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A Case Study Examining High-Achieving Black and Latinx Students' Reasons for Using or Not

Using Academic Support Services

A Doctoral Dissertation Presented by

Nafeeza Uddin-Schmidt

Submitted to the Office Educational Leadership for Diverse Learning Communities

Molloy College

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 2022

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2022



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

The dissertation of **Nafeeza Uddin-Schmidt** entitled: *"A Case Study Examining Black and Latinx Sophomore Students' Reasons for Using Academic Support Services or Not"* in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the School of Education and Human Services has been read and approved by the Committee:

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Abstract

Black and Latinx students are completing college at lower rates compared to White and Asian students. Many studies have documented the role of academic support services in helping students successfully complete college. Yet, many of the support services are built into students' course schedules during freshman year to help transition to college. During the sophomore year, many of those supports are no longer built in, and students must seek them out themselves.

Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the reasons high-achieving Black and Latinx students opt in or opt out of using academic support services and whether their reasons are related to cultural wealth, stereotype threat, and/or the culture of a predominantly White institution (PWI). Interviews were conducted with 14 students and 5 administrators.

Students who used the tutoring or writing center found it helpful to pass a course or improve their writing. Other students noted they participated in an academic support program because they wanted to make friends with students of color on campus. The reasons students opted out of using support services included the availability of tutors, seeking help from family and peers, and wanting to figure things out on their own. Some students reported negative racial experiences at the PWI, which impacted their decision to use academic support services. Both students and administrators overwhelmingly indicated the need for an increase in diversity. Administrators believed Black and Latinx students opt out of using services due to not knowing how to access the services, the extent of the services available, and the location of the services—this contradicts what the students said. The administrators had many stereotypes about Black and Latinx, first-generation students accessing cultural wealth instead of the formal support services available at the college, showing that they are not well informed about students of color on campus. Results of this study can inform administrators on the perceptions and experiences of students as well as

how academic support services are offered and received so that more students in need of these services feel comfortable accessing them and succeed in completing their college degree.

Keywords: academic support services, Black students, Latinx students, stereotype threat

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Thank you to my husband for supporting me, believing in me, having faith in me, and most importantly, taking care of our family so I could pursue my dream of completing a doctorate. To my children, Ashton and Avery, you are truly the best part of me. May you always pursue your dreams and know your challenges do not define you, may they fuel your drive to success. Be who you are meant to be!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

College enrollment rates in the United States have increased over the past 30 years (Engle & Theokas, 2010). With a growing global economy, a college degree is needed for a competitive workforce and provides monetary benefits (Mudge & Higgins, 2011). Between 2003 and 2013, the college enrollment of Latinx students increased from 23% to 34%, while the rates for Black students “were not measurably different” (Musu-Gillete et al., 2016, p. 89). However, there is a racial gap in college completion rates for Black and Latinx students. For example, students who matriculated in 2010, only 40% Black and 54% Latinx students received their bachelor’s degree within six years compared to 74% of Asians and 64% of Whites (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019). One solution to this problem is academic support services (Cooper, 2010; Halcrow & Iiams, 2011; Lim, 2014). Yet at an institution where the majority of the student population is White, high-achieving students of color might experience stereotype threat at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) that has voluntary support services and programs (Steele & Aaronson, 1995). The culture of a PWI can create an unwelcoming and lonely environment (Adams & McBrayer, 2020; Turner, 1994). As a result, Black and Latinx students might draw on cultural wealth resources such as peers and family members when struggling academically or wanting to increase their grade in a course (Da Graca & Doherty, 2016; Yosso, 1995). This study sought to examine how high-achieving Black and Latinx students navigated voluntary academic support services at a PWI.

By revealing how high-achieving Black and Latinx students make sense of academic support services at a PWI and their decision to use or not use academic support services, this study adds to the literature on two different marginalized groups of students: Black and Latinx. In addition, this study contributes to the stereotype threat framework by adding a different context, qualitative research without a testing component, not previously explored with this theory. The

findings of this study can help guide how academic support services are promoted, implemented, and accessed.

Previous studies have documented the positive impact support services have had on helping students achieve academic success and complete a college degree. These support services include tutoring (Abrams & Jernigan 1984; Cooper, 2010; Gahan-Retch et al., 1989; Halcrow & Iiams, 2011), a sense of belonging (Tinto, 2006; Walter & Cohen, 2007), academic advisement (Crockett & Levitz, 1983; Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Kot, 2014; Pardee, 2004), and programs offering financial support (Lim et al., 2014). Yet, despite offering these services on college campuses, including PWIs, very little research exists on Black and Latinx students' sense making of these services—specifically, what are students' perceptions of academic support services/programs and their decision-making process to opt in or opt out of using these services?

Theoretical Frameworks

The effect of academic support services on completion rates are indisputable. Studies have also documented the racial hostility Black and Latinx students have experienced while attending PWIs, which led to a lack of commitment to their academic studies and a decreased sense of belonging to the institution, which affected persistence and success (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Elkins et al., 2000; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano et al., 2000). Solórzano's (1998) seminal research study on critical race theory (CRT) documented the racial microaggressions Chicana and Chicano doctoral students experienced from faculty. It also stated that underrepresented students experienced lower expectations from faculty, their opinions were not taken seriously during discussions, and “not so subtle racist... incidents” (p. 128) such as someone saying, “You're not like the rest of them” (p. 130). Other studies have documented Black students feeling the need to prove themselves because professors did not have access to their previous grades showing how well they did (Barber, 2004). Solórzano et al.'s study (2000) on racial microaggression

experienced by Black students at a PWI documented racial minority students “feeling invisible” (p. 65) in the classroom and negative interactions with faculty infused a sense of self-doubt. These experiences of feeling unwanted and inadequate ultimately contribute to students dropping out of college (Haywood & Brown Payne, 2017; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano et al., 2000; Torres & Burrow, 2010). When looking at academic support services at a PWI through the lens of CRT, it is crucial to understand the historical structures of higher education and whom the services structured to benefit.

Based on the literature available, I used multiple theories to explain why students opt in or opt out of using academic support services, such as stereotype threat theory (Steele & Aronson, 1995), cultural wealth theory (Yosso, 2005), critical race theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), and stereotype management (McGee & Martin, 2011). According to Steele and Aronson’s (1995) seminal research, when students of the same academic standing and socioeconomic status completed a standardized test or academic assignment, Black students “face the threat of confirming or being judged by a negative societal stereotype” (p. 797). The risk of conforming to a negative racial stereotype puts tremendous pressure on Black students, and subsequently, they no longer identify with school achievements (Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Steele and Aronson’s study (1995) encompassed two racial groups of students, Blacks and Whites. Therefore, my study adds to the literature that has applied stereotype threat theory to Latinx students (Gonzalez et al., 2002; Ojeda et al., 2012; Rodriguez, 2014; Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016). In addition, past studies have applied stereotype threat theory in a testing environment using quantitative methods. In this study, I applied the theory using a qualitative approach.

In addition to stereotype threat theory, Yosso’s (2005) theory of cultural wealth guided my study. Cultural wealth theory builds on Bourdieu’s social reproduction theory (Bourdieu &

Passeron, 1977) that “People of Color ‘lack’ the social and cultural capital required for social mobility” (Yosso, 2005, p. 70). Opposing traditional Bourdieuan cultural theory, Yosso posited six forms of cultural capital that students of color possess, which are often “unchallenged and unrecognized” (Yosso, 2005, p. 70) and are aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance. Aspirational refers to the dreams one holds for the future despite barriers.

Linguistic encapsulates all the intellectual and social skills gained from communication experiences in multiple languages or styles. The networks and communities a person is a part of is also referred to as social capital. Navigational refers to “maneuvering through social institutions” (Yosso, 2005, p. 80), and resistant capital is the competence and know-how nurtured through behavior that disrupts inequality.

Familial capital is the ability to call upon extended family and community members to access personal knowledge and resources that will be useful while navigating college life (Da Graca & Doherty, 2016). This is an essential commodity, as many studies have documented how parental involvement can positively affect students’ efficacy in their K-12 years (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005, 2007; Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002; Sylva et al., 1999). In this study, I examined the role of stereotype threat and various aspects of cultural wealth in shaping students’ choices for opting in or opting out of support services. Similar to stereotype threat theory (Steele & Aronson, 1995), cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) provides an alternative explanation for students choosing to access different resources available to them rather than the formal structures of tutoring and writing centers or academic support programs.

A plethora of historical and modern practices have impacted Black and Latinx students completing college degrees, including lack of diversity among faculty, imposter syndrome, racial stereotyping, and barriers socially and within the campus (McGee, 2016). When analyzing a

complex issue such as college graduation rates among Black and Latinx students, CRT (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) is a framework theorizing that existing structures perpetuate racial inequality. CRT was developed from previous critical legal studies frameworks and has five core tenets: “counter-storytelling; the permanence of racism, Whiteness as property, interest convergence and the critique of liberalism” (Hiraldo, 2010, p. 54). Counter-stories in higher education serve as a tool for marginalized students, faculty, and staff to voice their experiences and evaluate the campus climate. The permanence of racism theorized that racism is in multiple fabrics of our society, such as political, social, and economic. In post-secondary education, it exists when colleges and universities refuse to acknowledge that systemic racism exists and reinforce it through well-intended policies (Hiraldo, 2010).

In CRT, *Whiteness as property* is referred to as a resource that only Whites can possess and benefit from, perpetuating the idea of entitlement. Interest convergence is the fourth tenet of CRT, which stipulates that Whites primarily benefited from the civil rights movement. Specifically, PWIs use diversity initiatives to recruit international students who are not eligible for financial aid but have the resources to pay tuition. The last tenet of CRT is *critique of liberalism*, which refers to color blindness. According to DeCuir and Dixson (1999), color blindness is a tool that enables people to be oblivious to racist policies that preserve and sustain social inequity. In higher education, this is illustrated through the lack of inclusivity reflected in curriculums and student activities (Hiraldo, 2010). Race and property rights are linked together and used to help us understand inequity in education: “Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States.

U.S. society is based on property rights” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 48). When viewing the current K-12 and higher education systems of education (Villalpando, 2004), CRT theorists argue that the poor conditions of the K-12 schools Black and Latinx males attend are a

result of institutional and structural racism. Specifically, these students are viewed from a deficit approach, tracked, and resegregated (Allen et al., 2013). As Engstrom and Tinto (2008) wrote, “Access without support is not opportunity” (p. 50); increasing the enrollment of students of color does not mean that the students experience full integration into the college. While Engstrom and Tinto (2008) found that creating a safe environment where students are actively supportive is key in helping students of color succeed, Black and Latinx students continue to experience racial microaggressions and a lack of support at PWIs (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Haywood & Payne, 2017; Jones et al., 2002; Robertson et al., 2014).

Stereotype management theory was also used as a lens to examine the findings of this study. Although Black and Latinx students encountered tremendous barriers when enrolling in college, such as inadequate preparation, microaggressions, and a lack of sense of belonging, some are working through the barriers to achieve academic success. McGee and Martin’s (2011) qualitative study consisted of 23 Black (born both in the United States and abroad) mathematics and engineering students from four universities located in Midwestern United States and explored how they succeeded despite stereotype threat and the barriers they encountered. Based on interviews completed, the authors concluded that students were in a “constant state of awareness that being Black is conceptualized by others as a marker of inferiority” (McGee & Martin, 2011, p.1354). They developed strategies to show not only that they belonged but that they were not inferior and incapable of succeeding. Some of the strategies included staying organized, being always prepared and on top of their work, and proving that racial stereotypes were unfounded. Other strategies used to cope with stereotype threat were seeking out acceptance by individuals who thought poorly of them or Blacks as a whole and to exhibit behaviors that were more favorable to the White middle-class culture, more commonly known as code-switching. Previous studies on stereotype threat were all quantitative and entailed a testing component. My qualitative

study provides valuable insight by establishing the existence of stereotype threat without participants having their skills measured in some way but also providing an explanation of students succeeding despite encountering racial barriers and negative stereotypes about their race.

Academic Support Services and Programs

At this PWI, academic support services offered include academic advisement and tutoring and writing centers. Both centers on campus are opt-in and reactive; students typically seek out the services when encountering difficulty with a course. In addition to the support services listed above, there are two opportunity programs, also opt-in programs, that offer supplemental advisement as well as academic and financial support to Black and Latinx students who meet qualifying criteria. Program staff encourage students to seek out help; therefore, students are proactive instead of reactive when accessing tutoring or writing support. QUARTET is federally funded, and the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math program (STEM) is state funded. STEM is geared toward increasing the number of underrepresented students majoring in STEM fields. Each program has unique requirements that must be met for students to participate. Ten of the students who participated in this study were previously enrolled in the STEM program, including five Black students (all female) and nine Latinx students (three males and six females).

Rationale and Significance

A significant amount of literature exists on college retention and factors that contribute to student success in higher education. These factors include academic support (Halcrow & Iiams, 2011), a sense of belonging (Tinto, 2006; Walter & Cohen, 2007), advisement (Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Kot, 2014), and financial support (Lim et al., 2014). Many of these studies focused on support available for first-year students transitioning to college and successful retention strategies. However, very little literature exists on Black and Latinx college students and their decision to opt in or opt out of using academic support services at a PWI. Specifically, I fill the gap in the literature about the reasons why they opt in or opt out of services they are eligible to receive. This study provides insight into

students' perceptions and the reasons for their choice to use or not use academic support services. In addition, this study adds a qualitative dimension to stereotype threat theory that, in the past, was used for quantitative studies (Gonzalez et al., 2002; Rodriguez, 2014; Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016; Steele & Aaronson, 1995).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this case study was to explore the reasons a select group of high-achieving Black and Latinx college students gave for opting in or opting out of using academic support services although they were eligible for support. In addition, I examined what academic support services students believe are beneficial and if stereotype threat and cultural wealth played a role in their choices. The findings will inform college administrators of students' perceptions, experiences, and recommendations for academic support services and the culture of the PWI. Academic support services consisted of academic advisement, tutoring, and opportunity programs, such as STEM, offering financial support.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What reasons do high-achieving Black and Latinx students give for using academic support services, and what services do they believe are the most beneficial?
2. What reasons do high-achieving Black and Latinx students give for not using academic support services?
3. In what ways are their reasons for opting out related to cultural wealth, stereotype threat, and/or the culture of a PWI?
4. How do academic support service administrators make sense of why Black and Latinx students choose to use or not use academic support services, and in what ways are their responses aligned with the students or not?
- 5.

Overview of Methodology

A constructivist pragmatic worldview is the basis for the methodology of this study. A social-constructivist approach involves the researcher and respondents co-creating multiple realities, while the pragmatic view is a problem-oriented philosophy (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A case study design is used to make meaning of a phenomenon and allows researchers to obtain in-depth data on participants' experiences and perceptions (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016).

Participants

I used a purposeful sampling design for this study, which resulted in 14 Black and Latinx high-achieving student participants (10 students who opted in and 4 who opted out of using academic support services). This study occurred in a small liberal arts college located approximately an hour from a large metropolitan city in the Northeast. Total undergraduate enrollment for the 2018/2019 academic year was approximately 3,000 students, with over 50% White, 10% Asian, 10% African American, and 20% Latinx. The majority of the students commute from nearby suburbs. The graduation rates for May 2019 broken down by race were 7% Asian, 8% Black, 15% Hispanic, and 70% White students.

The sampling criteria used to select students included the following:

Students who:

- Completed at least 30 credits, including transfer credits.
- Began their first year of college in Fall 2018 and returned in Fall 2019 to continue their second year.
- Began their freshman year in Fall 2019 and returned in Fall 2020 to complete their second year.
- Self-identify as Black or Latinx.

I received IRB approval in April 2020, during the COVID 19 pandemic. The campus was closed; all classes and administrative functions went to an online and remote format. Once IRB

approval was received, I contacted the Department of Records for a list of students meeting the criteria outlined above. A list of 110 students meeting the qualifying criteria was received in the latter part of the Spring 2020 semester and contained students' names, email addresses, majors, college credits earned in high school, and earned credits with the name of the institution. Five of the students departed from the college, and three chose not to participate in the study. Toward the end of the spring semester and during the summer months, the remaining 102 students were contacted via email to participate in the study. Professors and administrators who worked with students on the list aided in helping to recruit for the study. Both strategies yielded little results. By the end of the summer, I completed five interviews with student participants.

At the beginning of the fall 2020 semester, students from the list were contacted again via email. Participants were encouraged to refer any of their friends or peers who also met the qualifying criteria. The chairperson of my dissertation committee suggested creating a recruitment flyer offering an incentive such as a gift card to aid in the recruitment of participants. The flyer with an IRB amendment was granted approval in October 2020. I contacted some of my colleagues, professors, and administrators for help with disseminating the flyer to students.

Unfortunately, the flyer did not yield a positive response. Since most of the classes were still held online, I was unable to place the flyer on bulletin boards on campus or visit classrooms to speak about my study. The campus being on a remote format was a challenge in recruiting students. By the end of the fall 2020 semester, the sample consisted of 14 student participants, 9 Latinx and 5 Blacks, 11 males and 3 females, ranging in age from 18 to 21. All the student participants were interviewed, and transcription and coding were well underway. During the spring 2021 semester, upon reviewing initial findings with my Chairperson, we decided it would be beneficial to interview a few administrators on campus who work directly with students and in

academic support services. In summer 2021, the sample was amended to include five administrators, all women, two Black and three White. I completed the interviews in summer and fall of 2021. Interviewing the administrators allowed me to examine the phenomenon of why some Black and Latinx choose to use academic support services from a different perspective. This also increased the trustworthiness of the data by utilizing triangulation.

Data Collection

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, data collection was challenging and began in June 2020. Interviews occurred via Zoom, each lasting about 45 to 60 minutes. Participants were told to not discuss the study with their peers to ensure confidentiality and privacy. Participants were briefed on the study, and I explained that their grade point average (GPA) would be listed with their pseudonyms and used to provide background contextual information about the student. Their GPA would not be analyzed. Students submitted a signed consent form via email, and at the beginning of the interview, oral consent was recorded. Open-ended questions focused on the participants' perceptions of academic support services at a PWI, help-seeking behavior, and why they chose to use or not use academic services that were available to them. Additional questions centered on whether their parents' provided guidance on seeking help, accessing services, and access to family or peer members who have navigated higher education. After the initial three interviews were completed and transcribed, an initial review of the data with my committee chair determined that the interview protocol should be revised. Some of the amended questions included what role race plays in a student's decisions to use academic support services and how the participant describes the culture around academic support services at a PWI. The participants were interviewed a second time to capture data specifically related to stereotypes about their race and if race played a role in students' decisions to opt in or opt out of academic support services.

Rev.com software was used to transcribe interviews, which were uploaded to Dedoose[©]

and coded for themes and differences. Field notes were recorded in a notebook and provided detailed information on observations, behaviors, and interactions (Merriam, 2009). Reflexivity memos also provided additional context, thoughts, and feelings about the interviews and observations. Using a data-protection plan ensured confidentiality and privacy. A chart listing all the participants in the study, their pseudonyms, major, and GPA was created (see Table 4.1).

I interviewed the administrators after completing an initial review of the codes generated from the student interview data. Administrators provided feedback on why they believed Black and Latinx students opt in or opt out of academic support services and what are the benefits and challenges. All hard copies of the data were kept in a locked cabinet in the doctoral suite and only shared with the co-investigator. Dropbox software, a password-protected cloud service, was used to store all electronic documents, including transcriptions and Dedoose[®] thematic coding, with two-step authentication. After three years, all hard copy files pertaining to the study will be shredded.

Data Analysis

For the data analysis process, I used many of the techniques recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2017). Recorded interviews were transcribed word-for-word and reviewed for accuracy. While reviewing each line of data, I made notations on emerging themes or disconfirming information. Notes taken during the interview and reflexivity memos were analyzed for themes. Dedoose[®] software was used for organizing and coding the data.

The analysis process entailed inductive (theory generated) and deductive coding. Some of the theory-generated codes were support received in high school, ease of accessing services, stigma, perceptions, and the role of cultural wealth. Some of the deductive codes were reasons for opting out, lack of accessibility, not knowing about the services, and diversity. A total of 92 codes were generated, taken apart, and some were combined with other codes to form themes. The five

themes found were opt-in (comfortability seeking help), opt-out (cultural wealth), stereotype threat (stereotype management), academic support services, and diversity.

Limitations of the Study

This study occurred on a small private college campus in the Northeast. The sample consisted of 14 students, which is a limitation. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of the classes occurred online. There was very little access to students face to face. My recruitment strategy was limited to sending emails with a flyer and relying on colleagues to inform students of my study. My initial research questions sought to examine why Black and Latinx students with low GPAs chose to use or not use academic support services. Yet, my sample only contained students with GPAs above 2.49. I realize now that students with lower GPAs may not want to participate in this study, as they may not feel comfortable discussing the topic of seeking help or accessing resources. In addition, due to the pandemic and remote courses, I was unable to recruit students in this category. To achieve trustworthiness and triangulation of the data, I compared student interviews for similarities and differences as well as administrator interviews. I also included contradictory data and surprising findings in my final write-up of the study.

The goal is not for this study to be replicated; it is to explore the phenomenon from the participants' perspective. The demographics, academic requirements, and support services offered may be different depending on the size of the institution or location in other areas of the country. How students perceive and use academic support services may vary from person to person, as each person may interpret things differently. The findings obtained may be transferable to other institutions with similar settings and added to the literature on theories.

Conclusion

Many studies have documented the impact and benefits of academic support services (Dietsche, 2012; Gerhart & Olan, 2010; Kot, 2014). However, there is little literature available on

how students make sense of and choose to use academic support services that they are eligible to receive. The purpose of this study was to understand Black and Latinx students' perceptions of academic support services at a PWI and explore the role of stereotype threat and cultural wealth in their decision-making process. As the collegiate achievement gap continues to widen (Talbert, 2012), the findings may inform the literature and theories and provide the institution with some of the participants' recommendations for change. Chapter 2 provides a more detailed review of the literature and theoretical frameworks. Chapter 3 provides an explanation of the methodology and procedures used to conduct the study. Chapter 4 documents the findings, while Chapter 5 provides an overview of the study with limitations and recommendations for future studies.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used throughout this study, and the definitions below ensure a thorough understanding of the terms.

Academic support services: A variety of non-mandatory services offered through the college such as tutoring, writing center, additional advisement, and programs offering financial and academic support.

Black students: Students who identify as African American or African descent from various parts of the world such as Europe, Canada, Central or Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Cultural wealth: “knowledge, behavior, and skills” one can access to achieve goals and become successful (Cole, 2015, par. 1; Yosso, 2005).

Familial support: Knowing and becoming familiar with “extended family” and community members to access personal resources that will be useful while maneuvering through college (Yosso, 2005, p. 79).

First-generation students: “according to the federal definition officially developed for TRiO program...first-generation students come from families where their biological parents did

not complete a four-year college degree” (Center for First-Generation Student Success, 2017).

Latinx students: A gender-neutral term for students of Hispanic descent and are from Latin America or the Caribbean.

PWI: A predominantly White institution/college/university where over 50% of the student enrollment is White.

Stereotype management: Skills and strategies used to negate stereotypes and achieve academic success (McGee & Martin, 2011).

Stereotype threat theory: When students of color are assigned academic tasks, they fear conforming to negative stereotypes about their ethnic group, which results in poor academic performance (Steele & Aaronson, 1995).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I review the existing literature on Black and Latinx college students. The existing literature consisted of Black and Latinx students, low completion rates, and academic support services that contribute to post-secondary college success. Gaps in the literature included research on low completion rates for Black and Latinx students, how students make sense of support services, and the potential role of stigmas and cultural wealth in their decisions to opt in or opt out. In addition, the literature on college administrators supporting Black and Latinx students is almost non-existent. Many studies discuss the role and need for faculty of color in supporting students of color and degree completion.

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge by understanding the reasons Black and Latinx second-year college students give for using support services or not. Findings from past research have documented reasons for college attrition, strategies for improving retention, and support services (Cooper, 2010; Tinto, 1999, 2006). The enrollment of students of color in higher education continues to increase (Cross & Slater, 2016). However, the percentage of Black and Latinx students who completed a baccalaureate degree within six years was comparatively lower for Blacks (41%) and Latinxs (53%) when compared to Asians (71%) and Whites (63%; Musu-Gillete et al., 2016), which is the rationale for focusing on Black and Latinx students in this study.

The extant amount of literature available suggested that the factors outlined below contribute to low completion rates (Gong et al., 2015; Hawley & Nieto, 2010; Melguizo, 2008, 2010). Black and Latinx students enter college lacking academic preparedness (Palmer et al., 2010), lack of family support (Gong, et al., 2015; Pong & Hao, 2007), and financial need (Cross & Slater, 2016; Lim et al., 2014). Indeed, the college completion gap remains prevalent, even after accounting for socioeconomic status, academic preparedness, and adjustability to

collegiate life (Lim et al., 2014).

The following sections provide a review of the literature related to Black and Latinx students and academic support services. Additional topics include students' perceptions of services offered on campus as well as the role of their families in their academic choices. Understanding Black and Latinx students' perceptions and usage of academic support services at PWIs remains a vital subject for researchers and can add to the growing body of literature on these racial groups in college and support services.

Theoretical Framework

I drew upon multiple theories, including stereotype threat theory (Steele & Aaronson, 1995), cultural wealth theory (Yosso, 2005), CRT (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), and stereotype management theory (McGee, 2016; McGee & Martin, 2011) to examine how Black and Latinx students decide to partake in academic support services or not. Steele and Aaronson's (1995) seminal research on stereotype threat theory posits that when African American students are required to perform an "explicitly scholastic or intellectual task, they face the threat of confirming or being judged by a negative societal stereotype" (p. 797). According to the theory, after experiencing years of negative images of Black students' inferior abilities put forth by society, students incorporate into themselves an *inferior anxiety*, brought on by race-related triggers in the environment. When taking a standardized test or completing a scholarly assignment, the risk of conforming to a negative stereotype about the racial group to which one belongs puts tremendous pressure on Black and Latinx students, and subsequently, they no longer identify with the academic achievements (Rodriguez, 2014; Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016; Steele & Aaronson, 1995). A person does not have to believe the negative stereotype but rather just have the perception that others believe it (Fischer, 2010). Walton and Spencer (2009) articulated that when there was a reduction in a stereotypical threat in an academic environment, adversely stereotyped

students “perform better than would be expected based on their prior level of academic performance” (Logel et al., 2012, p. 42). If psychological threats are reduced or not visible in an academic environment, Black and Latinx students may achieve at higher levels than other groups with whom they previously performed at the same level. Logel et al.’s (2012) study emphasized the role of stereotypes in students’ scholastic abilities and illustrated evidence that when colleges provide tools, such as mental health strategies to endure negative stereotypes, students perform better.

Stereotype threat theory emphasized the role of negative stereotypes and racial stigmas on academic performance in college. This theory provided an alternate explanation of why Black and Latinx students may not access the supportive services available to them because they are fearful of being viewed as academically inadequate (Fischer, 2009; Gonzalez et al., 2002). Research on stereotype threat and Latinx students has been primarily limited, quantitatively based, and yielded similar results to Steele and Aaronson’s 1995 research (Ojeda et al., 2012; Rodriguez, 2014; Rodriguez & Arellano, 2016). Gonzalez et al.’s (2002) seminal research studied the effects of stereotype threat on the test performance of Latinx women. The study focused on two negative labels: gender and ethnicity. Latinx students performed at a lower rate in the diagnostic environment when compared to the control group. When comparing genders, Latinx women experienced stereotype threat, but White women in the study did not.

In addition to stereotype threat theory, CRT is a crucial theoretical lens to understand why students may not be accessing academic support services. CRT has its roots in legal studies and evolved as a tool to understand racism and its continued perpetuation in American society (Delgado, 1995a; Yosso et al., 2009). CRT has five major tenets: the first is race and that racism is permanent in our society and intersects with other forms of discrimination, including sex, class, language, and immigrant status. The second tenet challenges notions such as race neutrality, color

blindness, meritocracy, and equal opportunity because “self-interest, power and privilege of the dominant group” disguised these ideas (Yosso et al., 2009, p. 663). The third premise is a commitment to social justice through working toward the elimination of sexism, racism, and poverty while empowering people of color. The fourth premise places emphasis on counter-storytelling, as the lived experiences of people of color are critical to understanding racial subservience. Last, CRT theorists analyze racism in a historical and contemporary context.

When discussing low completion rates or the use of academic support services in K-12 or higher education, CRT is pivotal. Through a deficit lens, an extant amount of literature documents that students being ill-prepared for college combined with a lack of sense of belonging contribute to low college completion rates (Abrams, 1984; Carter, 2006; Roscoe, 2015; Tinto, 1993). However, CRT accounts for the role of tracking in K-12 education, *de facto* segregation, and how institutionalized racism contributes to students being underprepared for college as well as not completing a college degree.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson stated the following during his commencement address at Howard University:

You do not take a man who for years has been hobbled by chains, liberate him, bring him to the starting line of the race, saying, ‘you are free to compete with all others’, and still justly believe you have been completely fair... We seek not just freedom but opportunity—not legal equity but human ability—not just equality as a right and a theory, but equality as a fact and as a result.

The history of racism in higher education is complex. In the 20th century, key legislation such as The Civil Rights Act (1964) and Executive Order 10925 (1965), also known as affirmative action, were enacted to prohibit racial and gender discrimination, and to help combat racism. Both of these laws paved the way for students of color to enroll in colleges and

universities. However, as enrollment increased, completion rates for Black and Latinx students continued to lag (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Institutionalized systems contribute inequitable access to rigorous courses and curriculums, which would help Black and Latinx students prepare for post- secondary education (Adelman, 2006; Perna, 2005). In addition, once a student is enrolled in college without adequate support, it is an unjust expectation for them to perform at the same caliber as students who have always had those advantages. Racial microaggressions and barriers on college campuses also continue to exist and contribute to students of color leaving college (Creighton, 2007; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019; Solorzano, 1999; Solorzano et al., 2005).

Some institutions have adopted race-neutral, color-blind policies as a method of advancing diversity. According to Yosso et al. (2009), these policies perpetuate superficial increases of students of color on college campuses and provide the appearance of diversity. Very little commitment is reflected from PWIs to provide “equal access and opportunities for Students of Color, let alone promise an inviting, positive campus racial climate” (p. 664). CRT helps us to understand that while the enrollment of Black and Latinx students have increased, proportional gains have not materialized due in part to political structures constraining institutions to do away with “race -sensitive services and programs designed to improve the education experiences and outcomes” of these students (Villalpando, 2004, p. 48).

Campus climate and culture are often conflated and sometimes used interchangeably. Bauer (1988) defined climate as the “current perceptions, attitudes, and expectations that define the institution and its members” and has been used frequently to document how students of color may have experienced racism and discrimination on their campus (p. 2), while campus culture encompasses the history, mission, values, practices, beliefs, assumptions, physical settings, and traditions (Kuh & Hall, 1993; Museus et al., 2012). The two words *climate* and *culture* have two

distinct meanings; however, when the meanings are converged, this situation creates an environment that is supportive of students of color or perpetuate feelings of invisibility and inferiority among students as well as a negatively affect their academic performance (Feagin et al., 1996; Franklin et al., 2006; Nadal et al., 2014; Solórzano, 2000).

Solórzano's (2000) seminal research on racial microaggressions experienced by Black college students painted a vivid picture of the treatment of students. The study consisted of a sample of 34 Black students (18 females and 16 males) attending three elite PWIs using qualitative focus groups. Students reported feeling invisible and ignored within the classroom setting and noted instances of earning high grades only to be accused of cheating (p. 65). Students also felt the need to have other underrepresented students in the class counteract the effect of stereotype threat and "other students agreed that simply *looking like* a person a color can be cause for White professors, students, and college staff persons to draw negative assumptions about minorities and lower their expectations of them" (p. 67). Solórzano's (2000) study provided insight into how the racial microaggressions from various non-student members perpetuate institutionalized racism and can negatively affect students' efficacy.

In addition to stereotype threat theory (Steele & Aaronson, 1995) and CRT (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), Yosso's (2005) theory of cultural wealth also provides a theoretical framework for this study. Cultural wealth posits that some ethnic groups do not have the "social and cultural capital required for social mobility" (Yosso, 2005, p. 70). Opposing this premise, Yosso (2005) theorized six forms of cultural capital that are often "unrecognized" (Yosso, 2005, p. 70), known as aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance. Yosso defined *aspirational wealth* as dreams for the future instead of barriers and *linguistic wealth* as the intellectual and social skills gained from communication experiences in multiple languages.

Social capital are the networks and communities in which people belong. Navigational refers to knowing “maneuvering through social institutions” (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). Yosso (2005) defined *resistant capital* as competence nurtured through behavior and being disruptive of inequality.

Familial capital is knowing extended family and community members that you can access for resources (Da Graca & Doherty, 2016, Ch. 1). Many studies have documented how parental involvement has positively affected students in K-12 education (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005, 2007; Siraj-Blatchford et al., 1999). I explored participants’ cultural wealth using six premises: linguistic, familial, aspirational, social, navigational, and resistance. I examined the role of stereotype threat and cultural wealth in shaping Black and Latinx students’ choices in opting in or opting out of support services they are eligible to receive.

Last, a fourth theory was used as a lens to make sense of students thriving in spite of experiencing stereotypes about their race. Stereotype management is based on the premise that Black students no longer want to prove stereotypes wrong but rather use strategies to succeed (McGee, 2016; McGee & Martin, 2011). McGee and Martin’s (2011) seminal study occurred at two universities located in large Midwestern cities with a sample of 23 Black mathematics and engineering students. Seventeen of the students were undergraduates while six were enrolled in graduate school. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and videotaped. The findings of this study are as follows: students become aware of negative racial stereotypes; they then begin attempting to prove stereotypes wrong by always being “on point...on top of things” as students did not want to equate being Black with underachievement. This was also very stressful (McGee & Martin, 2011, p. 1365). In addition, stereotype management developed as students engaged in self-monitoring and self-reflection on what it meant to be Black. Students also engaged in code switching to navigate their surroundings and successfully complete a program in mathematics and

engineering. While the authors were not able to provide “definitive answers to how the students develop their resilience, like stereotype threat, their study provided an alternate explanation for Black and Latinx students succeeding in higher education in spite of the hardships they face” (McGee & Martin, 2011, p. 1379).

A plethora of research exists on each of the individual variables within this study, including the low college completion rates, how to support Black and Latinx students, and supports that have contributed to students graduating from college. My study contributes to the literature by examining how Black and Latinx sophomore students perceive support services and if their decision to opt in or opt out is related to the stigmas and cultural wealth. In addition, what services do they believe are most beneficial, and how do administrators make sense of why Black and Latinx students opt in or opt out of academic support services?

Support Services

This portion of the literature review focuses on the role of support services in college completion rates. In this literature review, support services consist of tutoring, writing support, advisement, and programs offering financial assistance as a component of support services. As the cost of tuition increases, growing student loan debt and a lack of financial know-how, paying for college can be a stressful burden to students (Rios-Ellis et al., 2015). From 2000 to 2010, the cost of undergraduate tuition, room, and board increased 42% and 31% at public and private institutions, respectively (Lim et al., 2014; Trombitas, 2012). Among the undergraduate students who received loans in 2011–2012, Black students received the second-highest amount of loans and were the lowest percentage of students completing a baccalaureate degree, and students who identified as two or more races received the highest amount of loans (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). Tinto (2006) acknowledged the disparity and linkage between financial resources and degree attainment, stating the gap between “well-to-do and poor students in four-year degree

completion” has increased (p. 11). Research has also shown that college students who are continuously worrying about finances have poor academic performance, and there is a strong link between socioeconomic status and students’ perseverance in post-secondary education (Ross et al., 2006). For example, Carter (2006) found that receiving sufficient aid helped Black and Latinx students overcome the challenges of their parents’ education and income.

As tuition rates increased and need-based aid decreased, many state and federal programs instituted services to help support underserved students with their transition to college (Berumen et al., 2015). Programs such as TRIO and Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP) not only offer financial assistance to students but also become a component of support services. CSTEP’s mission is to provide support and “Increase the number of students from under-represented groups who are pursuing professional licensure and careers in mathematics, science, technology, and health-related fields” (New York State Department of Education, 2018). CSTEP offered financial assistance for textbooks and travel to field courses. As reported by Musu-Gillette et al. (2016), Black students receive the highest amount of student loans and graduate at lower levels when compared to White and Asian students. The TRIO Program is a federally funded grant program whose mission is “provide equal educational opportunities for all U.S. citizens by increasing college readiness and developing higher education aspirations among students from low-income, first-generation college, and ethnic/racial minority backgrounds” (Pitre, & Pitre, 2009, pp. 96-97). The TRIO Programs offer advisement as well as financial and academic support to racially and economically underrepresented students (Dortch, 2012). Understanding why Black and Latinx students choose to use or not use support services that offer financial assistance at a PWI that contribute to completing college adds to the current literature and may inform administrators’ perspectives when advising students.

Few studies have documented students’ perceptions and experiences with opportunity

programs. Berumen et al. (2015) sought to analyze support services provided by a program designed to help students' transition to college and in what ways colleges and universities meet the mandates for such a program. The findings of the study indicated that, in some cases, the scholarship program was the deciding factor for some students who opted to attend college. However, in other cases, the scholarship was not enough to help and "family obligations increased financial strain" (Berumen et al., 2015, p. 34). Other students indicated that the advisement provided did not adequately prepare them for what to expect in a college classroom. Staff members reported wanting to provide services beyond the first year but could not because of budgetary constraints. Staff also indicated tremendous difficulty in identifying and recruiting students to "seek services and participate in programs" (p. 36), which further documented the need for studying why students choose to use or not use support services available to them. The growing enrollment of Black and Latinx students in post-secondary institutions has resulted in departments or programs providing students with academic support. According to Jones et al. (2002), some of the departments are not effective and rely on other departments. Numerous studies documented the campus climate at PWIs as alienating, discriminating, isolating, and lacking support for diversity (Haywood & Brown, 2017; Jones et al., 2002; Robertson et al., 2016; Solórzano et al., 2000; Wagner, 2014). All of these factors can negatively affect students' academic performance and their ability to seek help when needed (Jones & Cole, 2002).

Tutoring

Tutoring has played a crucial role and positively affected academic performance in higher education (Halcrow & Iiams, 2011; Topping, 1996). Some research has posited that tutoring is only effective when used at least six times a semester (Gahan-Rech et al., 1989; Xu et al., 2001). It is important to note that one definition of *tutoring* is a "teacher or professor who helps students outside of normal class time," a fellow student "who has a greater understanding of course

material” or a peer “who simply likes to help” (Cooper, 2010, p. 21). Tutoring can be one-on-one in which two or more students meet somewhere mutually convenient to study. Alternatively, they can meet in a tutoring center and receive help from tutors who generally are available for only a certain amount of time, also known as *drop-in tutoring*.

Cooper’s (2010) study focused on the effectiveness of the tutoring center and the effect of drop-in tutoring. The sample consisted of two cohorts of freshmen students. The researchers used Tutortrac software to track the number of visits to the center, hours spent, and the courses for which they received tutoring. The findings of the study showed that students of color visited the tutoring center more than White students. However, there was no difference in the number of visits from first-generation and non-first-generation students. Students who visited the tutoring center 10 or more times were more likely to be enrolled in college compared to their peers who visited the center less than 10 times or not at all. When analyzing the effect of tutoring on academic standing, more students who used the tutoring center were in good standing as opposed to those who did not.

Cooper’s (2010) study affirmed the relationship between tutoring, retention, and academic standing. It also sheds light on the importance of students building relationships with their peers, which can increase social satisfaction on campus. All of these variables are pivotal to students’ academic success. It is essential to understand how Black and Latinx students perceive and use tutoring services to assist college administrators and increase students’ usage, which can lead to better grades and college completion.

Dietsche’s (2012) mixed-methods study sought to understand what factors influenced students’ actual usage of support services, which contradicted Cooper’s (2010) findings on tutoring. Specifically, despite the students indicating they needed help in specific academic areas, approximately half of the students used the respective support services in place to address the

challenge. The study consisted of 62,434 full-time and part-time students enrolled in Canadian community colleges, colleges, and universities who completed a survey, which students self-reported on the academic services that would be beneficial to them. Students reported non-use in academic advising and peer tutoring 70% and 79%, respectively. There was a “weak but significant difference” (p. 74) found in the usage of campus services relative to first language spoken, aboriginal ancestry, and visible minority status. Participants who indicated a positive view of their studies used academic advising more often and those who identified as aboriginal or visible minority status. This study highlighted the notion that students who are the most in need of support services are reluctant to seek help. There were two limitations to this study; the students were not broken down by sophomores, juniors, or seniors or by different races and ethnicities.

Advisement

In addition to tutoring, advisement is a core support service used to increase retention and graduation (College Board, 2009; Tinto, 1993). “Good advising is the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience” (Light, 2001, p. 81). There are multiple ways that colleges and universities choose to provide advisement, including advisement centers (Kot, 2014) as well as individual or group advisement provided by a faculty member or administrator. Academic advisement can best be described as centralized, decentralized, or shared (Pardee, 2004). The shared split model entails dedicated offices advising a specific group of students over a specific period of time, which is common with most institutions. Many recent studies on advisement have been quantitative and looked at the impact of advisement on the retention of first-year students and grade point averages (Bahr, 2008; Kot, 2014).

Many studies focused on the impact of advisement on student retention with mixed and inconsistent results (Kot, 2014). Crockett (1983) argued that supplemental advisement (advisement beyond the selection of courses) that utilizes a whole-student approach could play a

crucial role in students completing their degrees. The process entails a comprehensive approach that assists students with expounding educational plans in order to reach their life and career goals; the advisor may monitor students' grades, refer them to additional services, and assist students with experiential learning opportunities to achieve their career goals.

Kot's (2014) study found that students who made use of centralized advising during their first and second semesters earned a higher end-of-term GPA at the end of both semesters and a higher cumulative GPA at the end of their first year when compared to students who did not.

Second-year students who made use of centralized advisement also exhibited a difference in behavior. This study allowed administrators to gain insight into what advising techniques contributed to a higher GPA and retention. It is important to note that Kot's study focused on centralized advising conducted by professional advisors, not faculty advisors. In the college where this case study occurred, the majority of the advisors are faculty, and only a few come to the position with counseling experience. Brock (2010) posited one of the paradoxes in post-secondary education:

Ivy League Schools and highly selective liberal arts colleges, that enroll the best prepared and most traditional students tend to offer the most such guidance, while institutions that serve the least prepared and the most nontraditional students tend to offer much less. (p. 119)

That is, to increase retention and help Black and Latinx students, institutions must be willing to analyze their advisory methods and delivery of tutoring services to ensure success.

Students' Perceptions of College Life

Students' perceptions of their academic surroundings, such as the campus and sense of belonging, can play a role in their completion of a college degree (Tinto, 1999, 2006). Using a case study design, Jones et al.'s (2002) study sought to document students' experience at a PWI,

campus climate, and their opinions on student services. The study occurred at a large research university in the Northwestern United States and consisted of 35 participants: 7 Blacks, 7 Asian-Pacific Islanders, 11 Chicano/Latinx, and 10 Native Americans. While this study occurred almost 20 years ago, the findings are noteworthy and still relevant today (Creighton, 2007; Robertson et al., 2014). Specifically, some of the participants stated they felt discriminated against and “a sense of alienation” (Jones et al., 2002, p. 28). Students also indicated that some academic and departmental units did not want to help students and expected the cross-cultural center to be responsible for providing services to underrepresented students. These findings are similar to Robertson et al.’s (2014) study on racism and the experiences of Latinx students at a PWI specifically and racial microaggressions that were mentally stressful although they did adjust to college. These experiences also contribute to students not seeking help as they do not want to be labeled or viewed as inadequate.

Pyne and Means (2013) documented the journey of a first-generation Latinx student from a low socioeconomic background through the first year of college. Ana was “undocumented” for many years and obtained a legal status at approximately 14 years of age. Academically, Ana did well in high school and secured “her own financial way into a highly selective private university” (p. 191). During her first year of college, however, Ana did not want to ask for help from her teachers; she was afraid her instructors would reject her because of her modest upbringing. Most importantly, Ana did not want them to think she was incapable of doing well in school because she was not born in the United States. Ana’s story is representative of many students on college campuses. It is reflected in previous studies such as Wiggan and Watson (2016), who highlighted the importance that children be taught at a young age that their capabilities are equal to their peers. They have the opportunity to do just as well, if not better than their counterparts (Walton & Spence, 2009). Higher education administrators are in a unique position to help historically

marginalized students by creating a welcoming, safe environment for students while providing support services needed for success.

Low College Completion Rates

While access to higher education has increased for all students, college graduation rates have remained low, specifically among Black and Latinx students (Brock, 2010; Melguizo, 2008, 2010; Musu-Gillete et al., 2016; Walton & Spencer, 2009). Negative stereotypes (Walter & Cohen, 2007) and the mismatch between students' academic skills and the institutions they attend are some of the reasons Black and Latinx students are not completing a college degree.

Mismatch theory posits that students of color “are likely to fail, or at least do very badly” in college because of affirmative action, academic unpreparedness, and the rigor of institutions attended (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997, p. 62). Contrary to the mismatch theory, Melguizo (2010) argued that the number of students obtaining a bachelor's degree increases when attending a more competitive and selective institution and that colleges should explore using more nontraditional admissions criteria.

The most selective colleges and universities have traditionally used SAT scores and high school grade point averages to determine acceptance (Melguizo, 2010). To help students of color gain access to selective higher education institutions, The Gates Foundation created a more well-rounded measurement based on noncognitive variables such as positive self-concept and nontraditional knowledge. Melguizo's (2010) sample consisted of 888 students, both recipients and non-recipients of the Gates Millennium Scholarship, who completed three sets of surveys at different times. The categories of the colleges and universities were most selective, highly selective, and very selective. The results of the study confirmed that students were five times more likely to complete a baccalaureate degree within six years at a selective institution compared to a nonselective institution. This study illustrated how support mechanisms assist students with

building relationships with others, feeling social satisfaction, and a part of campus life, which are key components of students' efficacy.

Scholars have suggested that in addition to a lack of support services, parental involvement (Gong et al., 2015), rising tuition costs (Lim et al., 2014), and not achieving a sense of belonging (Fisher & Hartmann, 1995; Russo, & Kadel, 1994; Tinto, 1993) contribute to low college completion rates among Black and Latinx students. Walton and Cohen (2007) argued that because of negative stereotypes that marginalized groups internalize, they are more likely to be unsure of their social belonging in settings such as school and work and if “they will be fully included in positive social relationships in these settings” (p. 1447). The uncertainty of fitting in, especially for students of color, can destabilize the students' academic performance. Walton and Cohen sought to improve the way students viewed their social belonging on campus through an intervention used to teach students how to understand non-threatening challenges. Two cohorts of freshmen students received the intervention during their first year of college: 49 Black and 43 White students.

The experiment involved the treatment group reading surveys from seniors at their school who reported meeting many people during their first year and whether or not they belonged in college. The participants documented their experiences as freshmen on paper, which became video-recorded speeches that were delivered. Researchers informed the students that the videos would help future peers with their transitioning to college. Through this process, students were able to work past their stigma of receiving services by viewing themselves as “benefactors and not as beneficiaries” (Walton & Cohen, 2007, p. 1448). An analysis of the GPA of the treatment group throughout their enrollment indicated a rise in the GPA for Blacks and European Americans, while Black students in the non-treatment group did not reflect a change in GPA. The role of sense of belonging in college and this group of students' academic success are connected.

This study showed how Black students internalize adversity and the role that race plays in their progression during their enrollment. Contrary to Walter and Cohen's study (2007), of Black students' challenges, Yosso (2005) argued that students of color have a plethora of cultural knowledge and connections that often go unnoted or masked when harnessed and can help students to succeed.

The Role of Family and Seeking Help

Numerous studies have documented the role of family in students' lives and as it relates to persistence (Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Saenz, et al., 2018). Literature on how a student's family impacts help-seeking behavior or accessing academic support services is almost non-existent. While some in this sample were first-generation college students and from different socioeconomic brackets, there were also students from immigrant families. Indeed, Latinxs are quickly becoming the largest population of people in the United States, and 50% of Latinx youth are from immigrant families (Gong et al., 2015).

Using Yosso's (2005) cultural wealth framework, Saenz et al. (2018) sought to discern how male community college students balanced their family obligations, work, and academics while navigating their college environments. Through conducting 23 semi-structured focus groups with 130 Latino male students enrolled part-time and full-time at seven community colleges in Texas, two themes emerged. Saenz et al. (2018) found that as the participants made their way through college, they relied heavily on familial capital, which served as an inspiration for them wanting to succeed despite the challenges faced. Students felt inadequately prepared for community college due to being academically underprepared first-generation college student, which served as negative familial capital.

As Tinto (2008) stated, "access without support is not opportunity" and students' success are not only their own responsibility but also the responsibility of academic institutions (p. 1).

Fifty-five years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act and affirmative action, PWIs continue to neglect their responsibility to provide adequate resources needed for students of color to succeed (Creighton, 2007; Solórzano, et al., 2005). Multiple studies have documented the supports needed for students of color to succeed, such as the development of special support programs and diversity training for faculty and staff (Gladwell, 2000; Rowley, 2000). Because some institutions' programs have failed to meet its purposes and supports, students have gone so far as to create student-initiated retention programs. Unfortunately, because these programs are student led, there is "little institutional memory," and when students graduate, additional students are not available to take on the roles, ultimately leading to the programs no longer existing (Sólorzano et al., 2005, p. 283).

Conclusion

Access to higher education has increased for all students (Frye & Taylor, 2013; Musu-Gillete et al., 2016). However, Black and Latinx students continue to graduate from college at lower rates when compared to other subgroups (Musu-Gillete et al., 2016). Contributing factors such as socioeconomic status and the availability of resources are no longer the sole reasons for the college completion gap. Research has documented students' reluctance to seek help because it is viewed as a weakness or conforming to a negative stereotype (Aaronson et al., 2002; Steele, 1997). Findings show that tutoring, academic advisement, and programs offering financial support contribute to student graduation rates (Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000).

Second-year Black and Latinx students make a conscious decision to use or not use support services. But why? This dissertation uses the lenses of stereotype threat theory, critical race theory, cultural wealth theory, and stereotype management to examine how Black and Latinx sophomore students make sense to use or not use support services, and whether stigmas and cultural wealth play a part in their decision-making process. In addition, how do administrators

make sense of why Black and Latinx students opt in or opt out of using academic support services? This study will add to the growing body of literature on Black and Latinx students, sophomore college students, and support services.

Chapter 3: Method

This chapter illustrates the research method executed for this qualitative case study on the reasons why Black and Latinx students choose to opt in or opt out of academic support services at a PWI. As previously stated, research has shown that tutoring, supplemental advisement (Bahr, 2008; Swecker et al., 2013), and financial support (Lim et al., 2014) have helped students persist in college and contribute to degree completion. Many of these services are available on college campuses; however, not all students choose to utilize them. Very little research exists on why students choose not to utilize services (Alexitch, 2002; Bartram, 2009; Dietsche, 2012). The existing studies focus on the positive impact of students using academic supports (Cahalan et al., 1994; Chaney, 2010). Some researchers have argued the positive impact is due to selection bias; certain “unobservable characteristics such as the student’s desire to learn” could lead to these students taking advantage of the support services, leading to biased results (Bettinger et al., 2013, p. 103).

As Black and Latinx students are completing college at lower rates in comparison to White and Asian students (Brock, 2010; Musu-Gillete et al., 2016), this study fills the current gap in the literature through examining how Black and Latinx students make meaning of academic support services at a PWI. I drew upon stereotype threat theory (Steele & Aronson, 1995), cultural wealth theory (Yosso, 2005), CRT (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), and stereotype management theory (McGee, 2016; McGee & Martin, 2011) as my theoretical frameworks to examine why sophomore Black and Latinx students opt in or out of academic support services. In addition, this research explores what role stigma and cultural wealth plays in their decision-making process and how administrators make sense of students using or not using support services.

This chapter details the research questions, theoretical frameworks, research design, and sample selection. In addition, it also documents the methods used for collecting and analyzing data and anticipated ethical considerations.

Research Problem

Black and Latinx students complete college at lower rates compared to White and Asian students (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). A substantial amount of literature exists on Black and Latinx students and the factors that affect college success. Factors such as segregation, systemic racism, limited access to advanced placement courses, and lack of a rigorous high school curriculum contribute to poor academic preparation for college (Center for the Study of Higher Education Management, 2007; Mudge & Higgins, 2011; Palmer et al., 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Once enrolled in college, a lack of sense of belonging, inadequate academic support, and concern about the financial cost of college contribute to low completion rates (DaDeppo, 2009; Tinto, 2006). To help freshmen students transition from high school to college, many institutions provide academic and social supports, which foster persistence and contribute to degree completion (Tinto, 2006). However, upon completion of the first year of college, many of the academic supports are no longer embedded in their schedules. At this PWI, during the sophomore year of college, students have a choice in using academic support services that help to build and refine skills needed for efficacy, but they must actively seek out these services. The problem is how Black and Latinx students are navigating academic support services and the culture of a PWI when seeking help.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study is to explore why Black and Latinx sophomore students opt in or opt out of using academic support services. This study also examines the role of stigma and culture in students' decision-making process and how administrators make sense of students'

decision to use or not use academic support services. The findings of this study will inform college administrators on Black and Latinx students' perceptions of academic support services at a PWI and can help to reshape how services are promoted to students to increase usage. The term *academic support services* is used in this study to refer to tutoring and similar services as well as opportunity programs offering academic and financial support.

Stereotype threat theory (Steele & Aaronson, 1995) is a phenomenon whereby students of a racial group are placed in an academic setting to complete a task and they fear conforming to a negative stereotype about their race, which hinders their academic performance. Students do not need to believe the stereotype themselves; only those others believe it. Yosso (2005) defined *cultural wealth theory* as the resources available to students such as celebrating multi-lingualism, knowledge passed on through the family, networks of friends and family, skills for maneuvering through social institutions, skills that help students overcome adversities, and the ability to hope for a brighter future (Saenz et al., 2018; Yosso, 2005).

In addition to stereotype threat (Steele & Aaronson, 1995), the theory on cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), stereotype management (McGee & Martin, 2011), and CRT (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) was used as a lens to view the policies and procedures of the college, which is a PWI. CRT emerged from critical legal studies and focused on the connection between race, racism, and power in society (Duncan, 2020; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The first principle of CRT dictates that racism is interwoven deeply in our society. The second principle denotes criticizing liberalism that upholds colorblind ideologies that perpetuate a racial hierarchy. Critiquing liberalism calls for discussions on race, especially in classrooms with students of color. The third principle of Whiteness as property is a resource only Whites can possess and benefit from. Counter-storytelling, the fourth principle, provides a way for students, faculty, and staff to voice

their thoughts on the college climate they experienced that are not the norm and can serve as an outlet (Duncan, 2020; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The last principle, interest convergence (Bell, 1980; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), notes that *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision of desegregating the South was done to further economic development and converged with the interests of Blacks, not because it was the morally right thing to do.

The fourth theory applied in this qualitative study was stereotype management (McGee & Martin, 2011; McGee, 2016). According to McGee and Martin (2011), stereotype management consists of strategies that students use to achieve success when they are aware of stereotypes about their race and inferiority. While in the beginning they work toward proving stereotypes wrong as they mature as students, they move toward becoming role models for other marginalized students. They “learned how to transform their shame, anger, and feelings of hopelessness and despair into strategies that minimized or deflated the blow of the stereotype” (McGee & Martin, 2011). While stereotype management helped students succeed academically, the authors warned it is not a long-term solution, as many of the students in their study felt discouraged and questioned whether they belonged in a specific major despite earning high grades (McGee & Martin, 2011). Students also felt emotional distress and discussed the toll it took to remain successful (McGee, 2016). The four theories used as a lens in this study helped make sense of the role of stereotypes in students’ decision-making process to use or not use academic support services, accessing informal cultural resources when needing help, how students manage stereotypes to remain successful, and what role does the culture of the PWI plays in the accessibility of academic support services.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided my inquiry into this study:

1. What reasons do high-achieving Black and Latinx students give for using academic support services, and what services do they believe are the most beneficial?
2. What reasons do high-achieving Black and Latinx students give for not using academic support services?
3. In what ways are their reasons for opting out related to cultural wealth, stereotype threat, and/or the culture of a PWI?
4. How do academic support service administrators make sense of why Black and Latinx students choose to use or not use academic support services, and in what ways are their responses aligned with the students or not?

Worldview

According to Creswell and Creswell, (2018), qualitative research entails making meaning of a phenomenon. A constructivist pragmatic worldview is the basis for the methodology of this study, which used the researcher and respondents to co-create multiple realities based on the data. The pragmatic view is a problem-oriented philosophy (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The findings of this study can inform the literature on Black and Latinx students, sophomore students, and academic support services.

Procedures

This study utilized a qualitative approach. According to Creswell (2018), case studies are a qualitative design used “to explore in depth a program, event, activity, process, or person” (p. 247). Case studies are a detailed analysis bounded by time and activity (Merriam, 2001). For researchers to understand how participants make meaning of a situation, the researcher is the instrument that uses both inductive and deductive reasoning (Saldana, 2014). A case study

methodology was used to explore participants' use of academic support services and how they handle struggling with a course. I also examined how administrators made sense of Black and Latinx students' use of academic support services. Interview questions also focused on the role of race in students' decision-making process to opt in or opt out of academic support services and stereotypes. Additional questions also queried the campus culture around academic support services and participants' demographic information such as age, gender, and ethnicity (see Appendix B).

Positionality

Positionality in research is important because it is “determined by where one stands in relation to ‘the other’” (Merriam et al., 2001, p. 411). My positionality is unique. I am neither Black nor Latinx. I identify as a woman of color and of East Asian descent. I was born in Guyana, South America, a country with a culture similar to the islands of the Caribbean. As a first-generation immigrant college student from a working-class family, I was fortunate to be a part of an academic support services program in college. It was not an opt-in program; my acceptance into the college was reliant on my participation in the program. Some of the services provided by the program included advisement and access to tutoring services that were not limited by scheduling or the number of tutors available. The college I attended was part of a large public system located in one of the largest cities in the world. Because the experience was positive and helped me to complete my college degree, understanding why some students opt in and others opt out of academic support services became the foundation of my dissertation study. My experiences in college occurred 20 years ago and therefore are different from those experienced by student participants I interviewed.

The student population of the college I attended was extremely diverse, but the faculty

was predominantly White. This research study was conducted on a college campus with a predominantly White student population and culture. While my experience with academic support services was positive, I tried to remain objective throughout the interviews by focusing on each participant's individual experience and perspective. It was important to me to hear their stories without my biases, and the students would find it easier to express themselves. To achieve complete emotional detachment when conducting qualitative research is impossible (Saldana, 2014).

I also realized that as a coordinator of an academic service program and now as an instrument of the research, I achieved a level of comfort with many of the student participants that made it easier for them to be honest about their experiences and perspectives. I sought to provide a space for students to share their voices openly. For students I previously had a rapport with, I was cognizant not to make assumptions about their responses. Some of the students I previously worked with as the coordinator of STEM felt comfortable enough to disclose that the program (and I) was extremely helpful. Jo noted that he considered me to be his advisor. Gabbs stated when she encountered issues with registering and her official advisor could not be reached, she contacted me and I was able to help her. While it was good to hear those statements, I remained vigilant to not let my feelings steer the interview. One of the interviews I conducted with a former student, Tanya, was not all positive. She indicated that the STEM program, a program geared toward increasing the number students of color pursuing STEM careers and licensed professions, may have in fact segregated students further and could have been used to promote inclusivity across the college. This was difficult to hear. However, I compartmentalized and continued the interview. I also inquired why she had not discussed this with me; she believed at the time she did not know how to articulate her thoughts.

Insider/Outsider

I considered myself an insider because I shared many commonalities with some of the student participants in this study such as ease with seeking help when I encountered difficulty with a course as well as finding academic support services beneficial. I also viewed myself as an outsider because my undergraduate experience occurred over two decades ago. I am also an outsider because my participation in an academic support program and tutoring services were not optional, unlike the participants in this study. I am also not Black or Latinx and do not know what it means to identify with the participants in that way.

Reflecting on my experience as an instrument of research, at the end of my study, I was conflicted and pleasantly surprised at the same time. I was conflicted because the participants provided two different views of the same institution, and both were correct. One group found the institution to be welcoming and supportive, while the other noted challenges to using academic support services. While I tried my best to refrain from making assumptions, it also left me closed to the possibilities of why students would opt out. I was pleasantly surprised when students indicated they opted out because they simply thought they didn't need it, while others chose to access informal resources such as family members and peers who studied the same subject matter. I was also astonished that race did not play a role in many students' decision-making process when considering academic support services. I was left wondering if they simply are "color blind" or have learned to manage stereotypes to thrive.

After each interview, I reflected on the notes taken on each participant and their responses to the interview questions by thinking about the size and location of the college. Some of the participants spent most of their lives living in similar suburban neighborhoods where the college was located, which was very different from my experience and yet the same. I attended a large

public college in the urban metropolis where I lived. Some of the participants attend a smaller college with limited diversity in the suburbs of where they live, perhaps because it was within their comfort zone.

Site Selection and Participants

I utilized a purposeful sampling design to select 16 Black and Latinx sophomores who opt in and opt out using academic support services at a PWI. This study occurred at a small private college located an hour from a large metropolitan city in the northeastern United States. Total undergraduate enrollment for the 2018/2019 academic year was approximately 3,000 students, with over 50% White, 10% Asian, 10% Black, 20% Latinx, and less than 1% American Indian. The sampling criteria used to select students included the following:

Students who:

- Completed at least 30–60 credits, including transfer credits
- Began their first year of college in Fall 2018 or Fall 2019 and returned in Fall 2019 or Fall 2020 to continue their second year
- Self-identified as Black or Latinx

IRB approval occurred in late Spring 2020 during the lockdown period of the COVID-19 epidemic when all classes for colleges and K-12 schools had moved to online instruction. The Department of Records was contacted in April for a list of sophomore students who identify as Black and Latinx, began their enrollment at the PWI in fall 2018, have completed at least 30 credits (including transfer credits), and returned to the college for fall 2019 and spring 2020. The list of participants was received at the end of the semester, toward the beginning of the summer.

The list contained 111 names; five students had withdrawn from the college at the end of

the spring semester and could not be reached. Six students opted not to participate in the study. One of the six who declined said it was because he did not identify as Latinx, although Latinx was captured in his demographic information provided to the college. It is also plausible that other students on the list felt the same and did not identify with the race/ethnicity information listed on their college application, especially if their parents assisted with the application and may have a stronger connection to their ethnicity compared to the student. Of the remaining 99 students on the list, 14 chose to participate in the study. Recruitment of students occurred via email during the latter part of the spring 2020 semester and during summer 2020, which was slow and yielded few participants because of the timing of recruitment and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Opportunity programs on the focal campus are opt-in programs that offer supplemental advisement and financial support to Black and Latinx students who meet certain criteria. One of these programs, the QUARTET, is optional for students who qualify, such as being a first-generation student and demonstrating financial need. This program offers participants financial benefits such as tuition assistance for two non-consecutive semesters, additional tutoring, and supplemental advisement while enrolled in the program. However, although students are encouraged to use academic support services and some actively participate in an opportunity program, they may still choose not to access resources such as tutoring. Similarly, Black and Latinx students who utilized tutoring could decline enrollment in the opportunity programs on campus.

Respondents were also recruited from opportunity programs on campus, through referrals from faculty, or various administrators who work with students that meet the criteria listed above. Respondents were split into two categories: students who have opted in and students who have opted out. I created a spreadsheet listing the names of the participants, their pseudonyms, and

which services they opted into (see Table 4.1).

During the fall 2020 semester, most of the classes were still in remote instruction. I emailed potential participants but did not receive any responses. My research protocol was then amended and approved by IRB to include a recruitment flyer that included giving participants the chance to win a gift card. Approval for the flyer was granted in late October 2020. In hopes of securing more participants for the study, I then reached out to undergraduate professors and administrators who interacted with students, asking if they would distribute my recruitment flyer to students. Unfortunately, this yielded only one participant. Student participants were also asked to refer any of their peers who were sophomores and identified as Black or Latinx. After speaking with my committee chair, due to the small number of participants, I opted to interview administrators for their perspectives and triangulating the data.

Initially, when planning this study, it was my hope that some of the participants would be students who earned low grade point averages (2.5 or lower) and could provide their unique perspective on using or not using academic support services. I have since realized that students with lower GPAs may not be comfortable participating in a study focused on discussing academic support services and their help-seeking abilities. While the participants in this study had a grade point average ranging from 2.54 to 3.95 and were considered to be high-achieving students, the data obtained answered the research questions. The interviews for this study occurred during the end of sophomore year for some students and during the beginning of the junior year for others. At the time of the interview, each participant earned credits ranging from 61 to 93 credits, due to the variation in number.

The final sample consisted of 14 high-achieving students (9 Latinx and 5 Black), and 5 female administrators who worked in academic support services (3 White and 2 Black). All

interviews occurred online via Zoom and ranged from 45 to 90 minutes in length and were recorded and transcribed. The interview protocol (see Appendix B) for student participants consisted of questions such as why they chose to use or not use academic support services, whether they found support services beneficial, if their reasons were related to stigmas about their race, and the role of the institution. The interview questions for administrators (see Appendix C) focused on the benefits and challenges of students using academic support services, their understanding of why students opt in or opt out, and the lack of diversity among support staff providing services.

Due to the limited number of student participants, my dissertation chairperson suggested interviewing administrators who work directly with students and/or support services. During Spring 2021, an IRB amendment was submitted, requesting permission to interview administrators. After this IRB was approved, five college administrators were interviewed (see Table 4.2). The administrators were all women: three identified as White and two as Black. Their unique perspectives provided triangulation of data. Naza is a White tenured professor who has worked closely with freshman students over the past few years and has worked for the institution for over a decade. The second administrator, Jane, is a White, middle-aged woman who works in the Writing Center, an academic support service that students can voluntarily use. Jane served as a paid consultant at the Writing Center and for 13 years was tasked with assisting students with their writing. The third administrator, Amber, is Black and has worked for the college for over a decade. She has most recently worked with the college's tutoring program, an opt-in service. The fourth administrator, Viola, is also a Black woman who oversees an opt-in academic support service program. The last administrator, Martha, works closely with multiple academic service departments. She also works with students who earned a cumulative GPA below 2.0, also known

as students on academic probation.

Data Collection

All data collected for this study were used for research purposes only and not shared with college administration or used by the researcher in her position working in support services. Most of the interviews were scheduled individually via Zoom. On the days I had more than one interview, I scheduled additional interviews at least two hours apart to protect participants' confidentiality and to ensure I had time to process and reflect on each interview.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, participants had minimal risk of overlapping or risk seeing each other, as all the interviews occurred via Zoom. At the beginning of the interview, I reviewed the consent form with each participant, explaining that their participation was voluntary, there was no compensation for participating, however, participants could win a gift card. Anonymity could not be guaranteed because demographic information was collected to add context to each participant (Coffelt, 2017). However, I would take all the necessary precautions to ensure confidentiality. Each participant signed a consent form giving permission to participate in the study and for the interview to be audio taped. Student participants also consented to have their GPA released to the researcher. Because all of the interviews occurred virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic, participants signed and emailed the consent to the researcher.

I informed participants at the beginning of the interview that all pertinent information would remain confidential and that a pseudonym would be assigned to each individual's name. In addition, their GPA would add contextual information in the report and not analyzed and their information would not be released from the researcher in anyway. Participants were told they could take a break or stop the interview at any moment. The purpose of this study was to strictly

document the students' perspectives. Open-ended questions focused on students' decision to attend college, their major, and prior and current use of academic support services. Additional questions focused on the students' perceptions of academic support services at a PWI, the decision-making process, and various aspects of Yosso's cultural wealth framework. For example, students were asked if they discussed their academic life with their parents. The interview protocol for administrators focused on why they believe students opted in or out of using academic support services and the role the institution as a PWI played in students' decision.

Upon completion of the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim by a transcription service, Rev. I then reviewed the transcripts for emerging themes and clarity of responses. After the first few interviews, the dissertation committee chair reviewed the interview questions and realized I was not asking key questions regarding stigma and race. The interview protocol was amended to include questions such as the level of support students received during their freshman and sophomore years and if stigma or race played a role in their decision to use or not use academic support services (see Appendix B). The 14 participants were interviewed using the revised questions.

I recorded my field notes in a notebook, which provided detailed information on observations, behaviors, and interactions (Merriam, 2009). Reflexivity memos provided additional context, thoughts, and feelings about the interviews and observations. Hand-written notations were made while reviewing field notes. Both field notes and reflexivity memos were additional sources of data. Quotes from the interviews were used to highlight the findings. All hard copies of the data were kept securely. Dropbox, a password-protected cloud service with two-step authentication, was used to store all electronic documents, including transcriptions and Dedoose thematic coding. All audio-recorded interviews will be destroyed upon completion of

my dissertation. All hard copy files will be shredded after three years. Participation was on a voluntary basis. Participants provided written consent to participate in the study. Student participants signed an additional consent to obtain their GPAs.

Data Analysis

For the data-analysis process, I used many of the techniques recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2017). Recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and reviewed for accuracy. While reviewing each line of data, the margins served as a space for notations on emerging themes or disconfirming information. In addition, Dedoose software was used to analyze chunks of data for themes. I also reviewed each transcript by hand and made notations in the margins. Once analyzed and coded, data were categorized and condensed for themes. Some of the initial codes included opt in, opt out, ease of accessing services, racial stigma, and the role of family and culture. Codes consisted of expected, unexpected, and disconfirming information. Chapter 4 consists of an explanation of the categories and findings.

Reliability and Validity

To ensure qualitative reliability and validity, I used the following protocols, including checking to ensure interview transcriptions were accurate and the codes and their definitions remained consistent during the coding process (Gibbs, 2007). In addition, member checking, which is providing some of the participants with the initial findings to ensure accuracy, was used to ensure validity. Triangulation of data occurred through interviews with students and field notes. Last, I utilized peer debriefing, which entailed using a committee member to review all the phases of my study and asked questions to ensure the information gathered would be useful to college administrators (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Anticipated Ethical Issues

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), research involves, collecting data from people about people it is the responsibility of researchers to always put the welfare of the participants first, advocate the integrity of the study, and protect against any misconduct that may reflect poorly on the home institution. (p. 88)

I obtained IRB approval prior to the start of the study. In addition, various gatekeepers who helped with the study, such as the Vice President of the Department of Records, provided approval. An explanation of the general purpose of the study, usage of the data, the purpose of their grade point averages, and appropriate consents occurred prior to or at the beginning of the interview.

In qualitative studies, the researcher is the instrument used to conduct the study; therefore, I refrained from sharing personal impressions and avoided disclosing sensitive information. As the researcher, it is also my responsibility to address any concerns or issues during the interview. Participants were told that at any time they may experience mental anguish during the interview process, I would stop the interview and refer the participant to student mental health counseling if needed. It is important to note my role as a researcher was compartmentalized from my role as an advocate while employed as a staff member at the college. It was equally important that I remained objective in my role as the researcher while seeking how students made sense of academic support services unless there was an immediate danger to the student or others.

Expected Impact of Study

Black and Latinx students are graduating at lower rates in comparison to White and Asian students. They are also taking on higher financial debt for college enrollment when compared to other ethnic groups (Brock, 2010; Musu-Gillete et al., 2016). If institutions are committed to

closing the collegiate achievement gap, it is necessary to understand why Black and Latinx students choose to opt in or out of services that have shown to contribute to efficacy and degree completion (Berumen et al., 2015; Carter, 2006; Halcrow & Iiams, 2011). By exploring this phenomenon, the findings obtained will inform fellow students, so they are aware of their own choices to use academic support services. The findings of the study will also inform the institution on how academic support services are promoted to students and can foster targeted outreach to support students who have GPAs in the range of 2.0 to 2.5.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this case study was to examine Black and Latinx sophomore students' decision to use or not use academic support services. Students who opted in also discussed what services they believed were most beneficial and why. In addition, opt-out students were asked whether their reasons were related to stigmas associated with using academic support services. I also sought to examine the role of a PWI in Black and Latinx sophomore students' decision to use academic support services. Last, how do administrators who provide support services make sense of why students opt in or opt out of using academic support services? This chapter provides profiles of the participants, the data analysis process, themes, and findings supported by quotes from the participants.

Participants

As explained in Chapter 3, I conducted this study at a small, predominantly White liberal arts college in the northeastern United States. The total undergraduate population is about 3,500 students, with the majority enrolled full-time. Purposive sampling was used to recruit students who participated in the study. Upon receiving IRB approval, I met with the Vice President of Information and Records to review the selection criteria. He provided me with a list of 110 participants who met the requirements for the study outlined below:

- Completed at least 30–60 credits, including transfer credits
- Began their first year of college in Fall 2018 or Fall 2019 and returned in Fall 2019 or Fall 2020 to continue their second year
- Self-identified as Black or Latinx

The final sample consisted of 14 students: 9 who identified as Latinx and 5 as Black.

There were 11 females and 3 males ranging from 18 to 21 years old. Two of the participants were

18 years old, six were 19 years old, five were age 20, and one was 21 years old (see Table 4.1).

The nine Latinx participants were not a homogenous group. Although many of them were born in the United States, their parental heritage stemmed from the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Jamaica, Peru, Puerto Rico, and the Caribbean.

Table 4.1: Student Participant Demographics

	Pseudo- nym	Race/ Ethnicity	Age	Gender	First- Generation College Student	Major	Special Program	Academic Support Services Program	Academic Support Services Used	Credits	GPA
1	Alex	Latinx	20	M	No	Art	NA	NA	None	64	3.67
2	Amo	Latinx	21	F	Yes	Biology	NA	STEM	Tutoring	84	3.95
3	Angie	Black	19	F	No	Biology	NA	STEM	Tutoring & Writing Center	61	3.69
4	Dani	Black	19	F	No ^b	Psychology	NA	STEM	Tutoring & Writing Center	92	2.93
5	Draya	Latinx	19	F	No	Business	NA	NA	None	92	3.13
6	Gabs	Latinx	20	F	No ^c	Biology	NA	STEM	Tutoring	61	2.54
7	Joane	Latinx	19	F	No ^b	Biology	NA	STEM	Tutoring	63	3.41
8	Jordan	Latinx	19	M	Yes	Nursing	NA	STEM	None	77	3.35
9	Joey	Latinx	19	M	No	Biology	NA	STEM	Tutoring	74	3.85
10	Kiesha	Black	18	F	No	Communi- cations	Honors	STEM	None	93	3.95
11	Rayne	Latinx	20	F	No	Nursing	NA	NA	None	63	3.44
12	Tanya	Latinx	20	F	No	Social Work	NA	STEM (some)	None	67	3.51
13	Willa	Black	18	F	No	Biology	NA	STEM	Tutoring	89	2.87
14	Zafaya	Black	20	F	No	Nursing	Honors	NA	None	91	3.56

a. Credits reflect the total number of credits earned at the end of their sophomore year, including transfer credits.

b. Mother has some college education.

c. One parent went to college and one did not.

In addition to the 14 student participants, five college administrators who provide academic support services to students were interviewed (see Table 4.2). The administrators were all women: three identified as White and two as Black. Their unique perspectives provided the triangulation of data.

Table 4.2: Administrator Demographics

	Name	Race/Ethnicity	Support Service Affiliation	# Of Years at the College
1	Amber	Black	Tutoring services	over 10 years
2	Jane	White	Writing services	over 10 years
3	Martha	White	Multiple departments	over 15 years
4	Naza	White	Freshman students	over 10 years
5	Viola	Black	QUARTET program	almost 4 years

Several commonalities and differences among the student participants and college administrators emerged throughout the interviews and the data-analysis process, as described in more detail below.

Data Analysis

The committee chair and I reviewed the initial data after the first three interviews were completed. This resulted in amending the interview protocol. The revised protocol included questions that specifically addressed race, stigma, and the use of academic support services. The three initial participants were also re-interviewed using the amended questions (see Appendix B).

I reviewed the transcripts multiple times to achieve familiarity with the text and analysis for similarities and differences. I used Dedoose[®] software for sorting, coding, organizing, and analyzing the data. According to Saldana (2014), there are several strategies in qualitative data analysis. Two of the primary methods used were deductive and inductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning is “what we generally draw and conclude from established facts” while inductive is

“what we experientially explore and infer...based on the examination of evidence and an accumulation of knowledge” (Saldana, 2014, p. 588).

The initial coding process resulted in codes that were inductive such as opting in, opting out, cultural wealth, stereotype threat, reasons for low college completion rates among Black and Latinx students, academic support services, and the role of the institution. Some of the deductive in-vivo codes generated were level of support freshman year, awareness of academic support services, race, and a student’s decision to use support services, experience with microaggressions on campus, diversity within the college, struggles with course content, and stereotype management.

I used Dedoose © software to code participant transcripts. The codes were printed, combined, and categorized for themes that would answer the research questions. While reviewing the codes, I made hand-written notes in the margins. The initial coding consisted of 92 codes, which were condensed into 35 sub-themes and five themes. After completing the initial coding process, I began pulling apart the codes to make connections between the codes and participant responses. For instance, when reviewing the code of opting out, I realized there were central sub-themes about students wanting to figure things out on their own and students choosing to use alternate forms of support. Students were not against using academic support services; they all believed it was beneficial even when they opted out of using them.

I reviewed the administrators’ transcripts multiple times and hand-coded them for themes. Notes were made in the margins, documenting similarities and differences among the interviewees. Themes that emerged among the administrators included the lack of representation reflected among faculty, staff, and students, as well as students not knowing the totality of or the method to access academic support services, all of which became a part of the opt-out code.

Table 4.3: Codes and Theme Development to Answer Research Questions

Research Questions	Why did high-achieving Black and Latinx students choose to use academic support services, and what services do they believe are most beneficial?	Why did high-achieving Black and Latinx students choose not to use academic support services?	In what ways are their reasons for opting out related to culture wealth, stereotype threat, and/or the culture of a PWI?	How do academic support service administrators make sense of why Black and Latinx students choose to use or not use academic support services, and in what ways are their responses aligned with the students or not?
Inductive Codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opt-in • Academic Support Programs • Beneficial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opt-out • Stereotypes • Schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stereotypes • Role of institution • Awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of institution • Accessibility of services
Deductive Codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfort level with seeking help • Rigor of major • Encouraged by faculty and staff • Tutoring Center • Writing Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did not need it • Figure it out on their own • Availability of tutors and scheduling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stereotype threat • Stereotype management • Race and students' decision • Lack of diversity • Welcoming and supportive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack diversity • Location of services • Availability and extent of services available
Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opt-in • Comfortable seeking help • Most beneficial • Need help with course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opt-out • Figure it out on their own • Did not need it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stereotype threat • Stereotype management • Lack diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack diversity • Location of services • Availability and extent of services available • Stereotyped first-generation students

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The following research questions guided this qualitative research study:

1. What reasons do high-achieving Black and Latinx students give for using academic support services, and what services do they believe are the most beneficial?
2. What reasons do high-achieving Black and Latinx students give for not using academic support services?
3. In what ways are their reasons for opting out related to cultural wealth, stereotype threat, and/or the culture of a PWI?
4. How do academic support service administrators make sense of why Black and Latinx students choose to use or not use academic support services, and in what ways are their responses aligned with the students or not?

I found that 10 students opted in and used academic support services because they needed help and believed the services were beneficial. These participants indicated they used academic support services such as tutoring, the Writing Center, or a support program because they knew they needed help increasing their grades, successfully completing a course, or their professor recommended it. One student noted that even the students who are proficient writers should utilize the Writing Center to help them become even better writers. The Writing Center also helped one student with focusing more on a topic. Participants indicated that being a part of an academic support service program, such as STEM, helped prepare students of color who would be working in a predominantly White environment and encouraged students to access tutoring and the Writing Center. One of these participants mentioned that making the formal support programs more racially diverse by including White students would provide integration benefits to all.

Four students in the sample chose not to use academic support services. Three of the four

had a GPA of 3.44, 3.56, and 3.67. One student had a GPA of 3.1 and acknowledged that the services were beneficial and available but did not believe they needed these services. The students' reasons ranged from wanting to figure things out on their own to accessing cultural wealth, including seeking help from peers and family members who were working in the same fields the participants were pursuing. Cultural wealth captured the informal resources students accessed when encountering difficulty with a course. I also found that students' awareness of stereotypes about their race, their negative racial experiences on campus, and stereotype management were influential factors that students gave for opting out. The four students who did not access academic support services all had relatively high GPAs.

Regardless of whether they utilized any support services, I found several common threads among the student participants of the study, which became thematic. I organized the findings by the following five themes: (a) reasons for opting in, (b) reasons for opting out of academic support services, (c) the role of stereotypes, (d) access to informal cultural wealth factors, and (e) lack of diversity. The five themes also consist of findings from the administrator interviews. Administrators had incomplete and, at times, biased accounts for why they believed Black and Latinx students opt in or opt out of support services.

Reasons for Opting In

The 10 student participants who used academic support services, which included the Tutoring and Writing Centers and academic service support programs, noted various reasons for opting in, such as encouragement from their advisor, wanting to seek help to do well in their courses, and being a part of a program that promoted diversity so they could build friendships. These students believed that the support services helped increase their grades on assignments and helped their overall GPA. For example, Zafaya, a 20-year-old Black female nursing major, who

regularly used the Writing Center stated,

I have used the Writing Center and the library for different papers that I have had for two different papers, and they were helpful. [They] fixed up my grammar and helped me focus, writing better on my topic. That was helpful and I did use them...it was a meeting with one of the library personnel or someone just in the Writing Center going over your rough draft or your paper later on and you reading it out loud to them. You stop in between and then fixing either sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, just going over your paper and make sure it is clear, concise, on topic, and that it flows well. That way, you can get the best grade possible.

Zafaya benefited from the Writing Center's grammatical review of her paper.

Similarly, another student, Joey, a 19-year-old male Latinx biology major, used the Writing Center, tutoring center, and participated in an academic services program. He described the experiences as positive and noted how these services raised his GPA significantly: "Very good, actually, because I used them the second semester last year, and then I got a 4.0. So, I would say that has a lot to do with my increase in GPA." Joey was able to see a direct link between using academic support services such as tutoring and his grade for the course increasing.

Another student, Joane, a 20-year-old Latinx biology major, also opted to use the Writing Center, tutoring, and participated in the STEM program. She described the experiences as helpful:

So, for the Writing Center, definitely I'd say it's really good help. They don't do a lot of work for you; they point out the things that you did wrong, so you definitely have to do a lot of work on your own, but it's very helpful. Every time I've gone there, I've gotten a

better grade than if I hadn't gone there. For tutoring services, I think it's a really good opportunity depending on what tutor you get. Because I definitely feel like sometimes, if you don't have someone who is really looking out for your best interest, it can be a little bit challenging to understand someone.

At first glance, Joane's remark appears to be related to race. Yet, she said she never encountered a negative racial experience at the college. Rather, the reference to tutors not having a student's best interest appears to be about tutors caring about student success. She implied that some tutors might be more vested in helping students than others.

Another student participant, Amo, a 21-year Latinx biology major, indicated she used the Writing Center because she was not very confident in her writing ability:

Prior to this thing [COVID-19], the Writing Center, I used for when I took psychology online this semester. Every two weeks, we have to be submitting an essay or a story that we'll have to read in class, and I'm not 100% confident about my writing yet because I still make grammatical mistakes, and I still phrase things that are really kind of hard to read sometimes, so Writing Center was a must ...I think it's a really good tool to use because even though you really think that you're really good at phrasing stuff or anything, they always can make it sound more educational or make it flow really nicely, and not just short thoughts in just one page... Yeah, because it's not...it's about trying to give...not trying to give the perfect paper, but trying to make it interesting, trying to make the reader engage on what you're doing or what you're saying. I think they do a really good job of bringing another perspective that you didn't see, and in the writing, it's like, 'Phrase it this way instead of this way.'

Amo described the help she received as improving the quality of her writing. She also received

help using the American Psychological Association format in her papers, which consists of a detailed list of rules for citing research properly and writing papers. She indicated that the Writing Center was extremely helpful to her in this area.

The students who used academic support services all found it useful and beneficial to increasing their grades and their writing. Some participants also described seeking help from their professors, which illustrates students' comfort level with seeking help and wanting to do well in their classes. I also found that biology majors used support services more than students majoring in nursing, art, and communications. The rigor, depth of detail, and amount of memorization required of biology students could be one of the reasons for this finding.

The STEM Academic Support Service Program

Of the 14 students who participated in this study, 10 students enrolled in the STEM academic services program. Of the 10, some noted they were encouraged by their science professors to access the resources available within the program. They also described the experience as positive and were encouraged by the program advisor when struggling with course content or experiencing challenges. The program advisor is an administrator, not a faculty member. Gabs, a 20-year-old biology major who is also a part of the STEM program, stated,

My advisor [from the STEM Program] she actually has been the one that's answered my questions whenever it came to academic needs, what I need to do to go into med school. She's even helped me get research opportunities, especially also doing presentations. So, yeah, she's also helped me with what courses to take and which one would help me be easier for that semester, so it's not too much workload.

While the resources were beneficial, some participants stated they wanted to be a part of the STEM program because it had a diverse student body. Therefore, it was a place where they could

make friends who were also of color and could help them to stay motivated to succeed. Jordan, a 19-year-old male Latinx nursing student, described the sense of community and support he received while participating in the STEM support services program:

STEM, honestly, has been like the game-changer for me, coming in as a freshman. It's really hard, as many people may experience, like finding friends, finding your new group, and then STEM kind of provided like a safe space and a place where I can make connections with people who had similar backgrounds. And then the same people that meet also encourage you to work hard, and they kind of show you the ropes of how to really be a college student. So, although I was having difficulties at first adapting to the new college environment, they would tell me like, 'Have a set schedule.' They'd give me advice on time management and through certain coordinators, and through the people that we meet and the events that we had, it definitely played a big role in helping me make the transition from high school to college... So, seeing that there's a lot of support from STEM program, seeing that there's a lot of availability, whether it's through workshops, whether it's through people coming in, like having motivational speakers to come in and kind of tell us to keep fighting, keep pushing forward, and giving us advice on what to do, and what we'll encounter once we get older, once we get into our fields. It's really helped a lot and that's what like, I was like, 'Let me do this. I want to be part of the STEM program.'

As you can see from Jordan's quote, the STEM program was a source of motivation and support to do his best and navigate the college community. Jordan also indicated that his STEM advisor provided more flexibility for meetings compared to his academic advisor, who was not easily accessible because of their teaching and work schedules.

Ange, a 19-year-old female Biology major, also described wanting to be a part of the STEM program for social and academic reasons: “One of the reasons was, since I was new to the school, I figured I joined something where I could interact with others and find people to be friends with on campus.” Ange joined the STEM program for financial assistance with textbooks and meeting other students. Another student, Kiesha, stated it was a place to meet and socialize with other students of color in the program who were not in her other courses and become educated on various topics. She stated,

I would say it's a great place to learn new things. I remember when they had speakers come in and talk about their jobs; this is definitely a great place to learn about different professions, not only in your area. I learned so much about the medical field, that's not my major, but it was interesting stuff to learn and pick up on and just a place to see other students of color if you wouldn't regularly see them in your courses. And it was just a warm, welcoming program.

Tanya, a 20-year-old female Latinx Social Work major, explained her experience with the STEM program as a place where students of color can motivate each other and find community. She believed that the program would be better if more White students enrolled to learn about institutional racism and not segregate students:

I think it's a great program to uplift students of color working in a predominantly White environment, but I also think it segregated the population to the point that we weren't educating the students on Long Island, meaning the students of the majority on the intricacies of like institutionalized racism and structuralized racism when we could have used. I think STEM could have been used to uplift the entire campus and not necessarily just the students of color and the financially underrepresented.

Tanya described the college as a PWI and noted that there is a need for students in the suburbs to learn more about diversity and structural racism. This coincided with the sub-theme of lack of diversity in academic support services, which other students and the administrators referenced when interviewed.

Students enrolled in the STEM support services program explained their experience as different from receiving traditional advisement from their academic advisor. They indicated their academic advisors helped them with registering for courses. Conversely, the STEM program provided a safe space where Black and Latinx students met other students of color; they were supported, motivated, and encouraged when encountering difficulties or challenges. Participating in an academic services support program helped them transition to college and provided some financial support. On the other hand, one student believed that the STEM program should be available to all students, not just students of color.

The findings in this section outlined the rationales students provided for opting to use academic support services, such as needing help with the course when encountering difficulty with course content, wanting to increase their GPA, seeking help to pass a course they would have otherwise failed, or wanting to make friends who were also students of color. The administrators interviewed shared some of the same reasons for students opting to use support services, such as encountering difficulty with a course or could not pass the class without help. They also discussed other factors that may hinder students from accessing academic support services.

Administrator Views

The five administrators working in academic support services shared their thoughts on why students choose to use academic support services. They echoed sentiments similar to the

students who opted in, saying students choose to use services because they want to improve their grades, they are struggling in their courses and need extra help, or because it is heavily encouraged and promoted by faculty in certain disciplines such as the sciences and nursing due to how rigorous the courses are. They also pointed out that the students they see in the writing and tutoring centers come in with a range of academic abilities. Jane, a White woman who works for the Writing Center, described,

We perceive ourselves as welcoming, and we work with people at all levels at any part of the writing process. A lot of students just come with, 'I got this assignment. I have nowhere to start.' And then, some come with, 'Okay, here's my 20-page thesis. Can you just go over it with me?'

Jane's thoughts above coincided with what was reported by student participants, who stated that students with varying levels of writing skills need go to the Writing Center for help. It also aligned with the participants who stated that the institution is welcoming and that everyone wants students to succeed.

Another administrator, Naza, a White female professor, stated that students come in with a wide range of abilities and use academic support services because they need "extra help" in their classes:

I think sometimes when you transition from high school to college, the writing skills, the math skills are...as an undergraduate professor, you have the job of catching everyone and putting them at least somewhere on the same spectrum. We get such a diverse population of students who come in that have all different levels of experience, and writing skills and math skills, so I think primarily they'll seek help not soon enough, but because they're struggling in some of their courses.

A Black female administrator, Amber, who works closely with academic support services, believed students majoring in biology and nursing use services such as tutoring and the Writing Center because “It is heavily promoted by the faculty in those disciplines due to their heavy course content that builds over time. Students can easily fall behind and feel lost. Tutoring provides a great support.” While the choice to use one service over another may vary, the participants who use academic support services do so because they need help and are encouraged by their instructors.

Viola, another Black female administrator, tasked with implementing an academic services program on campus, stated she believed students opted to use academic support services because she encouraged them to do so and often reminded them to sign up for services:

Particularly if I talk about, or specifically, if I speak on, in terms of my contact with students, is because I've encouraged them to do it. I usually tell students at the beginning of the semester, ‘Don't forget—if you are taking these particular courses, you need to get tutors the first week of classes. You don't need to wait; just get your tutors the first week of classes.’

According to the administrators, students use support services such as tutoring and the Writing Center because transitioning from high school to college can be difficult, and they want or need extra help, or their majors are rigorous, and they need help to pass their courses. Professors may be encouraging students majoring in biology and nursing to use formal methods of support because of the rigor of each major and using the services can help the students be successful.

Reasons for Opting Out

Four of the 14 students chose not to use tutoring services, the Writing Center, or

participate in an academic support services program. Three of the four who opted out were Latinx: Alex, a 20-year-old male art major, and two females, Draya, a 19-year-old business major, and Rayne, a 20-year-old nursing major. The fourth student who opted out, Zafaya, was a 20-year-old Black student majoring in nursing. They cited reasons such as not needing the services of the tutoring or Writing Center and exploring other cultural wealth resources such as seeking out friends, peers, and family members. All students noted that their Black and Latinx peers may opt out of using services because they do not know how to access them or they are uncomfortable using the services because of stigmas associated with their race or ethnicity. Some students described opting out because of scheduling conflicts when trying to reserve a tutor and a lack of tutors, and others, like Alex, a 20-year-old Latinx student who is an art major, opted out because he did not think he needed help:

I appreciate that it's there, but I think I'm in a place where I don't need it. I'm not going to say it's not off the table for...my entire college experience. But as of right now, I think I've got a handle of the schoolwork that is presented to me.

Similarly, Rayne, a 20-year-old female Latinx nursing student, described her decision to opt out as “I just haven't felt the need for a tutor, but if I felt this class is hard, I need a one-on-one tutor every week, I would definitely go there.”

Another student, Willa, an 18-year-old Black student majoring in biology, opted out because of scheduling issues and a lack of tutors, noting,

I would say mostly timing, like scheduling conflicts because I know last semester, a few students wanted to use the tutoring services, but the specific topics that they needed couldn't fit into their schedule, I think...The tutor was available when they weren't. I think there's only one or two tutors per...There are only a few tutors per certain topics

and, then some topics, you don't have tutors at all.

Zafaya, a 20-year-old Black student majoring in nursing, also opted out because of scheduling challenges. She explained,

So, I tried to get a tutor—when was it—in my first semester of my sophomore year in the fall. I wasn't doing great in one of my classes, and I kept trying, you know, to find a tutor, but they go quickly. That's how great they are, but most of them, what I found when I maybe tried to sign up, which was maybe mid-semester, they are mostly at night, and I can't stay that late because I commute, and I didn't have a car at the time, so it's harder for me to make that schedule...didn't sign up for tutoring. I didn't think I needed it then, but instead of tutoring, it was easier to have a study group with some people in the class, and that helped me more. Again, the scheduling was an issue when I'm looking for a tutor. A lot of them, especially as I am a nursing student, some are at night or during my day classes, so that was hard, so that was a little difficult.

Rayne, Zafaya, and Willa opted out of using formal tutoring services available through the college. At different points during their interview, all three students stated they used other informal resources such as peer-study groups and family members in the healthcare field.

However, Willa and Zafaya both stated that at different points, they could not access tutoring due to the limited availability of times and tutors. In some instances, tutors are only available for specific courses. This is important because if there were more tutors and additional times available to access tutoring, both students would have accessed the service. Students opting out of using the service is not because they did not want to use it.

Perceptions of Why Other Students Opt Out

When asked if Black and Latinx students may feel embarrassed or uncomfortable when

wanting to seek help, Amo, a 21-year-old female Latinx student majoring in biology, indicated,

I feel that sometimes, usually, I feel that race brings another perspective because we're... as a minority group, we are used to people not supporting and also not being offered the same things as mostly Caucasian students or Caucasian people. Sometimes I feel that students [of color] don't really go out there and try to look for the resources that they can use because they are afraid that they will be shut down. They are afraid that it wouldn't be the same treatment as it will be for Caucasian students...because they're of a different ethnicity or race that...I feel that it's more...Instead of being...It's something that happens in real life and almost day-to-day basis, but there are also people who are trying to change that. And I know for a fact that people in the tutoring center or at STEM program or at the Writing Center that treat you equally. And, there's no, like, 'We treat Caucasian students better than others.' They offer you the same treatment equally. But in life outside of [college], there are other people who might not give you the same treatment. I feel that if we go from that experience that we had outside of [college] and we think that it will be the same treatment there, but if maybe you don't try it, then you will never know.

As Amo explained, because of the racial discrimination Black and Latinx students encounter in their everyday lives, they may be reluctant to explore or use academic support services in college. Black and Latinx students perceive not being treated in the same way as their White counterparts, even though in actuality, the services are available to all students. While Amo has had her own negative racial experiences outside of the institution, she felt comfortable using academic support services to increase her grade and do well in the course.

Another student, Tanya, a 20-year-old female Latinx student majoring in social work, described feeling discomfort when asking for help:

I definitely feel embarrassed needing help, I think that is subjective, and it comes down to who the person is; if they're willing to want that help and get that help, that's a different story than someone who knows they need help but doesn't want to reach out for the help. Four participants, including Tanya, described feeling unease or embarrassment when seeking help. Within this group are the students who experienced stereotype threat, described in more detail below; they did not want to be the students who validated negative stereotypes about their race or as the student who does not get it. This is consistent with past research, including Steele and Aronson's (1995) seminal work (Gonzalez et al., 2002; Massey & Fischer, 2005; Owens & Massey, 2011).

Administrator Views

Administrators discussed why they believed students opted out of support services, including not understanding what the services are about, the extent of the services available, and the location. Martha, a White woman who works with many of the academic support services offered to students, believed that the location of services was a barrier to participation:

The challenges to both those places is location. All the three service areas are in the basement of a building that has no traffic, so students have to be very motivated to find them. I think a drawback is not being aware. And the students who are aware...know to get their tutor early on, but...students wait, and if they wait until like Thanksgiving, there's no tutors. So, I think that's a drawback. I think it's a drawback we don't have enough tutors. And with the writing center, people don't understand sometimes what the writing center could do.

While students may not always understand the services available, some administrators described the location of the services and the space itself as a hindrance to students accessing the services.

Like the students, Martha brought up the number of tutors as a barrier to accessing services.

Jane, a White woman, believed that space and comfort were barriers:

The students themselves have very positive experiences here and feel very welcomed.

But from our end, I think the environment could be a lot better. It's not very comfortable the way we work. The space isn't big enough. There are writing centers that have a little bit of a welcoming/waiting space. We don't really have that. And even the space that we work with, the desks aren't large enough for two people. And that might, I don't know how much that has affected people coming here, but we have certainly felt the impact. I think sometimes we can't even get enough students in because of the space, and we have long waiting lists for students to come.

Jane went on to say that not only is there a lack of space, but it also feels hidden, which may be overwhelming for Black and Latinx students to find, which is a hindrance to them accessing the services.

The administrators pointed to several reasons as contributing factors to students opting out of using academic support services, such as not knowing what services are available, how these services may help them academically, lack of adequate space for students to receive services, and being physically located in a terrible location with windowless rooms in the basement. Jane also noted that the Writing Center itself might have a negative connotation, such as students using services as a punishment. In addition to these reasons, at least one of the services discussed in this chapter was staffed with predominantly White people. Lack of diversity is a multi-layered issue.

Lack of Diversity

As a PWI, many of the student participants believed the institution could do more to

increase the diversity of the student body, faculty, and administration. The racial breakdown of the undergraduate population of approximately 3,000 students for the 2018–2019 academic year was over 50% White, 10% Asian, 10% African American, and 20% Latinx. The faculty and the administration is also predominantly White, including staff in the academic support service departments. The student participants were not shy speaking about the lack of diversity across the college. Some students described feeling discomfort when having White tutors or walking into a support service center with a solely White staff. Not having peers or professors in the classroom illicit feelings of discomfort and unease, resulting in Black and Latinx students not wanting to seek help. These students did not want to conform to the view that students of color do not know something, also known as stereotype threat.

When asked about race and stigma, Tanya, a 20-year-old Latinx Social Work major, stated that it depends on how comfortable students are with PWIs growing up:

Depending on what's the student's upbringing—like myself, I've grown up in a very diverse community, and then to go asking for help when absolutely no one looks like me, yeah, that would be very uncomfortable for me. But if you talk about a student, like a minority who lives in Smithtown [a mostly White community] where there's not much representation, it may be normal for them because that's the only thing that they've been exposed to. It's subjective; I feel like a lot of students may feel that way, but I also feel like a lot of students may not feel that way if they grew up in like a predominantly White area...yeah, I think it all depends on personal experience.

As Tanya described, working with White tutors was not the norm for some student participants if they grew up in a predominantly Black or Latinx K-12 school system. When asked if they encountered any Black or Latinx tutors, Joey, a 20-year-old Latinx student majoring in biology,

stated, “I can't remember. I want to say no, I don't think so. Not when I was there, at least, or maybe I just didn't notice.” Joey’s feedback provides context for why students may feel uncomfortable seeking help from others who are not of the same race. Kiesha, an 18-year-old Black female student majoring in communications studies, noted some of the discomfort Black and Latinx students may experience when wanting to access services in a predominantly White setting. She stated,

I know a lot of students of color...It's like a guessing game, I guess, where it's like, ‘Oh, is this person racist? Are they openly racist? Are they not racist?’ So, I guess let's say you go to the Writing Center and everyone in there is White. It's like, ‘Oh, should I be here or stuff like that,’ where just the energy or the aura or just stare or something. So, I guess that definitely has like a part in it.

Keisha explained that utilizing academic support services, such as the Writing Center, can be a mentally daunting experience when the staff is predominantly White. In addition to wondering whether staff is personally inclusive and unbiased with regard to race and ethnicity, a student of color in this predominantly White setting may experience uneasiness or anxiety of the underrepresentation of Black and Latinx persons in the room and experience feelings of being misplaced.

In addition to the staff being predominantly White in academic support service offices, students also noted a lack of diversity among faculty. Gabs, a 20-year-old Latinx student majoring in biology, stated that not many professors share her race or ethnicity:

The professors, from what I've seen, not many of my professors that I've met have a Latino background or anything like that. It's not very diverse as a professor, I would say...So many of the professors I've had were of White background. I haven't seen or met

any of my professors to have any other background of being Latino or anything. It wasn't something where I could actually make a connection to the person where they could understand any of the hardships I go through.

Students like Gabs indicated the need for faculty of color. They noted that White faculty might not be sensitive to Black and Latinx students' needs, responsibilities outside of college, or situations they encounter in their daily lives. They also discussed wanting to use academic support services but questioned whether they belonged there because the staff was predominantly White. When asked about the diversity of the college, a student participant named Tanya, a 20-year-old Latinx student majoring in social work, stated that where she grew up in Queens, New York, was very different from the focal college in terms of diversity, and many of the friends she met did not have very much experience with students of color:

It was uncomfortable for the fact that, well, first, we have the STEM class over the summer, so that class was very diverse, so I didn't see a problem with the college at all, and then starting in September, the classes were very different compared to what I was used to. I live in Queens, so I went to elementary school here—incredibly diverse. I also live in Flushing, so [it] is very diverse here. So, it just took me back like, 'Oh, this is kind of different,' but I didn't really think much of it, but then once I started like networking and talking to people, I realized that the way we were raised is very, very different. The college is a Predominantly White Institution, which is also a reflection of some of the towns and suburbs of this northeastern metropolis. I have a friend who lives in Smithtown, and he was like, 'Oh, there was one Black kid in my high school,' and I was like, 'What?' That's so crazy. And then hearing microaggressions, how often people use them, really took me back, even professors, and they're not intentional; they're not from a

malice place. It just took me back how people who grow up in less diverse areas, view the world very different.

PWI problems include microaggressions against students of color. Some of the students interviewed noted that diversity is important and would like to see faculty, students, and staff more racially representative.

Administrator Views of Diversity

The five administrators interviewed in this study offered different perspectives on why students may opt out of using academic support services, including feeling discomfort seeking help from people who are not of the same racial or cultural background. Naza, a White administrator who works with students, stated,

I think they may not feel comfortable, especially if it's a peer tutoring. Because I know a lot of our tutoring—maybe not so much the Writing Center—but tutoring in particular can be peer. I think it's a little bit harder when the peer is not of the same background, or they don't want to maybe ask for help, or maybe they sometimes don't even know it's available.

Naza believed that the lack of diversity among tutors is one reason students opt out. Another reason, she indicated, was not feeling a sense of ease asking for help or receiving it, especially when the tutor may not be of the same race or culture as the student. Jane, a White woman who works at the Writing Center, shared similar thoughts to Tanya's perception when she explained that where students of color grow up, in PWIs or not, may be related to their level of comfort with seeking help:

Well, there's a couple of ways you can go at it depending on where students, if they were from suburban schools; I guess we would look pretty familiar to them. If they come from

more urban areas, they might be surprised that they're not seeing somebody who doesn't look like them.

Jane's quote above describes how some students may be used to being in a PWI, depending on where they grew up. She also indicated that all of the staff in the Writing center are White. This may cause students of color to not feel comfortable, which is an additional hurdle for students to get through when seeking help. When asked about the diversity among staff at the institution playing a role in students' decision to use academic support services, Viola, a Black administrator, stated:

When I first started working here as an African American woman, and I might have been maybe one or two semesters in, I had a student approach me of African descent, and she just happened to be walking down the hallway, she says, 'Excuse me, what class do you teach?' And, I told her who I was and where I worked. And she said, 'Oh, I just wanted to know if there was a class, actually, if it was something that I could possibly take, if you were teaching it.' Because, like we all know, it's a Predominantly White Institution. The lack of diversity among faculty, staff, and students is visible, and students are eager to have more faculty and staff of color, which is evident by Viola's interaction above. On the issue of diversity, Martha, a White woman who has worked as an administrator in academic support services for many years, believes there is awareness of the lack of diversity among staff, but little improvements were made to increase diversity when hiring. She indicated,

I think for years, we did a lot of lazy hiring at the college where we would just hire people we knew instead of doing searches, and that has kept it not only White, but of a certain particular class of people. So, I think there's a lot that needs to be done here...It's still business as usual here at [the college]. I haven't seen any really

significant changes, unfortunately. I was on a couple of hiring committees last spring, and even though there are qualified people of color, the offers went to White people. So, I think that there is...It's just people like to hire who they're familiar with, and that's not okay.

One Black administrator, Amber, stated she did not know why students opted out of using academic support services. This was a unique perspective; I was left wondering if that was a legitimate answer or because she did not want to offer an honest opinion because of the college being predominantly White.

Lack of diversity among support staff, such as tutors and faculty, were a barrier recognized by both students and administrators who participated in this study. Both groups acknowledged that not having diverse faculty or staff can influence how the service is perceived. Black and Latinx students may believe they do not belong in the center or use its resources as the staff were predominantly White, which created an additional hurdle for students when trying to access academic support services. Students also acknowledged that having predominantly White faculty may not be culturally sensitive to the challenges Black and Latinx students encounter in their everyday lives.

Role of Stereotypes and Use of Support Services

While students and administrators talked about the lack of diversity among faculty and support staff, the students also discussed the role of stereotypes in students' decision-making process to use or not use academic support services. The role of stereotype threat in students' academic performance in post-secondary education is well-documented (Aronson et al., 1998; Dennehy et al., 2018; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013; Logel et al., 2012; Massey & Fischer, 2005; Owens & Massey, 2011). However, the role that stereotype threat might play in college students'

decisions to seek help when encountering challenges with their classwork is not a widely discussed topic.

Racial stereotypes were a factor in two students' decision to opt in or opt out of using academic support services. Most of the participants felt that race could play a role in other Black and Latinx students' decision to use or not use academic support services because of how they are treated in society and aware of the negative stereotypes about their race. In the next few sections, I will describe two groups of students in this sample. The first group reported that they had no negative racial experiences in college and provided other rationales for opting in or out of services. The second group disclosed experiencing racial microaggressions on campus; however, it did not affect their decision to use services. They also illustrated stereotype management in their behaviors after the negative racial experience.

No Negative Racial Experiences

Eight of the 14 participants said they never encountered a negative racial experience while enrolled at the PWI or throughout their K-12 career. They also indicated race did not play a role in their own decision to use academic support services or other Black and Latinx students' decisions. Instead, student participants provided different non-racial rationales for opting out, including "figuring it out on your own," peers and parent support, and pride. This theme of not seeing race as a factor in opting in or out of support services may be related to students in the sample not being aware of or not having a sophisticated critique of the ways in which PWIs are racialized institutions that benefit White students. For example, when directly asked if race played a role in his choice to use academic support services, Alex, a 20-year-old male Latinx student majoring in art who opted out of using academic support services, said,

When it comes to race? No, for me...I don't think that's it. I think it's just a mentality

thing. You know, some people, they want to like tough it out, you know? They think they can do it by themselves and try and overcome some obstacles. I don't think it's a race thing. I think it's just a mental thing.

According to Alex, it had nothing to do with race. Rather, he believed it was the mentality of students wanting to work through the challenges on their own. The biggest hurdle for students is knowing they need help and asking for it.

Rayne, a 20-year-old female Latinx student majoring in nursing who opted out, explained that when she encounters difficulty with a course, she uses resources such as peers and her parents for help. She also noted that race is not a factor in students' decision to opt in or out of academic support services. Rather, Rayne felt that other students opted out because of pride or opted in because of insecurities about their academic abilities. She explained,

I feel like it's not really a race thing. I just feel like it's kind of more a pride thing. Like, 'Do I really want to reach out for this help right now or not?' Or maybe like, 'Am I comfortable enough to do this or not?' But I feel like it doesn't have as much to do with race. Just being like, 'I'm not smart enough, like all the other students, to comprehend this in class. Like I need that extra help.' I feel like it's more like that, feeling like you're not at the same pace as everyone. I personally don't think race has anything to do with your intelligence. I just think it has to do with, are you willing to put in the work? And because I feel like everyone learns differently.

Rayne's response illustrated other rationales for students asking or not asking for help such as an awareness of how they are doing in class compared to other students, pride, and work ethic. It also showed race is not always reason for students who opt out of academic support services.

Yet, these eight participants did acknowledge that race played a role in other students'

decisions to use academic support services. Joey, a 19-year-old male Latinx student majoring in biology who opted out, indicated race did not play a role in his decision to use tutoring. But he believed it could play a role in other students' decisions if they experienced a negative racial incident and saw that the tutoring center had mostly White staff. He stated,

Some people, if they're not White, I guess, believe that they won't fit in, or something. That's just their belief sometimes, and maybe they've encountered something like that. They've had something happen to them that was racially abusive, which I have never experienced, so that doesn't affect me. But yeah, I'm sure that can affect someone's decision to do something that involves mostly populated White people [in the tutoring center].

Like Joey, Joane, a 19-year-old Latinx student, acknowledged that race did not play a role in her decision to use academic support services, but it can for other students. She explained,

I feel like my ethnicity and my race doesn't really play a huge role in my life since I'm mixed. I have a lot of cultures and everything. And for me personally, I just see myself as American before anything else just because I wasn't really raised in a specific setting, or culture, or ethnicity, really. I was just raised like a typical American life...I guess everyone comes from different environments in high school. And going into college, we all kind of mix from different backgrounds and different households. So, some people might feel a little less comfortable in this new setting than others, especially if they feel like in their classes, they don't see as many people raised with the same culture as they were. And not knowing that there's a program with people with cultures just like them, I guess, could be nerve-racking not knowing and having to make that step on your own.

Joane's perspective on race is nuanced. While she understands Black and Latinx students may feel discomfort not seeing more students of color in their classes or on campus or asking for help, she is of mixed race, Latinx and White, and fair in complexion. She is able to navigate life without being labeled as one thing or another. Without her disclosing she is biracial or self-identifying as Latinx, I find myself asking if she did not have the physical description she did and had a darker complexion, would her views on race be different?

Another participant, Zafaya, a 20-year-old Black female student majoring in nursing who opted out because of scheduling issues, said she had never experienced any negative racial micro-aggressions at the college. However, she did explain that racial stereotypes did play a role in how she acted during her first year at the college. She explained,

I felt that sometimes I tried to hold myself back, not to be, I guess, too Black or something. I don't know how to describe it, but I kind of felt like I had to hold back on that. I don't know if they [other students] had experienced people of color, I guess. I don't know. But I did feel like I hold back my personality just a little bit. And then when I got more comfortable, I felt I could be more of myself...I didn't want to be typecast as too loud, or too flamboyant, or too extra, as they may say, so I just didn't want that to be placed on me or for people to just only see me as that. So, I kind of just stood back, maybe was a little more quiet, and just not really myself. I'm not that loud of a person, but just to...I didn't want people to stare and look at me and just only see that.

Zafaya did not want to be stereotypically labeled or stared at and only see the stereotypes. She wanted to feel more comfortable on campus before revealing more of her personality. This is indicative of students' awareness of stereotypes pertaining to their race and ethnicity and using strategies to work through them. Zafaya used *stereotype management*, defined as the ability that

“some high achieving students know they are being stereotyped and can re-articulate the stereotypes and manage them to minimize their impact” (McGee, 2016, p. 1627).

Negative Racial Experiences

Most of the students described the PWI as welcoming and supportive to students of color. However, of the 14 participants, 3 experienced racial micro-aggressions from peers in the classroom or staff in campus offices. Only one of the three students said that the racial incident influenced their decision to use services. The other students used stereotype management to cope; however, their experiences point to the reasons that other Black and Latinx students (not in this study) may have for opting out of support services.

Kiesha, a Black 18-year-old female student majoring in communications arts, experienced stereotype threat that influenced her decision to opt out of using academic support services. Her response showed elements of stereotype threat regarding using support services:

Oh, maybe the barrier that since I'm like Black, maybe I dislike not being able to necessarily not ask for help; it's a pride thing, I guess, where it's like, 'Oh no, I should know it already.' Like that makes sense... You don't want to be labeled as or seen as someone that didn't know it... You don't understand, you're not listening, you're lazy.

Kiesha did not use the Tutoring or the Writing center and said she dislikes asking for help because she feels “she should know it already.” She did not elaborate on the stereotype threat but acknowledged that students in a popular competitive discipline chose not to use the academic support services they needed because they did not want to be seen as lackadaisical or not putting in the effort. Kiesha’s experience and description of her peers in rigorous majors support previous literature on stereotype treat. She did not want to risk conforming to some of the negative stereotypes about Black students by opting into support services. In addition to

experiencing stereotype threat, Kiesha also experienced a professor making negative comments about her hair.

Angie, a Black immigrant female 19-year-old student majoring in biology, is one of the three students who experienced a racial micro-aggression from a staff member on campus. Angie recalled a situation on campus where she and her sister were treated differently at the Student Advisement Center. They were waiting in line to be helped and were standing behind a White male student:

We were behind waiting, and they (Student Advisement staff) were very nice and smiley with him and relaxed. When he left, and we came, well...my sister noticed that they changed the way they were interacting. They weren't as like smiley or kind with us as they were with the man who had just left. She noticed that, and pointed it out to them, and they didn't receive it very well. She said it very kindly, too; she just said, please, next time, take into consideration what they were doing.

Despite this incident, Angie said she continued to access the services of both the Tutoring and Writing Centers.

Another illustration of stereotype management came from Draya, a 19-year-old female Latinx student majoring in business. Draya described a negative racial experience in one of her classes while presenting on the *glass ceiling*, the idea that there are barriers for women and people of color to advance in a profession:

I had girls in my class telling me that doesn't exist. I'm like, 'That doesn't exist for you guys yet; I live through it every day.' And then, I almost cried that day in class. And I was just like, I can't be in this school anymore. And then I told my friends, and they were like, 'You can't do that. You need to prove to them that you're meant to be here. And

you're going to work hard, and you're going to just push through it, because I know you can.'

While Draya enjoys her classes, she has not used any academic support services because she has access to friends for support and cultural wealth from her mother and uncle, who were both business majors like herself. Draya and Angie's experiences are examples of stereotype management. Both students continue with their college studies despite encountering negative racial experiences. It also did not affect Angie's decision to use academic support services, which may be due to her extremely rigorous major, biology.

Administrator Views

When asked about the role of stereotypes in students' decision-making process to use or not use academic support services, administrators had mixed comments. Amber, a Black woman, noted that stereotypes do play a role in students' decisions:

On a predominantly White campus, perceived stereotypes may play more of a role as Black and Latinx students may feel heightened pressures to fit into academic spaces.

Seeking academic support may contribute to them feeling more needy than the average college student.

Similarly, Naza, a female White administrator, believed students do not feel comfortable asking for help from people who are White:

I would say that the students want to feel like they have it all under control and they don't need help. Also, they do not feel comfortable asking for support from someone who 'doesn't look like them.' I don't think our centers are diversified or very welcoming. This needs to be addressed.

Amber and Naza's quotes illustrated the connection between the lack of diversity of faculty,

staff, and students regarding stereotype threat when wanting to seek help from predominantly White support staff. The answers elicited from the administrators are similar to their thoughts on the diversity of faculty, staff, and students at the college. However, they all agreed the institution could do more to increase equity and inclusion across the school. This is important because under the umbrella of equity and inclusion, training and resources for faculty, staff, and students are needed. One administrator, Jane, a White woman, stated,

I think that the way the college approaches things, they do committees, come up with proposals and then some actions. Whether or not these things are successful, I think that's a debatable point. But it is certainly true that academia goes slowly, and they might have these recommendations.

Stereotypes play a multi-faceted role in the participants' decision to use or not use academic support services. Of the 14 students in the sample, 10 participated in an opportunity program, used tutoring services or the Writing Center, and 4 opted out. Two of the 10 students who opted in indicated that stereotypes played a role in their decision to not seek help from the Writing Center and tutoring services. Both students participated in an academic support program because of the racial diversity of the program. They wanted to build relationships with other students of color.

Of the four students who opted out of using any of the academic support services available to them, one student, Draya, experienced a microaggression from her peers in one of her classes. The majority of the students stated race did not play a role in their decision to use academic support services, with a few noting that their lighter skin color may have played a role in how others viewed their race. Many students did discuss the role of their families in their education.

Role of Cultural Wealth

Culture is a critical factor that plays a multi-faceted role in Black and Latinx students' educational experiences, and many studies have documented the role of family support in relation to academic achievement (Catsambis, 2001; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Gong et al., 2015; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Sáenz et al., 2018). Cultural wealth is a variety of “skills, abilities and contacts” shared by historically marginalized students (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). The use of cultural wealth was consistent throughout my interviews with the student participants who opted to pursue non-institutional resources when encountering difficulty with a course. Specifically, with this sample, I found that parents created a culture that fostered help-seeking tendencies in the students. However, I found that students wanted to figure things out on their own, even though their parents encouraged them to ask for help. Students also sought the help of their peers, some of whom they were friends with or met in their classes when encountering difficulty with a course. They formed study groups and quizzed each other to prepare for exams. Some felt it was easier to seek help from their peers.

Family

Black and Latinx students who were not first-generation students noted that when they needed advice or help with their courses, they regularly spoke with family members who either helped them with coursework (if they had professions within the same field) or encouraged them to seek help at the institution when experiencing challenges with their coursework. For example, Draya, a 19-year-old Latinx student, said one reason she did not need academic support services was that she asked her family members for help:

A lot of the times, I used to just either call my uncle or be like, ‘Can you explain this to me? I know that you do this, so I kind of need a little bit of help.’ And, he'll always help

me. Or, if it was in accounting, my mom used to help me because that's what she majored in. So, I always used to find someone who knew what they were doing in my personal circle. So, I didn't have to move my schedule around for a tutoring service if I could just pick up the phone and call [family members]...It was a lot easier for me...because my mom is also a business major—was a business major—and so was my uncle. If I really had any questions about any of my business classes, I would go to them...But also, I'm really studious, so I just never really found a need to use the tutoring services. And I know my writing has greatly improved over the year, so my essays usually get As. So, I don't really go to the writing center either.

Draya is fortunate to have family members who have direct knowledge of the business and accounting fields. When encountering challenges in her courses, she would access cultural wealth within her family.

Another participant, Willa, a female 19-year-old, Black student, noted that her parents gave her the following advice: “My parents say if you need help, you should just ask for it.” Math is an extremely challenging subject for Willa, so she chose to use tutoring services during her first year of college. Willa described tutoring as,

It's extra help. You have people that will go over specific topics with you. If you really needed help and you knew what you needed help on, I would recommend it, but if you're just lost, like sometimes in math, I just don't know what's going on, I feel like tutoring isn't helpful because you don't know specifically what you need help with.

During Willa's sophomore year, while enrolled in calculus, she attempted to sign up for tutoring but was unsuccessful because there were no calculus tutors available. One of the administrators interviewed for this study also mentioned this issue.

Similarly, Zafaya, a Black female 20-year-old student, noted how her parents told her how important it is to seek help when having difficulty with a course:

I attribute that to my parents. They have always encouraged me to get help when I needed it. When I was struggling in high school with, um, I think it was in Trigonometry or Algebra 2, they were on me about it. They were really concerned because I wasn't really asking so much for help. And they really sat me down and talked to me about how there's nothing to feel embarrassed or ashamed about getting tutoring yourself, and if you need the help, there isn't anything we won't do to help you, to get that whatever you need to succeed is the most important part. And that has really stuck with me, and I've always kept that too that if I needed help, there's nothing wrong with asking for it.

Zafaya also brought up how seeking help is connected to her Caribbean culture. She stated, I think [race] can, depending on how they were raised. If getting help wasn't something that they were taught was okay to have. I know that sometimes with African Americans, being one myself, that it's pushed. For me personally, with Caribbean parents, it's always pushed. If you need help, go get help. It's more important to get that grade than trying yourself and failing. And if you're not raised in a house like that, where it's pushed, then you may feel embarrassed and believe instead that you're supposed to do it all by yourself.

While Zafaya was motivated and encouraged by her parents to seek help, she also had access to cultural wealth and would often discuss challenges with her family who attended the same college and had some of the same professors as her:

Um, we would discuss a certain professor. They used to tell me stories when we were younger about different professors that they had, how they felt about them, whatever nickname they had made for them. And then when I started going and had those

professors, it was like re-remembering all those stories I had heard about them and then me having my own experiences with them. Sometimes it was the same, sometimes it was different, you know. But it was just interesting to see that those people are still there, and, you know the same assignments I've had they've had as well and talking about that. Or that you know the people, the classmates, you know the study groups, what they used to help them study for a test, or how they did a certain project.

Zafaya's mother is a nurse practitioner, and her father previously studied nursing before switching to respiratory therapy. She noted it was easier to talk to and seek help from her parents because they had some of the same experiences while pursuing their degrees at the college. She also indicated it might be easier for other students to reach out to their parents and peers for help, as they may feel less discomfort seeking help from someone they feel comfortable with as opposed to a stranger.

Friends, Peers, and Professors

In addition to accessing resources and knowledge from their parents, some students also sought help from their peers, friends, and professors. Joane, a 20-year-old female Latinx student, said she discusses her college life with her parents. However, although her mother attended college but did not complete a degree, she avoids talking about the challenges she encounters with a course because she does not believe her parents can help her with coursework. Therefore, she reaches out to her professor and peers for help. She explained,

In the beginning of the semester, I can tell if I'm going to have a hard time just by the way the professor handles the syllabus and the way that, I can just, I'll scan the textbook. I'll get a good feel for it, and if I know that I'm going to have a hard time, I'll just sign up for tutoring right away. But then, if I haven't signed up for tutoring and it's the middle of

the semester, I'm having a hard time, I guess I'll just continue to go over it, try to contact my professor if they can help me at all or contact my friends in the class or people, I know who've taken the class maybe...I would mention it to one of my friends or something in one of my classes.

Joane stated, "There is no shame in asking for help"; everyone needs help sometimes, and if it helps her to do well and get a better grade in the course, then she would seek help. She goes through a series of steps to get the help she needs when encountering difficulty with a course, including reaching out to the course professor and then to friends and peers who had previously taken the course.

Similarly, Draya, a 19-year-old female Latinx student, also relied on studying with her peers in student life. She indicated,

A couple of us would have classes together, so we used to study with each other. Or, even if we don't, we still quiz each other when we know there's a test coming up.

Everyone's just really supportive and always there for you...If I don't understand something, I'll ask someone who took the class before. And just be like, 'Okay, can you help me? I don't understand this.' And they'll sit there. And even if it's just for half an hour, just explaining, 'Okay, so this is what you have to do to get here,' they'll do it. And I do it to my friends, too.

Rayne, a 20-year-old Latinx student, also noted she has a diverse group of peers she reaches out to for help: "I feel like because we're all nursing majors, so we're all like, 'We're all struggling together. Let's all come together before the test.' Like, it's just like, we just need the help."

Student participants found it easier to access their network of cultural wealth, which included family members, friends, and peers who pursued the same major. They described the ease and

comfort they felt when asking for help with difficult course content. In some cases, they described their friends having the same difficulty and, in the end, they all just wanted to understand the content and do well. If it was too late in the semester, students also reached out to their instructors for help and utilized office hours when needed.

Administrator Views

The administrators provided multiple reasons when asked about students accessing their cultural wealth resources to help with difficulty in a course. They believed Black and Latinx students opt out of using academic support services because they want to figure things out on their own because they are first-generation students. When discussing why students opt out, Naza, an administrator, stated,

I think sometimes the generation of students, they're trying to be successful. They think that they can do it themselves. We're shifting to more of the mindset of 'It's okay to ask for help when you need it.' But I think they're still in that transition zone of, 'I should be capable of doing this myself.' Like, 'Look what my family did. My grandparents did.'

They want to also be successful. I think we are moving into more of a 'It's okay to ask for help' generation, but we're still making that transition. I still think that we're seeing the students that are afraid to ask for help because they feel they can do it themselves.

Another administrator, Martha, a White woman who worked with various academic support services and identified herself as a first-generation college student, echoed similar thoughts about students of color being "on their own" compared to White students. She explained,

I think that sometimes students don't like to ask for help. It's funny, like I was thinking about the ways that I help students with problems with their professors. And I find that the White students usually get their parents involved, and the parents call up and make

demands of the college, where the Black and Latinx students are on their own. I have a little special spot in my heart for them because I'm first-generation in college too, so I feel they're trying to figure this out, and I wanted to give them the support so that they feel like, not like I'm their mother, but that I could be an advocate for them and be as fair. So, I feel like it's sometimes a matter of trust with some students.

According to Martha, students opt out because some do not like to ask for help while others may be first-generation students who are figuring things out without the help from their parents.

While Martha wants to advocate for first-generation students, there was an inherent assumption that this group of students may not be supported by their parents. However, this is contradictory to the findings. While the parents of first-generation students may not be able to help them academically, they reported their parents encouraging them to seek help when they need it.

Viola, a Black woman administrator who also coordinated one of the academic support programs, explained that not understanding what services are available to them and low self-esteem are the main reasons students opt out:

Just not really understanding what the services are about. And also self-esteem. So, you have students that are dealing with low self-esteem, a lot of our students. And the reason I say self-esteem, the largest majority of my students are first-generation students and students who are first-generation, they're coming into school, and they don't really know what it means to be a college student. They're not going to embrace some of the services the way other students have embraced it because they're first-generation.

While Viola's feedback reflects why some Black and Latinx students opt out of using academic support services, including the STEM program, it is not necessarily true of most. The majority of the students in this sample had GPAs that ranged from 2.87 to 3.95.

In addition to students wanting to figure things out on their own when encountering difficulty with their coursework, some students have their own children or other family members help them with their work. As Jane, a White administrator, explained,

Certain populations need more help with writing. For example, older non-native English speakers often have their children, nieces, and nephews help them with their writing.

They will sometimes bring a paper to work on after they've had family help. This is a huge plus for these students since there seems to be no set courses to help non-English speakers deal with the expectations of academic writing [at the college].

In other words, for some groups of students help from family members is viewed as beneficial. A third administrator, Martha, a White woman in her 50s, agreed any help is beneficial. However, she cautioned about using family or friends for help with nursing:

Some students show nursing information to aunts or friends. The life of a working nurse is very different than textbook theory. Sometimes the aunt or friend tells them you do not need to know that, and the student believes them, and then that topic is on the test. Peer study groups are great; they work together and stick to the schoolwork.

Martha's rationale for the pros and cons of accessing cultural wealth provided an added perspective on why accessing cultural wealth may not always be the best resource to access because of the current trends in the subject matter. Last, one administrator, Amber, a Black woman, stated, "It could simply be a matter of students' preference, as the academic support services at the college are advertised and available to students throughout the school year." Amber viewed students using peer groups and family members as a resource is a matter of preference. She stated "academic support services at [College Name] are advertised and available to students throughout the school year." However, the availability of services is

contradictory to what students and other administrators have expressed throughout the interview process.

Unanticipated Findings

In addition to the five themes discussed above, there were surprising findings that included a welcoming and supportive PWI, academic support programs not viewed as an academic support service, and Black and Latinx students choosing to access alternate, informal, non-traditional resources when needing help. These unanticipated findings are discussed in Chapter 5.

Conclusion

Most of the participants believed academic support services are beneficial. Students who opted in needed help and understood the resources available. Students who opted out did so because of stereotype threat or they preferred to get help from peers, friends, or family members. Eight of the 14 student participants indicated they had not encountered a negative racial experience on campus; however, they noted that race and stereotypes inside and outside of college can play a role in other students' decision to use academic support services. Specifically, they stated for some groups of people who encounter negative racial experiences in their everyday lives, they may not feel comfortable seeking help from staff members who are predominantly White and do not represent or understand their racial or cultural background.

Administrators noted that Black and Latinx students use academic support services because they need help passing a course, want to do well, or are heavily encouraged by their instructors. They also indicated Black and Latinx students opt out of using services because of not knowing how to access the services, the extent of the services available, and the location of the services—contradicting what the students said. The administrators had many stereotypes

about Black and Latinx first-generation students accessing cultural wealth instead of the formal support services available at the college, showing that they are not well-informed about students of color on campus. Two administrators agreed that any help from friends or family is beneficial. However, another explained that students should be mindful of getting help from family members or people working in the field because they may encourage students to study only what is needed in the field, not what is required by the text or instructor, which may negatively impact their grade.

The lack of diversity among faculty, staff, and students was highlighted by both students and administrators who participated in the study. Both groups explained that Black and Latinx students not seeing staff, students, or faculty of similar cultural backgrounds might be reluctant or less inclined to seek help. Similarly, Black and Latinx students may not feel a sense of belonging and question whether they should use the services when walking into support service offices staffed with predominantly White people, some of whom have implicit biases about students of color.

In this chapter, I present a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings in relation to the literature, and unanticipated outcomes. The summary includes an overview of Chapters 1-4, including reviewing the problem, the purpose of the study, the methodology, research questions, and findings. Next, I discuss the unanticipated findings, limitations of the study, and recommendations for current practice and future research.

Summary of the Study

In this study, I examined how Black and Latinx sophomore students make meaning of their decisions to opt in or opt out of academic support services. Studies have shown that academic support services, such as tutoring and programs offering supplemental advisement and financial support, contribute to helping students complete college successfully (Alexitch, 2002;

Bartram, 2009; Cahalan et al., 1994; Chaney, 2010; Dietsche, 2012). However, over the past five years, I have encountered Black and Latinx students who did not want to use academic support services. My initial inquiry into this phenomenon was guided by wanting to understand why students would choose not to participate in a program or services designed to help students academically with college persistence and graduation (Abrams & Jernigan, 1984; Cooper, 2010; Crockett & Levitz, 1983; Gahan-Rech et al., 1989; Halcrow & Iiams, 2011; Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Kot, 2014; Lim et al., 2014; Pardee, 2004; Tinto, 2006; Walter & Cohen, 2007).

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the disparity in college graduation rates for Black and Latinx students compared to White and Asian students. Chapter 2 detailed the current literature on the role of academic support services such as tutoring and programs offering financial support and college success. Using multiple theoretical frameworks, including stereotype threat (Steele & Aaronson; 1995), cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), critical race theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), and stereotype management (McGee, 2016; McGee & Martin, 2011), I gained a better understanding of how students make sense of and utilize academic support services in the literature review. In Chapter 3, I gave a detailed description of the participant recruitment strategy and data-collection methods that I used with a final sample of 14 students and 5 college administrators. After coding and analyzing the data obtained from interviews (in Chapter 4), I documented the key findings and takeaways.

Overview of the Problem

The enrollment of Black and Latinx students in college has increased over the past 30 years (Engle & Theokas, 2010). However, these subgroups of students are graduating at lower rates compared to their White and Asian peers. When comparing the racial breakdown of students who matriculated into a four-year program in 2010 and graduated in six years, Black and Latinx students completed their degree at 40% and 54%, respectively, compared to 74% and

64% of Asian and White students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019).

Students not completing a college degree encounter many problematic challenges in life, which can hinder their social and economic mobility (Carter, 2006; Lotkowski et al., 2004; Mudge & Higgins, 2011). Black students have the highest student loan debt compared to other groups (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). Students of color from low-income households also default on their loans at excessively higher rates (Hillman, 2014). Studies have shown that students with a bachelor's degree earn more than those with only a high school diploma (Carnevale et al., 2015; Kurtzleben, 2014). The extant amount of literature suggests that academic support services contribute to college success. Therefore, the problem is understanding why some Black and Latinx students choose to opt out of using these services such as tutoring and programs that provide academic support at a PWI. While the sample of this study consisted of students whom the college would consider as high-achieving students, the data provided valuable insights into students' decision-making process regarding academic support services and the management of stereotypes that can have long-term effects such as anxiety, stress, and mental health challenges (McGee, 2016; McGee & Martin, 2011).

In this study, I examined how sophomore Black and Latinx college students make sense of academic support services and their reasons for opting in or opting out. In addition, I explored which services they believe are most beneficial and are their reasons for opting out related to stereotype threat, cultural wealth, or the culture of a PWI. Last, how do academic support service administrators make sense of why Black and Latinx college sophomores choose to use or not use academic support services? This study comprised 14 high-achieving Black and Latinx students. Although many used academic support services, there were four who did not.

Method

The basis for this study's method was a pragmatic constructivist worldview (Creswell &

Creswell, 2018). I used semi-structured interviews with college sophomores and administrators who participated in this study. This format allowed participants to provide detailed answers and follow-up questions after the data-analysis process. A case study design allows researchers to obtain in-depth data on participants' experiences and perceptions, which was the objective when interviewing participants (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2016).

I contacted the Department of Records at the local college for a list of students meeting the following criteria:

- Completed at least 30 credits, including transfer credits
- Began their first year of college in Fall 2018 and returned in Fall 2019 to continue their second year
- Began their freshman year in Fall 2019 and returned in Fall 2020 to complete their second year
- Self-identify as Black or Latinx

I completed this study at a small liberal arts college in the northeastern region of the United States. According to the Fall 2020 data retrieved from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2022), the total undergraduate student population at the college was 3,000. The racial breakdown of students was 6% Asian, 8% African American, 19% Latino, and 57% White. Most of the students commute from nearby suburbs.

I received IRB approval in Spring 2020, at the beginning of the COVID-19 epidemic, and toward the end of the semester. All classes had moved to a remote modality during the pandemic. The Department of Records provided me with a list of 110 students meeting the criteria above. The recruitment of students began early in the summer. Students were contacted via email multiple times. I also reached out to colleagues, professors, and administrators, asking them to distribute the flyers to students in hopes of recruiting more participants for this study. Fourteen students participated in this study, nine identified as Latinx, and five as Black. There were 11

females and 3 males, with ages ranging from 18 to 21 years old. Two of the participants were 18 years old, six were 19 years old, five were age 20, and one was 21 years old (see Table 4.1).

Interviews began in the Summer 2020 and concluded in Fall 2021, ranged from 40 to 80 minutes in length, and occurred via Zoom.

During the Fall 2021 semester, once it was determined the sample would be 14 students, my committee chair and I decided to amend the study to include the perspectives of various administrators who also work in academic support services. Due to the small number of students, I interviewed five administrators who work in academic support services with Black and Latinx students: three White and two Black women. The administrators' perspective would also serve as triangulation of the data obtained from student participants.

Discussion of Findings

The findings include the reasons students used academic support services, such as needing help to pass a course and being encouraged by their instructors to seek help. It also provided the reasons students opted out of using support services, such as the availability of tutors and wanting to figure things out on their own. Students also stated that tutoring and the writing center services were most beneficial because tutoring services allowed for extra time to understand a specific topic, and the writing center helped students who were good writers become stronger writers. Last, the findings documented negative racial experiences, diversity, the role of cultural wealth, and stereotypes in students' decision-making process to use or not use academic support services.

Opting In

10 out of 14 opt-in students provided various reasons for using academic support services, answering Research Question 1. Many indicated they needed the help and wanted to do well in their courses. Others indicated they were encouraged by the instructors of their courses.

Specifically, it appears nursing and biology instructors encouraged students to access the services available because of the rigor of the coursework. Other students noted they participated in an academic support program because they wanted to make friends with a diverse student body. Administrators believed students utilized services such as the tutoring center and writing center because they needed help to complete a course successfully; without it, they may have done poorly or failed the course.

Opting Out

In Research Question 2 of this study, I sought to examine the reasons Black and Latinx sophomore students chose not to use academic support services. Students who opted out did so because they wanted to figure things out on their own or accessed peers and family members when encountering difficulty with a course. Another reason noted for opting out was scheduling issues and the availability of tutors. Two students opted out of using academic support services because of stereotype threat. All 14 student participants agreed that while stereotypes did not play a role in their decision to opt in or opt out, they understood how it could play a role in other Black and Latinx students' decisions because of racial discrimination in society and on campus.

Three of the five administrators agreed that the availability of the tutors was an issue, as well as only having tutors for a limited number of courses. Specifically, during the fall semester, if students do not sign up for tutoring at the beginning of the semester, by Thanksgiving, there are no tutors available. They also indicated that students opt out because they are not aware of the extent of the services available, how to access them, and the location of the services. They noted that both tutoring and writing centers are in the basement of a building with little to no natural light. They felt the environment was not very welcoming for students.

Diversity of the Institution

Both students and administrators discussed the lack of diversity at the PWI college as

possible barriers for students to opt into academic support services. Students noted that the limited diversity among students, faculty, and staff was an issue. Specifically, an increase in faculty of color is needed and would allow instructors to be more culturally sensitive to the challenges some Black and Latinx students encounter outside of school. As one Latinx student explained, she had never had a Latinx professor or a professor from a different ethnicity, so it was difficult to build a connection with White faculty members who she believed did not understand the challenges she faced in her life. Students also indicated that encountering a tutor of color was not the norm. Accessing academic support with predominantly White staff, which is the case with the Writing Center, created a situation in which some students of color might experience discomfort. In seeking help from people who are not representative of their ethnicity, students may wonder if the person they will be getting help from perceives them differently than White students. When wanting to access academic support services, due to the predominantly White faculty and staff, students questioned their sense of belonging at the college.

Four out of the five administrators interviewed shared their views on the diversity of the organization. One administrator would not provide details on the diversity of the institution, only saying that there was “always” room for improvement. My perception was that this administrator did not feel comfortable discussing the topic in great detail. Most believed that students may feel uneasy when accessing support from tutors in the Tutoring Center or consultants in the Writing Center who were not Black or Latinx. One administrator, Viola, a Black woman in her 50s, noted students of color are eager to take courses with faculty of color. She explained that when she first began working for the college, students mistook her for a professor and asked which courses she taught so they could take them. However, another administrator, Jane, a White woman in her 60s, stated that depending on where they grew up, especially in the suburbs, some students may be used to attending a PWI. Black and Latinx students growing up in the suburbs of a large

northeastern city may be comfortable in an environment such as a PWI. They can navigate these spaces, and the lack of diversity may not be an issue for them.

Last, another administrator, a White woman and in her 50s, discussed the institution's hiring practices. She stated that the college did a significant amount of "lazy" hiring of faculty and staff for many years. Candidates are interviewed by search committees; however, the committees do not always get to offer input on which candidate should get hired. The supervisor of the new hire has the sole discretion of choosing the candidate for the position. Rather than actively hiring candidates of color who meet the qualifications, some new hires were made based on familiarity and comfort level with the applicant.

In addition to wanting to increase the diversity of faculty and administrators, four out of five administrators also stated more could be done to increase the diversity of the student body. They agreed that the demographics of the student body has changed, becoming more diverse over the past 15 to 20 years. However, they also stated there was still room for improvement. One administrator, Martha, a White woman in her 50s, described the college as not doing enough in this area. Having more student life activities for students of color, such as a "Black Student Union," would help increase the recruitment of Black and Latinx students. While many of the students noted race did not play a role in their decision, they agreed that it can influence other Black and Latinx students' decision to use or not academic support services. In addition to the lack of diversity, the role of stereotypes and students' racial experiences was also discussed when interviewing study participants.

Role of Stereotypes and Racial Experiences

In addition to stating their reasons for opting in and opting out of using academic support services, and the diversity of the institution, students and administrators also discussed the role of stereotypes in students' decision-making process. Of the 10 students who opted in, Tanya, a 20-

year-old Latinx majoring in social work, participated in an academic service program limitedly. Of the four students who opted out of academic support services, Kiesha, an 18-year-old Black student majoring in communications, described her race as a barrier and her pride getting in the way of asking for help. She also noted that stereotypes played a role in her decision. Both students disclosed they did not use tutoring services because they believed they should have known the information in their courses. All the student participants acknowledged that stereotypes and race could play a role in other students' decisions because of how their racial groups are perceived and because these groups are aware of the stereotypes perpetuated about their people.

Many of the student participants did not have any negative racial experiences. Four participants opted out of academic support services and provided various rationales for opting out, such as “wanting to figure things out on their own.” They believed it was not about race but rather the mentality of the student. Other rationales included the uneasiness of not knowing the race or culture of the person they are seeking help from and students' pride. The fourth research question examined how administrators made sense of Black and Latinx sophomore students opting in and out of academic support services. Interwoven into all five findings of this study are the answers to this question.

Findings Related to the Literature

I applied multiple theories to examine the findings of this qualitative study, including stereotype threat (Steele, 1995; Steele & Aronson, 1997), cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), critical race theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), and stereotype management (McGee, 2016; McGee & Martin, 2011). Stereotype threat theory (Steele, 1995; Steele & Aronson, 1997) was used to examine the role of race and stereotypes in students' decision to opt in or opt out of using academic support services. Stereotype management was used as a lens to make sense of students

succeeding at a PWI despite experiencing stereotypes and microaggressions. Critical race theory provided insight into the structural policies at the college and how it affects Black and Latinx students.

While there is a plethora of research on stereotype threat theory, the majority of studies were quantitative and had a testing component (Aronson et al., 1999; Schmader et al., 2008; Spencer et al., 1999; Steele, 1997). This qualitative study focused on students' decision-making processes and fills a gap in the literature by examining the relationship between experiencing stereotype threat and their decision to opt out. Two students wanted to be viewed positively as competent students, which led them to opt out of support services. One of these participants, Kiesha, a Black 18-year-old female majoring in communications, also disclosed that students of color majoring in a more competitive discipline at the college opted out of using academic support services because they did not want faculty or staff to view them as lazy. This is consistent with past research on stereotype threat, including Steele and Aronson's (1995) seminal work (Gonzalez et al., 2002; Massey & Fischer, 2005; Owens & Massey, 2011).

Prior research has documented the role of peer support in college life, such as "forming study groups, sharing notes and experiences, and giving advice about classes to take and strategies to use" (Richardson & Skinner, 1992, p. 226). Student participants, who preferred not to access formal resources such as the tutoring and writing centers, noted they relied on peers and family members for help. Administrators interviewed provided various reasons for students opting out of services and did not disclose students seeking help through non-formal methods as a reason. Bourdieu (1974) theorized that students from affluent families had access to resources that helped them to be successful academically, and lower and middle-class students were lacking these forms of capital (Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Yosso, 2005). This, along with numerous studies on Black and Latinx first-generation students, comes from a deficit perspective (Dennis

et al., 2005; Lohfink & Paulsen, 2005; Mehta et al., 2011) and possibly contributed to some administrators making judgments about students. Specifically, some administrators believed that first-generation students are not being supported at home. This was contradictory to the findings from the study, as first-generation students in the sample discussed feeling supported by their parents even in situations where their parents could not help them academically. This finding confirmed Garcia and Guerra's (2004) findings about administrators' pre-judgments but also highlights students accessing cultural wealth help when encountering challenges academically (Dennis et al., 2005; Rodriguez et al., 2003; Yosso, 2005). When asked their thoughts, administrators viewed students seeking help from peers and family members as positive.

In addition to stereotype threat and cultural wealth theory, I drew on critical race theory as a lens in this study. Critical race theory posits that there are structures in place within organizations that perpetuate inequality (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The findings in this study confirmed prior literature, such as students of color experiencing microaggressions on campus and not feeling supported or a sense of belonging (Von Robertson et al., 2016; Yosso et al., 2009). I completed this study at a small liberal arts college that has been in existence since the 1950s and is a PWI. The limited amount of diversity could be a result of the existing policies and procedures in place. Some of the structures include not having a uniform policy for search committees to provide recommendations on candidates, academic support services not being as accessible as possible, and increasing the recruitment of faculty and students of color. In addition, there is also no uniform training on faculty advisement that entails a cultural sensitivity component. Three of the five administrators who participated in this study noted that more work is needed to increase the diversity of the staff, faculty, and administrators. The location of academic support services as well as the limited diversity and availability of tutors are also hindrances to students maximizing the use of the services. While it has been discussed in the

past, addressing these challenges were not viewed as a priority by the institution. The findings support previous literature and illustrated the tenets of critical race theory. In theory, this PWI advertised that all students had access to the same academic support services such as tutoring and access to the writing center. However, many Black and Latinx students and administrators noted that students experienced scheduling issues and a lack of availability of tutors when trying to access the services. Students reported that tutoring was not available for challenging courses such as calculus. One administrator stated the services provided are to “check off a box” (e.g., the bare minimum). The lack of resources to ensure the availability of the services is in part due to pre-existing structures embedded within an organization (Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano et al., 2000).

In addition, the college has two opt-in academic support programs. These programs provide many resources, including supplemental advisement, career exploration and planning, financial support, and building community among a diverse group of students. This PWI did not market the programs as an academic support. Many students were not aware of the programs or how to inquire about the qualifications to participate in them. In some ways, these practices are pervasive and continue the cycle of students lacking awareness and totality of services.

Previously, the leadership group comprised people who had been a part of the college for many years. Recently, there have been changes in the leadership of the institution, and some administrators interviewed hope new gains will result in increasing inclusivity and diversity across the college as well as increasing awareness and accessibility of academic support services.

Most of the students indicated race did not play a role in their decision to use or not use academic support services, did not have negative racial experiences on campus, and race was not an issue for them. While interviewing the students, it appeared as though some were oblivious to the college being a PWI—that is, an institution where over 50% of the student enrollment is

White (Lomotey, 2010). According to McGee (2011), stereotype management is a process of resiliency and academic success that students undergo in response to stereotypes and racialized experiences while very much aware that faculty and staff placed little value on their race or Blackness. Like McGee's (2011) study, the Black and Latinx students in this study were high-achieving students who used a host of strategies to work toward successfully completing college. Four students also sought help from their peers and family members when encountering difficulty with a course. In some cases, they also reached out to their instructors during office hours for help because they knew they needed it to succeed. They saw past the stereotypes and focused on their goal of completing college and pursuing their respective careers. They managed stereotypes about their race.

In addition, similar to McGee's (2016) study, students attempted to assimilate to deflect the stereotype. One student, Zafaya, was conscious of the stereotypes about Black women. When she began her enrollment at the college, she consciously did not behave a certain way or exhibit certain mannerisms. She did not want to anyone to view her as "ghetto." While managing stereotypes is a successful strategy, it is not a long-term solution and can cause stress (McGee, 2016; McGee & Martin, 2011). In addition, students in this study displayed various behaviors to help manage stereotypes such as working overtime to stay on top of their coursework, smiling a lot to appear friendly and approachable, and avoiding questions about their personal life. While the strategies assisted students in managing stereotypes and doing well academically, they felt emotional distress when managing stereotypes.

McGee has conducted the majority of studies on stereotype management and Black and Latinx students majoring in STEM fields (McGee & Martin, 2011; 2013; 2016, 2021). This study adds to the limited amount of literature available on stereotype management (Haughton et

al., 2014; Kokka & Chao, 2020). While some of the participants were STEM majors, it was not one of the required criteria, and some majored in nursing, communications, and art.

Unanticipated Outcomes

Unexpected findings emerged while conducting this study. First, while the college is a PWI, many students overwhelmingly felt it was very welcoming and supportive. In addition, students did not view grant-funded programs, such as STEM, as offering supplemental advisement and additional financial assistance, and they did not characterize it as an academic support service. These programs were also not promoted by the college as academic support services. Second, many participants knew about the services but wanted to figure things out on their own using cultural wealth resources. Last, students viewed their advisors as someone they met with once or twice a semester to discuss their schedules. They felt their relationship with their advisor was not supportive in terms of academic support services.

Welcoming and Supportive PWI

Although the college is a PWI, an unanticipated finding was that many participants described the college as a welcoming and supportive institution. The majority of the student participants had never encountered a negative racial experience and believed the institution seeks to help students of all cultures. Students also believed the environment was very personable, with professors wanting students to succeed and going above and beyond to help students. Many Black and Latinx students who participated in this study described the college as supportive and welcoming. This was a surprising finding, as the college is a PWI.

Academic Support Programs/Academic Support Services

Academic support programs provide additional support to students who are challenged academically, financially, or both. Many of these programs help students build a sense of

community and offer services such as tutoring, advisement, career guidance, and overall support toward completing a degree (Talbert, 2012). While some institutions have similar institutionally funded programs, many of these programs are grant-funded from the state and federal government. Ten students who previously enrolled in a grant-funded academic support services program, STEM, also participated in this study. When asked to describe what academic services are available on campus, students noted the Tutoring Center, Writing Center, the Counseling Center, and the office that provides services to students with disabilities. Students did not equate programs such as STEM as an academic support. Zafaya, a 20-year-old Black student majoring in nursing, had previously heard about the program but believed it was a program that had income requirements, and since she did not qualify for any grants in her financial aid, she did not think she would qualify to be a part of the program and did not think to pursue this option. Zafaya did in fact qualify for the STEM program. Many of the student participants were not aware of the academic support programs available on campus. Some had heard of the programs but did not inquire because they believed the programs were clubs.

Accessing Alternate Non-Traditional Resources

Another surprise finding in this study was that some participants who encountered difficulty in a course preferred accessing non-traditional methods of seeking help and resources, known as cultural wealth. Students indicated that when needed, they were able to get help by reaching out to peers, family members, or the instructor of the course. They knew academic support services such as tutoring were available to them but did not feel the need to use them, possibly because they were all high-achieving students.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study provided several implications for practice. At this PWI, faculty,

staff, and students could benefit from cultural sensitivity training to better serve and build relationships with a racially diverse student body. In addition, training for faculty on how to holistically advise students or move to a model of professional advisors during the first two years and faculty advisors the last two years would benefit students. Last, to better serve students, the institution must re-define academic support services, how it is promoted to students, diversifying staff and where it is located.

Cultural Sensitivity

Black and Latinx students attend college from various socioeconomic circumstances; some have financial challenges while others do not. Some lack academic skills while others have strong grade point averages. Despite this, they all need resources and support to navigate their college education and ultimately become productive adults. It is imperative for faculty and administrators to understand the nuances of Black and Latinx students and their unique needs and not go to the default, one-size-fits-all model of thinking that all students of color need the same things. Getting to know students helps in forming better relationships. This translates to students being more receptive to guidance and feedback offered.

Academic Support Programs & Advisement

As noted in Chapter 2, advisement plays a critical role in college students' success (Bahr, 2008; College Board, 2009; Kot, 2014; Tinto, 1993). Depending on the advisement model of the college, students are advised by faculty or professional advisors in a center setting. At this institution, academic advisors are primarily faculty members, and their training does not have a cultural sensitivity component. A specific model is not used in training. Students meet with their advisors predominantly to discuss their schedules, and the interaction occurs once or twice a semester.

Faculty have many responsibilities, including advisement, teaching courses, participating on committees, and conducting research. Faculty are not required to review their advisees' grades at the end of the semester or meet continuously with them during the semester. Moving to a professional advising model, during the first two years, advisors can build a rapport with students, monitor their academic progress more closely, and provide referrals for additional services in a case management way. This would allow faculty to focus their time on mentoring students on career exploration and readiness.

In addition, many academic support programs, including institutionally funded programs, have a built-in advisor component for participants to access. The advisors review grades for retention, builds rapport with students, and provide referrals for additional services when needed. Many utilize a push-in advisement, a model where advisors reach out to students on an ongoing basis to ensure their advisees are supported and receive the resources needed to thrive (Kot, 2014; New York State Education Department, 2021; U.S. Department of Education, 2021). This model is an essential component of many grant-funded opportunity programs geared toward increasing the college completion rates for underrepresented or economically challenged students and has proven successful. Using the advisory component of academic support programs may help students strengthen their sense of belonging at a PWI college and work past managing stereotypes.

Promoting and Relocating Academic Support Services

In addition to cultural sensitivity training and push-in advisement, I recommend redefining academic support services to include academic support programs, how they are promoted to students, and changing the physical location of the services offered. While the student participants indicated they learned about the tutoring, writing, and counseling centers

during their first year in college, during their sophomore years, if they wanted to pursue using them, they had to seek them out on their own. The services were scattered in multiple locations throughout the campus; the tutoring and writing centers were located in the lower levels of a building with very little natural light. This was described by administrators as an environment that is not inviting to students wanting help.

Students and administrators discussed other students opting out of academic support services because of not knowing how to access the services or the extent of the services available. Continuously promoting academic support services, including programs to students throughout their time at the college, reinforces how to access the services when needed. One strategy would include short video clips from students who have used the services and having the videos loop on the various screens throughout campus, especially those frequented by students. In addition, the services should be more accessible to students.

Programs such as STEM are an academic support and should be promoted and portrayed as such. They should also be physically grouped together in close proximity to the tutoring and the writing centers for easier accessibility and help students understand the totality of the available services available.

Increasing the Diversity of the College

Both students and administrators who participated in this study discussed the lack of diversity in the college. Research has shown that Black and Latinx students often experience imposter syndrome, lack of belongingness, micro-aggressions, and stereotype threat on PWI campuses (Benitez et al., 2017; Dancy & Jean-Marie, 2014; Yosso, 2009). Studies have documented the positive impact faculty of color have with Black and Latinx students (Hagedorn et al., 2005; Marx & Goff, 2005). Increasing the diversity of the student body is also imperative.

Black and Latinx students may be more inclined to reach out to their peers for support when seeing an increase of students like themselves in the classroom. It would also be beneficial to actively hire high-achieving Black and Latinx students as tutors to help with increasing diversity within academic support services and increase the likelihood of students of color feeling more comfortable seeking help.

Increasing the diversity of academic support services programs is also pivotal. The STEM program is a grant-funded academic support services program to increase the number of underrepresented students pursuing math and science careers. The program is also focused on increasing access to these careers for White and Asian students who must meet certain financial criteria. One student noted that increasing the number of White students in the STEM program would help them be more culturally and racially sensitive. Many students might feel that it is not a program for them, which may be why there was only a small number of White students in the program.

Limitations

While the recruitment pool included over 110 participants, it was challenging to recruit participants for the study due to receiving IRB approval toward the end of the spring semester. In addition, a COVID-19 pandemic was declared in March 2020, forcing colleges and universities to move all instruction to an online remote format. By the end of the semester and during the summer months, many students were no longer checking their email accounts. When the college re-opened for the fall 2020 semester, the pandemic was still ongoing, and the majority of the classes occurred in an online format. I was unable to visit classrooms and recruit students in person. These recruitment issues might have been the reason why my sample included only high-achieving students instead of students with a GPA between 2.0 and 2.5, who likely need

academic services the most. For students in this group who may not be participating in a support service program, there was little information on how and if advisors monitor their academic progress or if they are accessing academic services such as the tutoring and writing centers to help with increasing their GPAs. In addition, of the 14 student participants in the study, only 2 were first-generation college students. This may have contributed to the majority of the students accessing cultural wealth in lieu of formal academic support services.

Recommendations for Future Research

My recommendation for future research is to conduct a study with a larger group of student participants, some of whom have a GPA of 2.0-2.5. One idea would be to compare and contrast first-generation and non-first-generation students' comfort with seeking help and access to cultural wealth. I could also examine how faculty advisors at the PWI makes sense of Black and Latinx students opting in or out of academic support services, and their role in the decision-making process. Last, I would like to conduct a study with Black and Latinx students on the role of academic support services in their decision to leave the institution.

Conclusion and Reflections

Many studies have found that academic support services contribute to students successfully completing college (Abrams & Jernigan 1984; Cooper, 2010; Crockett & Levitz, 1983; Gahan-Rech et al., 1989; Halcrow & Iiams, 2011; Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Kot, 2014; Lim et al., 2014; Pardee, 2004). As the college completion rates for Black and Latinx students continue to lag behind their White and Asian peers, it is important to examine how this group of students perceives the services and how institutions can improve the way services are offered. The findings of this study indicated that race and stereotypes play a role in Black and Latinx students' decision to use or not use academic support services. While students believe the

services are beneficial, some chose to access informal resources instead, such as friends and family members, also known as cultural wealth. Other students knew the services were available and chose not to use them because they believed they did not need academic help.

Understanding this phenomenon provided insight on how support services are offered to students. Both students and administrators noted challenges, including a limited number of tutors, flexible scheduling, and a lack of diversity in support staff. In addition, some students were not aware of academic support programs or how they benefit students. Academic support service staff need to know more about the students accessing services to ensure that students with low GPAs can also use them. Also, Black and Latinx students use various strategies to manage stereotypes and achieve success. However, these strategies are not long-term solutions and should also be further examined.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval

Molloy College IRB
Approval Date: April 10, 2020
Expiration Date: April 9, 2021



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Kathleen Maurer Smith, Ph.D.
Dean, Graduate Academic Affairs
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DATE: April 10, 2020

TO: Nafeeza Uddin-Schmidt
FROM: Molloy College IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1564772-1] A case study examining Black and Latinx students' reasons for using academic support.

REFERENCE #:
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
CONDITIONAL: NOT APPROVED FOR IN PERSON INTERVIEWS.

DECISION DATE: April 10, 2020

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # (2)

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Molloy College IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations. However, exempt research activities are subject to the same human subject protections and ethical standards as outlined in the Belmont Report.

This acknowledgement expires within three years- unless there is a change to the protocol.

Though this protocol does not require annual IRB review, the IRB requires an annual report of your exempt protocol (Expedited and Exempt Research Protocol Annual Report Form) which is available on the IRB webpage.

If there is a proposed change to the protocol, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to inform the Molloy College IRB of any requested changes before implementation. A change in the research may change the project from EXEMPT status and requires prior communication with the IRB.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact Patricia Eckardt at 516-323-3711 or peckardt@molloy.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

Sincerely,

Patricia Eckardt, Ph.D., RN, FAAN
Chair, Molloy College Institutional Review Board

This letter has been issued in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Molloy College IRB's records.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol (Student Participant)

A Case Study Examining Black and Latinx Students' Reasons for Using Academic Support Services or Not.

***Interviews will be conducted in a quiet space with adequate protection of participant privacy such as an office with a closed door. Interviews will be audio-recorded.**

Statement of Confidentiality and Potential Risk for Participants: A data protection plan is in place for all data collected during this interview. The plan entails all participants getting assigned a pseudonym. However, the researchers cannot guarantee confidentiality. There is a risk for breach of privacy and compromising the confidentiality, if information is discussed outside of the research setting. If information is shared outside of the research setting this could result in participants experiencing stigma and negative impact. If new findings develop during the course of the research which may change your willingness to participate, we will tell you about these findings. By signing the consent form and engaging in this interview, you agree not to disclose matter discussed in this individual interview, or to disclose the participants involved in this study with others outside of the research setting. The school is aware of the study.

For all respondents: The interview will begin with me introducing myself and providing the purpose of the study. I will explain that the interview is confidential, and their participation is voluntary. Each interview will take 45-60 minutes of their time. The subject will sign a consent form to participate in the study. A second verbal consent is acquired for the interview to be recorded. Additionally, I will also explain that as a researcher, I cannot guarantee anonymity only confidentiality and all the interviews and data will be stored in a secured locked location on the campus and in an encrypted cloud system such as Dropbox.

Brief Project Description – The purpose of this study is to understand why students choose to use or not use academic support services such as tutoring or support programs available on campus, their prior use in high school and their perceptions of these services.

Introduction

1. Please state your age, major and why you chose to attend XXX College.
2. If I were talking to your advisor, how would he/she describe you as a college student?
Probe: grades, class participation, office hours, tutoring, etc.
3. Can you list the academic support services that are available at the college?
4. Which ones have you used?

Background Experience with Support Services

1. Tell me about your prior educational experience in high school?

Probe: Grades, GPA, sports, clubs, etc.

2. Do you feel like your high school prepared you for college life? Why or why not?

Probe: did you have access to AP classes – teacher’s expectations.

Probe: What motivated to go to college?

3. Did you ever use support services such as tutoring or meeting regularly with your guidance counselor in high school? What was your experience like?

Freshman Year

1. How would you describe your freshman year at the college?

Probe: Opportunity Program, tutoring, grades, transition, FST Course etc.

2. How would you describe the level of support during your freshman year to help with you transitioning from high school to college?

Probe: Do you think those supports transferred over to sophomore

3. How did you academically during your sophomore year?

Probe: Choosing a major, advisor, grades, professors, etc.

Probe: Is there anything you learned during your freshman year that you are doing differently this year?

Familial Influence

1. Tell me about your parents’ educational background?

Probe: Are you a first-generation student? Did your parents attend or graduate from college?

Probe: What about other members of your family such as siblings or relatives?

2. Do you discuss your college life/experience with your parents or family? If, yes to what degree?

Probe: What types of things do you discuss, e.g., grades, struggles, classes, friends, professors, etc.?

Advisement

1. Describe for me a typical advisement session.

Probe: Tell me about your advisors, is it a faculty member or is it someone from the student solutions center?

Probe: Do they talk to you about programs or services that offer academic support?

Probe: How much help you get from your advisor?

Probe: Does your advisor get to know you well, personally?

For students not participating in QUARTET or STEM

1. Are you aware of the different support services available on campus such as tutoring and programs such as QUARTET or STEM that offer financial assistance for textbooks or tuition?

Probe: What supports are you currently using on campus?

Probe: Was there any Black or Latinx tutors or counselors?

Probe: How would you describe it to your friends?

Probe: Would you recommend it, why or why not?

Student's choice and usage

1. Describe for me what you do when you're struggling with a course?

Probe: Do you ask for help? If yes, who do you usually go to friends/peers or tutoring? Why do you go to that person?

Probe: Do you go to your professor's office hours for help? Can you tell me about that experience?

Probe: I've been hearing a lot of students mention using study groups, do you think they are helpful or not?

Probe: Are you encouraged to ask for help if you need it? If yes, who encourages you?

2. Do you perceive any barriers to your education at the college?

Probe: How do you deal with the barriers?

3. What types of supports, if any, do you believe you need to complete college and get your degree?

4. Do you believe the academic services available helps with maintaining or increasing your grades? Why or why not?

Probe: student study groups, office hours, writing center, etc.

Probe: Are your study groups or people you receive help from racially diverse?

Probe: Do you receive formal or informal tutoring?

5. Which of the support services do you believe are most beneficial and how?

Stigma of Using Support Services

1. [College name] is known for being a supportive college or having a supportive culture, would you agree with that statement or not?

2. If I was your advisor and I asked, what do you think prevent students from using academic support services, what would you say?

Probe: Do you think the feeling they experience (embarrassment or discomfort or *whatever they are feeling from question above*) is related to race?

3. Do you know someone who chose not to use academic support services and should've?

Probe: What was their reasoning and what happened?

Probe: What held them back?

Probe: Was there any consequences?

4. How do you think students feel when they use services like tutoring or participating in a program such as Quartet or STEM?

Probe: When friends, family, professors know?

5. [College Name] is a predominantly White institution; do you think race plays a role in a student's decision to use academic support services?

Probe: Did it play a role in your decision?

Probe: As a predominantly White institution, how would you describe the culture around support services at [College Name]?

6. Have you ever had a situation where you were treated differently because of race with a student, faculty, or staff?

7. How would you change or improve academic support services on campus to make it more accessible, welcoming?

8. Black and Latinx college enrollment has increased. However, Black and Latinx students complete college at a lower rate than White and Asian students, why do you think that is?

Probe: What is your ethnicity?

Probe: Were you born in the United States? Were your parents born in the United States?

Probe: Did you live on campus?

Grand Tour Question - Tell me about your future aspirations after college.

If the questions do not get the answers you want- then ask bold questions here.

Closing

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me. All of the information you have provided will remain confidential. Once I have reviewed the information you provided, would it be okay to follow up with you and possibly schedule a second interview should I need clarity on any points?

When my study is completed, I can provide you with a copy of the findings.

Appendix C: Interview Protocol (Administrator) Administrators of Academic Support Services

A Case Study Examining Black and Latinx Students' Reasons for Using Academic Support Services or Not.

***Interviews will be conducted on-line via zoom with adequate protection of participant privacy. Interviews will be audio-recorded.**

Statement of Confidentiality and Potential Risk for Participants: A data protection plan is in place for all data collected during this interview. The plan entails all participants getting assigned a pseudonym. However, the researchers cannot guarantee confidentiality. There is a risk for breach of privacy and compromising the confidentiality, if information is discussed outside of the research setting. If information is shared outside of the research setting, this could result in participants experiencing stigma and negative impact. If new findings develop during the course of the research, which may change your willingness to participate, we will tell you about these findings. By signing the consent form and engaging in this interview, you agree not to disclose matter discussed in this individual interview, or to disclose the participants involved in this study with others outside of the research setting. The school is aware of the study.

For all respondents: The interview will begin with me introducing myself and providing the purpose of the study. I will explain that the interview is confidential, and their participation is voluntary. Each interview will take 15-30 minutes of their time. The subject will sign a consent form to participate in the study. A second verbal consent is acquired for the interview to be recorded. Additionally, I will also explain that as a researcher, I cannot guarantee anonymity only confidentiality and all the interviews and data will be stored in a secured locked location on the campus and an encrypted cloud system such as Dropbox.

Brief Project Description – The purpose of this study is to understand why students choose to use or not use academic support services such as tutoring or support programs available on campus, their prior use in high school, and their perceptions of these services. To add depth and context, I am interviewing 2-3 administrators on their perspective as to why students may choose to use or not use academic support services.

Introduction

Can you state your name, title/current position, how long have you worked in this position, and how long at [College Name]?

Have you held more than one position at [College Name]?

Have you seen a shift in the racial make-up of the student body over the years? Can you elaborate on that?

Probe: Do you think the college has done enough to adapt to the change?

Perspective on usage

My study is a case study focused on Black and Latinx sophomore students' reasons for using or not using academic support services. As an administrator who oversees one of these services, why do you think some Black and Latinx sophomore choose to use academic support services such as tutoring or the writing center and some do not?

What are the benefits and challenges of students using Tutoring or the Writing Center?

Some of the participants I interviewed indicated the lack of diversity among the tutors, faculty, staff etc. as a reason why Black and Latinx students may choose not to use these services, they may not feel comfortable, what are your thoughts?

Which programs use Tutoring/Writing Center the most and why do you think that is?

Do you think race plays a role in student's decision to use academic support services?

Last Question - Is there anything you think can be done to improve the usage of these services among the Black and Latinx students?

Appendix D: Interview Questions in Relation to Research Questions

	Research Question	Interview Question	
1	What reasons do high-achieving Black and Latinx students give for using academic support services and which services do they believe are most beneficial?	I3, I4, F2, F3, FI2, NP1, NP2, SC1, SC2, SC4, SU, S3, S4, S5, SC5	
2	What reasons do high-achieving Black and Latinx give for not utilizing academic support services?	I3, I4, FSU2, SU3, SU4, SU5, SU7, SU	
3	In what ways are their reasons for opting out related to cultural wealth, stereotype threat, and/or the culture of a predominantly White institution?	SU4, SU5, SU6, SU7	
4	How do academic support service administrators make sense of why Black and Latinx students choose to use or not use academic support services, and in what ways are their responses aligned with the students or not?	I1, I2, I3, P4, P5, P6, P7	

Appendix E: Codes

Theory Generated Categories	<i>In-vivo</i> categories
Cultural Wealth – Social Capital, Parental Involvement, Peers/friends, study groups, culture/background	Freshman year Sub code - level of support
Stereotype threat theory (fear of confirming to negative stereotype)	Reasons for opting in Sub codes – Tutoring Center, Writing Center, STEM
Culture of academic support services at PWI	Reasons for opting out Sub code - Don't feel they need it, stigma, not sure how to access it, Figuring things out on their own, scheduling conflicts, Programs (STEM & QUARTET not viewed as an academic support service
Help Seeking –	Academic Support Services – Sub codes – helps/increases grades, most beneficial, known to students, Welcoming & supportive Race and a student's decision to use
Reasons for low college completion rates among Black & Latinx students	Stereotype threat –
Academic support services -beneficial	College Sub codes – culture shock, experience with discrimination, college's culture regarding academic support services, changes Diversity of staff and faculty
Role of institution –	Prior experience with academic support services K-12 sub codes- elementary school, high school preparation for college
	Barriers to education Sub Code – No barriers
	Sophomore year
	Stereotype management
	Struggling with course content – sub theme comfort seeking help, seeking help from professor, peer groups, study groups
	Cultural wealth Sub codes – parents, peers, study groups

