utilizing academic advising to cultivate adaptability in students changing majors within the education field* [Unpublished dissertation]. Arizona State University.
- Fonteyne, L., Eelbode, A., Lanszweert, I., Roels, E., Schelfhout, S., Duyck, W., & De Fruyt, F. (2018). Career goal engagement following negative feedback: Influence of expectancy-value and perceived feedback accuracy. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 18(2), 165–180.
- Ford, D. Y., & Helms, J. E. (2012). Overview and introduction: Testing and assessing African Americans: “Unbiased” tests are still unfair. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 81(3), 186–189.

- Frank, A. (2000). The standpoint of storyteller. *Qualitative Health Research*, 10(3), 354–365. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/104973200129118499>
- Freedman, L. (2017, June). When not to parallel plan: Advising academically grieving students. *Academic Advising Today*, 40(2). <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/When-NOT-to-Parallel-Plan-Advising-Academically-Grieving-Students.aspx>
- Fries-Britt, S., & Turner, B. (2001). Facing stereotypes: A case study of black students on a white campus. *Journal of College Student Development*, 42(5), 420–429.
- Frieze, C., Marculescu, D., Quesenberry, J., Katilius, G., & Reynolds, J. (2018). "Where are you really from?": Mitigating unconscious bias on campus [Published conference presentation]. Research on equity and sustained participation in engineering, computer, and technology (RESPECT). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1109/RESPECT.2018.8491696>
- Fritz, E., & Van Zyl, G. (2015). Lifelines. In M. McMahon, & M. Watson (Eds.), *Career assessment: Qualitative approaches* (pp. 89–96). Sense Publishers.
- Gable, R. (2021). *The hidden curriculum: First generation students at legacy universities*. Princeton University Press.
- Gallup. (2017). 2017 college student survey: A nationally representative survey of currently enrolled students. <http://news.gallup.com/reports/225161/2017-strada-gallup-college-student-survey.aspx>
- Gardner, J., & Koch, A. (2020, November). *Equitable outcomes in gateway course for independent colleges and universities* [Conference presentation]. Council of Independent Colleges Virtual Conference. <https://www.cic.edu/programs/2020-cao-institute>
- Gasman, M., & Nguyen, T. (2019). *Making Black scientists: A call to action*. Harvard Education Press.
- Gati, I. (1993). Career compromises. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 40(4), 416–424. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.40.4.416>
- Gati, I., Houminer, D., & Aviram, T. (1998). Career compromises: Framings and their implications. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 45(4), 505–514. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.45.4.505>
- Gatta, M., Kahn, J., Koncz, A. J., Galbraith, A., & Longenberger, A. (2021). *Salary survey: Starting salary projections for Class of 2022 new college graduates. Data reported by employers*. NACE: National Association of Colleges & Employers.
- Gelatt, H. B. (1989). Positive uncertainty: A new decision making framework for counseling. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 36, 252–256.

- Ghassemi, M., Bernecker, K., & Herrmann, M. (2017). The process of disengagement from personal goals: Reciprocal influences between the experience of action crisis and appraisals of goal desirability and attainability. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 43(4), 524-537. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167216689052>
- Ghassemi, M., Wolf, B. M., Bettschart, M., Kreibich, A., Herrmann, M., & Brandstätter, V. (2021). The dynamics of doubt: Short-term fluctuations and predictors of doubts in personal goal pursuit. *Motivation Science*, 7(2), 153–164. <https://doi.org/10.1037/mot0000210>
- Gilbert, P. (2005). *Compassion: Conceptualizations, research and use in psychotherapy*. Routledge.
- Given, L. M. (2008). *Prolonged engagement*. *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n344>
- Glennen, R. E. (1975). Intrusive college counseling. *College Student Journal*, 9(1), 2–4.
- Glickman, K. L., Smith, S. W., & Woods, E. C. (2023). Psychological distress, attitudes toward seeking help, and utilization of college counseling at a predominantly minority college. *Journal of American College Health*, 71(3), 765–774. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2021.1908301>
- Gollwitzer, P. M., & Oettingen, G. (2019). Goal attainment. In R. M. Ryan (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of human motivation* (pp. 247–267). Oxford University Press.
- Gordon, V. N. (2006). *Career advising: an academic advisor's guide*. National Academic Advising Association.
- Gordon, V. N. (2007). *The undecided college student: An academic advising and career advising challenge*. Charles C. Thomas Publisher.
- Gordon, V. N., & Polson, C. L. (1985). Students needing academic alternative advising: A national survey. *NACADA Journal*, 5(2), 77–84. <https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-5.2.77>
- Gose, B. (2020). *Using data to understand student behaviors*. The Chronicle of Higher Education. [https://connect.chronicle.com/rs/931-EKA-218/images/StudentData\\_Jenzabar\\_InisghtsReport.pdf](https://connect.chronicle.com/rs/931-EKA-218/images/StudentData_Jenzabar_InisghtsReport.pdf)
- Gottfredson, L. S. (2005). Applying Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise in career guidance and counseling. In S. D. Brown & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work* (pp. 71–100). Wiley Publishing.

- Goyette, K., & Mullen, A. L. (2006). Who studies the arts and sciences? Social background and the choice and consequences of undergraduate field of study. *Journal of Higher Education, 77*(3), 497–538.
- Grace, M. K. (2019). Parting ways: Sex-based differences in premedical attrition. *Journal of Social Sciences Medicine, 230*, 222–233. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2019.04.030>
- Grimes-Crump, R. (2001). Virginia teacher licensure examination policy: Intended and unintended effects on teacher availability and minority representation [Unpublished dissertation]. Virginia Tech University.
- Grites, T. J. (2000). Using assessment instruments. In V. N. Gordon & W. R. Habley (Eds.), *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook* (pp. 258–286). Jossey-Bass.
- Grüttner, M. (2019). Belonging as a resource of resilience: Psychological wellbeing of international and refugee students in study preparation at German higher education institutions. *Student Success, 10*(3), 36–44. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5204/ssj.v10i3.1275>
- Haase, C. M., Heckhausen, J., & Silbereisen, R. K. (2012). The interplay of occupational motivation and well-being during the transition from university to work. *Developmental Psychology, 48*(6), 1739–1751. <http://www.doi.org/10.1037/a0026641>
- Haase, C. M., Heckhausen, J., & Wrosch, C. (2013). Developmental regulation across the life span: Toward a new synthesis. *Developmental Psychology, 49*(5), 964–972. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029231>
- Haase, C. M., Singer, T., Silbereisen, R., K., Heckhausen, J., & Wrosch, C. (2020). Well-being as a resource for goal re-engagement: evidence from two longitudinal studies. *Motivation Science, 7*(1), 21–31. <https://doi.org/10.1037/mot0000199>
- Habley, W. R., Bloom, J. L., & Robbins, S. (2012). *Increasing persistence: Research-based strategies for college student success*. Jossey-Bass.
- Hadinger, M. A. (2015). *Underrepresented minorities in medical school admissions* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Pennsylvania.
- Hagen, P. L. (2018). *The power of story: Narrative theory in academic advising*. NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising.
- Hagen, P. L. (2022). Using methods from the Humanities. In C. M. McGill, S. S. Gizerian, & P. L. Hagen (Eds.), *Scholarly inquiry in academic advising* (2nd ed., pp. 182–194). Stylus.
- Hallqvist, A., & Hydén, L. (2012). Learning in occupational transitions: A study of the process following job loss. *Work: Journal of Prevention, Assessment & Rehabilitation, 43*(3), 331–341.
- Hamm, J. M., Tan, J. X. Y., Barlow, M. A., Delaney, R. L., & Duggan, K. A. (2022). Goal adjustment capacities in uncontrollable life circumstances: Benefits for psychological

- well-being during COVID-19. *Motivation and Emotion*, 46, 319–335.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-022-09941-6>
- Hammond, J. L. (2017, March). How to give bad news. *Academic Advising Today*, 40(1).  
<http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/How-to-Give-Bad-News.aspx>
- Händel, M., & Dresel, M. (2018). Confidence in performance judgment accuracy: The unskilled and unaware effect revisited. *Metacognition and Learning*, 13, 265–285.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11409-018-9185-6>.
- Hansen, S. S. (2011). Integrative life planning: A holistic approach. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 48(4), 167–169.
- Harkin, B., Webb, T., Chang, B., & Authors (2016). Does monitoring goal progress promote goal attainment? A meta-analysis of the experimental evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 142(2), 198–229. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/bul0000025>
- Harper, R. P., Weston, T. J., & Seymour, E. (2019). Student responses to problematic STEM teaching methods. In E. Seymour & A. Hunter (Eds.), *Talking about leaving revisited: Persistence, relocation, and loss in undergraduate STEM education* (pp. 149–196). Spring Publishing.
- Harris, R. B., Mack, M. R., Bryant, J., Theobald, E. J., Freeman, S. (2020). Reducing achievement gaps in general chemistry could lift underrepresented students into a "hyperpersistent zone." *Science Advances*, 6.  
<https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.aaz5687>
- Harry, N. (2014). *Constructing a psychological coping profile for call centre agents* [Unpublished dissertation]. University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.
- Hatch, B. (2023). "Ambiguous at best, discriminatory at worst": College involuntary leave policies strip disabled students of agency and opportunity. *Human Capability Studies* (POV262), Washington & Lee University.
- Hartung, P. J. (2013). Career as story: Making the narrative turn. In W. B. Walsh, M. L. Savickas, and P. J. Hartung (Eds). *The handbook of vocational psychology: Theory, research, and practice* (4th ed., pp. 33–52). Routledge Publishing.
- Haskins, J. (2016, July 26). *How meta-majors guide students toward on-time graduation*. EAB Global, Inc. <https://www.eab.com/daily-briefing/2016/07/26/how-meta-majors-guide-students-toward-on-time-graduation>
- Heckhausen, J., & Wrosch, C. (2016). Challenges to developmental regulation across the life course: What are they and which individual differences matter? *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 40(2), 145–150. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0165025415588796>

- Heckhausen, J., Wrosch, C., & Schulz, R. (2010). A motivational theory of life-span development. *Psychological Review*, *117*, 32–60. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017668>
- Henderschiedt, G.A. (2009, June). Helping students weather the storm: Career advising in tough economic times. *Academic Advising Today*, *32*(2). <https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/Helping-Students-Weather-the-Storm-Career-Advising-in-Tough-Economic-Times.aspx>
- Henderson, M. D., Gollwitzer, P. M., & Oettingen, G. (2007). Implementation intentions and disengagement from a failing course of action. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, *20*(1), 81–102.
- Herridge, A. S., McNaughtan, J., & James, L. J. (2020). Online orientation among community college students: Academic engagement and sense of belonging. *Journal of Applied Research in the Community College*, *27*(1), 17–31.
- Herrmann, M., & Brandstätter, V. (2015). Action crises and goal disengagement: Longitudinal evidence on the predictive validity of a motivational phase in goal striving. *Motivation Science*, *1*(2), 121–136. <https://doi.org/10.1037/mot0000016>
- Herrmann, M., Brandstatter, V., & Wrosch, C. (2019). Downgrading goal-relevant resources in action crises: The moderating role of goal reengagement capacities and effects on well-being. *Motivation and Emotion*, *43*, 535–553.
- Hill, S., & Albert, N. M. (2021). Understanding the experiences of African American nursing students. *Journal of Nursing Education*, *60*(3), 150–154.
- Hinkelman, J.M., & Luzzo, D.A. (2007). Mental health and career development of college students. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, *85*(2), 143–147.
- Hinojosa, T., Rapaport, A., Jaciw, A., LiCalsi, C., & Zacamy, J. (2016). *Exploring the foundations of the future STEM workforce: K–12 indicators of postsecondary STEM success*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED565641.pdf>
- Holding, A. C., Hope, N. H., Harvey, B., M. Jetten, A. S., & Koestner, R. (2017). Stuck in limbo: Motivational antecedents and consequences of experiencing action crises in personal goal pursuit. *Journal of Personality*, *85*(6), 893–905. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12296>
- Holding, A. C., Moore, A., Verner-Filion, J., Kachanoff, F., & Koestner, R. (2022). Choosing to lose it: The role of autonomous motivation in goal disengagement. *Motivation and Emotion*, *46*, 769–789. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-022-09952-3>
- Hortop, E. G., Wrosch, C., & Gagne, M. (2013). The why and how of goal pursuits: Effects of global autonomous motivation and perceived control on emotional well-being. *Motivation and Emotion*, *37*, 675–687. DOI 10.1007/s11031-013-9349-2

- Holland, D. G. (2019). The struggle to belong and thrive. In E. Seymour & A. Hunter (Eds.), *Talking about leaving revisited: Persistence, relocation, and loss in undergraduate STEM education* (pp. 277–328). Spring Publishing.
- Holland, J. L. (1997). *Making vocational choices: A theory of vocational personalities and work environments*. Psychological Assessment Resources.
- Hooley, T., (2018). A war against the robots? Career guidance, automation and neoliberalism. In T. Hooley, R. G. Sultana, & R. Tomsen (Eds.), *Career guidance for social justice* (pp. 93–108). Routledge.
- Hooley, T., Sultana, R. G., & Thomsen, R. (2018). The neoliberal challenge to career guidance: Mobilising research, policy and practice around social justice. In T. Hooley, R. G. Sultana, & R. Tomsen (Eds.), *Career guidance for social justice* (pp. 1–31). Routledge.
- Horowitz, G. (2019). *Teaching STEM to first-generation: A guidebook for faculty and future faculty*. Horowitz Publishing.
- Housel, T. H. (2019). The importance of intersecting marginalized identities in considering: What is known and not known about first-generation college students. Housel, T. H. (Ed.), *First-generation college student experiences of intersecting marginalities* (pp. 3-10). Peter Lang Publishing.
- Hu, S., Creed, P. A., & Hood, M. (2017). Career goal revision in response to negative feedback: Testing a longitudinal cross-lagged model. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 64(3), 335–345. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000193>
- Hu, S., Hood, M., & Creed, P. A. (2018). Within-person relationship between career goal feedback and career-related stress: A weekly survey study. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 65(6), 681–689.
- Hu, S., Creed, P. A., & Hood, M. (2019). Does socioeconomic status shape young people's goal revision processes in the face of negative career feedback? *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 110, 89-101. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2018.11.011>
- Hu, X., Zhang, H., Meifang, G. (2023). Letting go or giving up? The influence of self-transcendence meaning of life on goal adjustment in action crisis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1054873>
- Huble, C., & Scholer, A. A. (2022). Melting COVID-frozen goals: How goal disengagement supports well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Motivation and Emotion*, 46, 752–768. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-022-09959-w>
- Huffman, T. (2022). Making claims using qualitative data. In C. Vanover, P. Mihás, & J. Saldaña (Eds.), *Analyzing and interpreting qualitative research: After the interview* (pp. 351–370). Sage Publishing.

- Hughey, K. F., & Hughey, J. K. (2009). Foundations of career advising. In K. F. Hughey, D. Burton Nelson, J. K. Damminger, B. McCalla-Wriggins, & Associates, *The handbook of career advising* (pp. 1–18). Jossey-Bass.
- Hurtado, S., & Carter, D. F. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of the campus racial climate on Latino students' sense of belonging. *Sociology of Education*, 70, 324–345. <http://doi.org/10.2307/2673270>
- Hurtado, S., Milem, J. F., Clayton-Pederson, A. R., & Allen, W. R., (1998). Enhancing campus climates for racial/ethnic diversity: Educational policy and practice. *The Review of Higher Education*, 21(3), 279–302.
- Ibrahim, S. A. (2019). Physician workforce diversity and health equity: it is time for synergy in missions! *Health Equity*, 3(1), 601–603. <https://doi.org/10.1089/heq.2019.0075>
- Iwen, M. (2019). Letters of recommendation: Just say no. *Inside Higher Education*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2019/04/10/letters-recommendation-reaffirm-entrenched-systems-bias-and-exclusion-opinion>
- Jack, A. A. (2019). *The privileged poor: How elite college are failing disadvantaged students*. Harvard University Press.
- Jacoby, B. (2020). Engaging commuter, part-time, and returning adult students. In S. J. Quaye, S. R. Harper, & S. L. Pendakur (Eds.), *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations* (3rd ed., pp. 325–342). Routledge.
- Jaensch, V. K., Hirschi, A., & Freund, P. A. (2015, December). Persistent career indecision over time: Links with personality, barriers, self-efficacy, and life satisfaction. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 91, 122–133. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2015.09.010>
- Jankowski, N. A., & Lundquist, A. E. (2022). Equity and assessment: A storied past. In G. W. Henning, G. R. Baker, N. A. Jankowski, A. E. Lundquist, & E. Monenegro (Eds.), *Reframing assessment to center equity: Theories, models, and practices* (pp. 36–54). Stylus.
- Jantzer, J., Kirkman, T., & Furniss, K. L. (2021). Understanding differences in underrepresented minorities and first-generation student perceptions in the introductory biology classroom. *Journal of Microbiology & Biology Education*, 22(3), 1–9.
- Jehangir, R. R., Stebleton, M. J., & Deenanath, V. (2015). *An exploration of intersecting identities of first-generation low-income college students* (Research Report No. 5). University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for the First Year-Experience and Student Transition.
- Jenkins, D., Brown, A. E., Fink, J., Lahr, H., Yanagiura, T. (2018a). *Building guided pathways to community college student success: Promising practices and early evidence from Tennessee*. Community College Research Center: Teachers College, Columbia



- University. <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/building-guided-pathways-community-college-student-success.pdf>
- Jenkins, D., Lahr, H., Fink, J., & Ganga, E. (2018b). *What we are learning about guided pathways*. Community College Research Center: Teachers College, Columbia University. [https://www.deltacollege.edu/sites/default/files/what\\_we\\_are\\_learning\\_about\\_guided\\_pathways-ccrc.pdf](https://www.deltacollege.edu/sites/default/files/what_we_are_learning_about_guided_pathways-ccrc.pdf)
- Jett, C. C., & Davis, J. (2020). Black males' STEM experiences: Factors that contribute to their success. In E. O. McGee & W. H. Robinson (Eds.), *Diversifying STEM: Multidisciplinary perspectives on race and gender* (pp. 192–208). Rutgers University Press.
- Johnson, L., & Wiese, N. (2022). Local students at university: Narrative descriptions of lived experiences. *Student Success*, 13(1), 41–53. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5204/ssj.2000>
- Johnson, B. W. (2007). Transformational supervision: When supervisors mentor. *Professional Psychology Research and Practice*, 38(3), 259–267. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0735-7028.38.3.259>
- Johnson, J. (2015). The new professional advisor: Building a solid informational advising component. In P. Folsom, F. Yoder, & J. E. Joslin (Eds.), *The new advisor guidebook* (2nd ed., pp. 107–120). Jossey-Bass.
- Jordan, P. (2015). Effective communication skills. In P. Folsom, F. Yoder, & J. E. Joslin (Eds.), *The new advisor guidebook* (2nd ed., pp. 213–229). Jossey-Bass.
- Josselson, R. (2013). *Interviewing for qualitative inquiry*. The Guildford Press. <https://www.guilford.com/excerpts/josselson.pdf?t>
- Jostmann, N. B., & Koole, S. L. (2009). When persistence is futile: A functional analysis of action orientation and goal disengagement. In G. B. Moskowitz, H. Grant, G. B. Moskowitz, & H. Grant (Eds.), *The psychology of goals* (pp. 337–361). Guilford Press.
- Kafka, A. C. (2021, November). Building students' resilience. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <https://store.chronicle.com/products/student-mental-health-new-challenges-new-solutions>
- Keene, M. (2022). *College is a scan of leftist liberal ideas: An exploration of rural and first-generation college students' memorable messages about higher education* [Unpublished dissertation]. University of Tennessee.
- Kelly, K. R., & Pulver, C. A. (2003). Refining measurement of career indecision types: A validity study. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 81(4), 445–454. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2003.tb00271.x>
- Kim, J. (2016). *Understanding narrative inquiry*. Sage Publishing.

- King, C. A., Eisenberg, D., Pistorello, J., Coryell, W., Albucher, R. C., Favorite, T., & Zheng, K. (2022). Electronic bridge to mental health for college students: A randomized controlled intervention trial. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 90*(2), 172–183. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ccp0000709>
- King, L., & Pittman, L. (2013). *The back-up plan made simple: creating an initiative to engage students in developing a parallel plan for success* [Conference presentation]. NACADA Annual Conference. <http://apps.nacada.ksu.edu/conferences/ProposalsPHP/uploads/handouts/2013/C085-H01.pdf>
- Klinger, E. (1975). Consequences of commitment to and disengagement from incentives. *Psychological Review, 82*, 1–25.
- Knapik, M. (2006). The qualitative research interview: Participants responsive participation in knowledge making. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 5*(3), 77–93.
- Koch, A. K., & Drake, B. M. (2021). Momentum stoppers and equity blockers: The implications of gateway courses at their transfer receiving institutions. In J. N. Gardner, M. J., Rosenberg, & A. K. Koch (Eds.), *The transfer experience: A handbook for creating a more equitable and successful postsecondary system* (pp. 214–234). Stylus.
- Koen, J., Klehe, U. C., & Van Vianen, A. E. M. (2012). Training career adaptability to facilitate a successful school-to-work transition. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 81*(3), 395–408.
- Kouzoukas, G. (2020). Engaging first-generation students. (2020). In S. J. Quaye, S. R. Harper, & S. L. Pendakur (Eds.), *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations* (3rd ed., pp. 287–306). Routledge.
- Kramp, M. K. (2014). Exploring life and experience through narrative inquiry. In K. deMarrais and S. D. Lapan (Eds.). *Foundations for research: Methods of inquiry in education and the social sciences* (pp. 103–122). Routledge Publishing.
- Kreibich, A., Wolf, B. M., Bettschart, M., Ghassemi, M., Herrmann, M., & Brandstatter, V. (2022). How self-awareness is connected to less experience of action crisis in personal goal pursuit. *Motivation and Emotion, 46*, 825–836.
- Krott, N. R., & Oettingen, G. (2018). Mental contrasting of counterfactual fantasies attenuates disappointment, regret, and resentment. *Motivation and Emotion, 42*(1), 17–36. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-017-9644-4>
- Kruger, J., & Dunning, D. (1999). Unskilled and unaware of it: How difficulties in recognizing one's own incompetence lead to inflated self-assessments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 77*(6), 1121–1134. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.77.6.11214>.
- Krumboltz, J. (2008). The happenstance learning theory. *The Journal of Career Assessment, 17*(2), 135–154. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072708328861>

- Krumboltz, J. D., Foley, P. F., & Cotter, E. W. (2013). Applying the happenstance learning theory to involuntary career transitions. *Career Development Quarterly*, 61(1), 15–26. <http://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0045.2013.00032.x>
- Krumboltz, J. D., & Levin, A. S. (2010). *Luck is no accident*. Impact Publishing.
- Kussin, L. (2023). *A case study on mental health gatekeeper training for academic advisors* [Unpublished dissertation]. Fordham University.
- Labov, W. (1973). *Sociolinguistic patterns*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Labov, W. (1982). Speech actions and reactions in personal narrative. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Analyzing discourse: Text and talk* (pp. 219–247). Georgetown University Press.
- Lancaster, C., & Xu, Y. J. (2017). Challenges and supports for African American STEM student persistence: A case study at a racially diverse four-year institution. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 86(2), 176–189.
- Landon, P., & Hammock, W. K. (2010). Planned happenstance: Preparing liberal arts and social science students to follow their hearts to career success. *Academic Advising Today*, 33(1), <https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/Planned-Happenstance-Preparing-Liberal-Arts-and-Social-Science-Students-to-Follow-Their-Hearts-to-Career-Success.aspx>
- Lattuca, L. R., & Stark, J. S. (2009). *Shaping the college curriculum: Academic plans in context* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass Inc.
- Law, B. (2015). Storyboarding and the use of narrative. In M. McMahon, & M. Watson (Eds.), *Career assessment: Qualitative approaches* (pp. 105–111). Sense Publishers.
- Lawton, J. (2018). Academic advising as a catalyst for equity. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2018(184), 33–43.
- Ledwith, K. E. (2014). Academic advising and career services: A collaborative approach. *New Directions for Student Services*, 148, 49–63. <http://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20108>
- Lee, J. A. (2018). Affirmation, support, and advocacy: Critical Race Theory and academic advising. *NACADA Journal*, 38(1), 77–87. <https://doi.org/10.12930/NACADA-17-028>
- Lee, J. K., Alston, A. T., & Kahn, K. B. (2015). Identity threat in the classroom: Review of women’s motivational experiences in the sciences. *Translational Issues in Psychological Science*, 1(4), 321–330. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/tps0000050>
- Leipold, B., Bermeitinger, C., Greve, W., Meyer, B., Arnold, M., & Pielniok, M. (2014). Short-term induction of assimilation and accommodation. *The Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 67(2), 2392–2408. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17470218.2014.931443>

- Lent, R.W. (2005). A social cognitive view of career development and counseling. In S. D. Brown, & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work* (pp. 101–127). Wiley.
- Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *45*(1), 79–122.
- Lent, R. W., & Brown, S. D. (2006). Integrating person and situation perspectives on work satisfaction: A social-cognitive view. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *69*, 236–247.
- Lent, R. W., & Brown, S. D. (2013). Social cognitive model of career self-management: Toward a unifying view of adaptive career behavior across the life span. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *60*(4), 557–568. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033446>
- Lent, R. W., & Brown, S. D. (2020). Career decision making, fast and slow: Toward an integrative model of intervention for sustainable career choice. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *120*, 103448.
- Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *45*(1), 79–122.
- Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (2000). Contextual supports and barriers to career choice: A social cognitive analysis. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *47*, 36–49. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.47.1.36
- Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashiach, R., & Zilber, T. (1998). *Narrative research: Reading, analysis and interpretation*. SAGE publishing.
- Liem, R. & Liem, J. H. (1999). Psychological effects of unemployment on individuals and families. *Journal of Social Issues*, *44*(4), 87–105. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1988.tb02093.x>
- Light, A. E., & Chodos, E. (2022). Don't give up? It's a little complicated: Action crisis moderated consequences of goal support. *Motivation and Emotion*, *46*, 868–883. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-022-09977-8>
- Liu, V. Y. T., & Kopko, E. M. (2020). *Major decision: The impact of major switching on academic outcomes in community colleges*. Community College Research Center. <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/major-switching-academic-outcomes-community-colleges.html>
- Loftin, C., Newman, S. D. Dumas, B. P., Gilden, G., & Bond, M. L. (2012). Perceived barriers to success for minority nursing students: An integrative review. *International Scholarly Research Notices*, 2012. <https://downloads.hindawi.com/archive/2012/806543.pdf>
- Loseke, D. R. (2022). *Narrative as topic and method in social research*. Sage Publications.

- Lowenstein, M. (2000). Academic advising and the "logic" of the curriculum. *The Mentor*, 2. <https://journals.psu.edu/mentor/article/view/61732/61377>
- Lowenstein, M. (2015). General education, advising, and integrative learning. *The Journal of General Education*, 64(2), 117–130. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/jgeneeduc.64.2.0117>
- Lutz, D. J., Boon, A. T., & Zue, X. (2016). Resolving ethical dilemmas in academic advising through core aspirational principles. *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*. <https://dus.psu.edu/mentor/2016/06/resolving-ethical-dilemmas-in-academic-advising-through-core-values-and-aspirational-principles/>
- Ma, J., Pender, M., & Welch, M. (2019). *Education pays: The benefits of higher education for individuals and society*. College Board. <https://research.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/education-pays-2019-full-report.pdf>
- MacPhee, J., Modi, K., Gorman, S., Roy, N., Riba, E., Cusumano, D., Dunkle, J., Komrosky, N., Schwartz, V., Eisenberg, D., Silverman, M. M., Pinder-Amaker, S., Watkins, K. B., & Doraiswamy, P. M. (2021). *Strengthening safety nets: A comprehensive approach to mental health promotion and suicide prevention for colleges and universities*. National Academy of Medicine. <https://nam.edu/a-comprehensive-approach-to-mental-health-promotion-and-suicide-prevention-for-colleges-and-universities-insights-from-the-jed-campus-program/>
- Madden, K., Pereira, P., Rezvi, S., Trinder, V., & Martin, D. B. (2020). Cartographies of race, gender, and class in the White (Male Settler) spaces of science and mathematics. In E. O. McGee & W. H. Robinson (Eds.), *Diversifying STEM* (pp. 69–106). Rutgers University Press.
- Madera, J. M., Hebl, M. R., & Martin, R. C. (2009). Gender and letters of recommendation for academia: Agentic and communal differences. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 94(6), 1591–1599. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016539>
- Malcom, S. M. (2019). Forward. In E. Seymour & A. Hunter (Eds.), *Talking about leaving revisited: Persistence, relocation, and loss in undergraduate STEM education* (pp. i–xii). Spring Publishing.
- Manueliot-Kerkvliet, C. (2015). My climb to the highest rung. In R. S. Minthorn & A. F. Chavez (Eds.), *Indigenous leadership in higher education* (pp. 160–168). Taylor and Francis Group.
- Marion-Jetten, A. S., Schattke, K., & Taylor, G. (2021). Coping with the crisis: A mindfulness manipulation positively affects the emotional regulation of action crises. *Social Psychological Bulletin*, 16(4), <https://doi.org/10.32872/spb.7225>
- Marrast, L. M., Zallman, L., Woolhandler, S., Bor, D. H., & McCormick, D. (2013). Minority physicians' role in the care of underserved patients: diversifying the physician workforce

- may be key in addressing health disparities. *Journal of the American Medical Association Internal Medicine*, 174(2), 289–291.
- Martinen, E., Dietrich, J., Salmela-Aro, K. (2018). Intentional engagement in transition to adulthood. *European Psychologist*, 23(4), 311–323.
- Mattingly, C. (1998). *Healing dramas and clinical plots: The narrative structure of experience*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mayhall, J., & Burg, J. E. (2002). Solution-focused advising with the undecided student. *NACADA Journal*, 22(1), 76–84. <http://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-22.1.76>
- Mayer, Z., & Freund, A. M. (2022). Better off without? Benefits and costs of resolving goal conflict through goal shelving and goal disengagement. *Motivation and Emotion*, 46, 790–805.
- McAlpine, L., Jazvac-Martek, M., & Hopwood, N. (2009). Doctoral student experience in education: Activities and difficulties influencing identity development. *International Journal for Researcher Development*, 1(1), 97–109. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/1759751X201100007>
- McCarty, B. & Jones, S. (2017). *Parallel plan: An alternative path to success*. [http://tassr.org/uploads/3/4/2/3/3423105/parallel\\_plan\\_\\_bonnie\\_a.\\_mccarty\\_and\\_stacey\\_jones.pdf](http://tassr.org/uploads/3/4/2/3/3423105/parallel_plan__bonnie_a._mccarty_and_stacey_jones.pdf)
- McCarty, C. A., Weisz, J. R., Wanitromanee, K., Eastman, K. L., Suwanlert, S., Chaiyasit, W. & Band, E. B. (1999). Culture, coping, and context: Primary and secondary control among Thai and American youth. *Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry*, 40(50), 809-818. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10433414/>
- McCoy, D. L., Luedke, C. L., & Winkle-Wagner, R. (2017). Encouraged or weeded out: Perspectives of students of color in the STEM disciplines on faculty interactions. *Journal of College Student Development*, 58(5), 657–673. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2017.0052>
- Mcdossi, O., Wright, A. L., McDaniel, A., & Roscigno, V. J. (2022). First-generation inequality and college integration. *Social Science Research*, 105, 102698. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2022.102698>.
- McFadden, A., & Curry, J. (2018). *State leader's and school counselor's roles in elementary and middle school career development: Research findings and promising practices*. Techniques. <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Techniques/2018/March/1-p5686>
- McGee, E. O. (2020). *Black, brown, bruised: How racialized STEM education stifles innovation*. Harvard Education Press.
- McKay, S.; Veresova, M., Bailey, E.; Lamblin, M., Robinson, J. (2023). Suicide prevention for international students: A scoping review. *International Journal of Environmental Research & Public Health*, 20, 1500. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20021500>

- McNair, T. B., Bensimon, E. M., & Malcom-Piqueux, L. (2020). *From equity talk to equity walk*. Jossey-Bass Publishing.
- Meara, N. M., Day, J. D., Chalk, L. M., & Phelps, R. E. (1995). Possible selves: Applications for career counseling. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 3(3), 259–277. <https://doi.org/10.1177/106907279500300402>
- Mehta, S. S., Newhold, J. J., & O'Rourke, M. A. (2011). Why do first-generation students fail? *College Student Journal*, 45(1), 20–36.
- Menke, D. J. (2015). The 3-I career advising process and athletes with foreclosed identity. *NACADA Journal*, 35(1), 22–28. <https://doi.org/10.12930/NACADA-14-031>
- Menser, N. J. (2015). *The perfect formula: Benchmarks that best predict retention in selective admission programs* [Unpublished dissertation]. Western Kentucky University.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Mertova, P., & Webster, L. (2020). *Using narrative inquiry as a research method* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Miller, G. A., Galanter, E., & Pribram, K. H. (1960). *Plans and the structure of behavior*. Henry Holt & Co.
- Miller, T. M., & Geraci, L. (2011). Training metacognitive in the classroom: the influence of incentives and feedback on exam prediction. *Metacognition and Learning*, 6(3), 303–314.
- Miller, W. R., & Moyers, T. B. (2017). Motivational interviewing and the clinical science of Carl Rogers. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 85(8), 757–766. [doi:10.1037/ccp0000179](https://doi.org/10.1037/ccp0000179)
- Mitchell, L. K., Levin, A. S., & Krumboltz, J. D. (1999). Planned happenstance: Constructing unexpected career opportunities. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 77, 115–124.
- Mitchell, T. L., Thomas, D., & Smith, J. A. (2018). Unsettling the settlers: Principles of a decolonial approach to creating safe(r) spaces in post-secondary education. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 62(3–4), 350–363. <http://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12287>
- Moody, K., Eiselein, G., Paz, R., Bauer, T., & Cook, K. (2023). Living learning communities for first-year first-generation students. In Troy, C., Jackson, K., Pearce, B., & Rowe, D. (Eds.), *Developing and implementing promising practices and programs for first-generation college students* (pp. 145–163). Routledge Publishing.
- Moore, K. G. (2020). Career advising and development in community colleges: A review of the literature and implications for practice. *Journal of Student Affairs*, 24(2019-2020), 47–60. [https://mountainscholar.org/bitstream/handle/10217/211436/JOUF\\_JOSA\\_v29\\_2019-2020.pdf?sequence=1#page=48](https://mountainscholar.org/bitstream/handle/10217/211436/JOUF_JOSA_v29_2019-2020.pdf?sequence=1#page=48)

- Moskowitz, G. B. & Gesundheit, Y. (2009). Goal priming. In G. B. Moskowitz, H. Grant, G. B. Moskowitz, & H. Grant (Eds.), *Goal priming* (pp. 203–233). Guilford Press.
- Mulhern, C. & Steiner, E. D. (2022). Changes in college and career readiness support during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. RAND Corporation, RR-A827-5, 2022. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA827-5.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA827-5.html)
- Multon, K. D., Heppner, M. J., Gysbers, N. C., Zook, C., & Ellis-Kalton, C. (2001). Client psychological distress: An important factor in career counseling. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 49(4), 324–335.
- NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. (2006). *NACADA concept of academic advising*. <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Pillars/Concept.aspx>
- NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. (2017a). NACADA academic advising core competencies model. <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Pillars/CoreCompetencies.aspx>
- NACADA. (2017b). *NACADA core values of academic advising*. <https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Pillars/CoreValues.aspx>
- NACE: The National Association of Colleges & Employers. (2019). *The top four career competencies employers value most*. <https://www.nacweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/the-four-career-competencies-employers-value-most/>
- NASPA & Uwill. (2023). *Current state of college and student mental health*. <https://vy350.a2cdn1.secureserver.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/NASPA-Uwill-Research-Brief.pdf>
- National Alliance on Mental Illness. (2016). *Engagement: A new standard for mental health care*. <https://www.nami.org/Support-Education/Publications-Reports/Public-Policy-Reports/Engagement-A-New-Standard-for-Mental-Health-Care>
- National Association for Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment (NABITA). (2020). NABITA. <https://www.nabita.org/resources/nabita-2020-survey-data-infographic>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2022a). *ACT scores*. <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=897>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2022b). *Annual earnings by educational attainment*. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cba>
- National Center for Educational Statistics. (2019). *Baccalaureate and Beyond: A first look at the employment and educational experiences of college graduates, 1 Year Later (NCES 2019-106), Table 2*. National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2019241>



- NCDA: National Career Development Association. (2015). *Code of ethics*.  
[https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/asset\\_manager/get\\_file/3395](https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/asset_manager/get_file/3395)
- Neault, L. C., & Piland, W. E. (2014). Facing the closed door: What community college students do after being denied transfer admission. *Community College Review*, 42(3), 184–200.  
<http://doi.org/10.1177/0091552114529813>
- Neely, M. E., Schallert, D. L., Mohammed, S. S., Roberts, R. M., & Chen, Y. (2009). Self-kindness when facing stress: The role of self-compassion, goal regulation, and support in college students' well-being. *Motivation and Emotion*, 33(1), 88–97.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-008-9119-8>
- Nettles, M. T., Scatton, L. H., Steinberg, J. H., & Tyler, L. L. (2011). *Performance and passing rate differences of African American and White prospective teachers on Praxis examinations*. *Education Testing Services*.  
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/j.2333-8504.2011.tb02244.x>
- Nguyen, T., Gasman, M., Lockett, A. W., & Pena, V. (2021). Supporting Black women's pursuits in STEM. *The Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 58, 879–905.
- Niedenthal, P. M., Setterlund, M. B., & Wherry, M. B. (1992). Possible self-complexity and affective reactions to goal-relevant evaluation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 63(1), 5–16. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.63.1.5>
- Niles, S. G., Anderson, W. P., Jr., & Cover, S. (2000). Comparing intake concerns and goals with career counseling concerns. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 49, 135–145.
- Nix, A. N., Tamara, B. J., & Hu, S. (2021). Advising academically underprepared students in the “College for all” era. *Review of Higher Education*, 45(2), 211–238.
- Noble, N., & Winkleman, L. (2016). Using cognitive behavioral theory in career counseling. In J. Hicks, B. Flamez, & M. Mayorga (Eds.), *Career counseling: Theory, practice, and application* (pp. 219–239). Cognella.
- Ntinda, K. (2020). Narrative research. In P. Liamputtong (Ed.), *Handbook of research methods in health social sciences* (pp. 1–12). Springer Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-2779-6\\_79-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-2779-6_79-1).
- Ntoumanis, N., Healy, L. C., Sedikides, C., Duda, J., Stewart, B., Smith, A., & Bond, J. (2014). When the going gets tough: The 'why' of goal striving matters. *Journal of Personality*, 82(3), 225–236. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12047>
- Ntoumanis, N., & Sedikides, C. (2018). Holding on to the goal or letting it go and moving on? A Tripartite Model of Goal Striving. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 27(5), 363–368. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721418770455>
- Nunn, L. M. (2021). *College belonging: How first-year and first-generation students navigate campus life*. Rutgers University Press.

- O'Banion, T. (1972). An academic advising model. *Junior College Journal*, 42(6), 62–69.
- Oettingen, G., & Stephens, E. J. (2009). Fantasies and motivationally intelligent goal setting. In G. B. Moskowitz, H. Grant, G. B. Moskowitz, & H. Grant (Eds.), *The psychology of goals* (pp. 153–178). Guilford Press.
- Oyewole, S. H. (2001). Sustaining minorities in prehealth advising programs: Challenges and strategies for success. In B. D. Smedley, A. Y., Stith, & L. Colburn (Eds.), *The right thing to do, the smart thing to do: Enhancing diversity in the health professions* (pp. 6–9). National Academies Press. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK223624/>
- Oyserman, D., & Lewis, N. A., Jr. (2017). Seeing the destination and the path: Using identity-based motivation to understand and reduce racial disparities in academic achievement. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 11(1), 159–194. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sipr.12030>
- Panke Makela, J. (2006). *Advising community college students: Exploring traditional and emerging theory*. Office of Community College Research and Leadership. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED495222.pdf>
- Pargman, T. C., & McGrath, C. (2021). Mapping the ethics of learning analytics in higher education: A systematic literature review of empirical research. *The Journal of Learning Analytics*, 1929–7750. <https://doi.org/10.18608/jla.2021.1>
- Peraza, P. D. G., & Nguyen, A. M. D. (2019). Latinx first-generation college students' career decision self-efficacy: The role of social support, cultural identity, and cultural values gap. Housel, T. H. (Ed.), *First-generation college student experiences of intersecting marginalities* (pp. 71–88). Peter Lang Publishing.
- Peshkin, A. (1988). In search of subjectivity, one's own. *Educational Researcher*, 17(7), 17–21.
- Pizzolato, J. E. (2007). Complex partnerships: self-authorship and provocative academic advising practices. *NACADA Journal*, 26(1), 32–45. <https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-26.1.32>
- Poynton, T. A., & Owne, L. (2022). Preparing students for uncertain futures: The role of college knowledge and student preferences for receiving college and career information. In E. M. Hines, & L. Owen (Eds.), *Equity-based career development and postsecondary transitions* (pp. 83–107). Information Age Publishing
- Praskova, A., Creed, P. A., & Hood, M. (2013). Facilitating engagement in new career goals: The moderating effects of personal resources and career actions. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 13(2), 115–134. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10775-013-9242-2>
- Preston, D. C. (2017). *Untold barriers for black students in higher education: Placing race at the center of developmental education*. Southern Education Foundation. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED585873.pdf>

- Pryor, R., & Bright, J. (2011). *The chaos theory of careers: A new perspective on working in the twenty-first century*. Routledge.
- Pryor, R., & Bright, J. (2019). Careers as fractal patterns: The chaos theory of careers. In N. Arthur & M. McMahon (Eds.), *Contemporary theories of career development: International perspectives* (pp. 135–152). Routledge.
- Rapley, T. (2020). Sampling strategies in qualitative research. In U. Flick (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data collection* (pp. 49–63). Sage Publications.
- Reid, M. J., & Moore, J. L. (2008). College readiness and academic preparation for postsecondary education: Oral histories of first-generation urban college students. *Urban Education, 43*(2), 240–261. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085907312346>
- Reid, E. R. (2022). Impacts of shortening the length of career guidance: Implications for practice, professionalism, service delivery and social justice. *British Journal of Guidance & Counseling 50*(1), 95–109.
- Rendón, L. I. (2021). A higher calling: Toward a more spacious role for academic advisors. *NACADA Journal, 41*(1), 5–12. <https://doi.org/10.12930/NACADA-21-91>
- Reynolds, A. (2020). *Pre-nursing student progression toward admission to nursing school at Indian University Bloomington: A mixed-methods study exploring anatomy coursework as a prerequisite for admission* [Unpublished dissertation]. Indiana University.
- Rice, K. G., Suh, H., Yang, X., Choe, E., & Davis, D. E. (2016). The advising alliance for international and domestic graduate students: Measurement invariance and implications for academic stress. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 63*(3), 331–342. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/cou0000141>
- Richards, J., & Dede, C. (2020). The 60-year curriculum. *Educause Review, 4*, 25–38.
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human services*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Riessman, C. K. (2014). Analysis of personal narratives. In J. F. Gubrium, J. A. Holstein, A. V. Marvasti, & K. D. McKinney (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of interview research* (2nd ed., pp. 367–380). SAGE Publications.
- Ripp, K., & Braun, L. (2017). Race/ethnicity in medical education: an analysis of a question bank for step 1 of the United States medical licensing examination. *Teaching & Learning in Medicine, 29*(2), 115–122. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10401334.2016.1268056>
- Robertson, C., Lewine, R., & Sommers, A. (2014). Perseveration and academic failure in healthy male undergraduates. *NACADA Journal, 34*(1), 16–21. <https://doi.org/10.12930/NACADA-13-005>

- Rodriguez, J., & Kolls, S. (2010). *Breaking bad news: Delivery techniques that help students make good alternative choices* [NACADA webinar].  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1h29klOQy\\_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1h29klOQy_o)
- Roller, M. R., & Lavrakas, P. J. (2015). *Applied qualitative research design: A total quality framework*. Guilford Press.
- Ross, D. A., Boatright, D., Nunez-Smith, M., Jordan, A., Chekroud, A., & Moore, E. Z. (2017). Differences in words used to describe racial and gender groups in medical student performance evaluations. *PLOS ONE*, *12*(8).  
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0181659>
- Rouland, K. (2017). *Exploring equity issues: Racial identity, academic identity, and academic outcomes for students of color*. Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium.  
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED585539.pdf>
- Roulston, K. (2013). Analyzing interviews. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis* (pp. 297–312). SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Roulston, K., & Choi, M. (2018). Qualitative interviews. In U. Flick (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data collection* (pp. 233–249). Sage Research Methods.
- Roulston, K., & Shelton, S. A. (2015). *Reconceptualizing bias in teaching qualitative research methods*. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *21*(4), 332–342.
- RTI International. (2021). *First-generation college graduates' participation in extracurricular and co-curricular activities as undergraduate students*. NASPA.  
<https://firstgen.naspa.org/files/dmfile/FactSheet-021.pdf>
- Rubin, M. (2012). Social class differences in social integration among students in higher education: A meta-analysis and recommendations for future research. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *5*(1), 22–38. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0026162>
- Rudolph, C. W., Lavigne, K. N., & Zacher, H. (2017). Career adaptability: A meta-analysis of relationships with measures of adaptivity, adapting responses, and adaptation results. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *98*, 17–34. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2016.09.002>
- Ruffalo Noel Levitz. (2015). *Attitudes of second-year college students: That influence college completion*. [http://learn.ruffalonl.com/rs/395-EOG-977/images/2015\\_Attitudes\\_of\\_Second\\_Year\\_Students.pdf](http://learn.ruffalonl.com/rs/395-EOG-977/images/2015_Attitudes_of_Second_Year_Students.pdf)
- Salinas, O. T., & Ross, K. W. (2015). Courageous conversations: Advising the foreclosed student. *NACADA Clearinghouse*.  
<http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Courageous-Conversations-Advising-the-Foreclosed-Student.aspx>

- Savickas, M. (2020). Career construction theory and counseling model. In S. D. Brown, & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work* (pp. 165–200). Wiley.
- Savickas, M. (2002). Career construction: a developmental theory of vocational behavior. In D. Brown and Associates (Eds.), *Career choice and development* (pp. 149–205, 4th ed.). Jossey Bass.
- Savickas, M. L. (1997). Career adaptability: An integrative construct for life-span, life-space theory. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 45, 247–259. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0045.1997.tb00469.x>
- Schiemann, M., & Van Brunt, B. (2018). 2018 NABITA survey of summary of findings. *Journal of Campus Behavioral Intervention*, 6, 42–57.
- Schlossberg, N. K. (2008). *Overwhelmed*. The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.
- Schlossberg, N. K., & Robinson, S. P. (1996). *Going to plan B: How you can cope, regroup, and start your life on a new path*. Simon & Schuster.
- Schmalzbauer, L., & Andrés, A. (2019). Stratified lives: Family, illegality, and the rise of a new educational elite. *Harvard Educational Review*, 89(4), 635-660,700,702.
- Schneider, M., & Sigelman, M. (2018). *Saving the liberal arts*. American Enterprise Institute.
- Schreier, M. (2018). Sampling and generalization. In U. Flick (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data collection* (pp. 84–97). Sage Research Methods.
- Schreiner, L. A. (2013). Strengths-based advising. In J. K. Drake, P. Jordan, & M. A. Miller (Eds.), *Academic advising approaches: Strategies that teach students to make the most of college* (pp.105–120). Jossey-Bass.
- Schudde, L., Jabbar, H., & Hartman, C. (2021). How political and ecological contexts shape community college transfer. *Sociology of Education*, 94(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040720954817>
- Schudde, L. T., Ryu, W., & Raymond, S. B. (2020). Major movement: Examining meta-major switching at community colleges. *Review of Higher Education*, 44(2), 189–235.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2007). *The SAGE dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Selzer, R. A., & Khan, R. (2022). Developing the AAMC competencies with pre-health professional students through the use of the Intercultural Development Inventory. *Handbook of Research on Development Competencies on Pre-Health programs*. <https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/developing-the-aamc-competencies-with-pre-health-professional-students-through-the-use-of-the-intercultural-development-inventory/305091>

- Severy, L. J. & Slinger, P. J. (1996). MAPP (monitoring academic progress policy): providing advising direction through the use of a degree auditing system. *NACADA Journal*, 16(2), 39–45. <https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-16.2.39>
- Seymour, E., Hunter, A., & Weston, T. J. (2019). Why we are still talking about leaving. In E. Seymour & A. Hunter (Eds.), *Talking about leaving revisited: Persistence, relocation, and loss in undergraduate STEM education* (pp. 1–54). Springer Publishing.
- Shaffer, L. S., & Zalewski, J. M. (2011a). Career advising in a VUCA environment. *NACADA Journal*, 31(1), 64–74.
- Shaffer, L. S., & Zalewski, J. M. (2011b). “It’s what I have always wanted to do.” Advising the foreclosure student. *NACADA Journal*, 31(2), 62–77. <https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-31.2.62>
- Shin, Y., & Lee, J. (2019). Self-focused attention and career anxiety: The mediating role of career adaptability. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 67(2), 110–125.
- Schutt, D. A. (2018). *A strength-based approach to career development using appreciative inquiry*. National Career Development Center.
- Slaton, A. E., (2010). *Race, rigor, and selectivity in U.S. engineering: The history of an occupational color line*. Harvard University Press.
- Smith, A. A. (2021). Long wait for students to enroll in some community college nursing programs. *Ed Source: Highlight Strategies for Student Success*. <https://edsources.org/2021/community-college-students-look-to-improve-access-to-enter-some-campus-nursing-programs/662289>
- Smith, J. L., Cech, E., Metz, A., Huntoon, M., & Moyer, C. (2014). Giving back or giving up: Native American student experiences in science and engineering. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 20(3), 413–429.
- Sokolow, B. A., Van Brunt, B., Lewis, W. S., Schiemann, M., Murphy, A., & Molnar, J. (2019). *The NABITA risk rubric*. [https://www.campusuicidepreventionva.org/NaBITA\\_2019\\_Whitepaper\\_Final1.pdf](https://www.campusuicidepreventionva.org/NaBITA_2019_Whitepaper_Final1.pdf)
- Solberg, V. S. H., Donnelly, H. K., Kroyer-Kubicek, R., Basha, R., Curtis, G., Jaques, E., & Schreiber, K. (2022). *The condition of career readiness in the United States*. Coalition for Career Development. <https://irp.cdn-website.com/81ac0dbc/files/uploaded/CCDC-Report-nopics-V2.pdf>
- Solóranzo, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 69(1/2), 60–73.

- Soria, K. M., & Stebleton, M., (2013). Major decisions: Motivations for selecting a major, satisfaction, and belonging. *NACADA Journal*, 33(2), 29–43. <https://doi.org/10.12930/NACADA-13-018>
- Soria, K. & Bultmann, M. (2014). Supporting working-class students in higher education. *NACADA Journal*, 34(2), 51–62. <https://doi.org/10.12930/NACADA-13-017>
- Spence, J. M., & Scobie, N. A. (2013). Socratic advising. In J. K. Drake, P. Jordan, & M. A. Miller (Eds.), *Academic advising approaches: Strategies that teach students to make the most of college* (pp. 197–222). Jossey-Bass.
- Spencer, S. J., Steele, C. M., & Quinn, D. M. (1999). Stereotype threat and women's math performance. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 35, 4–28.
- Stachl, C. N., & Baranger, A. M. (2020). Sense of belonging within the graduate community of a research-focused STEM department: Quantitative assessment using a visual narrative and item response theory. *PLOS One*, 15(5). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0233431>
- Steele, C. M., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test of performance of African-Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69, 797–811.
- Steele, G. & White, E. R. (2019). Leadership in higher education: Insights from academic advisors. *The Mentor: Innovative Scholarship on Academic Advising*, 21(2019), 1–10.
- Steele, G. E., & Kennedy, G. J., & Gordon, V. N. (1993). The retention of major changers. *Journal of College Student Development*, 34, 58–62.
- Steele, G. E., & McDonald, M. L. (2000). Advising students in transition. In V. N. Gordon & W. R. Habley (Eds.), *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook* (pp. 144–162). Jossey-Bass.
- Steele, G. E., & McDonald, M. L. (2008). Moving through college. In V. N. Gordon, W. R. Habley, & T. J. Grites (Eds.), *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook* (2nd ed., pp. 142–156). Jossey-Bass.
- Stitt, R. L., & Happel-Parkins, A. (2019). "Sounds like something a white man should be doing": The shared experiences of black women engineering students. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 88(1), 62–74.
- Stowe, D. E. (1996). Postmodern view of advisement in higher education. *NACADA Journal*, 16(2), 16–18. <https://meridian.allenpress.com/nacada-journal/issue/16/2>
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2016). *Student development theory in higher education. A sociological psychological approach*. Routledge Publishing.
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2019). *College students' sense of belonging: A key to educational success for all students* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

- Strayhorn, T. L. (2022). Unraveling the relationship among engagement, involvement, and sense of belonging. In E. M. Bentrin & G. W. Henning (Eds.), *The impact of sense of belonging in college* (pp. 21–34). Stylus.
- Streufert, B. (2019). Advising alternatives: A case study. *NACDA Review*, *1*(1), 14–29. <https://doi.org/10.12930/NACR-18-1011>
- Sultana, R. G. (2022). Four 'dirty words' in career guidance: from common sense to good sense. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10775-022-09550-2>
- Super, D. E. (1953). A theory of vocational development. *American Psychologist*, *8*, 185–190. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0056046>
- Szelenyi, K., & Chang, J. C. (2002). ERIC review: Educating immigrants: The community college role. *Community College Review*, *30*(2), 55–73.
- Talamantes, E., Henderson, M. C., Fancher, T. L., Mullan, F. (2019). Closing the gap—making medical school admissions more equitable. *New England Journal of Medicine*, *380*(9), 803–805. <https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMp1808582>.
- Tang, M. (2019). *Career development and counseling: Theory and practice in a multicultural world*. Sage Publications.
- Taylor, C. S., & Hapes, R. L. (2023). Voices from the field: Working together to support students in crisis. In S. M. Campell, C. S. Taylor, & M. Dial (Eds.), *Academic advising administration: Essential knowledge and skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (2nd ed., pp. 157–161). Routledge.
- Thiry, H. (2019). Issues with high school preparation and transition to college. In E. Seymour & A. Hunter (Eds.), *Talking about leaving revisited: Persistence, relocation, and loss in undergraduate STEM education* (pp. 137–148). Spring Publishing.
- Thiry, H., & Weston, T. J. (2019). Choosing STEM majors. In E. Seymour & A. Hunter (Eds.), *Talking about leaving revisited: Persistence, relocation, and loss in undergraduate STEM education* (pp. 115–136). Spring Publishing.
- Thompson, M. N., Her, P., Fetter, A. K., & Perez-Chavez, J. (2019). College student psychological distress: Relationship to self-esteem and career decision self-efficacy beliefs. *The Career Development Quarterly*, *67*(4), 282–297. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cdq.12199>
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.
- Toretzky, C., Mutha, S., & Coffman, J. (2018). *Breaking barriers for underrepresented minorities in the health professions*. Healthcare Center at the University of California, San Francisco.



- <https://collections.nlm.nih.gov/master/borndig/101745455/Breaking%20Barriers%20for%20Underrepresented%20Minorities%20in%20the%20Health%20Professions%20.pdf>
- Torpey, E. (2016, September). *Will I need a license or certificate for my job?* Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2016/article/will-i-need-a-license-or-certification.htm>
- Trejo, S. (2016). An econometric analysis of the major choice of first-generation college students. *The Developing Economist*, 3(1).  
<http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1407/2/first-generation-college-students-college-major-choices>
- Troxel, W. G., & Kyei-Blankson, L. (2020). *The "typical" advising session: An exploration of consistency*. NACADA Center for Research at Kansas State
- Twale, D. J., De Luca, B. M. (2008). *Faculty incivility: The rise of academic bully culture and what to do about it*. Jossey Bass.
- Tyler, L. (2011). *Toward increasing teacher diversity: Targeting support and intervention for teacher licensure candidates*. Educational Testing Services.  
<https://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/ETS-NEA-2011-01.pdf>
- Tyton Partners. (2020). *Driving toward a degree: Collaboration is crucial to holistic student supports*. <https://www.advisingsuccessnetwork.org/foundational-context-and-planning/collaboration-is-crucial-to-holistic-student-supports-drivetodegree/>
- Tyton Partners. (2022). *Driving toward a degree*. Advising Success Network.  
<https://www.advisingsuccessnetwork.org/structures-and-processes/driving-toward-a-degree-2022/>
- Vaccaro, A., & Newman, B. (2022). Theoretical foundations for sense of belonging in college. In E. M. Bentrin & G. W. Henning (Eds.), *The impact of sense of belonging in college* (pp. 3–20). Stylus.
- Vacha-Haase, T., Davenport, D. S., & Kerewsky, S. D. (2004). Problematic students: Gatekeeping practices of academic professional psychology programs. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 35, 115–122.
- Vagle, M. D. (2018). *Crafting phenomenological research* (2nd Ed.). Routledge Publishing.
- Varney, J. (2013). Proactive advising. In J. K. Drake, P. Jordan, & M. A. Miller (Eds.), *Academic advising approaches: Strategies that teach students to make the most of college* (pp. 137–154). Jossey-Bass.
- Vasileiou, K., Barnett, J., Thorpe, S., & Young, T. (2018). Characterizing and justifying sample size sufficiency in interview-based studies: systematic analysis of qualitative health research over 15-year period. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 18, 148.  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-018-0594-7>

- Velez, E. D. (2020). *How can high school counseling shape students' postsecondary attendance?* National Association for College Admission Counseling. <https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/publications/research/hsls-phase-iii.pdf>
- Vespia, K. M., Freis, S. D., Arrowood, R. M. (2018). Faculty and career advising: Challenges, opportunities, and outcome assessment. *Teaching of Psychology, 45*(10), 24–31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0098628317744962>
- Vohs, K. D., Park, J. K., & Schmeichel, B. J. (2013). Self-affirmation can enable goal disengagement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 104*(1), 14–27.
- Walker, R. V., Zelin, A. I., Behrman, C., & Strnad, R. (2017). Qualitative analysis of student perceptions: “Some advisors care. some don't.” *NACADA Journal, 37*(2), 44–54. <https://doi.org/10.12930/NACADA-15-027>
- Wang, X.(2020). *On my own: The challenge and promise of building equitable STEM transfer pathways*. Harvard Education Press.
- Wang, J. Y., Lin, H., Lewis, P. Y., Fetterman, D. M., & Gesundheit, N. (2015). Is a career in medicine the right choice? The impact of a physician shadowing program on undergraduate premedical students. *Academic Medicine, 90*(5), 629–633.
- Wedge, J. R. (2013). Admission criteria, program outcomes, and NCLEX-RN (RTM) success in second degree students. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED559833>
- Wee, S. (2013). Development and initial validation of the Willingness to Compromise Scale. *Journal of Career Assessment, 21*(4), 487–501. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072712475281>
- Weissman, S. (2021). Struggling to fill a dangerous and growing labor gap. *Inside Higher Education*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/11/04/colleges-and-universities-strive-graduate-more-nurses>
- Weston, T. J., Seymour, E., Koch, A. K., & Drake, B. (2019). Weed-out classes and their consequences. In E. Seymour & A. Hunter (Eds.), *Talking about leaving revisited: Persistence, relocation, and loss in undergraduate STEM education* (pp. 197–244). Spring Publishing.
- Williams, M., Kim, E. J., Pappas, K., Uwemedimo, Marrast, L., Pekmezaris, R., & Martinez, J. (2020). The impact of United States Medical Licensing Exam step 1 cutoff scores on recruitment of underrepresented minorities in medicine: A retrospective cross-sectional study. *Health Science Reports, 3*e2161. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hsr2.161>
- Windchief, S. (2018). Stealing horses: Indigenous student metaphors for success in graduate education. In R. S. Minthorn & H. J. Shotton (Eds.), *Reclaiming indigenous research in higher education* (pp. 76–87). Rutgers University Press.

- Winnicott, D. (1960). The theory of the parent-child relationship. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 41, 585–595.
- Winterer, E. R., Froyd, J. E., Maura, B., Martin, J. P., & Foster, M. (2020). Factors influencing the academic success of Latinx students matriculating at 2-year and transferring to 4-year US institutions—implications for STEM majors: A systematic review of the literature. *International Journal of STEM Education*, 7(1).
- Wissel, A. M. (2015). Gatekeeping in counselor education: Experiences of terminating students for nonacademic concerns. *Vistas Online*, 8. [https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/vistas/article\\_08.pdf?sfvrsn=51a9fd5\\_12](https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/vistas/article_08.pdf?sfvrsn=51a9fd5_12)
- Wrosch, C., Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Schulz, R. (2003). The importance of goal disengagement in adaptive self-regulation: When giving up is beneficial. *Self And Identity*, 2(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860309021>
- Wrosch, C., & Scheier, M. F. (2020). Adaptive self-regulation, subjective well-being, and physical health: The importance of goal adjustment capacities. In A. J. Elliot (Ed.), *Advances in motivation science; advances in motivation science* (pp. 199–238). Academic Press.
- Wu, I. H. C., Bathje, G. J., Kalibatseva, Z., Sung, D., Leong, F. T. L., & Collins-Eaglin, J. (2017). Stigma, mental health, and counseling service use: A person-centered approach to mental health stigma profiles. *Psychological Services*, 14(4), 490–501. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ser0000165>
- Wurster, K. G., Kivlighan, D. M., & Foley-Nicpon, M. (2021). Does person-group fit matter? A further examination of hope and belongingness in academic enhancement groups. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 68(1), 67–76. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/cou0000437>
- Yosso, T. (2005). Whose culture has capital A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 8, 69–91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006>
- Zacher, H. (2016). Within-person relationships between daily individual and job characteristics and daily manifestations of career adaptability. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 92, 105–115. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2015.11.013>
- Zacher, H., Ambiel, R. M., & Noronha, A. P. (2015). Career adaptability and career entrenchment. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 88, 164–173. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2015.03.006>
- Zhang, J., Bray, B. C., Zhang, M., & Lanza, S. T. (2015). Personality profiles and frequent heavy drinking in young adulthood. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 80, 18–21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2015.01.054>

- Zhang, C., Kuncel, N. R., Sackett, P. R. (2020). The process of attrition in pre-medical studies: A large-scale analysis across 102 schools. *PLOS One*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0243546>
- Zhang, J., Bray, B. C., Zhang, M., & Lanza, S. T. (2015). Personality profiles and frequent heavy drinking in young adulthood. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *80*, 18–21.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2015.01.054>.
- Zilvinkis, J., Kinzie, J., Daday, J., O'Donnell, K., & Vande Zande, C. (2022). *Delivering on the promise of high-impact practices: research and models for achieving equity, fidelity, impact, and scale*. Stylus Publishing.

## Appendix A - Email Invitation and Reminder

### Initial Email Invitation

Date: TBD

Message Details

From: Billie Streufert <bstreufert@ksu.edu>

To: Participant List

Subject: Research Study: Change of Major Student Experiences

Dear Student:

Students change their majors for a variety of reasons. Some are pulled by various possibilities. Others, however, are pushed by pain and forced to pursue alternative academic programs after the institution denies them admission or progression in their initially chosen major.

This study, which is required as a part of my dissertation at Kansas State University, examines the lived experiences of students who encountered unplanned educational or vocational changes. To help higher education understand ways they can better support students as they pursue their goals, I invite you to meet with me via Zoom for an individual conversation related your lived experiences. Your voice is an important one!

Your responses remain confidential. I will not publish any identifiable information (e.g., name, institution attended) connected to your responses. Some of these questions may remind you of any disorientation or distress you may have experienced when you changed majors, especially if the change was unforeseen or unanticipated. You can take a break at any point during the interview or elect to end your participation.

Individuals who participate in the duration of the study will receive a \$50 giftcard to Amazon. Additionally, your participation enables institutions to advance the well-being and persistence of other students who may also change their major. I appreciate your consideration given the benefits your responses provide to academic advisors and students.

Best,  
Billie

### Frequently Asked Question

#### **I didn't change my major during college. Do you still want me to meet with me?**

No. If you graduated with the major you declared at the point of entry, your experiences do not align with the purposes of this study.

#### **I am not currently enrolled in college. Do you still want my responses?**

Yes. This study has not limited participation to individuals who are enrolled in college. The voice of students who graduated are important. You offer unique perspectives about what colleges did to help or hinder your success. Please consider meeting with me given your distinct

perspectives.

**Who is conducting this study?**

I am completing this study as a part of my Ph.D. in academic advising leadership at Kansas State University. While I remain employed by Augustana, they will not have access to or any knowledge of who participated in this study.

**How will my answers be used?**

I will review the interview responses I collect and report on collective themes or individual responses that capture important considerations academic and career advisors must consider as they support students in the future. Although narrative quotes or phrases may be used to capture participants' lived experiences, nothing else will be shared. I will not reveal your identity throughout the duration of this study.

**Who will see my responses?**

Only my major professor and I will have access to your interview responses. Your data will remain secure and private.

**Who can I contact with questions or concerns?**

Please contact me or my major professor if you have questions about the study itself.

Lead Investigator:

Billie Streufert

[bstreufert@ksu.edu](mailto:bstreufert@ksu.edu)

605.310.9901

Major Professor

Dr. Wendy G. Troxel

[wgtroxel@ksu.edu](mailto:wgtroxel@ksu.edu)

785.532.5127

If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact:

Lisa Rubin, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506

(785) 532-3224

Brad Woods, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance

203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506

(785) 532-3224

Besides talking about your lived experiences with the researcher, it may also be beneficial to speak with a mental health counselor. Kansas State University provides free support to any student. Visit <https://www.k-state.edu/counseling/> or contact the Counseling Office ([counsel@k-state.edu](mailto:counsel@k-state.edu) | 785.532.6927) to learn more.

## **Reminder Email (Sent One Week After Launch)**

Date: TBD

Message Details

From: Billie Streufert <bstreufert@ksu.edu>

To: Participant List

Subject: Research Study: Change of Major Student Experiences

Dear Student:

Last week you received an invitation to meet with me to explore your lived experiences as entered a new educational program and changed majors. Please consider participating in this study to provide valuable information about ways institutions can better support students as they pursue their goals. I care about your experiences and want to amplify your important voice.

Participation only takes one hour of your time and is completely confidential. Individuals who participate in the duration of the study will receive a \$50 giftcard to Amazon. No contact information or identifiable information will be collected or connected to interview responses.

I will share my findings with you throughout the study so you can validate and revise your comments however you desire. The final publication will be available at the Kansas State University library at the end of the calendar year.

I appreciate your consideration and participation.

Sincerely,  
Billie Streufert

### **Frequently Asked Question**

#### **I didn't change my major during college. Do you still want me to meet with me?**

No. If you graduated with the major you declared at the point of entry, your experiences do not align with the purposes of this study.

#### **I am not currently enrolled in college. Do you still want my responses?**

Yes. This study has not limited participation to individuals who are enrolled in college. The voice of students who graduated are important. You offer unique perspectives about what colleges did to help or hinder your success. Please consider meeting with me given your distinct perspectives.

#### **Who is conducting this study?**

I am completing this study as a part of my Ph.D. in academic advising leadership at Kansas State University. While I remain employed by Augustana, they will not have access to or any knowledge of who participated in this study.

**How will my answers be used?**

I will review the interview responses I collect and report on collective themes or individual responses that capture important considerations academic and career advisors must consider as they support students in the future. Although narrative quotes or phrases may be used to capture participants' lived experiences, nothing else will be revealed. I will not reveal your identity throughout the duration of this study.

**Who will see my responses?**

Only my major professor and I will have access to your interview responses. Your data will remain secure and private.

**Who can I contact with questions or concerns?**

Please contact me or my major professor if you have questions about the study itself.

Lead Investigator:

Billie Streufert

[bstreufert@ksu.edu](mailto:bstreufert@ksu.edu)

605.310.9901

Major Professor

Dr. Wendy G. Troxel

[wgtroxel@ksu.edu](mailto:wgtroxel@ksu.edu)

785.532.5127

If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact:

Lisa Rubin, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506

(785) 532-3224

Brad Woods, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance

203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506

(785) 532-3224

Besides talking about your lived experiences with the researcher, it may also be beneficial to speak with a mental health counselor. Kansas State University provides free support to any student. Visit <https://www.k-state.edu/counseling/> or contact the Counseling Office ([counsel@k-state.edu](mailto:counsel@k-state.edu) | 785.532.6927) to learn more.



## Appendix B - Informed Consent

**Project Title:** Involuntary Major Changes: Student Narrative about What Helped and Hindered their Adaptability

**Project Approval Date/Expiration Date:** TBD based on approval letter

**Length of Study:** Three Interviews Not to Exceed One Hour

**Principle Investigator:** Dr. Wendy G. Troxel (785.532.5127 | wgtroxel@ksu.edu)

**IRB Chair Contact:**

Lisa Rubin, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224; Brad Woods, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of students who change their majors during college and the distress or disruptions that may occur as the result of such changes. Your participation can help college staff support other students who encounter events like you did.

**Procedures of the Study:** If you elect to participate, you will meet individually with me for three individual interviews lasting no more than sixty minutes. I will transcribe the conversation for reporting purposes. We can meet via Zoom or the local library, depending on your geographical location. I will ask you questions about events that occurred in college related to choosing a major or career and the meaning you prescribe to these situations when you construct the story of your college education. Your name and demographic information about you (e.g., program of study, institution, race, gender) will not be used. You are not required to answer every question during the interviews.

**Alternative Treatment:** Besides talking about your lived experiences with the researcher, it may also be beneficial to speak with a mental health counselor. Kansas State University provides free support to any student. Visit <https://www.k-state.edu/counseling/> or contact the Counseling Office (counsel@k-state.edu | 785.532.6927) to learn more.

**Risks of Participation:** Some of these questions may remind you of the disorientation or distress you may have experienced during college. You can take a break at any point during the interviews or elect to end your participation. It is possible that you may experience distress as you relive or describe past events. You also may discover new insight that is helpful as you construct your past, present, and future career story.

**Benefits Anticipated:** Besides the \$50 Amazon gift card, you may benefit from additional clarity as you reflect on your previous career transitions and future vocational goals. Additionally, your participation enables higher education to design its services and programs to support students who are clarifying their goals and coping with vocational change.

**Confidentiality:** Your participation in this study is voluntary and confidential. You may withdraw from this study at any time. You will have the opportunity to review the narrative that I include in findings based on your responses. Your name and institution will remain confidential and not be included in the manuscript. All your information is stored in an encrypted secure file.

If you have questions about your participation in this study, please contact the Kansas State University Institutional Review Board at [comply@k-state.edu](mailto:comply@k-state.edu) and 785-532-3224. By signing your name and verbally agreeing, you consent to your participation in this study.

**Terms of Participation:** I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below or in the Zoom chat indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature (printed or electronic) acknowledges that I have viewed and received a copy of this consent form.

---

Participant Name

---

Participant Signature

---

Date

# Appendix C - Interview Guide

## Interview Guide

In this interview guide, I outline the questions I may ask participants. Given the emergent design of this study, this is not an exhaustive list of questions.

### Interview #1

After I thank participants for their time, affirm the importance of their lived experiences, and review the informed consent form, I will read the following reminder about mandatory reporting and mental health resources:

*As a reminder, note that your responses are confidential unless you indicate you may harm yourself or others. Besides talking about your lived experiences with me, it may also be beneficial to speak with a mental health counselor. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides free tele-support to individuals with mental health needs. Simply call 988 for immediate assistance. I can also help you locate free mental health resources in your region.*

I will then ask the following questions:

1. What inspired you to enroll at <insert name of institution>?
2. Tell me about how your high school prepared you to attend and apply to college. (RQ 1b)  
(Potential follow-up questions: Did you take any AP classes? How many science courses did you take during high school? Describe your interactions with your school counselor.)
3. What difficulties (if any) did you endure before you came to college? (RQ1)
4. What went well during college? (RQ 1)
5. What would you change if you had a magic wand? (RQ 1)
6. What process did you use to select your initially chosen major? (RQ1)
  - a. To what degree did you explore majors or careers before you began college?
  - b. How (if at all) did your institution encourage you to explore or confirm your major or career goals when you first began college?
7. What characteristics did you especially find appealing about your initially chosen career? (RQ2)
8. Tell me about a time you felt like you belonged in your initial major. (RQ1a, 1b)
9. Tell me about a time you did not sense that you belonged in your initial major. (RQ1a, 1b)

10. Would you be interested in meeting again to describe your experiences before, during, and after you changed majors, as well as how you formed new career goals?

### **Interview #2**

Prior to this interview, students will complete the worksheet provided in Appendix D. I will begin this interview by again reviewing the purpose of this study and informed consent. I will read the following reminder about mandatory reporting and mental health resources:

*As a reminder, note that your responses are confidential unless you indicate you may harm yourself or others. Besides talking about your lived experiences with me, it may also be beneficial to speak with a mental health counselor. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides free tele-support to individuals with mental health needs. Simply call 988 for immediate assistance. I can also help you locate free mental health resources in your region.*

I will further unpack the events they describe in the worksheet by asking some of the follow-up questions below, depending on their responses.

### **Before the Change**

1. Worksheet: Describe the event(s) that occurred that cause you to become aware that you might not be able to pursue your intended major?
  - a. What happened, and where were you?
  - b. What occurred before the event?
  - c. What happened after the event?
  - d. Who were the significant people in the event?
  - e. What did they do that was helpful or unhelpful? (If feedback was provided, I will follow-up to explore the type of feedback and how it was delivered.)
  - f. What did you feel during the event?
  - g. What did you think during the event?
  - h. What did you do during the event?
2. What prevented you from securing admission or remaining in your initially chosen major? (RQ1b)
3. What campus resources did you use in the semesters leading up to the change of major? (RQ1a)

### **During the Change**

4. Worksheet: How were you notified that you were denied admission or unable to persist in your chosen program? (RQ1)
  - a. What occurred before the event?
  - b. What happened after the event?
  - c. Who were the significant people in the event?
  - d. What did they do that was helpful or unhelpful? (If feedback was provided, I will follow-up to explore the type of feedback and how it was delivered.)
  - e. What did you feel during the event?
  - f. What did you think during the event?

- g. What did you do during the event?
5. Sometimes there are ripple effects to change. How did the immediate change of major impact other areas of your life?

### **After Notification**

6. What happened after the institution placed you in an alternative program? (RQ1)
- a. Describe the event(s) that stand out to you as impactful.
  - b. Who or what helped or hindered your coping?
  - c. What were your feelings?
  - d. What were you thinking?
  - e. What did you do?
7. Worksheet: How did you a) identify, b) commit to, and c) pursue new career goals either during college and/or thereafter? (RQ2)
- a. What process did you deploy to identify your options and decide?
  - b. What characteristics were especially important to you about your newly chosen career?
  - c. How long did it take to both identify and commit to a new career? Was there a delay between identifying and committing to a new career?
  - d. Who (e.g., academic advisors, career services, professors, resident assistants) or what, if anything, helped you?
  - e. What hindered your coping?
8. Can you recall an instance(s) you considered leaving college because of the major change? If so, tell me about it. (RQ3) What helped you persist to graduation despite the change of major? (RQ3)
9. Worksheet: If you could go back, what advice would you give yourself?
10. What else would you like me to know that we have not already discussed?

### **Interview #3**

In this final conversation, I will once again review the purpose of the study and informed consent. Before I begin, I will read the following reminder about mandatory reporting and mental health resources:

*As a reminder, note that your responses are confidential unless you indicate you may harm yourself or others. Besides talking about your lived experiences with me, it may also be beneficial to speak with a mental health counselor. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides free tele-support to individuals with mental health needs. Simply call 988 for immediate assistance. I can also help you locate free mental health resources in your region.*

1. Tell me about your current post-graduation vocational goals.

2. How did your experience in your new major compare to your experiences in your first major?
3. What meaning did you derive (if at all) from your new educational program both during and after college?
  - a) How did you initially perceive the new major?
  - b) how did your understanding change over time? (RQ4)
4. If anything, what do you think you lost because of this transition?
5. What remained the same?
6. What did you discover or gain as a result of the change? (RQ4)
7. Were you asked by employers or graduate schools during interviews to describe what inspired you to choose your major? If so, how did you respond? (RQ4)
8. Some people use language such as “plan B” or “back-up plan” to describe your career. What do you think about this language? What would you want scholars who use this language to know about your current experiences now? (RQ4)
9. How satisfied are you with your current job or career? Do you ever have regrets (e.g., think “if only...”) or wonder what your life would be like had you earned a degree in your initial major? (RQ4)
10. To what extent did your involuntary transition during college prepare you for other unforeseen changes later in life (e.g., COVID)? (RQ4)
11. What do you want career and academic advisors to know to meet students’ needs in the future?
12. What else would you like me to know that we have not already discussed?



- 13. What happened after the institution placed you in an alternative program?**  
Consider the helpful or unhelpful events that occurred immediately after you changed your major or any landmark events thereafter. What inspired you to choose this event? How did it help or hinder you? Who were the significant people in the event, and what role did they play? What were your emotions, thoughts, or decisions during the event? How did this event influence the path of your life or current career?
14. What process did you use to arrive at new career goals either during college and/or thereafter? How long did it take? What attributes remain important to you about your chosen career?
15. If anything, what do you think you lost because of this transition? What remained the same, and what was found?
16. Using the space below, write a few sentences to your first-year freshmen self. What advice would you give yourself, knowing how your journey unfolded?
17. How satisfied were/are you with the major you completed at the time of graduation?
- |                       |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| a. Very Satisfied     | c. A Little Satisfied   |
| b. Somewhat Satisfied | d. Not Satisfied at All |
18. How satisfied are you with your current job or career?
- |                       |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| a. Very Satisfied     | c. A Little Satisfied   |
| b. Somewhat Satisfied | d. Not Satisfied at All |



## **Appendix E - Demographic & Background Information Form**

1. Chosen Pseudonym: To remain confidential, you get to give yourself a first name that I will use in the study. Your true name is known only to me. Which name would you like me to use?
2. Were you the first one in your family to graduate and earn a bachelor's degree?  
Yes  
No  
Not Sure
3. Did you receive a Pell grant during college?  
Yes  
No  
Not Sure
4. Please describe your racial and ethnic background.
5. Did you work part-time during college? If so, where, and how many hours?
6. As you feel comfortable, please describe anything you would like me to know about your identities that influenced your lived experiences during college.

## Appendix F - Thematic Analysis Memo Writing

Table III: Six-Part Thematic Analysis (Riessman, 2008, p. 92)

Narrative Elements	Definitions	Notes from Interviews
Abstract (AB)	Summarizes point of the narrative	
Observation (OB)	Provide time, place, situation, participants	
Complicating action (CA)	Describes sequence of actions, turning point, crisis, problem	
Evaluation (EV)	Narrator's commentary on complicating action	
Resolution (RE)	Resolves plot	
Coda	Ends narratives, returns listener to present	

Copyright Riessman, 2008