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First Generation College Students in a TRiO Program

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Doctorate of Education Program

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First Generation College Students in a TRIO Program

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Abstract

This research study was completed to explore how a specific population of college students strive to reach their educational goals. The purpose of the study concentrated on how TRiO first-generation college students (FGCs) at a community college perceived their success in accomplishing goals in a college educational setting with the assistance of the TRiO program. Theories guiding the study include Astin's I-E-O model and Bean's model. The research utilized interviews and a focus group with TRiO FGCs. Thirteen students participated in an interview and two students participated in a focus group. During the interviews and focus group, participants provided insight into how their status as TRiO FGCs effected their pursuit of academic goals and how the TRiO program assisted TRiO FGCs to reach their academic goals. Transcripts of the interviews and focus group were typed into a word document. These documents were coded using posting and NVivo software. Results indicated the perception of TRiO FGCs on their status as TRiO FGCs and how the TRiO program helped them attain the goals they hoped to reach as a college student. The common themes shared by students indicate implications for practitioners, higher education institutions, considerations for the future and indications of what may benefit all college students.

 Keywords: college students, community college, educational goals, higher education, practitioner implications, student status, TRiO FGCs

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I have waited for what seems like eons for the day that seemingly would never arrive, the day I got to write this portion of my dissertation. Of course, so true to form for me, I am not confident I can find the words to adequately, accurately, and effectively thank everyone. I will give it my best try to do so.

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it, my friends at work who understood I was busy when I neglected them, computer whizzes assisting me with technology, and finally, the Institutional Research department and TRiO folks. Yes, so many people have pulled me through this degree and I still need to mention more.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Enrolling in college is the norm for many high school graduates. In fact, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017) reported 69.7% of 2016 high school graduates were enrolled in college by October of 2016. As the United States strives to remain competitive globally, a college degree is a necessity for the United States workforce (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Regarding social mobility, earning a college degree is a way to attain upward social mobility and the American Dream (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). A part of social mobility is earning power. Statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016) indicated in 2015 the median weekly earnings for workers in the United States with a high school diploma was $678, workers with an Associate's degree earned $798, and workers with a Bachelor's degree earned $1,137. While attaining a higher level of education may increase income, lead to social mobility and achieving the American Dream, graduating from college is not the norm for all college students. Statistics reveal after six years of beginning college, almost 50% of students have not obtained a bachelor's degree (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

These statistics provide general information about the rate of attendance and graduation for college students and the importance of postsecondary education to society. However, for one specific group of college students known as first-generation college students (FGCs), the discussion of social mobility may be even more relevant. If a college student's parents have not attended college, the student fits into the category of FGCs (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). In addition to the category of FGCs as defined by Covarrubias and Fryberg (2015), there is another group of FGCs. This group is known as

TRiO first-generation college students (FGCs), who have the TRiO program to assist them.

The TRiO program originated as one portion of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 with a goal of increasing attendance and success for FGCs. The term TRiO was coined due to the creation of three programs with an educational focus. The three programs created included the Educational Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Student Support Services (Pitre & Pitre, 2009).

The Student Support Services (SSS) part of TRiO is the program targeted to assist post-secondary students. Post-secondary institutions commonly use the term TRiO when referring to the program. U.S. Department of Education (2016) described the purpose as, "the goal of SSS is to increase the postsecondary persistence and graduation rates of low-income students, first-generation students (i.e., students whose parents have not received a bachelor's degree), and students with disabilities" (p. 1). The definition of FGCs differs between TRiO programs and researchers such as Covarrubias and Fryberg (2015). Post-secondary students may apply to join the TRiO program; to be eligible, a student must be enrolled in college and meet the criteria for status as a TRiO FGCs, or low-income, or having a disability. There are benefits for college students to become a part of TRiO.

The research conducted on TRiO programs indicates the programs have been successful in assisting students marginalized due to socio-economic status or membership in a minority group enrolling in higher education institutions and reaching educational goals (Pitre & Pitre, 2009). TRiO works to ensure TRiO FGCs do not continue to be marginalized in the college setting due to their lack of social capital. Since TRiO FGCs

do not have a parent who has achieved a bachelor's degree, they may lack a social network or parents with the ability to provide advice on issues encountered by a college student. Furthermore, the conceptual frameworks of Astin (1970a) and Bean (1986) relate to FGCs and TRiO FGCs.

Bean's (1986) model included characteristics impacting the retention of college students.

A component of the model is parents. The model includes financial support parents may provide and the social capital parents may offer to their children (Bean, 1986). In the conceptual framework Astin developed, three important components are utilized. The components included are student inputs, the college environment, and the student outputs that are created by the student interaction in the college environment (Astin, 1970a). TRiO is a part of the college environment component.

Pitre and Pitre (2009) discussed how TRiO programs help students to achieve educational goals. Other researchers have worked to explore whether FGCs experience achievement guilt (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015; Covarrubias, Romero, & Trivelli 2015). Social capital and academic motivation of FGCs has also been the focus of research (Moschetti & Hudley, 2015). However, this dissertation worked to combine exploration of TRiO and FGCs by listening to the voices of TRiO FGCs at a community college. The question to be addressed was how a TRiO program at a community college might assist TRiO FGCs. Interviews and focus groups gave TRiO FGCs a voice in a search to uncover the social capital of TRiO FGCs in a community college.

Background

Post-secondary education has changed throughout history. Post-secondary education started when land grant institutions were established in 1862 (AACC, 2012). The influence of World War II and the idea of expanding college opportunities drove the evolution of college systems (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Competition due to the Sputnik race spurred further evolution (Bean & Metzner, 1985). An expansion of higher education in 1963 established a community college system (AACC, 2012). An additional driving force of change in the 1960s was the War on Poverty (AACC, 2012). This war impacted higher education by creating programs such as TRiO, which equalized opportunity for all students in American society with a desire to attend college (Pitre & Pitre, 2009). The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) in February 2016 reported that 45% of college students attending college attend a community college. These students represent a diverse population entering a college system where most campuses offer open enrollment; approximately 36% of the students in 2014 were FGCs (AACC, 2016). These factors indicate community colleges have the opportunity and challenge to assist a student population that is underserved and would not have the prospect of earning a postsecondary degree without community college assistance (Crisp & Mina, 2012). A portion of the student population served at community colleges is FGCs.

Since colleges enroll FGCs, there is a need for colleges to consider results from research studies on the FGCs population. Research studies with various emphases have been completed to discover how to assist FGCs in their academic pursuits. In one research study, researchers explored whether FGCs lack social capital due to a lack of

relationships with college personnel (Moschetti & Hudley, 2015). Curiosity regarding FGCs experiencing achievement guilt has motivated some researchers. They worked to investigate if FGCs feel guilty about reaching success in the college environment while family members do not have opportunities to pursue higher education (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015; Covarrubias, Romero, & Trivelli, 2015). Another focus for research has been searching to find how faculty relationships (Moschetti & Hudley, 2015) and prescriptive or developmental education impact FGCs (Crisp & Delgado, 2014). Additional research has attempted to explore how TRiO is beneficial to TRiO FGCs (Pitre & Pitre, 2009). What this exploratory case study researched differs from other research studies previously conducted on FGCs. This exploratory case study was on a specific group of FGCs. More specifically, the focus for this study explored what TRiO FGCs have to say about their college experience and how the TRiO program may assist TRiO FGCs to reach their academic goals.

Problem Statement

The problem this exploratory case study examined was how TRiO FGCs in a TRiO program perceived their success in accomplishing goals in a college educational setting. In relationship to academic goals, the U.S. Department Education (2016) revealed after six years of college less than 50% of students have graduated with a bachelor's degree, which is a reason for concern. It is especially disconcerting considering higher education is important to global competition and socio-economic mobility for populations that are identified as marginalized (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Therefore, research on the intersection of these variables deserves

exploration. Research is especially vital for the group of college students known as TRiO

FGCs in a TRiO program (Pitre & Pitre, 2009).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the exploratory case study was to research how TRiO FGCs in a

TRiO program perceived their success in accomplishing goals in a college educational

setting. The researcher studied TRiO FGCs and their college experiences by

interviewing them about their perceptions of the TRiO program and their academic

success. The setting was a community college in the rural Midwestern United States.

Research Questions

This exploratory case study investigated TRIO FGCs success a TRiO program.

The following research questions were addressed:

1. How are TRiO FGCs effected by their status as TRiO FGCs while pursuing
   academic goals?

2. How does a TRiO program help TRiO FGCs reach academic goals?

Rationale for Methodology

The methodology used for this study was qualitative research. Blaxter, Hughes,

and Tight (2010) outlined how case studies are useful to a researcher with the goal of

concentrating on one group in an organization. This study had the goal of concentrating

on a group of students known as TRiO FGCs in a community college. One eligibility

requirement for students to apply to become a part of TRiO is the student cannot have a

parent who has graduated college with a bachelor's degree. To better understand the

perception of this specific group of college students in the TRiO program and search for

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an answer to a research question focused on how TRiO may help realize students' collegiate goals, an exploratory case study was used to gain insight.

Research Design

Determining the appropriate design for research requires reflection. Yin (2014) highlighted one of the methods to determine whether a case study fits for research is to reflect on the questions to be asked. Yin (2014) explained that "'how' or 'why' questions" (p. 2) fit for case studies. Another aspect to consider is if the study is on contemporary issues. If the study examines contemporary issues and events over which researchers have no control, a case study is appropriate (Yin, 2014). The researcher of the proposed study asked how and why questions, explored the contemporary issue of FGCs retention in college, and had no control over the behavior of FGCs.

Stake (2006) wrote about the requirements for case studies to fit for a research study. "Qualitative case researchers focus on relationships connecting ordinary practice in natural habitats" (Stake, 2006, p. 10). In the study, the researcher investigated a TRiO program at a community college resulting in TRiO FGCs attaining their academic goals. Therefore, the researcher's queries fit an exploratory case study. Using qualitative methods to hear the voice of FGCs help a community college identify how to facilitate the success of TRIO FGCs. Overall, the features of research as described by Yin and Stake, fit this dissertation study.

The following terms were terms used in the exploratory case study:

Achievement guilt: This is a type of guilt FGCs may experience because they have academic opportunities in higher education their family members never had (Covarrubias, Romero, & Trivelli, 2015).

Continuing generation college students (CGCs): This is a group of students who have at least one parent who attended college (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015).

First-generation college students (FGCs): This is a group of students who have not had any parent who has attended college (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015).

Marginalized populations: People considered marginalized are those who do not fit within mainstream society or the majority group. In the context of the college campus, one marginalized group is students who are the first generation in their family to attend college (Mistry, Brown, Chow, & Collins, 2012).

Social capital: Is used to describe networks that exist due to social connections with others. This may include contacts to assist with questions about issues college students may experience (Moschetti & Hudley, 2015).

TRiO: This program was developed as a part of the War on Poverty and Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 that included three educational programs including Educational Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Student Support Services (Pitre, & Pitre, 2009).

TRiO FGCs: This is a group of college students whose parents have not completed a bachelor's degree (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Assumptions

A list of assumptions for this exploratory case study included:

1. All interviewees and focus group members would understand the interview questions and would answer the questions truthfully.

2. Interviewees and focus group members would answer questions to the best of their ability.

3. The interviewees and focus group members would only participate if they were willing to participate.

Limitations

Limitations of this exploratory case study included:

1. Lack of bias of the researcher was the goal and working toward that goal was the intent. However, complete elimination of bias is not humanly possible.

2. Diversity of the participants may be limited since the location of the study was at a rural Midwestern community college.

Delimitations

Delimitations of this exploratory case study included:

1. TRiO FGCs in the TRiO program were selected for the dissertation research study rather than coordinators of the TRiO program stating what TRiO FGCs see as beneficial to TRiO FGCs.

2. Two of the three community college campuses were selected for the study since the researcher is a faculty member on the campus that was excluded from the study.

Summary

The discussion in this chapter outlines a brief history of the evolution of higher education

institutions in the United States. The discussion of the history identifies thoughts on the need for higher education and the concern that college students are not persisting to achieve their academic goals. This lack of persistence fits with the conceptual methodology developed by Astin (1970a) and Bean (1986). The absence of persistence

also leads to exploring how TRiO may help TRiO FGCs. To accomplish this exploration,

an exploratory case study utilizing interviews and focus groups worked to answer

research questions about TRiO and how TRiO assists TRiO FGCs. Additionally, the

limitations and delimitations have been outlined in this chapter. The highlight of the

chapter and dissertation study was the desire to find insight into what TRiO FGCs

identify as beneficial to them in the TRiO program as they pursue their academic success.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

College students begin their college career pursuing an educational goal. While the educational goal may be unique to each student, success in achieving their goal is most likely a common thread for students. This desire is to achieve their post-secondary educational dream. Unfortunately, achieving this dream does not come to fruition for each college student. In fact, of the students beginning postsecondary studies in 2003–2004, nearly 49% of the students had not finished any postsecondary degree by June 2009. The lack of degree included all levels of postsecondary degrees such as a bachelor's degree, or associate's degree (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Exploration to identify barriers for college students is a must so colleges may increase the number of students persisting in reaching their educational goals and dreams. Therefore, the focus of this study was how TRiO FGCs in a TRiO program perceived their success in accomplishing goals in a college educational setting. The study focused specifically on TRiO FGCs. To uncover this information, the conceptual framework employed Astin's input, environment, and output (I-E-O) model paired with Bean's theory on student attrition.

This chapter contains a discussion of the background to the problem, the conceptual framework, a review of the literature, which covers an examination of social capital and a philosophical rebuttal, achievement guilt, faculty relationship, prescriptive/developmental education, life's obstacles, race, motivation, and solutions to retention proposed by researchers. The search for information on retention utilized online databases such as ERIC, ERIC ProQuest, and ProQuest Dissertation and Theses

Global, through the Concordia University Library, and Google Scholar. Keyword

searches used included, "retention and community college or deciding students or

undecided students," "retention of first year community college students," "first

generation and higher education and academic success," "first generation students and

family achievement guilt or survivor guilt," "first generation students and academic

preparation," "first generation students and social capital," "first generation students and

TRiO," "Native American and first generation college students," "African American and

first generation college students," and "Black and first generation college students."

These searches used the limitation of "peer-reviewed." The searches helped to locate

information about the background to the problem of students not finishing their academic

goals in post-secondary education.

Background to the Problem

When considering the problem of a student leaving college before reaching their

educational goal explored in this research study, it is vital to be aware of the brief history

of higher education and components of the history of community colleges. President

Lincoln signed the Morrill Act in 1862 creating land-grant institutions (AACC, 2012).

Another major event creating an impetus for growth of higher education was after World

War II a GI Bill offered higher education opportunities to veterans (Bean & Metzner,

1985). The National Defense Education Act of 1958, primarily precipitated by the Soviet

Union's launch of Sputnik (Bean & Metzner, 1985), was created during the Eisenhower

presidency (AACC, 2012). For community colleges, the Higher Education Facilities Act

of 1963 had an notable impact in expanding community colleges (AACC, 2012). The

Higher Education Act of 1965 established during the Johnson presidency, functioned to

expand the availability of higher education (AACC, 2012). Legislation in 1963 and 1965 reflected the political view college attendance would strengthen the nation; therefore, state and federal governments should support higher education through financial means (Bean & Metzner, 1985). In 1972 President Nixon signed amendments to the Higher Education Act resulting in Pell Grants being created (Bean & Metzner, 1985). However, the historical context has not been the only driving force of the growth of higher education. Economics has also been a driving force.

Economic context. One economic factor is the change in the types of jobs available to workers in the United States. In an economy in which blue-collar jobs are declining, enrollment in higher education institutions is affected. Specifically, there is an increase in enrollment of nontraditional students (Bean & Metzner, 1985). This is due to the need for training because the employment opportunities require more training than blue-collar jobs. This training may be obtained in higher education institutions. A second factor is women entering the workforce and the financial need for women to earn an income. Women also see the need to complete higher education to compete for higher paying jobs (Bean & Metzner, 1985). These economic factors are also thought to have a connection to the American Dream.

Some fear the American Dream could be endangered (AACC, 2012). The endangerment includes a threat to upward mobility, which has been likened to an agreement between one generation and the next generation promising the prospect for upward mobility of Americans. Moreover, the benefits of education have been described as crucial to the success of the American population. An educated society yields opportunity. If a society is educated, the members of the society have increased chances

of being employed and earning a living wage leading to the ability to provide economically for their family, pay taxes, and participating in the political process (AACC, 2012). Community colleges can provide the pathway to higher education and the training needed by Americans to achieve success.

Community college role. Community colleges provide training for many students seeking vocational training. Furthermore, impacting the socio-economic status of students completing their training. "By 2010 community colleges enrolled more than 13 million students….For a remarkably diverse student population, they have long served as the gateway to higher education and thus to the middle class" (AACC, 2012, p. viii). Unfortunately, the downside to this is the low number of students completing a college degree. Equally disturbing is the effect on the population groups community colleges serve, such as students of color and students with a low socio-economic background (AACC, 2012). Due to the problem with success rates in community colleges and other higher education institutions, it will result in students failing to reach their academic goals. Models and theories have been developed to understand the phenomenon of student attrition.

Development of conceptual models. Astin (1970a) described the investigation of the impact colleges have on students as, "The burgeoning state of current research on college impact" (p. 223). He specifically referenced work completed by Feldman and Newcomb in 1969, which revealed few studies completed had a focus on a concern how colleges could influence cognitive outcomes. Astin then discussed his conceptual model, which included the impact colleges had on student outcomes. The components of the conceptual model known as the I-E-O model included inputs (I), the environment (E),

and outputs (O). Specifically, the inputs were student inputs, environment was the college environment, and outputs were student outputs (Astin, 1970a).

Astin's I-E-O model designated the college environment as 'E' and proposed the college environment influenced whether a student will display involved or uninvolved behavior in the college environment. Furthermore, the significance of involved behavior in relationship to persistence is, involved behavior yields a student who will spend time studying, become involved in campus activities, and interact with other students and faculty members. In contrast, uninvolved students are characterized as devoting little time to campus activities, studying, contact with faculty, and associating with other college students (Astin, 1999). In turn, the characteristics uninvolved students display are characteristics that fit students who leave college (Milem & Berger, 1997). Astin was not alone in identifying input and environmental connections in relationship to students' lack of persistence in reaching their academic goal; Bean identified these factors too.

Bean presented the idea that a student's characteristics when they enter college should be considered to truly understand the student's college experience (Bean, 1979). Plus, Bean (1986) emphasized, "Students must be informed of what will be required academically and socially to remain enrolled at an institution" (p. 47). He also indicated in his theory the background characteristics of students determine whether the student will persist. The characteristics he included were background variables such as education plans, their high school grades, if courses taken in high school were to prepare them for college, and parental characteristics of educational background, income, and support (Bean, 1986). The concepts advanced by Bean and Astin were used for this study.

Conceptual Framework

Astin developed and expanded his work (1970a, 1970b, 1985, 1991). In his work, Astin developed a model known as the, "input-environment-outcome (I-E-O) model" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 53). Inputs in the model consist of anything that has molded a student into the unique individual entering the college environment. Whereas, the environment is comprised of elements shaping a college student during their college career. The outcome is what the college student has become as their college years come to an end (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The researcher focused on the input and environment portion of the model.

Astin's model has five postulates in relation to student involvement. One type of involvement is psychological and physical that could result in engaging in college activities or engaging with other people on campus. The second is involvement using differing levels of energy in goals. Thirdly, involvement can have quantitative and qualitative characteristics. A fourth postulate is the amount of involvement will yield the amount of learning. Fifth, any policy or practice will have effectiveness to the extent the policy or practice results in the involvement of students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Astin's work has been useful for a foundation of research in student retention. Therefore, Astin's work provided a guide for this research study. TRiO programs, such as the TRiO program in this research study, may positively impact retention of students. Specifically, they may consider numerous inputs from a student's life and the college environment in relationship to student retention.

Bean's (1986) included a longitudinal theory of factors effecting a student's persistence in achieving their educational goals. Bean, like Astin, considered the inputs

influencing a student. However, Bean labeled student inputs as background variables and the variables included parents' income, education of parents, and parent support (Bean, 1986). Bean's work views the characteristics of the student, because they are integral in attempting to understand how students interact with postsecondary institutions (Bean, 1979). Bean's work relates to the TRiO FGCs studied in this research study. Moreover, Bean recommends consideration of a student's background and the college environment just as Astin did.

Review of the Literature

      Postsecondary environment. A large portion of the research work completed thus far is on student retention conducted in the post-secondary four-year institutional environment. Furthermore, most research completed has not utilized diverse student populations, community colleges or TRiO FGCs. This has resulted in viewing student involvement through the lens of traditional aged White students at four-year colleges (Wirt & Jaeger, 2014). An additional challenge is the models developed for use with a post-secondary four-year institution have been applied to community colleges (Mertes & Hoover, 2014). Community colleges are a vital source for research because approximately one-half of college undergraduates are enrolled at community colleges (Wirt & Jaeger, 2014).

      The research setting for this study was a community college in a rural area in the Midwest. Student demographics include predominantly white female students. Some of the students are TRiO FGCs. Non-traditional students are also a portion of the student population.

Review of research literature. Striving to reach an educational goal in college is difficult. However, it has been postulated that first-generation college students (FGCs) experience challenges continuing generation college students (CGCs) do not face. FGCs are students without a parent who has completed a college degree. Whereas, CGCs are students with a parent who has completed a college degree (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). Since FGCs do not have a parent who has navigated the higher education system, FGCs' parents may struggle if they attempt to provide advice and a social network (Moschetti & Hudley, 2015). Furthermore, TRiO FGCs have parents without a bachelor's degree (U.S. Department of Education, 2016), yielding TRiO FGCs' parents with limited college exposure and social networks. These social networks are a part of social capital. Covarrubias and Fryberg (2015) and Moschetti and Hudley (2015) found CGCs have a higher level of social capital than FGCs.

Social capital and philosophical rebuttal. An area to consider when exploring retention of FGCs in the higher education setting is how social capital effects FGCs. Social capital in the educational context has been described as, "the information, values, norms, standards, and expectations for education as communicated to individuals through the interpersonal relationships they share with others" (Padgett, Johnson, & Pascarella, 2012, p. 246). Vorhaus (2014) questioned whether social capital may be extended to resources of social networks or should be limited to institutional resources only. Vorhaus described it as an accordion effect, which is an attempt to use language to try to describe something as broad and narrow. Moreover, Vorhaus (2014) posed the argument that social capital should not be an overused term. His concern stems from a social scientist approach being utilized and a philosophical approach to social capital should be used

(Vorhaus, 2014). Vorhaus (2014) took the philosophical side of the argument. However, many researchers, including Covarrubias and Fryberg (2015) and Moschetti and Hudley (2015), advanced the theory of social capital impacting the success of college students, due to the evidence they have discovered and taking the social science side of the argument in relationship to social capital. The forms of social capital of FGCs mentioned by researchers include achievement guilt, faculty relationships, developmental education also known as prescriptive education, life's obstacles, and race. Covarrubias and Fryberg (2015) presented the achievement guilt concept of social capital as impacting FGCs. An impact of social capital on FGCs is higher levels of social capital most likely leads to retention of students and in turn helps this group of students to graduate college.

   Achievement guilt. A specific aspect of social capital Covarrubias and Fryberg (2015) explored is family achievement guilt. Working class FGCs may feel guilt due to their opportunity to attend college, which allows FGCs to achieve more than their family members lacking the opportunity to pursue higher education (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). This research study considered how achievement guilt effects TRiO FGCs in community college students at the school. Achievement guilt in FGCs has also been referred to as survivor guilt by Piorkowski (1983). Survivor guilt is guilt one feels because they have survived and others around them have not, even though others were equally deserving. The survivor guilt resulted from college students being the only members of their family to succeed in improving their socioeconomic status and capacity for success (Piorkowski, 1983).

   College students may experience achievement guilt at different levels as researched by Covarrubias and Fryberg (2015). They hypothesized FGCs and ethnic

minority students would experience a higher level of achievement guilt than the groups of CGCs and White college students. Covarrubias and Fryberg confirmed that they found empirical support for their hypothesis as a result of their research. Tate, Williams, and Harden (2013) tried to discover how to assist FGCs to get past achievement guilt and favored use of the term, survivor guilt. This group of researchers concluded more research is needed regarding FGCs and survivor guilt. Additionally, the researchers recommend college counselors need to be cognizant of the unique needs of FGCs; institutions' cultural structures should address FGCs needs and FGCs living close to their family while attending college can be beneficial (Tate et al., 2013). If this is not done, the result is FGCs feel they had to make choices regarding their home community, the networks they were establishing at the college and their future dreams after they completed college (Tate et al., 2013). Their recommendation for more research fits the study conducted in this dissertation. Furthermore, this guilt and the connection to community college populations was researched in this dissertation.

Community colleges, including the college in this research study, need to be aware of the potential for achievement guilt because their student body tends to be comprised of FGCs populations with low socio-economic status, minority racial status, immigrants, and single parents (Moschetti & Hudley, 2015). Furthermore, the student has moved away from their family and possibly have left their family in less than desirable life conditions (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). Moreover, since these students may be more vulnerable to achievement guilt, postsecondary institutions need to be proactive in addressing the needs of FGCs (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). These

concepts fit with the problem addressed in this dissertation. One solution proposed has been a consciousness of the risk and intervention through faculty relationships.

Faculty relationships. A component of the college environment explored is faculty interventions. Morales (2014) and Wirt and Jaeger (2014) investigated how faculty may assist to increase retention and persistence of FGCs. However, Morales found faculty members may not be prepared for the integral role they play in facilitating FGCs success. The disadvantage to this is faculty members in colleges most likely do not have training in relating to and teaching students with a variety of socio-economic status and diverse population groups (Morales, 2014). The community college environment researched had this as a part of the focus of the study. As Morales (2014) discovered, faculty can use many approaches to promote student success. Approaches include building students' self-efficacy, assisting student awareness of strengths and weaknesses, urging students to seek assistance, and explaining a clear connection between academics and a future career (Morales, 2014). Unfortunately, FGCs may be hesitant to accept assistance (Wirt & Jaeger, 2014).

To urge FGCs to seek help and assist FGCs to identify their strengths and weaknesses, student progress reports may be used. These reports may reveal academic performance and attendance of students; if instructors see weaknesses in academic performance, they may inform students about tutoring services to help with a student's success (Wirt & Jaeger, 2014). The method of teaching must also be considered.

FGCs may benefit from collaborative learning. This is because FGCs will be more involved students if collaborative learning is used and they become involved in

campus activities (Padgett, Johnson, & Pascarella, 2012). The motivation for FGCs and CGCs to attend college may also differ.

Researchers found FGCs in comparison to CGCs were more likely to have motives that are interdependent rather than independent motives (Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012). Moreover, FGCs seem to have an interdependent approach to college rather than an independent approach (Stephens et al., 2012). Another proactive approach for faculty is being aware of student fear.

Bledsoe and Baskin (2014) found college students are vulnerable to experiencing fear in the classroom. Therefore, faculty in the college classroom must be aware a student's performance may be impacted by fear and anxiety. A method to assist students with fear is helping students understand how to be aware of the fear response and how to learn techniques to manage a fear response (Bledsoe & Baskin, 2014). Not only has fear been something faculty must be aware of but researchers also have identified prescriptive courses, also known as developmental education, as a need for FGCs.

Prescriptive/developmental education. Research by Crisp and Delgado (2014) and Stebleton and Soria (2012) identified a connection between FGCs and the need for developmental education in the areas of math, reading, and English courses. Furthermore, there seems to be a connection between a parent's college background and whether developmental courses are a necessity for students. It was discovered that developmental students most likely do not have a parent with a college degree (Crisp & Delgado, 2014). Moreover, the researchers found developmental students had lower high school grade point averages and minority students were over-represented in developmental college courses in reading and English (Crisp & Delgado, 2014).

Stebleton and Soria also found FGCs skills in English and math were not as strong as the skills in these areas as CGCs. DeNicco, Harrington, and Fogg (2015) did not find a relationship between developmental education and retention. Additionally, the life responsibilities of FGCs have been a focus of research.

Life's obstacles. Stebleton and Soria (2012) along with Bledsoe and Baskin (2012) discovered FGCs are more likely than CGCs to have life responsibilities that cause obstacles. The responsibilities include work and family, which compete with student responsibilities; in addition, FGCs may have weak study skills further exacerbating life obstacles (Stebleton & Soria, 2012). Bledsoe and Baskin recognized FGCs might have responsibilities in addition to those in the classroom. The responsibilities may include working more than one job, investing time due to a long commute, and family demands. In addition to life obstacles, there is information about the benefit of TRiO programs.

TRiO. The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 created TRiO (Pitre & Pitre, 2009). The agenda of TRiO was to provide three education programs offering educational opportunities. These three programs known as Educational Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Student Support Services were designed to be comprehensive with the mission of increasing higher education attendance and college graduation (Pitre & Pitre, 2009). Graham (2011) described how she benefitted with her involvement in Upward Bound, a college preparation program, when she was a high school freshman. In Upward Bound, she realized what was required in college, how to be a successful student in college, and how to get into college. Once she was in college, she transitioned to the Student Support Services portion of the TRiO program. In college, a benefit of TRiO

was meeting other students in TRiO who were discovering success, which convinced

Graham she could make her dreams of a college degree a reality. The Student Support

Services portion of the TRiO program can be the point of entry into TRiO, even though

Graham had the benefit of entering TRiO through Upward Bound in high school.

Research has been conducted to discover how the learning environment may help TRiO

FGCs with interpersonal development.

Jehangir, Williams, and Jeske (2012) analyzed the design of a learning

community that they described as multicultural. Since TRiO students face a learning

environment, which may make them feel isolated, three faculty members from three

different academic disciplines joined to revise a course in their discipline. The courses

included a creative arts humanities course, a composition course, and a social science

course. Furthermore, the courses included a focus differing from the focus of the

traditional curriculum. There was an emphasis on race, class, gender, and inequality in

the United States. Also, the instructors included a focus on identity, community, and

social agency in assignments and discussions during class. All three of the courses had to

be taken by the students concurrently. With this approach, the TRiO students in the study

were empowered to describe who they are as an individual through self-reflection. This

is advantageous to TRiO students feeling empowered to determine their future rather than

feeling marginalized and powerless. This can result in long-term benefits. The aspect of

possible influences of race has been a focus for exploration.

Race. White and Ali-Khan (2013) proposed minority students lack academic

literacy. Skills in academic literacy assist students with academic reading, writing, and

speaking in the academic community. Unfortunately, this translates to poor performance

in the college classroom. Perhaps even more disturbing is that students feel they are, "expected to 'act White' in their styles of academic and social communication" (White & Ali-Khan, 2013, p. 28). These aspects of the academic environment lead White and Ali-Khan to suggest faculty working with minority students need to empower students to develop the abilities and gain the power to effect change in the educational institution. Moreover, research studies have attempted to distinguish whether there are differences in the college experience due to a student's racial identity.

Asian American students. Information on this student population tends to focus on the success story of this racial group. This is especially true of East Asians. The success story assumes Asian American students will be high achievers in an education setting, including higher education (Li, 2013). Due to being high achievers in education, it is also concluded Asian Americans will be successful socio-economically. Therefore, Asians living in poverty and the gap in socio-economic status are assumed to be non-existent and ignored (Li, 2013). Some Asian Americans do live in poverty placing them in a lower socio-economic class. Li (2013) emphasized the importance of this link is children from these families will experience the effects socio-economic status seems to have on a child's college education. Social class seems to impact school achievement, college preparation, college choice, and postsecondary decisions. Therefore, concluding all Asian American college students can be successful, should be applied with caution. Researchers also attempted to discover what Black male college students may experience regarding race and success.

Black male students. Seemingly, there is an association in academic and social circles with race and SES in relationship to success. The types of success affected

include educational success, upward mobility in SES, and personal well-being (Wilkins, 2014). With this idea as a guide, Wilkins (2014) explored the social experiences of Black and White male FGCs in high school and college. Her precise focus was friendships, if and how the males fit in social groups. This also translated to discovering the identity of the male students, which assists in determining a difference in educational success, integrating socially, and personal well-being. Through interviews, Wilkins (2014) found when Black men used identity strategies that were successful in high school to the college environment, the strategies did not work in college. Due to applying the identity strategies that were no longer effective, Black male college students have trouble with social integration and suffered the side effects of struggling emotionally and socially. For example, in high school, they had more freedom of behavior seen as acceptable. In college, the behaviors seen as acceptable were limited to stereotypical and adolescent types of behaviors. An additional difference for Black males compared to White males is Black males were not given the opportunity to take on identities synonymous with an adult identity during their college years. Wilkins concluded more research is needed to explore this college population. Studies have been completed to uncover the college experience of Hispanic FGCs.

Hispanic FGCs. Pyne and Means (2013) completed a case study of a Hispanic female attending a college with a population that was mainly white and used three semi-structured interviews during her first academic year. During an interview, Ana (a pseudonym) revealed she strongly identified as Mexican even after she obtained citizenship and mentioned her mother was still living in Mexico. This revelation points to the challenges of students with a life experience as an undocumented immigrant, next

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as a citizen, and having a family member unable to come to the United States. The revelation also reminds colleges of what may be needed to retain underrepresented students. Family may also be important to success.

Arbelo-Marrero and Milacci (2016) emphasized the importance of family for this group of students. In their work, they found students seemed to persist to reach graduation if they had support from family. This support helped to provide strength for the students in the study. Perhaps it will require a new approach to higher education for FGCs of color, diverse ethnic groups, or low SES. Academic preparedness is another aspect influencing the college student's college experience.

In a study on the academic preparedness of Latino FGCs, Boden (2011) found four themes during interviews with students. The themes included, "Personal education planning, guides, academic skills, and personal impetus" (Boden, 2011, p. 96). Student motivation to have a career allowing them to assist their family through financial means strongly influenced students' personal education planning. The guides were established by students enabling them to reach their goals but their first-generation status made it difficult for them to plan their goals. As for academic skills relating to being prepared academically, the norm for students would be to mention skills in English and mathematics. Latino FGCs did not mention these academic skills. Boden (2011) found the terms used by respondents to indicate personal impetus included, "words such as determination, hard work, and independence" (p. 103). Since these themes are important to success in college, Borrero (2015) chose to explore characteristics of college-bound high school seniors.

Interviews were completed in English with eight male and eight female students (Borrero, 2011). Student responses during the interviews revealed family was important and valued by the interviewees (Borrero, 2011). Strong community support and assistance from teachers were identified as integral to the students' lives and their pathway to college (Borrero, 2011). Throughout the interviews, students included 'college talk,' which Borrero (2011) felt was an indication students had college as their goal. Additionally, the college goal was something the students wanted their extended social group including family, community, and school. Borrero completed more research in 2015 with the spotlight on students in the role of interpreter. In the 2015 study, he interviewed five bilingual high school senior students. The students reported they used their bilingual skills to interpret in school, their home, and their community (Borrero, 2015). Because of their role as an interpreter, the students indicated it added to their feelings of accomplishment and success in academics (Borrero, 2015). Borrero (2015) admitted the study is on a small group of students, yet the feelings of accomplishment and success generated in students, due to their role as interpreters are important for educators to consider while working with this population. Another specific racial group researchers have investigated are White FGCs.

White FGCs. Lightweis (2014) inspected research literature on the "persistence and success of an underrepresented group enrolled in college who are white, working-class first-generation students" (p. 461). The research revealed this group of students struggle with financial, emotional, academic, and social frustrations. Additionally, they have a problem communicating with their parents because their parents have not had the college experience. It seems that students overcoming these challenges gain strength

from support systems in the form of reference groups and college resources encouraging students to reach their aspirations. More specifically, strength is gained from resources including mentors, advisors, and tutors (Lightweis, 2014). Thus, colleges need to consider these programs for White FGCs. Moreover, colleges need an awareness of factors that may motivate students.

Motivation. To understand motivation, Blackwell and Pinder (2014) completed a study utilizing qualitative methods. The qualitative methods consisted of semi-structured interviews that were recorded on audio cassette and follow-up phone conversations. FGCs and CGCs, specifically third generation CGS, were compared to discover what factors motivated them in striving to reach their academic goals. Discoveries included FGCs felt motivated by their love of reading, they felt they were different than their siblings, they had a desire for a better life, and this group of students also identified the parental support they received made a difference. Moreover, CGCs felt it was not their decision to attend college because the decision was made for them by their parents and what motivated them was CGCs were goal oriented due to internal motives and cognitive needs. Blackwell and Pinder identified the limitation of this study was information from siblings was not gathered. Another group of researchers investigated motivation as it related to socioeconomic status and self-regulation.

In a study of SES and self-regulation, a survey was used to gather information from the population of low SES students at an elite university. Johnson, Richeson, and Finkel (2011) used the survey to determine if SES influenced students. Survey results revealed low SES students with academic competency concerns yield an undermining of student self-regulatory behaviors, due to concerns about their academic fit. Therefore,

the researchers concluded there is an importance of striving to understand how students may encounter social disparities when they attempt to access postsecondary education. Even after accessing postsecondary education, students may struggle to make inroads into the social environment and social identities on campus (Johnson et al., 2011). An additional search for understanding of FGCs motivation looked at the link of motivation and social capital.

Moschetti and Hudley (2015) explored social capital and motivation of FGCs in a community college using interviews of FGCs with a working-class SES attending a community college in Northern Nevada. Categories used in the study were institutional support, personal characteristics, family support, and financial resources. Findings of the study included students reporting they faced institutional roadblocks, felt little educational and financial support from their parents, and difficulty with social integration. Another comment from students hinted at problems with best practices for institutional programs consisting of cohesion, cooperation, connection, and consistency (Moschetti & Hudley, 2015). In conclusion, researchers stated, "additional research on this population is necessary to understand how social support services on campus might function to serve their specific needs" (Moschetti & Hudley, 2015, p. 248).

Petty (2014) searched to discover how colleges could help to motivate students and assist them in reaching their academic ambitions. Knowledge of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation along with establishing programs to assist FGCs, is the recommendation Petty offers to higher educational institutions. Programs to assist FGCs to address their difficulties and possibly transition from secondary to postsecondary education would be beneficial.

Nakajima, Dembo, and Mossler (2012) randomly selected participants at a community college. Students were surveyed to find if they were a part of the college community, determine student's self-efficacy, and gauge their confidence in their career choice. Overall, Nakajima et al. (2012) concluded full-time students with good English skills and a high-grade point average (GPA) were more likely to continue attending college. In fact, students with a high GPA seemed to be retained regardless of their demographics or financial issues. Additionally, the best practices listed in this section fit with social capital and highlight the need for research to be completed on social capital.

Social capital. A vital resource for college students is social capital. Social capital is a resource comprised of interpersonal skills. Furthermore, the skills empower one to succeed in an environment emphasizing the importance of networking and collaborating in groups. One environment emphasizing importance of networking and collaboration is the college environment (Padgett, Johnson, & Pascarella, 2012). CGCs have been found to have a higher level of social capital than FGCs (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015; Moschetti & Hudley, 2015).

Nichols and Islas (2016) chose to concentrate on social capital's influence on pre-med FGCs, SC (parents with some college), and CGCs during their first year of school. They utilized surveys, interviews, and academic transcript analysis to complete their research. Findings indicated the social capital FGCs, SC, and CGCs sought first was their parents. FGCs mentioned their parents offered them support in the form of encouraging them to study, try to the best of their ability, and reassuring them they could be successful. This resulted in more of a push effect for FGCs. FGCs also mentioned a fear of instructors causing them to hesitate to seek interaction with their instructors.

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CGCs expressed how their parents would assist them in making decisions, encourage them to think abstractly to better understand what they were being taught, felt they could be critical of their instructors, and CGCs parents encouraged them to talk to their instructors. The effect for CGCs was compared to a pull effect. Overall, CGCs had more social capital available to them that they used to help them with their success. Whereas, FGCs had less social capital available to them. Nichols and Islas concluded that social capital seems to effect pre-medical students and FGCs might be at a disadvantage. The researchers also concluded further research is needed to determine the influence of social capital and to view the difference parenting style might have on college students. Moreover, the impact of social stratification on college students has been explored by researchers.

Oikonomidoy (2015) conducted a study in 2015 that indicated participants in the study had an awareness they were assigned a specific position on the social stratification scale both in college and outside of the college environment. However, Oikonomidoy found students were encouraged by a mentor at the college, which empowered students to overcome the limits of social stratification and become involved in activities to break the barriers of social stratification. Perhaps the most beneficial results of the research were uncovering methods to break through the existing barriers and establish new boundaries (Oikonomidoy, 2015).

Atherton (2014) sought to determine how FGCs may be impacted by social capital as it relates to being prepared academically. He underscored the relationship of a lack of academic preparation and social capital may lead a student to experience frustration and impact a student's performance in college coursework. Thus,

postsecondary institutions may be proactive by providing outreach programs to aid student success.

Kraus and Park (2014) also explored how social stratification affected individuals in the general population; they used the term socioeconomic status of participants and sought to find if there was a correlation with status and self-evaluation. Participants completed a survey revealing their social class, personality measures, and a measure of their self-esteem. The results gave correlational evidence that those surveyed revealing a lower social class had lower self-esteem in comparison to upper-class participants. Kraus and Park concluded future research should explore this further and consider whether social class impacts self-esteem and has an impact on college students. Interaction via social media may provide FGCs the social capital they lack in a post-secondary environment.

Social media, for example, Facebook, may provide information to students on how to apply to college, receive financial aid, and important deadlines (Wohn, Ellison, Khan, Fewins-Bliss, & Gray, 2013). This is vital to FGCs and is not necessary for CGCs since FGCs may not have the social capital network comprised of parents and friends with knowledge of how to navigate postsecondary procedures. Understanding how this influences a student will assist colleges to facilitate student success (Wohn et al., 2013). Social media may also assist students in their transition to college and support student success as researched by Gray, Vitak, Easton, and Ellison (2013). This group of researchers concluded utilizing Facebook with FGCs and minority students for group projects and peer interaction seemed to help this student population feel a connection to the college and retain this student population.

Proposed solutions. Researchers have searched to discern what postsecondary

institutions may do to facilitate the success of FGCs. Stephens, Brannon, Markus, and

Nelson (2015) concluded there is social inequality in our society making it imperative for

colleges to employ many methods to ensure the college environment may meet the needs

of students from the working class. For example, creating a culture that is more

inclusive, expedite a variety of relationships within and outside of the college

environment, and create an opportunity for building culture capital.

Stephens, Townsend, Hamedani, Destin, and Manzo (2015) also investigated

what could be done to ensure the success of students from a working-class background.

Stephens et al. (2015) proposed assisting this student population to see the strengths from

their backgrounds and provide them with the assistance they may need to be successful.

Advising has been suggested as another solution.

Allen, Smith, and Muehleck (2013) mentioned the importance of academic

advising to student success. These researchers focused on the importance of advising for

students with the academic goal of succeeding in a community college setting and then

transferring to a four-year institution. Students seemed to benefit from an advisor who

assisted the student to succeed in the environment at the community college and work to

prepare the student for the differences they would experience in the four-year institution's

environment. However, Allen et al. (2013) concluded with a need for further longitudinal

research and a more racially diverse population to increase the information on the

advantages of advising. Providing a first-year course was proposed as a solution to

increase the success of all college students.

Strategically designing the first year of a college program may be integral to strategically planning student success. In fact, it will not only improve success, a strategic first-year orientation program may also increase learning and retention for students (Mayo, 2013). Ryan (2012) recommended colleges establish a requirement for all students. All first-year students should enroll in a first-semester course designed as a seminar course and the instructor of the course also function as the student's advisor. She also recommended a portion of the curriculum of the course contain an emphasis on career choice. These recommendations would assist students in persisting to achieve their goal. Barrett, Ghezzi, and Satterfield (2015) suggested including a networking component in an orientation program. The networking creates connections for students when they come to the college campus. How the orientation courses and programs are delivered may also matter. Goomas (2014) questioned the mode of delivery of a first-year transition course meant to aid in college success. Students enrolled in a distance learning course designed to assist first year students with the transition to college, had a lower success rate than students completing the course in the classroom environment. There are guidelines for colleges to follow when investigating possible solutions for retention.

Mertes and Hoover (2014) provided advice for community colleges. Collecting and frequent updating of data requires significant work and investment of time. However, this is necessary to discover a change in trends, including changes in retention trends. Awareness of the unique qualities and challenges of each community college, rather than an assumption of all institutions being similar, is another consideration. Mertes and Hoover provided this advice, emphasizing an educational institution must

remember the importance of application of these strategies. Ignoring the recommendations when researching retention could easily impact an institution's long-term success and students persisting to their academic goal.

Summary

More students must reach their academic goals and reach their goal in a timely manner at higher education institutions, including community colleges. Specifically, FGCs need to be successful when pursuing their academic goals. Nichols and Islas (2016), Oikonomidoy (2015), and others investigated the components that possibly contribute to derailing FGCs from reaching their goal. These components include achievement guilt, faculty relationships, prescriptive education, also called developmental education, life obstacles, race, and motivation. During their research, many researchers stated there is a need for further exploration of the college experience, barriers, and how to retain the FGCs population. Researchers recommending further exploration include: Moschetti and Hudley (2015); Kraus and Park (2014); Tate, Williams, and Harden (2013); and Wilkins (2014). If researchers discover how barriers relate to preventing students in reaching their goal, community colleges may work to help students find success. Therefore, the focus of this study was to uncover how a community college may empower TRiO FGCs to accomplish an academic goal.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Every college student entering a college campus should exit the campus as alumni

with a degree in hand. While this statement could spur numerous debates of why or why

not, one group of students was the focus of this dissertation was to explore why a specific

group of students persist in achieving their academic goal. This group is first-generation

college students also known as FGCs. FGCs are described as students who are the first in

their family to attend college (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). TRiO FGCs are students

without a parent who has finished a bachelor's degree. Since there is a lack of

perseverance affecting achievement of academic goals by FGCs, post-secondary

institutions must reflect on ways to be proactive to empower FGCs so they may reach

their goals. One method of being proactive is to reach out to TRiO FGCs and ask what

assists them to be successful. Making the correct queries through investigation is one

way to be proactive to empower TRiO FGCs to leave a college campus after graduating

college. Therefore, this chapter outlines the completed study. The chapter includes the

statement of the problem, research questions and hypotheses, research methodology,

research design, population and sample selections, sources of data, data collection, data

analysis procedures, limitations of the research design, and ethical issues.

Statement of the Problem

The Fact Sheet: Focusing Higher Education on Student Success released by the

U.S. Department of Education (2015) highlighted points related to success in higher

education. The fact sheet included a discussion on the value of college, the expense of

college and the importance of having postsecondary credentials. Additionally, it

presented statistics for each state in the United States on completion rates at college and

the possible link to the rate of default rates on student loans. The sheet presented

information that poses states with higher completion rates at four-year colleges coincides

with lower default rates on student loans. The fact sheet included this statement, "we

must encourage institutions to improve their performance by recognizing and rewarding

colleges with strong student outcomes, especially with the neediest students, and

incentivizing underperforming colleges to improve" (U.S. Department of Education,

2015, p. 5). Since more college students achieving their academic goal is vital to higher

education, it is a necessity to make sure students persist to graduation. Furthermore,

ensuring first-generation college students (FGCs) persist to graduation is a fundamental

goal for colleges. Therefore, with the need to ensure students persist to graduation, the

problem this study explored was how TRiO FGCs in a TRiO program perceived their

success in accomplishing goals in a college educational setting.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

TRiO is a governmental program established in 1965 to promote educational

opportunity for low-income, racial minority, or first-generation college students (Pitre &

Pitre, 2009). To discover information pertaining to TRiO FGCs perception, participants

from the TRiO group who are TRiO first generation college students were selected.

Participants were selected by random sampling. Those eligible for random sampling for

interviews were TRiO FGCs attending their second semester or greater at one of the two

community college campuses in the study. A focus group was scheduled on each of the

two campuses in the study. No one attended the focus group meeting on one campus and

two attended the focus group meeting on the second campus. The research technique of

snowballing was attempted by requesting the two attendees to refer participants. No

referrals were made by the two focus group attendees. At each meeting site, there were

two students invited to the focus group who responded with their regrets they could not

attend the focus group meeting. These students were contacted for interviews and three

additional interviews were scheduled. Of the 13 interviewees and two focus group

members, one interviewee was disqualified due to a possible bias because of the

interviewee's work study position and one interviewee requested to be withdrawn from

the study for unspecified reasons a few weeks after the interview was completed.

The problem at the core of the study was how TRiO FGCs in a TRiO program

perceived their success in accomplishing goals in a college educational setting. This

question is most effectively and efficiently answered when the viewpoint of TRiO FGCs

was used to answer the question. Using this approach considered the individual the TRiO

program wishes to serve.

Research Methodology

The research method used to explore the central research question was the

qualitative approach. This method aids the researcher to utilize the natural context of the

participant in the study and to empower participants by giving them a voice (Creswell,

2013). Creswell (2013) stated, "Researchers keep a focus on learning the meaning that

the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers

bring to the research" (p. 47).

Therefore, to gain insight into TRiO FGCs in a TRiO program, the researcher

explored information from the viewpoint of TRiO FGCs. Qualitative research helped

accomplish this goal. Furthermore, with exploratory case study as the choice for a

research study, a researcher must strategically plan their research design to conduct an exploratory case study.

Research Design

For a research design, case study was the best fit to answer the central research question posed in this research study. As discussed by Yin (2014), a case study enables researchers to conduct an exploration from an angle that is both holistic and real-world. Whereas, a study investigating the perception of TRiO FGCs must be holistic and real-world to portray a participant's perspective effectively. Additionally, Yin described conditions to help determine how differing research designs can be selected. The three conditions are to first form the research question, next is to determine if there is need to control behavioral events, and third to focus on contemporary events (Yin, 2014). If establishing the first condition results in either a "how" or "why" research question being developed to guide the study, and if for the second condition there is no need to control behavioral events, and for the third condition the focus of the study is on contemporary events (Yin, 2014), then case study is a research design that fits the researcher's study.

In the current case study, the central question that guided research was how TRiO FGCs in a TRiO program perceived their success in accomplishing goals in a college educational setting. Secondly, control of behavioral events is not necessary. The study gathered information on the perceptions of TRiO FGCs. Lastly, there is a focus on a contemporary event. That event is a lack of persistence by college students to achieve their academic goals. In addition to the three conditions highlighting the need to utilize case study, strategy for gathering data of the case study was developed.

Creswell (2013) designed a data collection circle. The circle assists a researcher to visualize the activities in the process of collecting data for an exploratory case study. In the circle, the activities include locating individuals, gain access and establishing rapport, purposefully sampling, collecting data, recording information, resolving field issues, and storing data (Creswell, 2013). Individuals in the study were TRiO FGCs at two campuses of a rural Midwestern community college. After the Institutional Research Board (IRB) approved the research study for the dissertation study, the participating community college Institutional Research department approved the study. Moreover, a form giving consent by participants to participate was approved by both IRBs. Once approval was in place, rapport was built with Institutional Research department at the community college and the TRiO Program Director.

After rapport was established with college contacts, a list of TRiO students in their second semester or greater was requested from the Institutional Research department. Since the list did not designate whether the TRiO students were FGCs, the TRiO Director designated the students on the list who were not TRiO FGCs. This corrected master list was used to send an email message and survey via survey monkey to gather demographic information from all the TRiO FGCs on the list. Since the response rate was not 100%, the demographic information for the entire TRiO FGCs list was requested and obtained from the Institutional Research department. Next, the master list was divided into two master lists, one for each campus. A random sampling procedure was used to select five potential interviewees at each of the two campus locations. The dissertation study was explained to the potential participants via an email message, which started to build rapport with the potential participants. Those contacted were informed

they were randomly selected to participate in the research study and they were given the opportunity to choose to proceed or to withdraw. The potential participants were also asked to schedule an interview appointment. If they did not schedule an interview after an email, a follow-up phone call was made and a message was left on voicemail if the potential participant did not answer the phone call. If there was no response, a text message was sent to recruit the potential participant. If the student did not schedule an interview after these requests, another name was randomly selected and the procedure for contact was repeated. Demographic data was collected from interviewees at the beginning of the interview sessions.

The next set of data was collected during one to one semi-structured face to face interviews. Seidman (2006) outlined the procedure researchers should use for interviews. The researcher is not the center of the research or importance, the participant is. Seidman also explained interviews are powerful due to the insight a researcher may gain about the experience of participants. During the face to face interviews, two audio recorders were used to ensure a recording and back-up recording of the interview was recorded. Appointments for the interview lasting one hour was made with the participant. Once the appointment ensued, an informed consent form was discussed and the form was signed by the participant. Then the participant answered the questions about demographic information. Next, the interview protocol was completed. The interview was transcribed into a Word document and added to NVivo software. Each participant received the transcript via an attachment to their college email and received a text message to inform them the transcript had been sent. No participants had questions about the transcript.

The third set of data was collected using a small focus group discussion. No students attended one of the scheduled focus group meetings and a focus group on one of the campuses had two attendees. The session was audio-taped on two recorders ensured audio-taping of the sessions, a recording and back-up recording of the interviews, after which transcription of the recordings provided the data for analysis. Each focus group participant received a transcript via an attachment to their college email. A text message was sent to inform the participants the email had been sent. The researcher stored all audio-tapes, transcriptions, questionnaire information, computer files on secure flash drives and contact information organized under each participant's name, in a locked fire-proof safe.

Population and Sample Selections

The demographics of the population of TRiO program members who are, at a minimum, second-semester FGCs at the two campus sites included 59 TRiO students: 81.36 % female and 18.64% male; 44.06% Hispanic, 54.24% Non-Hispanic/White, and 1.70% Non-Hispanic/two or more races. The age of the population was 80% age 18–21, 10% age 22–30, and 10% age 31+. The demographic makeup of the participant sample was: 77% female and 23% male; 46.15% Hispanic/Latino/a/Mexican; Non-Hispanic White 53.85%; Non-Hispanic-two or more races 0%. As far as age, the makeup of the sample was: 84.62% age 18–21, 7.69% age 22–25, 0% age 26–30, and 7.69% age 31+.

Students eligible for selection included FGCs in the TRiO program who had completed two semesters of college. TRiO programs have been defined by Pitre and Pitre (2009). They explained that TRiO programs began in 1965 as a nationwide governmental program and were given the name due to consisting of three parts. One

was called Educational Talent Search. A second was labeled Upward Bound and the third was given the name Student Support Services. The overall design of TRIO was, "the purpose of assisting low-income, underrepresented ethnic/minority and first-generation college students as they transition from high school to (secondary school) to college" (Pitre & Pitre, 2009, p. 100). Due to TRiO including the FGCs population and the college in the research study has a TRiO program, FGCs enrolled in their second semester or more of college in the TRiO program on two of the community college campuses comprised the research sample.

Thirteen students were interviewed on the two campuses after they were selected using a random sampling procedure. This procedure was used because the procedure, "Adds credibility to sample when potential purposeful sample is too large" (Creswell, 2013, p. 158). Furthermore, Yin (2014) recommended a researcher has access to cases that will assist the researcher in answering the research question. Two additional students were interviewed during a focus group meeting. Using a sample of TRiO FGCs allowed access to a sample that provided insight into the problem researched for the exploratory case study.

Sources of Data

The study started by gathering demographic data through a survey monkey link attached to an email to the TRiO FGCs college email. Since the response was not 100% and the demographics had to be comprehensive, information on the demographics for the entire TRiO FGCs group was obtained from the Institutional Research department. The master list of the TRiO FGCs group was given to the Institutional Research department

and the demographics for the group was gathered from college records and given to the researcher.

Interviews were the second data source used. Face to face, audio-taped semi-structured interviews following an interview guide were conducted with participants on site at the two college campuses. Interviews were transcribed and thematic analysis utilizing posting and NVivo software for coding yielded the common interview themes. One focus group was scheduled at each campus and the session that met was audio-taped. The focus group session was transcribed. The transcription was subject to thematic analysis through use of posting and NVivo software for common themes.

Data Collection

Two campus locations at a Midwestern community college were utilized in the research study. The student body at these campuses were narrowed down to second semester or greater FGCs participating in the college TRiO program. Random sampling was utilized, as explained in the discussion that follows. A list of the names, college e-mail addresses, and phone numbers of the second semester or greater TRiO students for each campus, "Campus A and Campus B" was requested from the Institutional Research department at the college. The list was given to the TRiO Director to ensure the students on the list were FGCs enrolled in the TRiO program. The researcher reviewed the list to ensure no student on the list had been a student of the researcher. This comprised a master list. The researcher sent an email to all potential participants on the master list who were FGCs and a part of TRIO at the two campuses and had a link to a demographic survey in survey monkey (Appendix A). Since 100% response was not received, the list

was given to the Institutional Research department and demographic information was generated and given to the researcher.

To begin the random sampling process, the researcher typed the master list of students and cut the list into slips of paper with the name of each student from "Campus A." The slips of paper were placed in a bowl labeled "Campus A." Slips of paper were drawn from the bowl and a listing of the names was made. The first name drawn from the bowl was designated as number one on the student list for "Campus A." The second name drawn from the bowl was designated as number two on the student list for "Campus A" and this procedure was followed until all names were placed on the list in numerical order per the order the name was drawn from the bowl. This procedure was utilized for "Campus B" as well. Campus e-mail addresses and the phone number for each student was added to the list. This list was used as the initial list of potential interviewees for each campus. After the initial list was completed, an email was sent to each of the students on the list (Appendix B) requesting an interview appointment.

The next data collected was through completing interviews. Participants for the interviews were taken from the 'master list' for "Campus A and Campus B" Formation of this master list was explained previously in this data collection section. Participants one through five on the list for "Campus A and Campus B" were contacted for interviews by email, then phone call or voice mail message, then a text message. The phone contact script is outlined in Appendix C. If a participant on the list choose not to participate or did not respond to four attempts to schedule an appointment, the next randomly selected participant was contacted. The procedure was followed throughout the interview process. Face to face, one-to-one, semi-structured interviews using an interview protocol

(Appendix D) were conducted and audio-taped on two recorders. At the beginning of the

interview, an informed consent form issued by the Institutional Research Board for the

study was completed. The interviews were transcribed using NVivo software yielding

the second source of data. The participants reviewed the transcriptions to determine in

the accuracy of the transcriptions. Moreover, the transcripts were coded through use of

NVivo software. Transcripts were reviewed by the researcher to code common themes in

the transcripts. The procedure used a cycle of reading and rereading and coding and

checking the coding of themes.

After individual interviews had been completed, an additional group of TRiO

FGCs were invited to participate in a focus group, one focus group on each community

college campus in a meeting room. Selection of focus group members was done by

inviting all the students remaining on the master list for "Campus A and Campus B" after

the random sampling was completed to select interviewees. The e-mail message is

outlined in Appendix E. A text about the meeting, a mail invitation, and a reminder text

were also used to invite students to attend the focus group meeting.

Focus groups were intended to last 45 to 90 minutes. However, at one site, no

students came and at the other site two attended the meeting. The attendees completed

demographic information and the Institutional Research Board consent form. Since there

was small attendance at the meeting, the interview question protocol was used. Also, a

permission form was completed by each participant at the beginning of the group session.

Snacks and bottled water was available at the focus group session. The invitation stated

each participant would receive a $10 shopping gift card with the chance for two

participants to receive a $20 shopping card instead. Since there were two attendees, each

attendee received a $20 gift card. Ground rules were discussed including an explanation

of observing confidentiality (Eliot & Associates, 2005). Confidentiality was explained as

anything being discussed by the participants should not be discussed outside of the focus

group with anyone including other focus group members. Since the focus group

attendance was low, the snowballing research procedure was used. The two focus group

attendees were asked to refer other students for interviews. After two requests for names

of referrals, no referrals were received. Four students, two on each campus, responded

before the focus group meetings that they would be unable to attend. These students

were contacted; three additional interviews were scheduled and completed. More details

on the small focus group data is explained in the next section.

The focus group, meeting on their campus, discussion of the list of questions in

the interview protocol was audio-taped and (Appendix D). Audio-tapes of the focus

group were transcribed into a Word document and added to NVivo software generating

another set of data. The focus group members reviewed and approved the transcripts.

This procedure resulted in reading and rereading of focus group information and coding

of themes through use of NVivo computer software. The product obtained through

demographics, interviews, and one small focus group produced information that revealed

the perception TRiO FGCs have of the resources the TRiO program provides them to

persist to achieve their academic goal. This data was subject to analysis procedures

established by the researcher.

Data Analysis Procedures

The first set of data gathered was the information on demographics.

Demographic information was age of participants, gender of participants, and racial and

ethnic backgrounds of participants. These generated statistics for the group of FGCs in the TRiO program. Demographic information was also gathered on the participants in the study.

The second set of data gathered was based on the interviews with participants from "Campus A and Campus B." Participants were selected using the random sampling procedure discussed in the Data Collection section contained in this chapter. Each potential participant was contacted via email. The email had the goal of establishing rapport with potential participants and provided an opportunity to explain the purpose of the interview, to mention the interview process would take 60 minutes or less, to apprise potential participants of the content of the consent form, and to ask potential participants if they wished to participate (Appendix B). If there was no response, a phone request was made for an interview or a voicemail message was left on the phone. If there was no response after the phone call, a text message was sent to request an interview. If a student agreed to an interview, an interview appointment was scheduled at a time and day convenient to the participant in a college meeting room. If the potential participant chose not to participate, the next potential participant on the list was contacted. This procedure was followed with each potential participant on both "Campus A and Campus B."

The day of or before the interview, a reminder text was sent to the participant to confirm the time and place of the interview. This not only reminded the participant of the appointment but also continued to build rapport between researcher and participant. The researcher arrived at least 15 minutes before the interview appointment, set up the two audio-tape recorders and test them to ensure the equipment is working. When the participant arrived, they were welcomed and thanked for their participation before

beginning the interview. The participant was asked if they had any additional questions.

The researcher also talked to the interviewee about general information for rapport

building. Discussions about the weather, the classes the student was taking, their majors,

and their dream goal for their careers were common conversations. Once the participant

had a chance to ask any questions they had, the researcher started the interview process.

First, the consent form from the Institutional Research Board was explained to the

participant and the participant signed the form. After the consent form was completed,

the demographic questions were answered by each interviewee and the interview protocol

(Appendix D) was used for the interview. During the interview, the researcher adhered to

the protocol and worked to keep the interview focused and moving forward (Seidman,

2013). This honored the time of both the participant and the researcher. Upon

completion of the interview, the participant was thanked. As a small token of thanks, the

participant was given a $10 gift card. The researcher asked if there were any closing

questions and reminded the participant about receipt of the transcript of the interview.

The student was told if they had additional questions they could text or email the

researcher. Participants were informed a transcript of the interview would be emailed to

them for them to read and confirm the transcript's accuracy.

Once the interview was finished, the researcher labeled all forms and tapes with

either "Campus A and Campus B" and the participant number matching the participant

number on the master list of interview participants. Keeping all information labeled and

organized decreased stress for the researcher and facilitated follow-up with participants

(Seidman, 2013). Next, audio-tapes of the interviews were transcribed. The researcher

transcribed all the interviews word for word and included any non-verbal communication,

such as pauses or sighs. The transcriptions were transcribed into a word document, posted, and added to NVivo software for coding purposes. Including all details is vital so the transcripts may help recreate the interviews when the transcripts are read (Seidman, 2013). After the interviews were transcribed, each participant received a transcription of their interview via email and reminded if they had any questions to respond to the email.

Next, analysis of the transcripts started. Seidman (2013) recommended during the interview phase the only analysis done by the interviewer is reflecting on the process and quality of interviews. In this phase, researchers must let the transcripts speak rather than drawing conclusions too early in the process. "The interviewer must come to the transcript prepared to let the interview breathe and speak for itself" (Seidman, 2013, p. 120). Transcripts of all the interviews were read; statements that stood out were highlighted by the researcher. Transcripts were reread and any reoccurring categories were written on a list to begin finding themes. Limiting the categories to five at the beginning of the process helped to organize the process and make it more manageable (Creswell, 2013). A third reading of the transcripts was done to identify the statements that seemed to stand out and determine if the statements fit in the categories listed during the second reading. At this point of the process an expansion of the number of categories was done; keeping an open mind and considering the categories as tentative was vital (Seidman, 2013). Statements that were the opposite of other statements were noted rather than ignored. Next, a search of the transcripts using NVivo was done. The search used the categories that seemed to be evolving. Categories were posted on large sheets of post-it paper. Statements found by the NVivo search were written on small green post-it notes and placed on the large sheet of the corresponding category. Any statements that

were opposite were written on yellow post-it notes and placed on the large sheet of the corresponding category.

After the categories and statements were charted using the post-it notes, an interpretation of the information gained through the interviews and coding of themes started. A researcher can begin to ask questions about the connections and meaning of the connections and the meaning of information that is counter to other themes. The goal of giving value to what FGCs have shared makes a reflection on the limitations of research design essential.

Limitations of the Research Design

Researchers must exercise diligence and caution after the groundwork of a research study has been laid and the research plan is executed. However, even while exercising diligence and caution, there may be limitations researchers cannot control. In this study, what was not under the control of the researcher was the distance to the campuses for the researcher, which impacted the time frame for the study to be completed. The diversity of participants in their ethnic and racial background may be limited due to the college campuses student recruitment. Most students are recruited from small agriculturally based communities in the rural Midwest. These limitations may impact replication of this study in another geographic location. Limitations, challenges of validity and reliability are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Internal Validity

If a researcher draws an inference, anxiety in relationship to internal validity may occur for the researcher (Yin, 2014). To combat this anxiety while investigating FGCs and the TRiO program, conclusions made were done cautiously after using open and

axial coding, reading and rereading the transcripts, and coding on NVivo to ensure internal validity. Ways of addressing this issue during analysis of data included, "pattern matching, explanation building, addressing rival explanations, and using logic models" (Yin, 2014, p. 48).

Credibility

Each researcher, research site, and participant present their unique challenges to credibility. Therefore, the sources of data and data collection sections are designed with credibility in mind. Using a question protocol is another example of working to produce sound results. Regarding a research site, utilizing the Institutional Research department helped increase credibility during the selection of participants and safeguarding the involvement of appropriate college departments in the research process. Seidman (2013) mentioned a precaution about participants relating to credibility of participants. If participants are reluctant, researchers should not take it personally but consider how much rapport building may be needed. An ultimate consideration is whether participation in the study will benefit the participant and the purpose of the research study. Additionally, if participants are too willing to participate, this must be considered to make sure the interview produces credible information. Credibility helps to produce results that may be generalized to the total FGCs TRiO population at the community college.

External Validity

Asking effective how or what questions to uncover answers to the central question (Yin, 2014) of how TRiO programs may assist FGCs will help to find information that may be generalized to the total FGCs TRiO population. The information participants

share will reveal the experience of FGCs, rather than making assumptions. When thoughtful how or what questions are asked and good listening is used (Yin, 2014), external validity is the result. This type of validity will also extend to a transferability of the research work to additional colleges.

Ethical Issues

Ethics permeate the entire research study from beginning to end and even beyond, including when the results are published (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, before the study is planned, during the entire planning process, and when the study is conducted and information is shared, a researcher must consider what is ethical. Historically, ethical practices have not always been utilized resulting in harm to individuals. For example, there have been medical experiments that have failed to protect vulnerable individuals. The experiments include research done by Nazis during World War II and the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment. These experiments resulted in ethical guidelines for researchers such as the Nuremberg Code and The Belmont Report (Seidman, 2013). The research study followed the ethical principles established in The Belmont Report including respecting participants, working toward a benefit for participants while minimizing any harm, and applying fairmindedness to all potential and selected participants in the study (Seidman, 2013). Additional guidance for this research study came from the Institutional Research (IR) department of the community college and the Institutional Research Board (IRB) of Concordia University, Portland, Oregon. Both helped to provide a system of checks and balances for this study.

Conflict of Interest Assessment

Guidance from IR and IRB and following the ethical guidelines throughout the study provided a basis for an ethical study. Along with this foundation for an ethical study, the Belmont Report provided ethical guidance. Another ethical consideration is potential conflict of interest of the researcher. The researcher is employed as a faculty member by one of the three campuses of the community college in the proposed research study. As a faculty member, the researcher teaches lecture courses at one campus location and distance courses using on-line and satellite delivery. Moreover, the study did not include the home campus of the researcher. Additionally, any distance students enrolled in courses the researcher was teaching or had taught were deleted from the potential participant list produced by IR for the two campuses being used in the research study. This procedure eliminated possible dual relationships of faculty/student and researcher/participant.

Researcher's Position

In addition to elimination of dual relationships, there are other considerations the researcher must outline relating to ethical considerations. One is the dissertation researcher was not a college student in a TRiO program. However, as mentioned early in this chapter, Moustakis (1990) stated that a researcher does not have to have the same life experience as participants to understand the life experience of the participants. Therefore, the researcher was able to work with FGCs TRiO students. The advantage would be avoidance of over identifying with the participants; the disadvantage would be not being able to identify enough with participants. To overcome the disadvantage, the

researcher was aware of this potential trap and listened intently for the subtle clues given by participants.

The second position of the researcher that needs to be shared is the training and teaching experience of the researcher. The researcher has academic training as a counselor. This has the advantage of training in listening skills, which is a benefit for a researcher conducting interviews. The focus of the research study was to discover information about FGCs in a TRiO program rather than listening as a counselor with the purpose to assist an individual in gaining insight and making goals in relationship to addressing life problems. As a faculty member, teaching experience of the researcher includes more than 10 years of teaching beginning counseling skills to students. The advantages and disadvantages of this experience as a faculty member relates to the advantages and disadvantages mentioned relating to the researcher's academic training.

Lastly, the researcher's current faculty position includes four years of experience teaching courses in the discipline area of social sciences. The viewpoint of this discipline may be viewed as sympathetic to the position of FGCs in a TRiO program. Therefore, this potential bias must be acknowledged; a focus on the voice of participants constantly must be at the forefront, rather than a biased viewpoint hearing the voice of victims. In addition to the ethical issues addressed thus far, ethical issues in the proposed study need to be examined.

Ethical Issues in the Proposed Study

Every research study, including this proposed study, must continuously consider ethical issues throughout the entire study and after the study is completed. Deliberately using the standards for consideration of human rights and reporting the truth (Locke,

Spirduso, & Silverman, 2007) are at the heart of ethical intentions to address ethics in a comprehensive way. These standards were utilized in the proposed study.

The ethical standard of human rights begins with the selection process of participants. All FGCs TRiO students at the two community college campuses had an equal chance of being selected as participants in the study as interviewees or focus group members based on a random sampling procedure. Participants selected through the sampling procedure were contacted and asked to participate in the study on a voluntary basis. Then an appointment was scheduled for an interview with all volunteer participants. At the beginning of the interview, the informed consent form was discussed. Focus group members were contacted and asked to participate on a voluntary basis. Focus group sessions were scheduled and the consent form was discussed at the small focus group that met. At the interviews and focus group sessions, confidentiality was emphasized and explained. If there were any changes in the research study, the IR and IRB would have been notified (Herr & Anderson, 2005). The researcher committed to following ethical practice by not using student volunteers who had completed or were completing courses taught by the researcher (Locke et al., 2007). The researcher protected participants in every way possible. Reporting information as unbiased was the next standard to be applied.

Reporting the information that is shared by interviewees and focus groups was unbiased. Actual results were reported so the research results were unbiased. This was true even if conflicting information among participants was uncovered or information conflicts with what the researcher thought would be found (Yin, 2014). Sharing written information also observed procedures for avoiding plagiarism (Locke et al., 2007).

Consideration of ethical issues for the proposed study led to concluding points to summarize the overall goals for the research study and that were communicated in chapter three.

Summary

This chapter presented the details for a research study conducted to discover an answer to the central research question, how TRiO FGCs in a TRiO program perceived their success in accomplishing goals in a college educational setting. The research study described assists the reader to become informed about all the details of the study including methodology, design, population, sampling, sources of data, data collection and analysis, discussion of possible limitations, and ethical issues that were used to answer the central research question. With a plan and awareness of ethical challenges, the voices of FGCs in a TRiO program were heard to understand what they find helpful and assumptions were avoided.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to investigate FGCs in a TRiO program. The data collection included interviews and one small focus group to study the perceptions of TRiO FGCs. The participants were in a TRiO program at a rural Midwestern community college. The specific focus of research questions explored how TRiO FGCs in a TRiO program perceived their success in accomplishing goals in a college educational setting.

The setting of the study was in a rural Midwestern part of the United States at two of the three campus locations of a community college. Students in the TRiO program and enrolled at the two campuses comprised the research population. The study did not include the TRiO population at the third campus due to the principle researcher working as an instructor at the third campus. All students were beginning, at a minimum, their second semester of their freshman year of college. The number of FGCs at the two campuses totaled 59.

The list of TRiO students received from the Institutional Research department included 59 names. However, attrition due to several factors decreased the number of students available for the study. Attrition included several factors including non-FGCs listed on the original TRiO student list received from the Institutional Research department, students formerly instructed by the researcher via on-line course delivery, students requesting to be removed from the study, and some students randomly selected did not respond to multiple requests for an interview.

Interviews were completed with TRiO FGCs selected through random sampling. One interviewee was disqualified due to the student's position as a work study student yielding a potential bias. An additional interviewee requested to be withdrawn after completing an interview. This resulted in a total of five interviews completed on one campus and five interviews on the other campus. However, only eight of the 10 interviews could be utilized due to one disqualification and one withdrawal of interviewees. At this point in the study, the total number of TRiO FGCs remaining on the list for the two campuses was 33.

Of the 33 remaining TRiO FGCs, the breakdown was one campus had 15 TRiO FGCs and the other campus had 18 TRiO FGCs. All the TRiO FGCs were invited to a focus group meeting on their respective campus. Attendance at focus group meetings was extremely low. The focus group on one campus had no attendees; the focus group on the other campus had two attendees.

Since only two attendees came to the focus group on one campus, the two attendees were interviewed using the interview questions rather than the focus group questions. To recruit more participants, the snowballing research approach was used with the two attendees. Unfortunately, the snowballing approach did not result in any referrals from the two attendees. However, snowballing was also used with those who responded that they regretted they would be unable to attend the scheduled focus group meeting. This resulted in two more interviews being completed on one campus and one more interview being completed on the other campus.

The study employed an exploratory case study design. Additionally, TRiO FGCs perceptions comprised the focus of the study. This qualitative research design and population focus generated the central research questions.

The central research questions for the research study were:

1. How are TRiO FGCs effected by their status as TRiO FGCs while pursuing academic goals?

2. How does a TRiO program help TRiO FGCs reach academic goals?

This chapter will first present a discussion of a description of the sample. Next, the research methodology and analysis including information about the researcher will be discussed. Following that discussion, the summary of findings, and data and results are described. The first portion of information in the chapter includes a more specific explanation of the sample.

Descriptive Data

Since this study had a focus of discovering the perception of FGCs through an exploratory case study, the Institutional Research department at the college provided a list of TRiO students at two campuses of the community college. The lists did not designate TRiO FGCs. Therefore, the director of the TRiO program viewed the lists and designated the TRiO FGCs on each list. The researcher also evaluated the list and discovered some on-line students she had instructed the prior semester were on the list. These students were eliminated from the list. This process established a master list of TRiO FGCs for each campus. The information on the master list included name, college email address, and phone numbers.

After the principal researcher received the list, an email to explain the research study and survey request (Appendix A) was sent to every TRiO FGCs on the master list and the link to the survey monkey survey was sent to the TRiO FGCs to gather demographic information. Basic demographic information including gender, race/ethnicity, and age was requested. The response rate for the survey needed to be 100% to have the overall demographics for the group. Since the response rate was less than 100%, the demographic information was requested from the Institutional Research department at the college. Statistics based on information from the Institutional Research department for the 59 TRiO students was: 81.36 % female and 18.64% male; 44.06% Hispanic, 54.24% Non-Hispanic/White, and 1.70% Non-Hispanic/two or more races. The age of the TRiO students was 80% age 18–21, 10% age 22–30, and 10% age 31+.

A random sampling procedure was employed for selection of interviewees. The names of TRiO FGCs were typed on a list, one list for each campus. The lists were cut apart and each slip of paper with a student name was placed in a bowl, one bowl for each campus. Five slips containing names of randomly selected potential interviewees were drawn from each bowl. The procedure used to request an interview with each potential interviewee included four attempts. The first attempt was an email. The second attempt was a phone call; if no one answered the phone call, a voicemail was left on the phone. The third and fourth attempts were a text message to the randomly selected potential interviewee. After the fourth attempt and no response to the request for an interview, the randomly selected potential interviewee was considered as a 'no response' and another name was drawn from the bowl and the procedure to gain an interview was followed with the new randomly selected potential interviewee. In addition to this procedure to gain an

interview, a discussion and appendices were used as scripts. In the following paragraph, it outlines how the procedure was applied, as well as includes the response received from those who scheduled an interview.

To complete the procedure for randomly selected interviews, the first contact was an email explanation (Appendix B) sent to each potential interviewee and a request was made for an interview appointment at a time convenient to the interviewee. Contact information for the researcher was included and interested volunteers could contact the researcher via email or phone. Of the 10 randomly-selected interviewees, two made appointment requests via email. If the potential interviewees did not respond to the email request, a phone call was made or a voicemail was left for the potential interviewee using a script (Appendix C). Of the eight remaining interviewees, none answered the phone call. Therefore, a voicemail was left on their phone. Additionally, no interviewees responded to a request for an interview via the phone voicemail. A third request for an interview was made if the potential interviewee did not respond to the second request made by phone (Appendix D). Seven interviewees volunteered to schedule an interview after the third request was made via a text message. A fourth request for an interview by a text using the same message as the third request resulted in one of the ten randomly selected interviewees volunteering to schedule an interview. The procedure followed for randomly selected TRiO FGCs who did not volunteer after the fourth request, was the TRiO FGCs was labeled as a 'no response' on the master list and another slip of paper was drawn out of the bowl. The procedure including the four attempts for recruiting the TRiO FGCs was followed throughout the research study for randomly selected

interviewees. A summary of the breakdown of the completion of interviews compared to the number of potential interviewees is explained in the next portion of the discussion.

The master list for one campus contained 33 names. Three of the names were eliminated because the TRiO Director indicated the students were not FGCs. Two of the names on the list were on-line students the researcher had an instructor and student relationship with during the semester before the research study. Due to this, the two students were removed from the list for potential interviewees or focus group members. Two students requested to be removed from the list. One student was randomly selected for an interview and during the interview it was discovered the student was a work study student yielding the potential for a bias. The interview was completed and the student's experience was the same as every other interviewee. However, the results of the interview were not included in the results due to a possible bias. One student was randomly selected for an interview and scheduled an interview appointment. However, the student did not show up for the scheduled interview and did not respond to two requests to reschedule an interview. One student randomly selected for an interview did not respond to the four attempts at contact to schedule an interview. Five of the randomly selected potential interviewees scheduled and completed interviews. One of the interviews was scheduled after the first email contact; three of the interviews were scheduled after an email, voicemail, and text message request; one of the interviews was scheduled after an email, voicemail, and two text message requests. This yielded a total of 15 out of the 33, leaving 18 potential focus group members. All 18 were invited to the focus group meeting.

On the other campus, the list of TRiO students contained 30 names. The TRiO Director indicated one student on the list was not a FGCs. Two students requested to be removed from the list. One student selected for an interview through random sampling did not respond to an email request for an interview and an attempt to make phone contact was not successful due to the phone being disconnected. One randomly selected potential interviewee scheduled an interview and ½ hour before the interview appointment cancelled due to an emergency. Two requests made by text to reschedule were not answered. Six students selected for an interview through random sampling did not respond to an email, a phone voicemail, or two text requests for an interview appointment. Four interviews were completed, with one student requesting to withdraw from the study after the interview. One interview was scheduled after an email request; three interviews were scheduled after an email request, a voicemail request and a text message request. This yields a total of 15 out of the 30 on the master list. The remaining 15 were invited to the focus group meeting.

The time of the day and days of the week for TRiO FGCs interviews showed some trends. Many TRiO FGCs requested interviews to be scheduled on Tuesdays or Thursdays between 12:30 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. These trends were considered when the focus group meetings were scheduled. All interviews and focus groups were scheduled in meeting rooms at the college campus the interviewees were attending.

Interviews were audiotaped on two recorders. Before discussing the interview questions, interviewees answered demographic questions (Appendix E). For the interview, the questions on an interview protocol were used. The protocol contained nine questions, and a closing statement (Appendix E). At the close of the session, each TRiO

FGCs interviewee was thanked orally and received a $10 gift card. One to two days after

the interview, the audiotape was transcribed in a word document, saved on the

researcher's computer with password protection, and saved to two flash drives that were

stored in a locked filing cabinet. A transcript word file was sent to each TRiO FGCs

interviewee via their college email. A text message was sent to ensure each TRiO FGCs

interviewee knew the email and transcript attachment was in their email. TRiO FGCs

interviewees were asked to read the transcript and contact the researcher with questions

or feedback. This procedure was outlined for each TRiO FGCs interviewee after the

interview was completed. None of the TRiO FGCs interviewees contacted the researcher

with questions or feedback. However, one student requested to be withdrawn from the

study after the transcript was sent. After two weeks, both audio recordings were erased

for each interview.

Focus group participants were recruited from the names remaining on the TRiO

FGCs master list, with a total of 33 names, 18 from one campus and 15 from another

campus. The time and days selected for the focus group meetings utilized the results of

the most common days and times selected by interviewees for appointments. One focus

group meeting was scheduled on a Tuesday at 2:30 p.m. and Thursday at 3:00 p.m. was

selected for the other focus group meeting. Both meetings were held in a meeting room

on campus. Three contacts were made to invite each of the potential focus group

participants. An email was sent to each TRiO FGCs with an explanation of the research

project and a request for them to attend the focus group meeting was included (Appendix

F). An attachment on the email listed the details about the meeting such as date, time,

meeting room number, and length of meeting. The attachment also mentioned all

attendees would receive a $10 gift card with the exception that two attendees would receive a $20 gift card. Two days after the email was sent, each TRiO FGCs received a text message (Appendix F). If an error message was received indicating the recipient's phone number was a landline, a phone call was made. This occurred with three of the 33 phone numbers on the master list for both campuses. A voicemail was left at two of the phone numbers with the script that was sent via text to the 30 phone numbers capable of receiving texts, while one phone number did not have voicemail available. Mailing addresses were requested from the Institutional Research department and added to the master TRiO FGCs list. An invitation was placed in the mail on the same day the texts; phone calls were made to the 33 potential focus group participants for the two campuses (Appendix F).

Overall, this contact process resulted in 32 potential group participants receiving three contacts to recruit them for the focus group meeting and one potential group participant received two contacts. One potential group participant replied with regrets she would not be able to attend. One potential group participant texted a reply to confirm the time, date, and meeting place. No additional communication was received from potential focus group participants before the meeting date. On the day of each focus group meeting, a reminder text about the meeting was sent to the phone number capable of receiving texts. The exception to this was no text was sent to the potential group participant who replied with her regrets. As a result of this reminder text on the day of the meeting, two TRiO FGCs on one campus responded with their regrets they could not attend. One TRiO FGCs on the second campus responded with his regrets he could not attend. The four students responding with regrets they could not attend the focus group

meetings were contacted and three interview appointments were scheduled at a date and time after the focus group meeting had been scheduled to take place. Of the three appointments, three additional interviews were completed.

One focus group site had no one attend the focus group meeting. The second site had two attendees. At the site with two attendees, the importance of keeping all information confidential was explained. The two attendees were then asked the questions used for interviews. At the end of the session, both TRiO FGCs were reminded of the importance of confidentiality, thanked for their assistance, and presented with a $20 gift card. A $20 gift card was given to them because the invitation to the focus group stated two attendees would receive a $20 gift card. They were also informed a typed transcript of the session would be sent to them via their college email within a week and a text would be sent to inform them the transcript had been sent to their email address. After four days, the transcript was sent as an attachment to an email message and a text was sent as well. In the email message, a request was made for the students to suggest additional students who might be interested in completing an interview. Two more requests were made to each of the students via text messages for referrals for interviews. Unfortunately, the snowballing research technique did not supply any additional students for an interview. However, it is not listed by individual student due the need to preserve confidentiality of student identity. The analysis of the data generated comprises the next portion of this discussion.

Data Analysis Procedures

The researcher is a faculty member at a campus location not used for the study and all research was completed while the researcher was on sabbatical. Academic

background of the researcher includes a degree in counseling. Employment experience

of the researcher includes family service work and teaching experience in family services

and sociology courses. Background knowledge of the researcher about the TRiO

program is limited. However, the researcher designed a study exploring an advocacy

program assisting students to achieve success and providing a connection for college

students, especially the TRiO FGCs population. A study using an exploratory case study

was developed to complete an exploration of this population.

In developing the exploratory case study, the research design had a plan to gather

data using a Survey Monkey survey for demographic information of all the TRiO

students on two of the three college campuses and interviews and focus groups on two of

the three college campuses. However, 100% of the TRiO students did not respond to the

survey and the college Institutional Research department supplied the demographic

information for the TRiO students. Focus groups were not well attended as only one site

had attendees and there were only two attendees at the meeting. Therefore, the two

attendees at the focus group meeting were asked the nine questions used for the interview

protocol. Use of the interview protocol ensured dependability.

Researchers need to have confidence the data gathered is reliable, also known as

dependable (Creswell, 2013). The interview protocol was integral to reliability. Each

interview was completed following the questions on the protocol and each interview was

concluded using the same closing statement. Another procedure integral to reliability

was the sharing of transcripts. After each interview, interviewees were informed they

would receive a copy of the transcript attached to a message to their college email

address and it would be within a few days to a week. The interviewees were also told a

text message would be sent to their phone informing them the email had been sent. If they had any questions, they were encouraged to reply to the email or by text message to the researcher. All transcripts were sent via an email attachment to the interviewee's college email within one to four business days. All interviewees had phones with texting capability and received the follow-up text message the transcript had been sent. No replies were received from students with questions about the transcripts. Therefore, once data was gathered and no questions were generated by the transcript copies, steps were followed to analyze the data.

The steps used to analyze the information is outlined in the following portion of the discussion:

Initial review. To analyze the information generated by interviews, interviews were transcribed. The transcriptions were viewed by the interviewees. After transcripts had been viewed, the researcher added each transcript as a source in the NVivo file for this research study. The principle researcher printed the transcripts and read the transcripts, then read the transcripts again to begin to discover trends in the information. This started the process of organizing the information collected.

Open and axial coding. The researcher used both open and axial coding for the data collected. The open coding process helped to compare the information and place information in main categories. Printed transcripts could be read and phrases and words, which were key words and phrases, could be highlighted and notes made on the transcript. The main words and phrases were written on green post-it notes and posted on a 20" x 23" sheet for each of the nine questions. Any outliers were written on yellow

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post-it notes and posted on the corresponding sheet for each question. This process helped prepare the researcher for processing the software coding.

Preparation for software coding. All transcripts were added to the NVivo software as a source. Each transcript was labeled as Student and a different letter in the alphabet. This labeling created a unique label for each student in the study.

Software coding. The transcripts in NVivo could be evaluated using open coding. Each transcript was highlighted for main words and phrases. Nodes were created for main ideas. After this process, queries of the files could be completed. Word clouds and word lists of common words could be viewed in NVivo.

Reduction and elimination. To ensure an accurate answer to the two central research questions, the open codes that were identified through the coding of transcripts were analyzed for likeness and connection to the questions. However, open codes not found to have likeness and connection to the central research questions were eliminated. Coded data was also reviewed to ensure accuracy of fit with the central research questions being studied. Moreover, the codes were checked to ensure they matched what was contained in the transcripts.

Clustering and themes. Categories found through open coding were identified for each of the interview questions. Categories were also discovered for the central research questions. The three themes that emerged for R1 were (a) high school education, (b) determination, and (c) influence of family. The five themes that emerged for R2 were (a) orientation, (b) dates of semesters, (c) counseling, (d) books, and (e) TRiO. The themes for the interview questions and the themes for the central research questions are discussed further in the results section.

Completion of coding. To finish the coding process, the researcher critically

viewed the data collected. Next, the researcher interpreted the data for themes that

emerged and checked the data to make sure it matched the textual information. Last, the

researcher formulated conclusions for the study conducted.

Table 1.

Words or Phrases That Occur Frequently

Word or Phrase	Notes on the Word or Phrase	Notes on Emerging Themes
Orientation	Student B page 3 Student C page 6 Student D page 8 Student E page 9 Student F page 12 Student G page 14 Student H page 16 Student I page 18 Student L page 30	Students discussed how they initially found out about TRiO. The theme emerged orientation was how students were recruited.
August 2015, Summer 2015, Fall 2015, August 2016, Summer 2016 Fall 2016	Student A page 1 Student B page 3 Student D page 8 Student E page 9 Student F page 12 Student G page 14 Student H page 16 Student I page 18 Student K page 28 Student L page 30 Student M page 32	This showed the time of enrollment in TRiO for students. August, Summer, and Fall were combined and counted as the same enrollment period, then added to the year for the enrollment period theme.
High School	Student A page 1 Student C page 6 Student D page 8 Student E page 10 Student G page 14 Student H page 16 Student I page 19 Student J page 23 Student M page 32	The interviewees were discussing the level of education of their parents. This thematic category revealed the most common level of education of the students' parents.

Table 1 (continued).

Word or Phrase	Notes on the Word or Phrase		Notes on Emerging Themes
Advice/Advisor Counseling, Someone to Talk to, There for Me, Meet Up With, Check On Me, Help, Guidance	Student A Student B Student C Student D Student E Student F Student G Student H Student I Student J Student L Student M	page 1 pages 3, 4, 5 page 7 page 8 page 11 page 12 pages 14, 15 page 16 page 20 pages 24, 25 page 30 pages 32, 33	Listing of words and phrases were for the things TRiO provides and how TRiO assists with success. This listing indicates the most often listed theme of how TRiO is helpful, words or phrases with similar meaning were grouped together.
Book, Books, Textbooks	Student B Student C Student E Student G Student I Student J	page 3 page 7 page 10 page 14 page 19 page 24	Listing of words and phrases were for the things TRiO provides and how TRiO assists with success.
Determination, Driven, Persistence, Don't Give Up, Stick With, Self-Motivation, Set My Mind	Student A Student B Student C Student D Student I Student J Student I	page 1 pages 3, 4 page 7 page 8 page 20 page 24 page 31	The words and phrases were listed by interviewees as qualities for success. Words and phrases listed had the same meaning were grouped together as one theme.
TRiO Coordinator, (TRiO Coordinator's name), (former TRiO Coordinator's name), Her/She, They/Them	Student A Student B Student C Student D Student E Student F Student G Student I Student J Student K Student L Student M	page pages 3, 5 page 7 page 8 pages 9, 10, 11 page 12 pages 14, 15 page 20 pages 24, 25 pages 28, 29 page 30 pages 32, 33	Interviewees mentioning TRiO Coordinator, TRiO Coordinator's name or former TRiO Coordinator's name. For reasons of confidentiality, when a coordinator's name was given, it is designated as either (TRiO Coordinator's name or former TRiO Coordinator's name) contained in parenthesis.

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Highlights of the results of this study are presented in the next section of this chapter. The highlights include information about coding. The results section also includes a presentation of the themes of the data that was uncovered.

Results

The first portion of the discussion of the results outlines the coding process. During the coding process, both open and axial coding was utilized. First open coding was applied to each question to identify main categories (Creswell, 2013) for interviewees' responses. This process was done by writing the main words given by interviewees in answer to each question and shown on the interview transcript on a post-it note and posted on the large 20" x 23" sheet for each question. Synonyms were combined. For example, determination and persistence were combined with determination used as the response to the question. Then axial coding was used to identify additional categories (Creswell, 2013). NVivo helped to confirm the main categories and additional categories identified through the visual coding procedure using post-it notes. Following this procedure also helped to identify categories that were outliers. Additionally, non-verbal trends were noted while the coding process was completed. This procedure was used with the interview questions and with the central research questions. An explanation about the detail of the interview process is presented next.

At the beginning of each interview, the interviewee was asked basic questions to establish some rapport with the interviewer. Each interviewee was greeted by a handshake, if they offered their hand, and the researcher introduced herself. Basic every day discussions such as the weather or how their day was going was used to start a

conversation. Then a discussion of their course load and difficult classes followed. What major the student was pursuing was discovered during the conversation as well. Lastly, the student was asked what their dream job would be once they finished their degree. After the rapport was built the interview questions were discussed. Interviews lasted for approximately 25 to 55 minutes, which included the time for building rapport before the discussion of the nine interview questions and informational questions students had after discussion of the nine interview questions. The additional conversations after the discussion of the nine interview questions were frequent. Many students asked questions about earning a master's degree, a doctoral degree and the process of research. Some students were unfamiliar with sociology courses and asked questions about the difference between psychology and sociology. After the interviews, transcripts were typed. There was a total of 15 transcripts. However, one student was disqualified due to potential bias and another student requested to be withdrawn from the study. Therefore, the final number of one to one interviews was 13. One small focus group was used to gather information. Since one focus group had no attendees and the second focus group had two members, the interview questions were used and a transcript was typed for each of the two students. The answers from the focus group were combined with the answers from the interviews. The meeting lasted approximately 75 minutes, which includes the time included for building rapport before the discussion of the nine interview questions and at the conclusion of the session. Moreover, the final number of transcripts generated for research analysis was 15. The single-spaced transcripts of the information generated from the interviews and small focus group yielded 33 pages.

The interviews had a total of nine questions using the central research questions as a guide. The central research questions were, R1 How are TRiO FGC's effected by their status as TRiO FGCs while pursuing their academic goals? R2 How does a TRiO program help TRiO FGCs reach academic goals? Themes generated by R1 included high school, determination, and family influence. Themes generated by R2 included orientation, dates, counseling, books, and TRiO Coordinator. The results of these themes are included in the following information.

Coding theme for R1: High School. This theme is the first in the discussion of themes for R1. The theme emerged during the discussion of the educational background of the parents of interviewees. The range for the educational level of mothers was greater than for fathers. This range was no formal education to an associate's degree for one mother. Another portion of the theme worth noting is, one respondent gave information on her biological and adoptive parents, which resulted in a response of educational level for two mothers and two fathers for that respondent. The remaining 12 respondents gave the educational level for two parents. Therefore, this yielded a response for the level of education of 14 mothers and 14 fathers or a total of 28 parents. Overall, the most common theme was high school.

High School was listed as the level of education for 15 of the 28 parents with an additional parent obtaining a general education diploma (GED). Of the remaining 12 parents; one had an associate's degree, three had some college, six finished the 8th grade, one finished the 5th grade, and one parent had completed no formal education.

Student A discussed the educational level of two sets of parents. This student did not mention her biological parents were involved in her life. She mentioned her

adoptive parents in conjunction with high school years. When describing the level of education for her parents she included both biological and adoptive mothers and fathers.

Student C mentioned the number of family members attending college. She has 30 cousins and all have attended college. Yet, college attendance was not the norm for all her aunts and uncles. Of the cousins attending college, many have finished degrees. In fact, some have earned graduate level degrees. One is working to earn a doctoral degree in a country outside of the United States and two have master's degrees.

Student I explained how her father earned his GED. She recalled being around five or six years of age and her father working on his GED homework. Student I would color in her coloring book while her father worked on this homework. She thought it was "cool" her father had a folder from the college containing his homework. The college is a site for GED classes.

Student K revealed his mother's and father's educational background and the impact on employment. His mother is from another country. In her home country, there was limited opportunity for formal education. He described her educational level as, "she hasn't completed any like, formal education." For his father's educational level, he described it as high school. Student K then added, "But, yeah, but that is about it for both." His statement may be his way of hinting about the lack of his parents pursuing higher education. Furthermore, Student K mentioned that the jobs his parents could get were a driving force for him to continue school.

The most common education level listed by participants for their parents was high-school. Another revelation due to this theme, is the lack of experience parents of the TRiO FGCs in this research study have with higher educational institutions. Through

their research, Padgett, Johnson, and Pascarella (2012) found FGCs have a lower level of social capital compared to CGCs. This type of capital helps a college student to negotiate the environment of higher educational institutions. A higher educational institution serving TRiO FGCs needs to take into account how this lack of parental experience with college places students at risk of dropping out of college.
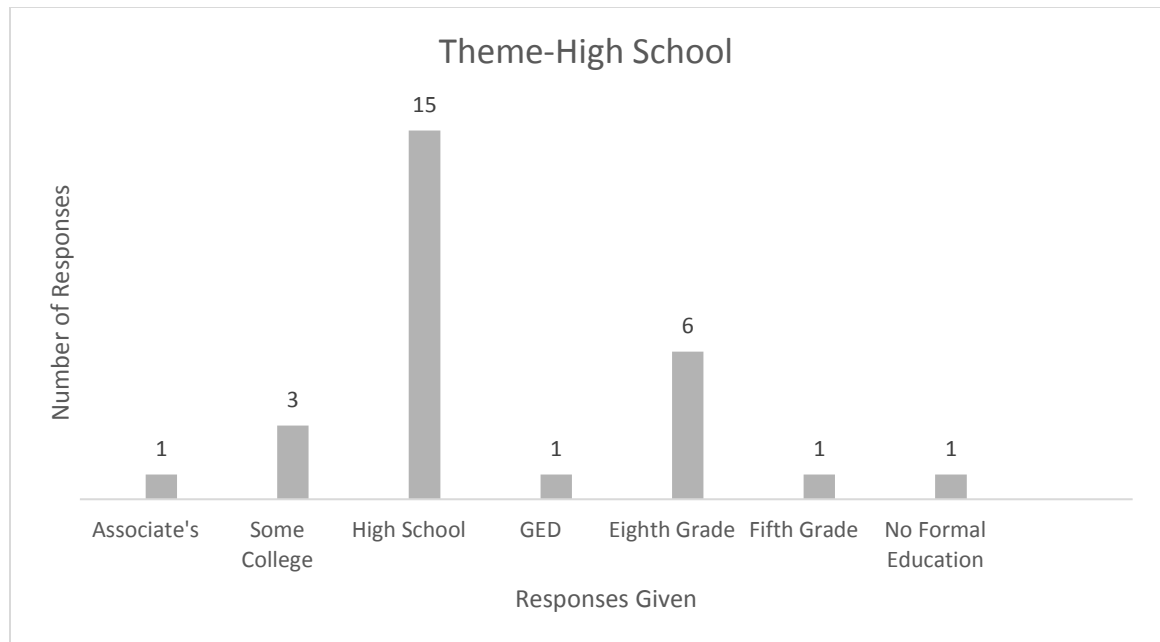
Figure 1. Coding Theme for R1: High School

Coding theme for R1: Determination. This theme is also related to R1. The answers generated are a list of qualities participants mentioned in relationship to qualities helping with success. This theme and qualities like the term determination were mentioned by six interviewees. Two participants mentioned driven, other qualities mentioned were determination, persistence, don't give up, and self-motivation.

When students discussed determination, the non-verbal response had some trends. Three of the interviewees answered without hesitation; five answered after a pause. Four of the respondents requested to come back to the question, while one requested to come

back to the question two times. Interviewees pausing or requesting to come back to the question could not explain why. A few simply explained it was a difficult question; yet, after pondering the question, determination is a quality mentioned by TRiO FGCs to help them move forward.

Tate, Williams, and Harden (2013) have discussed the need for FGCs to get beyond the barrier of achievement guilt, which is a feeling you are leaving others in your life behind as you move forward due to your accomplishments. Coping with the guilt and moving forward is crucial. With TRiO FGCs listing determination in relationship to success, it hints that the students in the research study are using determination to help them move forward. Beliefs are powerful as well.

Moschetti and Hudley (2014) found students who hit roadblocks in higher education have the belief they had to use personal effort to achieve their goals. Interviewees mentioning determination as leading them to achieve success would fit the belief that personal effort yields success. Determination is an individual quality emphasizing an individual's dedication to reach an accomplishment.

Intrinsic motivation will cause a student to be determined to succeed due to a desire to improve their past (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014). The desire to have a future that is different than the student's past was shared in an interview. In fact, one student mentioned it specifically.

Student A described her determination to improve her past. She used the term "driven". As she expanded on this, she mentioned the importance of one's past not defining or impacting their future. She also explained her life goals are made and her desire to, "don't want my past to affect my future at all."

Student D talked about persistence. She listed the quality of persistent and defined what that was like for her. She would not give up; part of the reason was she cares about what people think. Specifically, the pride she possessed inspired her persistence.
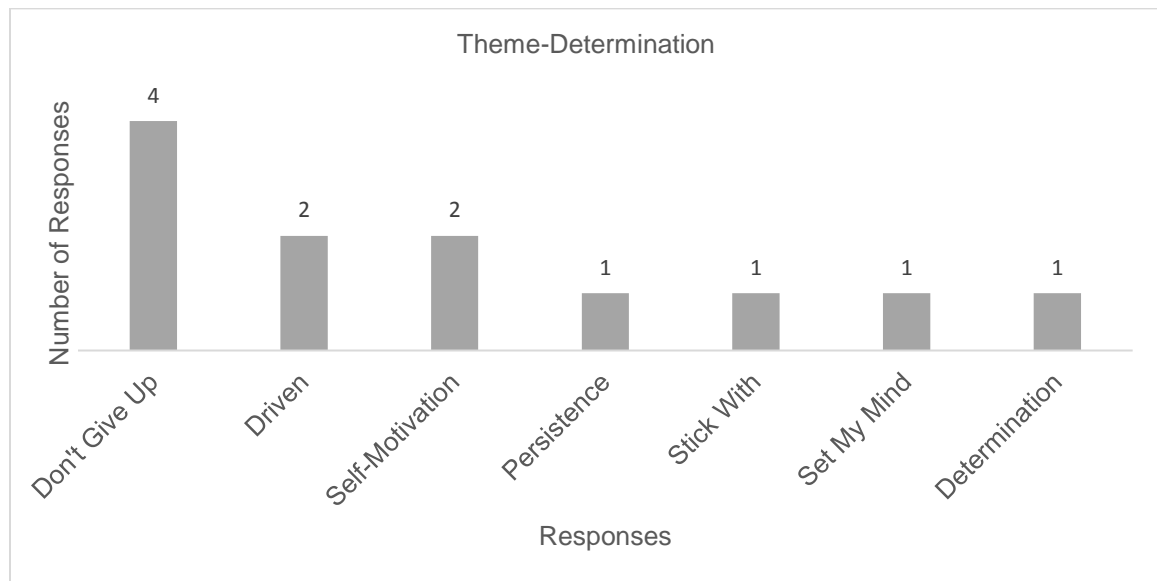
Figure 2. Coding Theme for R1: Determination

Coding theme for R1: Family Influence. This theme was listed by students in relationship to talking about their TRiO first-generation student status. Responses for this theme generated lots of information from interviewees because almost all of the students thought their status impacted them. The members of the family and the type of influence differed. However, the mention of family evolved as a theme. Three felt the pressure to graduate. The response of setting example for a family member, family not understanding the demands of college, or family not knowing how to support them was

listed by two students for each one. Parents' job opportunities or being away from family was listed by one student for each of these answers.

Student A spoke specifically about pressure to graduate. She stated the pressure is due to the difficulty of classes because classes in college are more difficult than they are in high school. Another type of the pressure for her is from family since she will be the first college graduate in her family. She is striving to learn how to manage the pressure.

Student B mentioned pressure from family to graduate. She described the pressure there is for her to graduate with a degree. It has been an expectation for her since she was a child. Even while she was young, she was reminded that education is something that is a priority. Additionally, she specifically mentioned there is pressure from her family even though she will not be the first in her family to graduate from college; yet, she wants to be the next one in her family to graduate.

Student J also mentioned pressure from family to graduate and pressure to take care of his mother. He discussed the pressure for him to graduate. Most of all, he did not want to disappoint family if he did not graduate from college. He could not consider quitting or failing because his family members expect him to finish. Student J did not feel his family would think he is a failure but he did not want to disappoint them. He planned to continue to pursue his degree no matter what. An added responsibility for Student J was the responsibility he had to provide for and take care of his mother. So, even if that responsibility would become a barrier, Student J would do everything possible to finish a college degree. This relates to the work done by Arbelo-Marrero and Milacci (2016). They investigated the importance of family context and stated,

"Experiences within the family context were powerful influencers that provided an impetus to persist" (Arbelo-Marrero & Milacci, 2016, p. 27). The persistence they referred to was striving for a bachelor's degree. Another family influence is to set an example for family members.

   Student C talked about the influence of being a parent. She expressed the importance for her to be an example to her son. Completing her education is something she takes pride in and provides an example to her son. She added that family members expect her to finish.

   Student D discussed the impact of her parental role and lack of her mother's understanding. She described how being a parent made her juggle the roles of parent, student, and worker. However, she also included the impact of her status of daughter. Her mother cannot understand the demands of college and homework. Her mom only understands the time commitment for attending classes and not the demand for time in relationship to her homework. This relates to work Bledsoe and Baskin (2014) completed when they identified how many life challenges there are to balance in addition to college life.

   Student H mentioned lack of parents' understanding. This student comprehended her parents have not attended college, which resulted in their lack of understanding the struggles of college. Not understanding the struggles has more impact too. Since her parents do not understand the struggles or what they are, her parents are unable to help her. The mention of parents providing support related to a concept by Moschetti and Hudley (2014). They concluded students in their study revealed a lack of educational support from their parents. Parents may supply emotional support but do not

know how to supply educational support. It also relates to Covarrubias and Fryberg's (2015) exploration of the lack of social capital of parents, which resulted in parents not knowing how the higher educational system works or having the social connections to assist their children.

Student M discussed a wish for a college role model. She explained she would like someone to "be there" for her sometimes. An advantage might be to have a parent who has completed college. It might be motivating to have parents who are college graduates because if they were successful, perhaps she would know she could be successful in college too.

Student E described the impact of her role as an older sibling. She strives to do her best in college. Additionally, in her family, she felt, "all eyes are on me." This is due to having younger siblings. So, not only is she doing her best but she is setting an example for others.

Student I indicated her role as a younger sibling had an impact on her. She has two older sisters. Both sisters have graduated with a college degree. So, even though her parents have not been to college, the college successes of her sisters made this the norm for her.

Student G referred to family connections. She felt her family is "close knit". Their support is strong, but she is away from them since she lives in the dorm, which is different from having them close. Student G admitted she missed her family members. However, the distance is overcome with phone calls or texts. She drew strength from communicating with them. Texting and calling helped to fill the void. This seems to

illustrate an example of having connections to family and trying to establish connections on campus (Tate et al., 2013).

The other family influence, also mentioned previously in this chapter during discussion of the thematic category of high school, is a factor discussed by Student K. He talked about job opportunities and explained the more education one has, the better jobs someone may get. His parents are limited to certain types of jobs because of their educational background. Student K stated he is very aware of that. Student K's awareness was shared with a student interviewed in a study done by Arbelo-Marrero and Milacci (2016). The student in their study expressed how life effects someone who does not have a college degree. This realization is something the student in their study identified as a driving force in striving to finish a college education.
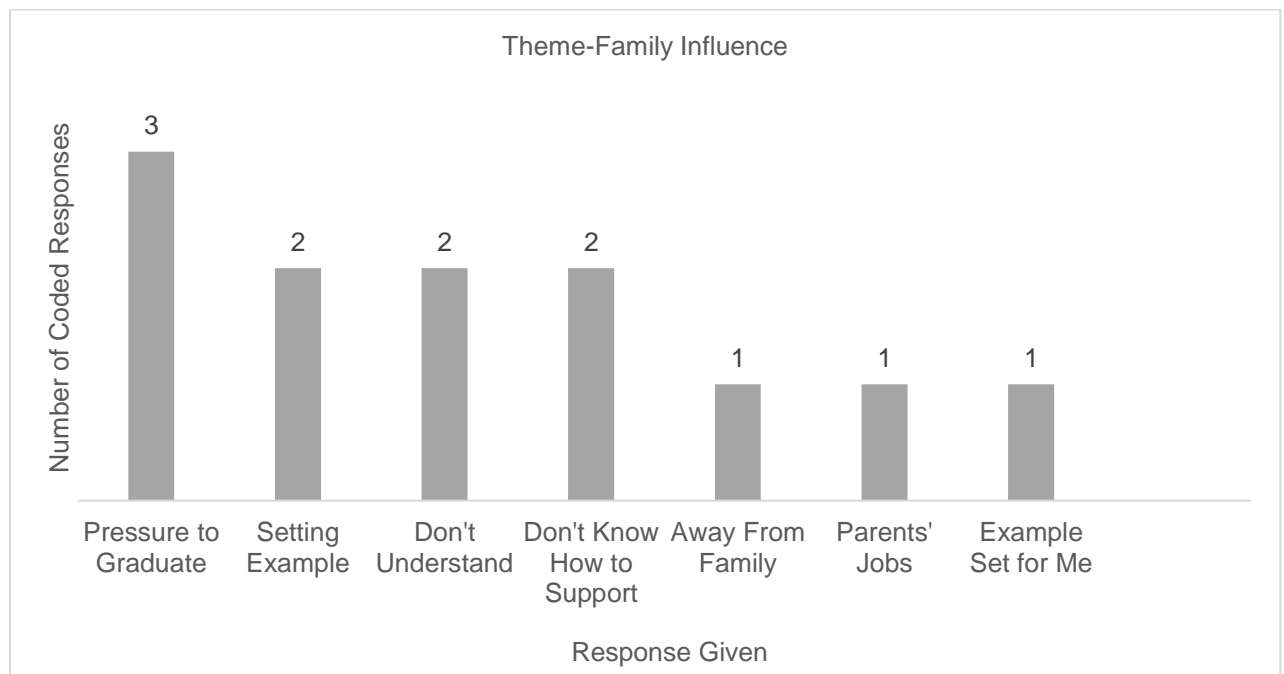
Figure 3. Coding Theme for R1: Family Influence

Coding theme for R2: Orientation. This theme evolved when students mentioned how they discovered TRiO was a program available to them. Most of the

time, students filled out applications to become a part of the program because of exposure to TRiO during orientation. The majority of students interviewed were made aware of the TRiO program in this manner. A few students had awareness of TRiO because of relationships they had before enrolling as a college student. Tate et al. (2013) presented the importance of addressing survivor guilt in students. One proactive move is promoting a chance for students to maintain past relationships while establishing new relationships in the college community. If TRiO seeks to enroll students during orientation, this is a critical time because students are transitioning from home community connections to home and college community connections. Nine of the students mentioned orientation or new student orientation, which yielded this theme.

Student E described orientation. He gave details on the orientation. He explained who recruited him to join TRiO at the orientation. Then he explained where the TRiO coordinator was located at orientation. Lastly, he mentioned the form he needed to fill out and how they contacted him to let him know he was eligible.

Student I also described orientation. She was from a different campus than Student E. Therefore, her description was a little different than Student E. She described who talked to her, the environment, the form and the acceptance process for TRiO.
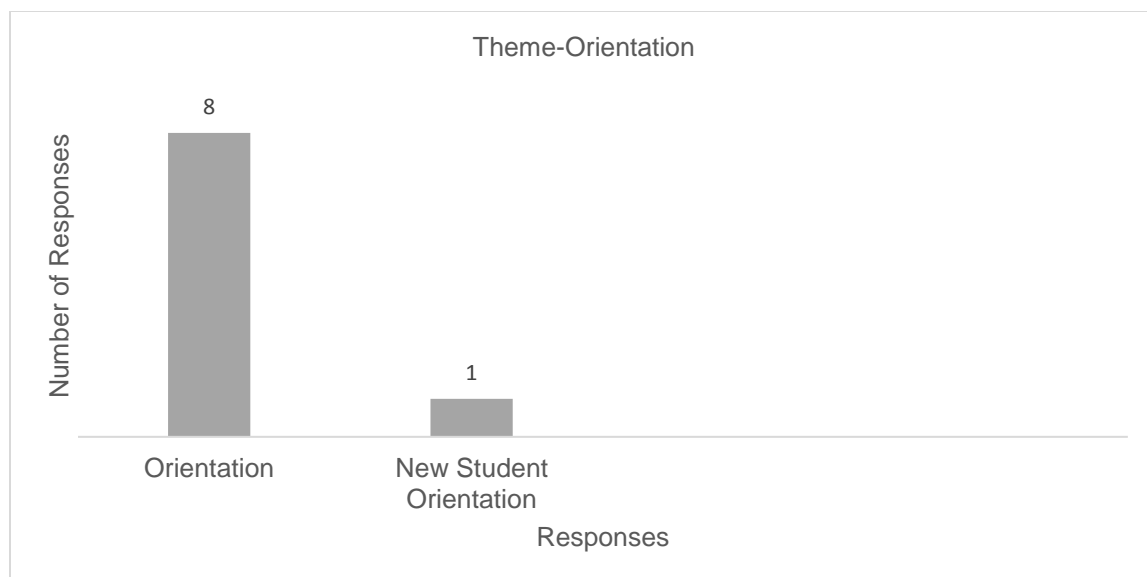
Figure 4. Coding Theme for R2: Orientation

Coding theme for R2: Dates. Similar terms were combined in relationship to the

theme of dates. The terms interviewees mentioned as July, August, Summer, and Fall

were combined into the term Fall for the theme. This term Fall was used in conjunction

with the year listed by interviewees. Thus, the total response for the dates yielded a

theme of six for Fall 2015 and Fall 2016. Based on this, it indicates six of the

interviewees are Freshman students and six were Sophomore students.

Another point about this theme is the timing of enrollment in TRiO for students.

For students who may be at-risk of leaving college, it is vital for them to join an advocate

program early in their college career. Tate et al. (2013) mentioned the need for at-risk

students to become a part of a college community and to define clearly their values and

their future goals. This will empower them to have confidence about their college goals.

Overall, a student may successfully navigate membership in their past community, the

new college community, and their future community they desire to join. Additionally,

these concepts emphasize TRiO's need to enroll students as soon as they begin college to

prevent TRiO FGCs departure from college. Counseling is also a theme that evolved

during interviews.
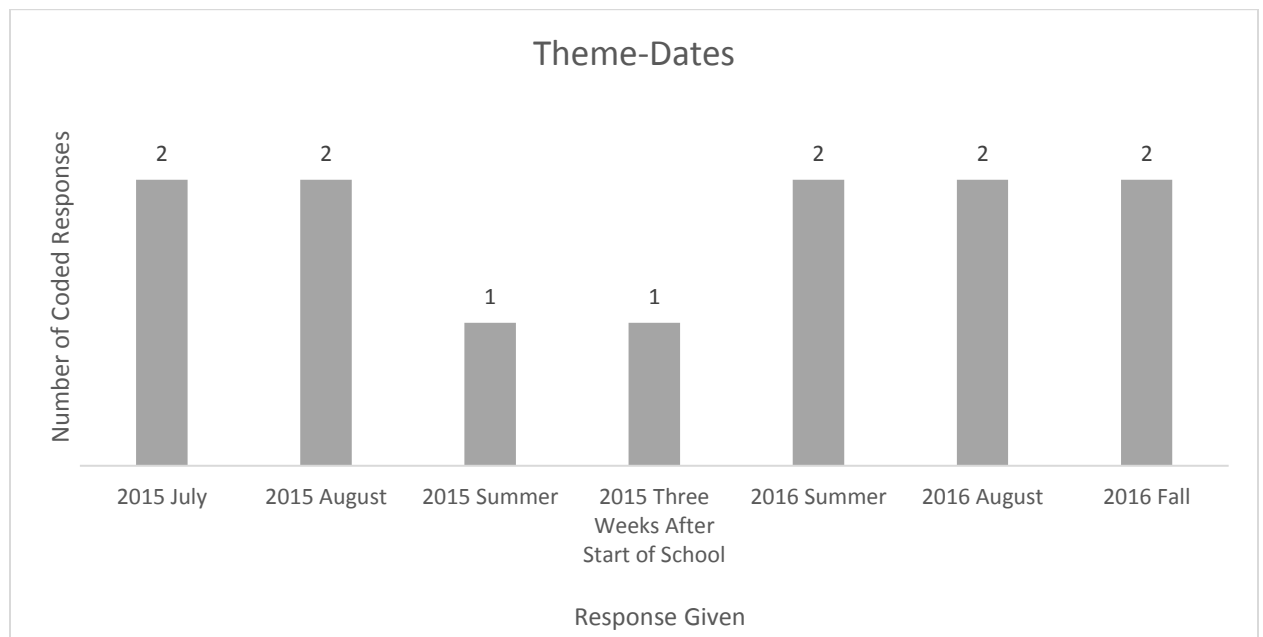
Figure 5. Coding Theme for R2: Dates

Coding theme for R2: Counseling. This theme has several related terms and

phrases that relate to advice or advising and counseling. The terms and phrases were

combined into the theme of counseling. Key words and phrases included help, guidance,

checking on me, meet up with, advice/advisor, there for me, someone to talk to, and

counseling. Several participants mentioned this theme and some referenced it several

times. The theme was not only referenced several times but was referenced in

combination with many portions of the discussion in relationship to TRiO coordinators.

Remembering the needs of the student requires awareness of the needs of the whole

person (Lightweis, 2014). The coordinators address needs of the whole student in the counseling functions they provide.

Student F knows the TRiO Coordinator will help. He felt that when he had questions he could ask the coordinator. In fact, if he could not understand a question in a class or needed to talk to someone about an assignment, he felt comfortable asking the coordinator. He thought the coordinator would help him when he needed help because it was not easy for him to ask for help.

Student B talked of the importance of counseling and advice. She felt counseling from the TRiO Coordinator is important. In fact, counseling for her extended beyond just college issues. She also included the term, advice. Student B obtained advice from a TRiO Coordinator on how to address struggles in her classes. She also explained that getting advice is available for all TRiO students.

Student J mentioned counseling specifically. This student said the word counseling and described the type of counseling he received from the TRiO Coordinator. Since he is the first in his family to attend college, he was uncertain what classes he needed to take but the coordinator helped him. Also, she could recommend who he should talk to if he needed something. He also explained how integral she has been for him as he applied to another school so he may continue his education. The coordinator assisted him with the application and sought clarification of unclear portions of the application. Moreover, the coordinator provided help, guidance, counseling, and helped with textbooks needed for college courses.

Student C listed advising. An explanation of the difference between her assigned advisor and meeting with the TRiO Coordinator as her advisor was a portion of the

interview. She expressed a preference for having the TRiO Coordinator help her sign up

for classes. Her advisor is fine, but she felt the TRiO Coordinator worked with fewer

students and knew her more personally.

Student J discussed advising. In addition to discussing how the TRiO

Coordinator provided counseling, Student J talked about the difference of an official

advisor and the TRiO Coordinator acting in an advising capacity. He explained that he

has an official advisor; yet, he explained the TRiO Coordinator is the one he met with

when he needed to plan his classes. He stated, "I just go to her. Because I can work with

her."

Student I mentioned advising. She has confidence in the coordinator as an

advisor. The coordinator contacted her about completing a graduation application, which

the student did not know she had to complete. In the discussion, she described how she

talked to her friends about how great the coordinator is at advising. She has promoted the

coordinator as a good advisor so much that her friends have wanted to contact the

coordinator to assist them too. However, they are not TRiO FGCs.

Student M explained how she can get support. She described she felt

comfortable with the coordinator. Therefore, she felt she could go to the coordinator

even if she was not doing well in her classes. The coordinator helped her when she

needed it because the coordinator had talked her through things.

Student D, G, and L appreciated someone to talk to. Student D expressed having

someone to talk to and offer encouragement had helped to provide support. Student G

and Student L had confidence if they needed any support, they could seek out their TRiO

Coordinator. This also relates to a connection with the college community (Tate et al.,

2013).

     Student A and H knew the TRiO Coordinator would check their progress. From

time to time, Student A mentioned the TRiO Coordinator had been in touch with her

periodically. The TRiO Coordinator had wanted to know how she was doing and if she

was doing well in her courses. Student H knew the coordinator would make sure she was

making the progress needed to be successful in her classes.

     Interviewees mentioned the advising the TRiO Coordinator did to help them.

They also mentioned they have an assigned advisor and the TRiO Coordinator as advisor.

This made some students choose between seeking advice between two advisors. The

theme of books evolved in discussions too.
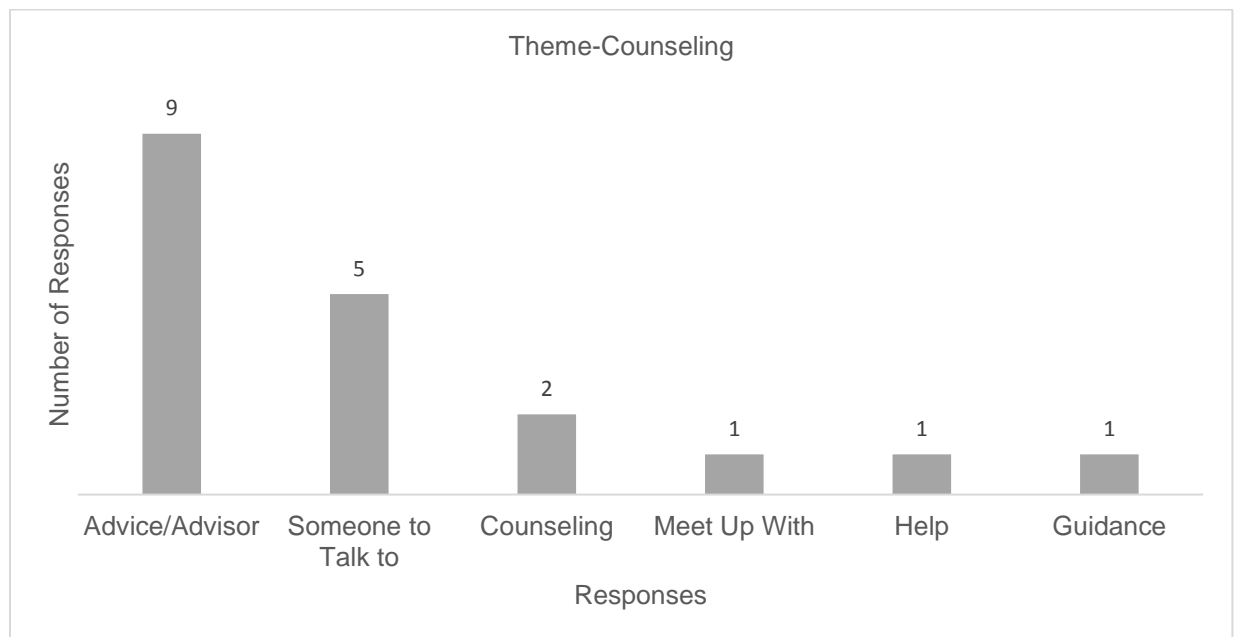
Figure 6. Coding Theme for R2: Counseling

     Coding theme for R2: Books. A few words that are similar were combined in

the coding category of books. The three words used by some students included book,

books, or textbooks. Students discussed the need for books in courses they were taking

and included that the TRiO program is a possible source of supplying books for courses.

This is especially important due to the cost of books required for their college courses.

Student E mentioned cost of books. She thought she saved lots of money on

books. That was because TRiO helped her with textbooks. She concluded that TRiO

provided books which helped her to be successful.

Student G talked about books. She realized TRiO would help with books if she

needed it. This was something she felt was important for TRiO to provide. It was

helpful to her.

Student I also talked about books. She was very aware of the cost of books.

What she did wass compare the price of buying and renting books. She mentioned the

cost of books continued to increase and questioned how the cost of books could be so

high for students. Additionally, she compared the price of books at different sources.

TRiO Coordinator was another theme during interviews.
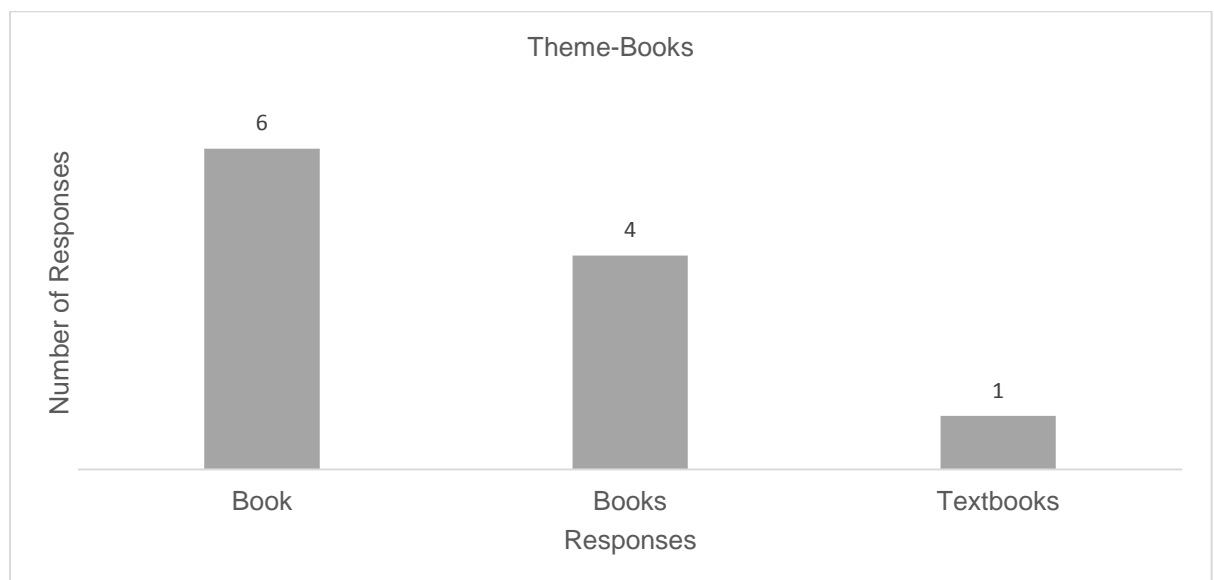
Figure 7. Coding Theme for R2: Books

Coding theme for R2: TRiO coordinator. An additional theme with similar words and phrases that were combined into one common theme is TRiO Coordinator. If any participant listed a name, the response in the transcript was changed to designate the name was used by enclosing the phrase TRiO Coordinator or former TRiO Coordinator in parenthesis. The words and phrases utilized by participants were TRiO Coordinator/Advisor/Instructor, TRiO Coordinator, former TRiO Coordinator, her/she, and they/them. It should be noted that all current and former coordinators have been female, which is information readers of the study need to know. This theme was listed frequently, as revealed in the charting of this theme, and it may be due to the many roles fulfilled by TRiO Coordinators to transition beginning college students.

TRiO Coordinators help address the problem of students leaving college. If students do not have a parent to turn to for assistance in figuring out the higher education system, they may exit college (Lightweis, 2014). Having a TRiO Coordinator to turn to may prevent an exit from college. TRiO Coordinators may also provide the supportive relationships needed to combat achievement guilt (Tate et al., 2013) and a transition from an environment that valued interdependence to an environment in college that values independence (Stephens et al., 2012).

Student F was willing to ask the TRiO Coordinator questions. He described how it was difficult for him to ask questions and how he struggled to form relationships with instructors. If he had questions about something he did not understand in class, he felt comfortable seeking assistance from the TRiO Coordinator. He was confident she would help him.

Student C discussed the relationship with the TRiO Coordinator. This student had worked with the former and current TRiO Coordinator. She described a close relationship with the former coordinator. Then the student described when the former coordinator left it, "just kind of threw me up in the air." However, she went on to explain TRiO Coordinators, "are great, awesome, and I can go talk to them about personal stuff, kind of like a therapist."

Student M completed the coordinator led class. She explained the benefits of the class and the skills taught facilitating success of college students. The class was helpful but needed more challenging assignments. The student explained she needed assignments that are more challenging to help her understand and apply things she learned in classes for her to retain the information.
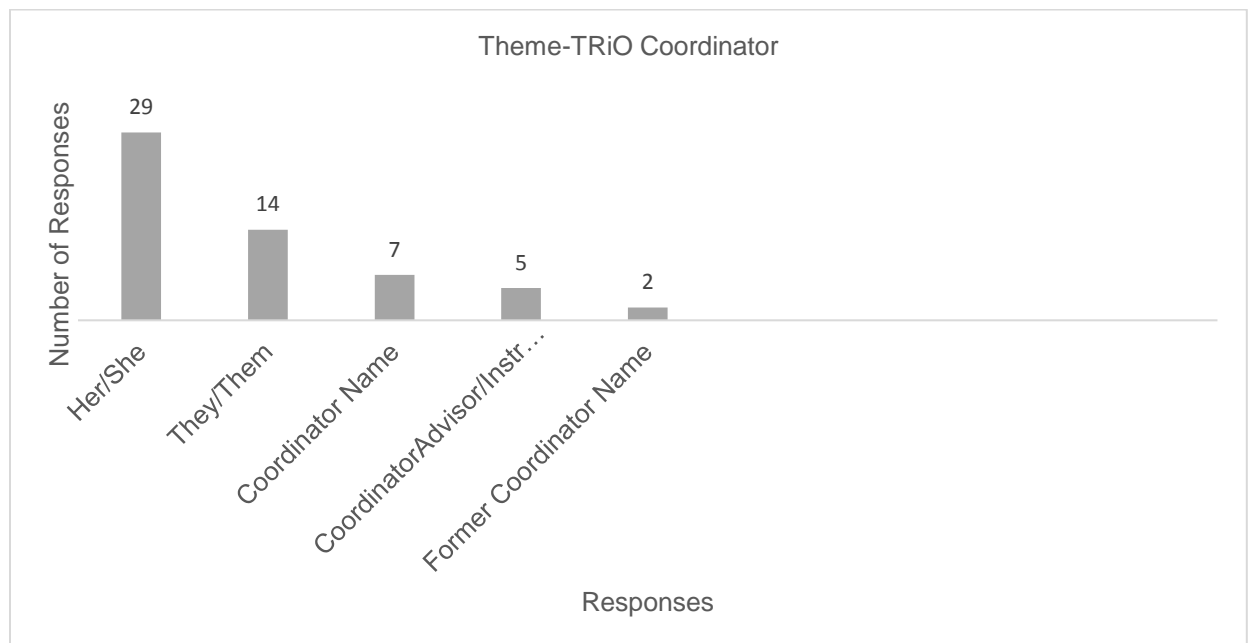
Figure 8. Coding Theme for R2: TRiO Coordinator

The discussion thus far and the charts show the overall themes that evolved in the interviews. The following discussion covers the interview questions in the next portion

of this chapter. After coding, themes evolved for the interview questions. The themes

for the interview questions are summarized next.

Joining the TRiO program. With the two central research questions in mind,

the first question students were asked was, how did you find out about the TRiO

program? Nine of the students mentioned they were recruited by the TRiO program

coordinator on their campus during new student orientation. One was recruited by the

TRiO program coordinator on their campus shortly after the student started attending

classes. One had a sister and friend in TRiO, one had a sister in TRiO, and one student

received a letter in the mail after attending orientation.

Enrollment in TRiO program. The next interview question was, when did you

enroll in the TRiO program? Six of the respondents joined the TRiO program in the fall

semester of 2015, their first year at the college and six joined in the fall semester of 2016

their first year at the college. One respondent started in the TRiO program during the

spring semester of 2015. Therefore, the overall balance of students in the study was

balanced between freshman and sophomore TRiO students.

Father's level of education. After the two basic interview questions about how

they became a part of the TRiO program, the FGCs were asked, what level of education

did your parents complete? One of the 13 TRiO FGCs gave information on her

biological mother and father and her adoptive mother and father. Therefore, her response

for both sets of parents is included in the results. The remaining 12 of the TRiO FGCs

included the educational level for both their mother and father. One of the interviewees

specified the level of education of her parents was the education her parents had achieved

in Mexico. Of the 13 students, one listed both biological and adopted father, one father

completed the 5th grade, three fathers completed the 8th grade, one father completed a GED, eight fathers graduated high school, and one father completed some college.

Mother's educational level. The students also included the level of education achieved by their mothers. One of the students included biological and adoptive mother's educational level. The educational level of mothers displayed more diversity than the educational level of fathers. At one end of the spectrum, a mother had not participated in any formal schooling. At the other end of the spectrum, one mother had completed an associate's degree. Overall results for the 13 students included one mother completed no formal education, three mothers completed the 8th grade, seven mothers graduated high school, two mothers some college, and one mother an associate's degree. The next question in the interview shifted the focus back to the TRiO program.

TRiO offers to students. What does TRiO provide to you? The answer to this interview question included a list of what TRiO has available to students and some of the interviewees identified multiple items TRiO has available. The most common answer was the TRiO Coordinators are available as someone to provide support, encouragement, and someone who is there to listen. The next thing TRiO provides and seen as vital is textbooks. Other things mentioned included computers that can be checked out, planners, college visits, tracking progress in college courses, and advising. Advising is seen as helpful when students switch their major, individualized advising TRiO coordinators offered compared to advising done by someone advising many students. The theme of success was the focus of the next two interview questions.

TRiO and success. One interview question focused on success of the interviewee was: How does TRiO help you to be successful? Whereas the prior question

was used to uncover what TRiO should help TRiO students. Interviewees could give

more than one response to this question. The most common answer to the question was

the student's TRiO coordinator checks on their progress and makes sure they are doing

well or checks with the student to see if they have any questions. Four students

mentioned the class TRiO students may take that was taught by their TRiO coordinator.

The class discusses study tips and skills, financial aid, and scholarships. Another

response mentioned by four students is how vital it is to have their TRiO coordinator to

talk to if they need help or just someone to be there listen. While one TRiO student felt

the other TRiO students were a good support system. Two students mentioned the

importance of being able to borrow textbooks and one felt it was vital to have a computer

available for checkout. Some of the interviewees are planning to continue their education

after completing their associate's degree. For the students planning to pursue a degree

beyond their associate's degree, the TRiO coordinator's help with a college application is

important as well as the opportunity to visit college campuses a student may consider as a

transfer institution. Other things mentioned by one student each was the TRiO

coordinator helped them to be a better student, the TRiO coordinator helped them to be

involved in the campus community, and the TRiO coordinator is very helpful with

advising.

Personal qualities for success. The other interview question with a success

focus was, what are the qualities you possess which you believe have helped you to be

successful? In answering this question, the non-verbal reaction needs to be included with

the results. Three answered the question without hesitation; five paused before

answering the question; four requested to skip the question and come back to it; one

96

participant requested to come back to the question two times. Respondents could answer

the question with as many qualities as they wished to list. One interviewee had a

response that was a bit different than other interviewees. She stated that she was driven

and explained her past was not going to define her or her future. The student repeated

this theme when she answered the last question in the interview and she revealed the

driving force for her in participating in an interview was because she wanted others to

know TRiO makes a difference to students. The most common theme in answer to this

question was determination and persistence; this was listed five times. The next theme

that was popular and listed three times is the theme of time management and not

procrastinating. Three listed the ability to ask questions was beneficial to success and the

importance of conquering shyness was mentioned by two as integral to their success,

while two mentioned self-motivation as important. Work ethic was also mentioned by

two interviewees. Other qualities listed were concern of what others think, having a child

as their driving force, commitment, and being patient in pacing to meet his goals were the

other qualities listed in answer to this question. After discussing success, the students

were asked about the impact of being a first-generation student.

Impact of first-generation status. The complete interview question composed

was: Has being a first-generation student impacted you? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

Eight of the interviewees answered the question, yes, and proceeded with their

explanation before being prompted to explain their, yes, response. Four of the

respondents answered, yes, and needed to be prompted to explain their, yes, response.

The remaining interviewee answered, no, and without hesitation added she felt unaffected

by her first-generation status because she had older siblings who had attended college and

graduated. Overall, 92% answered, yes, and 8% answered, no. More than one

explanation of the impact on first-generation student status was allowed per interviewee.

The most common explanation of the impact mentioned by four students was their parent

or parents do not understand the demands of college. Of the four students mentioning

this, two added that their parents also do not know how to help them. Three mentioned

the pressure they felt to be successful. Two of the interviewees mentioned they are

parents and want to set an example for their child, but it is difficult to balance everything.

One student mentioned setting an example for younger siblings is important. One

additional theme related to family was the difficulty of being separated from family

members because the student was very close to family and it was a source of

encouragement for the student. Also, identified as a difficulty was reaching a life balance

with school and one interviewee simply responded that school was hard. Another student

explained as a first-generation student he had observed the jobs that people have was

related to having at least a high school diploma and a college degree makes a difference

in job opportunities too. An attempt to uncover whether something would become a

roadblock to the student's academic goal was discussed in the next question.

Academic goal abandonment. Respondents were asked the interview question:

What if anything would make you abandon your academic goal? One interviewee had

more than one answer to the question; very few themes were repeated. Two of the

students answered nothing would make them quit even though school is hard work. Two

answered that teachers would make them abandon their goal. A little more detail was

given with one student listing teaching style and one student listing harsh treatment by

the instructor as the reason. Somewhat related to the theme of teachers was too much

homework, which was mentioned by two interviewees. An additional roadblock

mentioned twice was related to uncertainty of what they want to do. Other responses

listed once included wanting to become a parent, being a parent it was difficult to fit

school into her life too, balancing work and school, medical issues, uncertainty of what

career a student wanted to pursue, and money issues were listed by a student but the

student also stated she would work to save money to return to school. One student

explained he had family responsibilities because he must take care of his mother if

anything happened to her he was the only person she had to help her. However, he would

do anything he had to do to return to school and finish. The last interview question

discussed was more open ended.

     Addition to interview. The last question in the interview was: Is there anything

you wish to add to this interview? The most frequent response was nothing and was the

response of nine of the interviewees. However, the remaining interviewees had some

additional information to share and they could list more than one item. Almost all the

information interviewees wished to add was some advantage of the TRiO program. An

adamant response by one student was that TRiO does help. She expanded by mentioning

that if you were in TRiO you may be considered an underprivileged student but TRiO

was helpful to students. Therefore, she did not care if others viewed TRiO students as

underprivileged. Two students emphasized the advantage of having the TRiO

coordinator as an advisor. Other things emphasized as advantages of TRiO included

college visits to colleges offering bachelor degrees, the TRiO class emphasized tools for

college success, information TRiO coordinators shared with TRiO students, and the

advantage of TRiO completing volunteer projects. One of the interviewees

communicated three advantages of attending college. The advantages listed were college

had lots of homework but it was helpful, college provided an opportunity to meet others

and college could help to overcome shyness. This question also invoked a response the

interviewer had not anticipated. When this question was asked, a few of the students

reassured the principal investigator that she had done a good job with the questions and

interviews. Therefore, they had nothing to add to the interview. This concluded the

coding for the themes for the interview questions. Next coding the themes for the central

research questions will be discussed.

Summary

The main research question at the core of the study is: How TRIO FGCs find

success in reaching academic goals. One central research question that was addressed

was: R1. How are TRiO FGCs impacted by their status as TRiO FGCs while pursuing

academic goals? For example, due to status as TRiO FGCs was the college student

unsure of how to navigate the higher education system, possess less social capital and

finances, and lack role models who have college degrees. The other central research

question was: R2. How does a TRIO program help TRiO FGCs reach academic goals?

These questions are most effectively and efficiently answered when the viewpoint of

TRiO FGCs is used to answer the question. Using this approach considers the individual

the TRIO program wishes to serve rather than assuming what was helpful to FGCs.

Therefore, an exploratory case study was used to explore these questions.

Due to the exploratory case study approach and a focus on TRiO FGCs,

interviews were conducted. There were 13 one to one interviews completed, one

interview was disqualified due to the potential for bias and one interviewee withdrew

from the study. One small focus group of two attendees met. Since the attendance at the focus group was small, the two attendees were asked the interview questions. This yielded a total of 13 interviewees supplying data to be analyzed. Coding was done to analyze the data. Open and axial coding of the transcripts were done (Creswell, 2013). Coding was facilitated using posting responses with post-it notes to large 20"x23" sheets and NVivo software. This generated categories and themes. There were eight themes generated.

The eight themes generated were aligned with the selected research questions. Three thematic categories were used to answer research question number one. Five thematic categories were used to answer research question number two.

For the first research question, the first theme that evolved was high school. This theme yielded strong support for the most common level of education of the FGCs completing interviews in this study. There are some TRiO FGCs with parents who had less than a high school education and a few with a little more than a high school education. This level of education achieved has an impact on TRiO FGCs.

The second theme for the first research question was determination. This common theme was what TRiO FGCs mentioned as a quality to assist them when they were pursuing success. The non-verbal portion of their response indicated a hesitation in listing their personal qualities. The exact terms listed included several terms and phrases similar to the term determination. Determination as a theme helped TRiO FGCs as they pursued their academic goals.

Family influence was the third theme to answer the first research question. Family members in this theme varied and included parents, siblings, cousins, and

children. Not only did family members vary but the type of influence varied too. Some interviewees had pressure from family; others wished to set an example for family members, a few students who had family members who did not understand the demands of college or how to provide support to a college student. This theme indicated how TRiO FGCs are impacted.

The first theme for the second research question was orientation. This theme indicated when TRiO FGCs found out about the TRiO program. Most students were informed about the TRiO program as a resource to assist them during new student orientation. The second theme for the second research question was a list of dates. This second theme is closely related to the first theme. These themes indicate students enter the TRiO program and are informed about the TRiO program early in their enrollment.

Counseling is the third theme to evolve for the second research question. Interviewees mentioned several terms and themes. Therefore, the counseling had several forms such as advice or advisor, there for me, someone to talk to, meet up with, checking on me, help and guidance. This theme revealed an important function of how the TRiO program helped TRiO FGCs accomplish academic goals.

The fourth theme for the second research question revealed an important resource TRiO can provide to students. Book, books, textbooks were mentioned as something that the TRiO program can offer to assist students. This resource was a tool for TRiO FGCs to receive in leading to their success.

For the second research question, a fifth theme was TRiO Coordinator. This theme may seem to be a natural theme for interviews completed with TRiO FGCs. However, if this theme was absent, the connection with the coordinator and students may

be something to question. This theme had a variety of words and terms that are similar.

Overall, TRiO Coordinator mentioned frequently hints at how this person is integral to

the way a TRiO program helps FGCs reach academic goals.

In the study, the number of participants was a limitation. However, all students

on the master list were invited to participate in either an interview or a focus group.

Overall, the demographics of the group of interviewees were similar to the demographic

make-up of the TRiO FGCs master list. This chapter presented a discussion of the

research questions and themes that evolved. The next chapter presents the implications to

consider.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

Researchers have explored what may create barriers to college students attaining a degree. One specific group of college students to be studied by researchers are first-generation college students (FGCs). Investigation of whether FGCs have a disadvantage due to their parent's educational status was done by Moschetti and Hudley (2015). They found FGCs compared to continuing generation college students (CGCs) differ in social capital and motivation in an academic setting. Blackwell and Pinder (2014) chose to focus more on motivational factors of minority student FGCs. An additional, yet smaller research focus and the focus of this research study, has been a focus on the program known as TRiO. TRiO began in the mid-1960's and was given the acronym TRiO due to the three parts of the program, which were designed to equalize opportunities in education for all students (Pitre & Pitre, 2009).

Whether TRiO FGCs are disadvantaged due to educational background of parents, which, in turn, impacts their motivation, and how the TRiO program may help is beneficial information to a higher education institution. This beneficial information is central to this research study. Therefore, the central research questions asked in this research study were: How are TRiO FGCs impacted by their status as TRiO FGCs while pursuing academic goals? And, how does a TRiO program help TRiO FGCs reach academic goals? These questions were used as a guide to understand some aspects of TRiO FGCs at a community college in a rural Midwestern setting, and provide insight into how to improve and maximize the college experience for TRiO FGCs.

This chapter will present a discussion of the findings in relation to the literature and drawing of conclusions. Information will share the findings and conclusion, implications, strengths and weaknesses of the study, and recommendations. Additionally, discussion will include a focus on higher education and TRiO FGCs.

Summary of the Study

Researchers have investigated how FGCs may experience higher education differently than the CGCs population. For example, research has been conducted on achievement guilt (Covarrubias et al., 2014; Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). Moschetti and Hudley (2015) explored the relationship of social capital and academic motivation of FGCs. To help support FGCs, there was a federal program established in the mid-1960s known as TRiO (Pitre & Pitre, 2009). The program has provided a three-pronged approach to assist a population to find their way through the maze of educational systems, including college (Pitre & Pitre, 2009). The TRiO program applies the definition of FGCs as students who do not have any parent possessing a baccalaureate degree (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Currently, a TRiO program is an integral part of the community college utilized for this study.

An exploratory case study approach was used with one to one interviews and one small focus group. 13 TRiO FGCs were interviewed. One interview was disqualified due to possible bias. One interviewee withdrew after completion of an interview and offered no explanation for the withdrawal. One small focus group met with two attendees. Since the group was so small, the interview questions were used. During the interview, these students discussed different aspects of their TRiO FGCs status. They

expanded the discussion of their status by including how this status interacted with their goals, specifically academic goals.

The status of interviewees who were members of the TRiO group at the college included in the research study, related to theories generated by Astin and Bean. Bean (1986) advanced a model in his research, which proposed a college student being shaped by their parent's education and income. Astin (1970b) promoted the theory of student input added to the college environment determines the outcome for students. Parental education and income, added to the influence of a TRiO program in college yielding the student outcome related to the data generated for analysis in this study.

To analyze the data generated, open and axial coding was utilized. This was paired with a constant comparative analysis to find emerging items (Creswell, 2013). Interview transcripts from audio tapes were typed into a word document and analyzed for key words and phrases. The key words and phrases were written on post-it notes and posted to a large 20"x23" post-it sheet. Common themes on the small notes were grouped together on the large post-it sheet. Transcripts were saved in NVivo software; main ideas in the transcripts were highlighted. The main ideas were coded per theme; categories and queries could be run in the NVivo software. Using this coding process assisted with answering the central research questions. How are TRiO FGCs impacted by their status as TRiO FGCs while pursuing their academic goals? How does a TRiO program help TRiO FGCs reach academic goals? The themes related to these questions will be presented in the next section of this chapter.

Summary of the Findings and Conclusion

Research has been conducted with FGCs. The researchers have attempted to understand how FGCs' achievement guilt, social capital, and the environment in higher education influence FGCs while they pursue academic goals. The research with TRiO FGCs is limited. Therefore, the researcher searched to explore the TRiO FGCs college experience due to TRiO FGCs status and how the TRiO program works to assist TRiO FGCs enrolled in a TRiO program. Thematic categories evolved during the research study based on the insights shared by participants in this research study.

Views of participants about TRiO FGCs status. When participants were interviewed, they provided information on the first central research question. The discussion of how TRiO FGCs are impacted by their status as TRiO FGCs while pursuing academic goals generated data to be coded. When the data was coded, it revealed three themes.

Thematic category 1: Parental level of formal education. Participants shared the level of formal education of both their mother and father with one participant giving information for both biological and adoptive parents. The category reveals the most frequent answer given by participants. Overall the most common educational level was high school. Few parents of the TRiO FGCs have had exposure to a college experience. Another revelation of this theme is the emphasis on the lack of experience parents have with higher educational institutions for this group of TRiO FGCs.

As for the difference of FGCs and CGCs; Padgett et al. (2012) discussed parental experience with the college environment of FGCs and social capital. They described social capital creates the connections needed to navigate higher educational institutions.

Most of the TRiO FGCs who participated in the interviews could be impacted by the lack of college experience of their parents. The participants in the research study this research conducted would have that in common with the FGCs Padgett et al. (2012) studied.

Thematic category 2: Determination. The non-verbal response to identifying qualities for success included answering the question without hesitation, answering the question after a pause, and requesting to come back to the question. Interviewees pausing or requesting to come back to the question could not explain specifically why. A few simply stated it was a difficult question.

After pondering this question, participants responded with a variety of answers, such as driven, persistent, do not give up, stick with, set my mind, self-motivation, and determination. However, the answers were terms and phrases that were synonyms fitting an overall category of determination.

Determination is a quality related to research completed on FGCs. Tate, Williams, and Harden (2013) have discussed the need for FGCs to get past the guilt feelings and cope with these feelings to move forward in the college environment. Blackwell and Pinder (2014) mentioned students wanting to improve their past display intrinsic motivation causing the student to be determined to succeed. While work completed by Moschetti and Hudley (2014) discussed the belief students have if they hit higher educational institution roadblocks, they had to use their personal effort to achieve their goals. Therefore, a theme of determination mentioned by TRiO FGCs relates to what researchers have explored in relationship to FGCs.

Thematic category 3: Family influence. The responses for this theme indicated the importance of family for the participants. Family influence generated lots of

information from the interviewees. There were several different responses, but the students thought their family had an influence.

Researchers have identified types of family influences. Bledsoe and Baskin (2014) identified how students might have issues related to family that they must attempt to manage, in addition to their college life. The topic of support provided by parents of FGCs is a concept discussed by Moschetti and Hudley (2014). They concluded students in their study revealed a lack of educational support from their parents; yet, these same parents may supply emotional support even though they are incapable of supplying educational support. It also relates to work by Covarrubias and Fryberg (2015) on social capital of parents of FGCs. FGCs parents do not know how the higher educational system works nor do they have the social connections, which would be beneficial to their children because their children would have family relationships and acquire relationships in the college environment (Tate et al., 2013).

Arbelo-Marrero and Milacci (2016) investigated the importance of family context and stated, "Experiences within the family context were powerful influencers that provided an impetus to persist" (p. 27). The persistence they referred to was striving for a bachelor's degree. This research team also studied how life effects someone without a higher education degree.

The second central research question explored the assistance a TRiO program supplies to assist TRiO FGCs to realize their goals in education. Feedback from interviewees on this question yielded five thematic categories. The first theme TRiO FGCs in this research study identified was the assistance a TRiO program provides begins during orientation to the college.

Thematic category 1: Orientation. When participants discussed the term, they connected it to their beginning awareness of the TRiO program. Since this was mentioned by most of the students, it indicated their opportunity to join TRiO occurred at the same time as they made the decision to join the college community as a student. Per Tate et al. (2013), this is a proactive time to get students to join the TRiO program because survivor guilt may be addressed early in the student's college career. This crucial timing has allowed TRiO FGCs to retain past relationships while establishing new relationships at the time they transition to the college community. Furthermore, students may transition from home community connections to home and college community connections.

Thematic category 2: Dates. In this theme, it revealed the timeframe when students joined the TRiO program. The timeframe showed the researcher that half of the 13 interviewees were first-year students and half were second-year students. The remaining interviewee joined in Spring of 2015. This theme showed responses were almost evenly divided between first-year and second-year FGCs.

The other revelation by this theme is to confirm the TRiO program recruits and enrolls FGCs early in their college experience. This is vital for FGCs who are students considered to be at-risk for leaving college. Tate et al., 2013 mention the need for FGCs to become a part of the community, become clear about their goals or values, using their values to clarify their purpose in college, and to empower FGCs. The values and community these researchers have as a focus is regarding to completing college. This focus is a necessity because FGCs may be torn between their past community and the new community they are joining and the future community FGCs hope to join. In

addition to joining the new community early in their college life, counseling evolved as a theme.

      Thematic category 3: Counseling. This category included a variety of key words and phrases that are associated with the qualities of counseling. Those listed were help, guidance, checking on me, meet up with, advice/advisor, there for me, someone to talk to, and counseling. The key words and phrases varied but emphasized how important it is for FGCs to have someone to provide assistance. The assistance may extend to personal issues and issues relating to student college life. This may also extend to advising services. Lightweis (2014) mentioned the importance of remembering the needs of the whole person for FGCs. One aspect of the needs of the whole person is advising and the TRiO program provides that service. In addition, just having someone to talk to was also listed as important to some of the FGCs. This repeats the concept of a connection to the college community Tate et al. (2013) mentioned. Another category was the theme of books.

      Thematic category 4: Books. Students mentioned he key word book, books, and textbooks during interviews, some more than once. This was due to the cost of books required for their college courses adding to the cost of their education.

      Thematic category 5: TRiO Coordinator. Numerous key words and phrases were used by interviewees to express the term TRiO Coordinator. Key words and phrases were TRiO Coordinator/Advisor/Instructor, Coordinators' names, he/she, they/them. It was a term that frequently appeared in the interview transcripts.

      It follows that the research questions facilitated discussion of FGCs and the TRiO program. Furthermore, the frequent inclusion of the theme of TRiO Coordinator

highlights the importance of the person coordinating the program and the relationships of

the FGCs and the coordinator. Research literature mentions the importance of

relationships for FGCs.

Lightweis (2014) described how FGCs may leave college because they may

believe they have to decode the college system independently, rather than seeking

assistance from others. Parents are not a resource because they do not have parents to

turn to who have experience with the college system. This could result in FGCs giving

up and not pursuing academic goals, which included college. Having a program, such as

TRiO and a TRiO Coordinator that FGCs may turn to, could address the issue of FGCs

leaving college. Another vital function of TRiO Coordinators, as mentioned earlier in the

discussion for this study, is addressing the survivor or achievement guilt FGCs could

experience. Tate et al. (2013) described how FGCs could deal with achievement guilt

and explained the process supportive college personnel, such as TRiO Coordinators could

use to facilitate the steps preventing at-risk students from quitting college. An additional

aspect of empowerment integral to student success is assisting FGCs to transition from an

environment that valued interdependence to the environment of higher education, which

values independence (Stephens et al., 2012).

Implications

This research study investigated the experience of FGCs in a TRiO program.

Some studies have explored the experience of FGCs in community colleges and four-year

college institutions; yet, little research has explored TRiO programs. This research study

utilized an exploratory case study to examine how TRiO FGCs pursuing academic goals

are impacted by TRiO FGCs status and how TRiO programs provide support for TRiO

FGCs. The following portion of this chapter will present theoretical implications,

practical implications, future implications, and discuss strengths and weaknesses of the

study.

Theoretical implications. The work of Astin and Bean provide a theoretical base

for this research study on FGCs. Astin's work has spanned several years. Astin (1970a)

worked to discover what impact college had on students. Astin discussed a model using

the acronym I-E-O. I represented student input, E stood for college environment, and O

was about student output. Astin's model was designed to find how colleges could design

the environment in a manner that would increase student retention. By 1999, Astin

included how the college environment could incorporate student involvement to impact

student output. Astin's model continues to be used for research. Early (2016)

investigated mentoring relationships of college professionals with resident assistants

(RAs) and how this related to the leadership of RAs. Furthermore, Astin's I-E-O model

is a theoretical model that relates to the research study conducted by this researcher with

TRiO FGCs.

In this study, the student input is students from a specific population, FGCs in a

TRiO program. Per prior research studies, FGCs may have specific characteristics

because of the impact of their first-generation status. Characteristics such as the value of

interdependence (Stephens et al., 2012), a lack of social capital (Moschetti & Hudley,

2015), and achievement guilt (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). These characteristics may

add up to students at-risk to dropping out of college. The 'E' portion of Astin's model is

the two campuses of the community college environment used in this research study. If

these campuses are like most college environments, they include an emphasis on

independence (Stephens et al., 2012) and a system that may be unfamiliar to FGCs. Then, lastly, the 'O' of Astin's model represents output in Astin's model.

Based on the feedback from the TRiO FGCs interviewed for the research study discussed in this chapter, a TRiO program may intervene to create an 'O' or output to prevent exit of at-risk students from a college environment. Furthermore, prior researchers, such as Tate et al. (2013), Moschetti and Hudley (2014), Covarrubias and Fryberg (2015), and Stephens et al. (2012), discussed the mismatch of FGCs and the college environment creating an output, which may facilitate FGCs exiting college. Bean's work also relates to theoretical implications for the FGCs population in a college environment.

Bean (1979) mentioned student attrition in his work. Within this work, Bean included a background variable identified as socioeconomic status. The socioeconomic status was described as the occupational status of parents of the student. The research study on TRiO FGCs considers the occupational status of parents. During the interviews with students, interviewees mentioned the topic of occupational status. Furthermore, in 1986, an article written by Bean looked at assessing the attrition of students and mentioned the responsibility higher education institutions have to reduce attrition. To accomplish a reduction in attrition, Bean encouraged higher education administrators to consider background variables affecting retention decisions of students. One retention strategy is students establishing connections. During interviews for the research study presented in this chapter, TRiO FGCs discussed their relationship or connections with the TRiO Coordinator. Per Tate et al., 2013, this relationship is important to TRiO FGCs in college. Additionally, this fits with Bean's theory of retention of students.

In a more contemporary study, in 2001, Bean and Eaton (2001) explored psychological theories in relationship to student retention. The theories included attitude-behavior, coping behavioral, self-efficacy, and attribution. Bean and Eaton (2001) posited these psychological theories lead to academic and social integration. This 2001 research model by Bean and Eaton was used in a 2014 study by Johnson, Wasserman, Yildirim, and Yonai, demonstrating Bean's theory is being used in contemporary research.

In the research study conducted on TRiO FGCs by this researcher, students talked about their determination as a quality for their success. Possessing this attitude is vital to TRiO FGCs persisting in reaching their academic goals. Tate et al. (2013) mentioned the importance of FGCs becoming aware of their values and goals leading to students being empowered to follow through with their goals. This, in turn, needs to guide higher education institution's decisions to increase retention of students. In addition to theoretical implications, there are also practical implications.

Practical implications. This exploratory case study focused on interviews with TRiO FGCs to provide insight into their college experience. The information shared helped this researcher to understand how the students are impacted by their status as TRiO FGCs and what the TRiO program does to assist students. Information enabled the researcher to look at possible implications of what could be done to benefit the college and the college students.

Student population. Students in the study represented a group of students with parents who have limited experience with the college environment. With the limited experience of their parents in the higher educational environment, students have limited

support from their parents in navigating the college environment. This is compounded by the interdependence TRiO FGCs' parents may foster, rather than encouraging independence.

This lack of independence and lack of experience with higher education may make it difficult for TRiO FGCs to seek answers and assistance from college personnel. Hesitating to find the necessary resources and understanding procedures may place TRiO FGCs at-risk. If the students are at-risk, it may lead to failing classes and ultimately an exit from college.

TRiO programs. TRiO programs facilitated by TRiO Coordinators offer the advocacy at-risk students need to assist these students to persist in their search for success in college. The relationship may begin when the student enters the college environment. When this happens, TRiO FGCs arrive at college with an advocate to guide them through the maze of an unfamiliar higher education system. With a guide, at-risk students may lower their risk of failure and leaving college. Future implications of this study also need to be presented.

Future implications. The context of the study is an implication the researcher must highlight. The study was conducted in a rural area on two small college campuses. This yielded a total of 15 participants. Unfortunately, one participant withdrew and another participant was disqualified due to the potential for bias making the total number of 13 students who contributed data. Therefore, even though all eligible students on the

master list of 49 participants received more than one request to participate in the research study, the total who provided data was 13.

Another weakness was the focus groups planned did not meet. A group of 18 students on one campus was invited to a meeting; 15 at another campus were invited to a focus group meeting. Invitations were sent in several formats on different dates to invite the potential participants. The formats included email, mail, and a text message. On the day of the meeting, a reminder text was sent. One site had no one and the other site had two students. A group of students may have too many scheduling variables to schedule a time accommodating class schedules, work schedules, and family schedules. Method of communication is another concern.

The use of email and phone calls resulted in limited responses from students. However, use of texting seemed to be a mode of communication that would generate responses. Few students answered email; phone calls were forwarded to voice mail. When texts were sent, the response time was faster and the number of responses was greater. However, during the study, the sequence of communication was email, phone call, then text. Of course, email was useful due to the capability of attaching documents. Researcher bias needs to be prevented as well.

Researcher bias was minimized as much as possible. The researcher maximized validity while gathering the data through use of random sampling, snowballing, and following the interview protocol. A way to further minimize bias would be for a researcher to journal about bias and evaluate the journal entries.

An additional concern is what may have motivated students to participate. It is believed that students willingly volunteered for interviews. However, there were a few

interviewees who revealed their inquisitiveness about the process of receiving a doctoral degree and about the research study. If these motivated students to volunteer, it could have the potential to attract a specific student population. Strengths and weaknesses will be addressed next.

Strength and weaknesses. One weakness was the number of participants who volunteered. Further compounding this was one interviewee was disqualified due to potential bias and another interviewee withdrew from the study. Related to this weakness was the lack of attendance at focus group meetings. Yet, a strength of the study was all participants were interviewed, which allowed the researcher the opportunity to gather rich information from all the participants. Even though some interviewees were eliminated from the study, the potential for bias and information from an interviewee who may have been reluctant was not used in the data that was evaluated.

The strength of working with participants the researcher did not know had the potential to facilitate honest answers. The weakness related to this could be the interviewees did not have a long-term relationship with researcher, which is the type of relationship that could build trust. It also added to the time needed for building rapport. However, the participants seemed to have a level of rapport with the researcher. This was indicated to the researcher by discussions initiated by participants after the interview was completed. The researcher had participants show her photos on their phone of loved ones, pets, or special life events. Some participants discussed tutoring, dropping a course, or information about courses. A few wished to discuss the researcher's educational background, asked questions for an explanation of the progression of

graduate degrees, and an overview of how a research study was done. Demographics of the group also must be considered.

The demographic composition of this research study was comparable to the composition of the TRiO FGCs on the two community college campuses. However, the demographic make-up of other community colleges may represent greater diversity than this rural community college in the Midwestern part of the United States did. Furthermore, greater diversity may impact the needs of a more diverse group of TRiO FGCs. The type of higher education institution is mentioned next.

This study focused on a community college. The community college degree seeking and bachelor degree seeking students may differ. Usually, a community college works with students for a shorter timeframe than an institution offering bachelor's degree. Possibly, this will impact the responses of students. Students with less higher education experience may view the questions asked in this study differently. Plus, the environment of the community college and colleges offering bachelor's degrees may differ. Recommendations are presented next.

Recommendations

This section will cover recommendations this researcher wants future researchers to consider. Recommendations for practitioners will be presented. Additionally, recommendations for future practice is discussed. All the recommendations highlight information from this research study.

Recommendations for future research. The prior discussion mentioned some concerns the researcher had with the research study. Due to these concerns, some recommendations are suggested. A listing of the recommendations follows.

1. The group of students studied was small. Students have many demands on their time and a variety of schedules. College students have different class schedules, work schedules, and family demands on their time. Therefore, scheduling a meeting time that works for students to attend a group meeting is difficult. Plus, students may not understand the purpose or importance of a focus group meeting for a research study. Therefore, research using focus groups with a small group of college students may not yield groups large enough for a research study.

2. Results from this research study reflect a demographic group in a small rural community college in the Midwestern portion of the United States. A study conducted with a demographic group with greater diversity, in a more highly populated area, and in a bachelor's degree granting institution may have results that differ from this study. However, the results of this study reflect the trends of existing research literature.

3. The method of contacting participants should be considered. Almost all of the TRiO FGCs could communicate by texting on their phone. While email provides a communication tool that is convenient for attaching documents, it is a communication tool that students may not have linked to their phone for notifications. Plus, students may not check their email as frequently as they

check text messages. When planning research, researchers need to consider the most effective modes of communication.

4. Research conducted with TRiO FGCs may need to include an educational component. The component would be something to explain the progression of higher educational degrees and basic research information. The students in this study showed interest in graduate degrees. However, their exposure to the pathway to graduate degrees may be limited. With a limited knowledge of higher education, it follows that graduate degrees are a part of that limited knowledge for TRiO FGCs. Fortunately, students were willing to ask questions about the pathway and process to obtain graduate degrees. This component of the interviews in the research study was unexpected.

Recommendations for practitioners. This exploratory case study emphasized the importance of some of the practices of the TRiO program and hinted at some practices higher education needs to consider. For example, TRiO orientation, TRiO services, how to support TRiO Coordinators, communication with students, and including the family of TRiO FGCs. The list of recommendations may seem lengthy but is vital to consider to create a higher education environment, which is TRiO FGCs friendly.

1. TRiO orientation was timely for the TRiO FGCs interviewed. However, this does not provide the opportunity to recruit TRiO FGCs to attend the college. Nor does it provide for a transition of the students into the college environment before their arrival for classes on campus. At-risk students are in danger of dropping out and no transition period for TRiO FGCs does not give

them the opportunity to adapt to college or form relationships before they attend classes.

2. TRiO provides many resources for TRiO FGCs. TRiO FGCs who participated in interviews talked positively about the services they received. Some mentioned having the TRiO program assist them with books was helpful. Yet, if the cost of books is a concern for students, what can be done to ensure books are not perceived as a barrier to student success. Another service TRiO FGCs mentioned was advising. They mentioned the advantage of utilizing the TRiO Coordinator as an advisor rather than utilizing their assigned advisor. However, having two advisors may be confusing to students. Clarifying the person, a student should see for advising would eliminate another possible barrier. Students were also confident they could always talk to their TRiO Coordinator about any problems or questions. The assistance listed most often was the support of the TRiO Coordinator in varying ways such as listening to the students, checking on their progress, and teaching a class to help them learn skills to succeed in college courses. However, when teaching skills for success in college, coordinators must make sure the assignments are challenging to help students effectively learn the college success skills.

3. Due to all the ways TRiO Coordinators help students, ensuring the coordinators have the support they need to do their job is vital. For example, referral services need to be available for the coordinators to use if the TRiO FGCs need services the coordinators cannot provide. A specific example is

counseling if the TRiO FGCs need long-term intensive formal counseling services. Another type of support is the college should offer training to TRiO Coordinators. This recommendation is a reminder to higher educational institutions to reflect on the training provided to college employees.

4. How higher educational institutions communicate with TRiO FGCs should be reviewed. During this study, the use of email and phone calls as the first two contacts with randomly selected interview candidates was limited in generating responses from students. When the third contact was made using communication in a text, more students responded to the request for an interview appointment. Therefore, method of communicating with students needs to be analyzed to find the most effective communication method.

5. In this study, the influence of family was a theme. The way family influenced TRiO FGCs varied, but the influence of family was apparent. Higher educational institutions must consider this influence. TRiO FGCs are reported as arriving at the doors of a college used to an interdependent approach to life, which is a mismatch with college environment that values independence. TRiO FGCs may have pressure from their family to graduate and provide an example to other family members, but the students may not know how to proceed to graduation and they cannot seek support or assistance from family. TRiO FGCs family members do not understand the college environment. While recruiting and serving TRiO FGCs, the 'whole' student must be served and family is a portion of the 'whole' student.

6. In line with the theme of the 'whole' student is how faculty may address the needs of TRiO FGCs in their classroom. Faculty need to be aware some students in their classroom are interdependent students with no idea of the culture of higher educational institutions.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Preparation for the future is crucial for higher educational institutions. Then colleges may be proactive rather than reactive. Plus, in a rapidly changing global environment and a climate of rapid changes in requirements for public colleges, an institution needs to be setting trends rather than trying to catch up with the trends. This includes recruiting students, helping students to persist to graduation, and training.

With family influence being important to TRiO FGCs, colleges need to include the family in the recruiting process. Encouraging family members to visit the college campus, familiarizing family with the demands of college courses, and extending invitations to the children or siblings of TRiO FGCs may be methods to recruit the family that influences a college student. Perhaps, the best way to recruit new TRiO FGCs is for a college to get the advice from current TRiO FGCs.

Once the students have been recruited, complete orientation, and begin to attend college, students need to be encouraged to persist to reach their academic goal. For TRiO FGCs, being a part of their past community and transitioning to a new community with new connections is important to keep them in college. One way to accomplish this with TRiO FGCs is fostering a relationship with TRiO Coordinators. Next, ensuring TRiO FGCs set academic goals and understand how to achieve their goals may be

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accomplished. Lastly, TRiO FGCs need to be empowered to work toward their goals and strengthen their feeling of being a part of the college community.

An additional part of ensuring TRiO FGCs feel they are a part of the college community is training the employees of the college community. Providing training for employees to understand when they work with TRiO FGCs, this population may value interdependence over independence. Making employees aware of the importance of family influence for TRiO FGCs could also be a part of the training. This is important for all employees but also important information for faculty and advisors working with TRiO FGCs.

The population of TRiO FGCs was the focus of this discussion. This is due to the focus of the exploratory case study on this group of college students. The last future recommendation and closing point is to consider how the recommendations used to foster TRiO FGCs success may also foster the success of all college students.

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Appendix A: Email of Introduction to Trio Students

The purpose of this e-mail was to introduce myself to TRiO Students

Dear XXXX,

I would like to introduce myself. My name is XXXX and I am a doctoral student at XXXX. I want to forewarn you that this e-mail is rather long. However, I want to explain my research study. I also wish to request you complete the survey by clicking on the Survey Monkey link at the end of this email message. Therefore, I want you to be informed about my request for information. Your decision to volunteer or not to volunteer does not in any way impact your continuing participation in the TRIO program. Please read all of the information to help you understand my research study and request for information.

As a part of my doctoral studies, I am completing a research study. The population I wish to study is first-generation college students in the TRiO program (TRiO FGCs) at XXXX College. TRiO FGCs are college students who do not have any parent with a baccalaureate degree. One purpose of my study is to explore characteristics TRiO FGCs identify as characteristics that assist them to pursue their academic goals. The study will also explore how the TRiO program is helpful to TRiO FGCs. To gain this information, I plan to interview a few TRiO FGCs and to conduct a focus discussion group. All TRiO FGCs will be students beginning, at a minimum, their second semester at XXXX College. I am utilizing random sampling to select the students for interviews.

You are receiving this email because I am requesting you to complete the short survey by clicking on the link I have attached to the end of this message. If you have questions whether this is a legitimate request, you may contact your TRiO Coordinator.

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You may also contact the chair of my dissertation committee. Her name is Dr. XXXX, PhD, Full-time Faculty Chair. Dr. XXXX's email address is XXXX, her phone number is XXX-XXX-XXXX, and mail may be sent to her at XXXX .

I would be happy to discuss any questions you may have. You may contact me by replying to this email or calling me. My cell phone number is XXX-XXX-XXXX and home number is XXX-XXX-XXXX. If you call my home number, please remember I have an answering machine and I am not the only person with access to the home number and the answering machine.

Lastly, I appreciate you reading this lengthy and detailed e-mail. I am hopeful you will consider my request to complete the survey. Please complete the survey by (date), you will be asked to answer four questions after you click on this Survey Monkey link XXXXXX

Sincerely,

XXXX

XXXX Doctoral Candidate

Appendix B: Email to Randomly-Selected Interviewees

The purpose of the e-mail is to introduce myself, explain interviews, legitimize request, and finally to request an interview

Dear XXXX,

I would like to introduce myself. My name is XXXX and I am a doctoral student at XXXX. I want to forewarn you that this e-mail is rather long. However, I am requesting an opportunity to meet with you for an interview. Therefore, I want you to be an informed volunteer. Your decision to volunteer or not to volunteer does not in any way impact your continuing participation in the TRIO program. Please read all of the information to help you understand why I need volunteers.

As a part of my doctoral studies, I am completing a research study. The population I wish to study is first-generation college students in the TRiO program (TRiO FGCs) at XXXX College. TRiO FGCs are college students who do not have any parent with a baccalaureate degree. One purpose of my study is to explore characteristics TRiO FGCs identify as characteristics that assist them to pursue their academic goals. The study will also explore how the TRiO program is helpful to TRiO FGCs. To gain this information, I plan to interview a few TRiO FGCs and to conduct a focus discussion group. All TRiO FGCs will be students beginning, at a minimum, their second semester at XXXX College. I am utilizing random sampling to select the students for interviews.

You are receiving this email because you were randomly selected for an interview. I am hoping you will volunteer to complete an interview. However, before you decide, let me give you some additional details. The interview will take approximately one hour. That will give us enough time for introductions, discussing the

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consent form, and receiving your feedback to my questions. You will be assigned a number in the place of your name for confidentiality. I will audiotape the interview and a few days after the interview, I will email a transcript of the interview to you. I will text you to let you know the transcript was sent to your college email address. If you have any questions, you will let me know. After your questions are answered or after two weeks, I will destroy the audiotaped interview. I will use transcripts from all of the students I interview to determine the similarities and differences of the feedback I receive from students. Throughout this process, no names will be used. I will only use student's assigned numbers. Finally, I will compile the information for my research study for my doctoral dissertation.

This e-mail includes so many details, but I want to try to give you a detailed outline of the process and what you are volunteering to do. If you have questions whether this is a legitimate request, you may contact your TRiO Coordinator. You may also contact the chair of my dissertation committee. Her name is Dr. XXXX, PhD, Full-time Faculty Chair. Dr. XXXX's email address is XXXX, her phone number is XXX-XXX-XXXX, and mail may be sent to her at XXXX.

I would be happy to discuss any questions you may have. You may contact me by replying to this email or calling me. My cell phone number is XXX-XXX-XXXX and home number is XXX-XXX-XXXX. If you call my home number, please remember I have an answering machine and I am not the only person with access to the home number and the answering machine.

Lastly, I appreciate you reading this lengthy and detailed e-mail. I am hopeful you will consider my request for an interview. Having an opportunity to meet you and

discuss your TRiO FGCs experience would be a wonderful opportunity for me to hear your feedback. Therefore, I am hoping to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

XXXX

XXXX Doctoral Candidate

Appendix C: Script for Phone Call or Voicemail Message to Potential Interview Participants, Contact Attempt #2

Hello, this is XXXX. I sent you an email on (date email message sent) about the research I am completing on FGCs and the TRiO program. As a part of this research I am conducting interviews that will take approximately one hour. Prior to completing the interview, I will have you complete a consent form for participation. Do you have any questions about the study or interview consent form? (After questions are discussed, ask what days and times would work for an interview. If there is interest in volunteering, and interview appointment will be scheduled.)

Appendix D: Script for Text Message to Follow-Up Email Request for an Interview,

Attempt #3

(Student First Name), have you had a chance to read the email I sent to your college

email? I will call you tomorrow to follow-up, unless you have a chance to contact me

first. Thanks! XXXX

Appendix E: Trio FGCS Interview Protocol

Interview Date and Time-

Interview Location-

Name of Interviewer-

Name of Interviewee-

Demographic Information:

Race/Ethnicity:

    Black White Hispanic Latino/a Mexican Native American Asian

    American Other

    Prefer Not to Report

Gender:

    Male Female Prefer Not to Report

Age Group:

    18-21 22-25 26-30 31+

1. How did you find out about the TRIO program?

2. When did you enroll in the TRIO program?

3. What level of education did your parents complete?

4. What does the TRIO program provide to you?

5. What are the qualities you possess that you believe have helped you to be successful?

6. How does TRIO help you to be successful?

7. Has being a first-generation college student impacted you? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

8. What, if anything, has made you want to abandon your academic goal?

9. Is there anything else you would like to add to this interview?

10. Closing statement: Please remember your responses are confidential and will not be reported as a response tied to your name. You will receive an email of the transcript of your interview for you to approve. You will also receive a text message informing you the email has been sent. Thank you for your participation.

(Eliot & Associates, 2005)

Appendix F: Email Message, Invitation, and Text Messages to Invite Students to Focus Group Meeting

Dear (student's name),

You received an email message on (date message sent) explaining my research study. I would like to invite you to a focus group meeting to get your feedback on your experience as a first-generation (FGCs) in a TRiO program. The meeting will be held on (date) at (time). All attendees will receive a $10 shopping card with the exception of two attendees who will receive a $20 shopping card. If you have any questions, please reply to this email or call me at XXX-XXX-XXXX. You may also contact Dr. XXXX at XXX-XXX-XXXX. Thank You-XXXX

Invitation mailed to student's mailing address two days after the email message was sent.

You are invited to a focus group meeting on XXXX at XXXX p.m. in meeting room XXXX. For more details, please read the email sent to your college email address on XXXX. You may call XXX-XXX-XXXX with questions.

Text Message Sent:

(Student's First Name) Save the Date XXXX! Read your college email subject: Focus Group Input-Please! Sent XXXX-Thanks, XXXX

Text Message Reminder Sent the Morning of the Meeting:

(Student's First Name) Reminder-focus group meeting today at XXXX in meeting room XXXX. Thanks-XXXX

Appendix A-1: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does "fraudulent" mean?

"Fraudulent" work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one's own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate's final work without full and complete documentation.

What is "unauthorized" assistance?

"Unauthorized assistance" refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another's work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

Statement of Original Work

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*

Katherine S. Marble

_____

   Digital Signature

 Katherine S. Marble

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_____

    Name (Typed)

6/9/17
_____

    Date