ABSTRACT

Community College Success Coaching: A Phenomenological Exploration
of an Emerging Profession

Jessica A. Robinson, Ph.D.

Mentor: Perry L. Glanzer, Ph.D.

The purpose of this study was to develop an in-depth understanding of the essence of the emerging success coach profession and to understand how these community college student affairs staff members articulate and analyze the process of developing their students' success. The role of community college success coach only recently emerged and these practitioners' perspectives about what comprises student success in this context remain underexplored. Furthermore, the empirical community college student affairs literature continues to remain "downright skimpy" (Creamer, 1994, p. 9). This study was especially poignant in light of the Community College Completion Agenda's work to increase community college student success rates, which are commonly quantified by increased retention, GPA, and transfer rates.

Most of the current theories about community college student success do not entail a thorough understanding of the roles that community college student affairs professionals fill in helping their students to become successful. In turn, the dominant theories about student success primarily concentrate on promoting student *academic*

success, and do not typically explore what it may mean for students to be successful outside of their educational endeavors. This study aimed to present a robust understanding of what community college student success means from the perspectives of those employed to facilitate this construct: the community college success coaches themselves.

By using an *interpretative phenomenological approach*, this study gathered the experiences of community college success coaches to promote their students' success. I also explored my participants' perspectives about the ultimate goals of success coaching, especially regarding the relative lack of information about the success coaches' potential roles in developing their students' success outside of their academic endeavors. Through interviews, supported by document analysis, I provided a more holistic understanding of the ultimate purposes of this emerging student affairs function within the community college setting. I compared my participants' perspectives to the current philosophies about community colleges success to understand how these theories may need to be modified to account for my participants' lived experiences. I concluded by making specific recommendations as to ways that this practice should be augmented by current theories about community college student success.

Community College Success Coaching: A Phenomenological
Exploration of an Emerging Profession

by

Jessica A. Robinson, B.A., M.S.Ed., M.Div.

A Dissertation

Approved by the Department of Educational Leadership

_____

Jeffrey Petersen, Ph.D., Interim Chairperson

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of

Doctor of Philosophy

Approved by the Dissertation Committee

_____

Perry L. Glanzer, Ph.D.

_____

Nathan F. Alleman, Ph.D.

_____

Rishi R. Sriram, Ph.D.

_____

Kevin D. Dougherty, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School

August 2019

_____

J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

Page bearing signatures is kept on file in the Graduate School.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

PREFACE

The Starfish Story[1]

Once upon a time, there was an old man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach every morning before he began his work. Early one morning, he was walking along the shore after a big storm had passed and found the vast beach littered with starfish as far as the eye could see, stretching in both directions. Off in the distance, the old man noticed a small boy approaching. As the boy walked, he paused every so often and as he grew closer, the man could see that he was occasionally bending down to pick up an object and throw it into the sea. The boy came closer still and the man called out,

"Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?"

The young boy paused, looked up, and replied, "Throwing starfish into the ocean. The tide has washed them up onto the beach and they can't return to the sea by themselves. When the sun gets high, they will die, unless I throw them back into the water."

The old man replied, "But there must be tens of thousands of starfish on this beach. I'm afraid you won't really be able to make much of a difference." The boy bent down, picked up yet another starfish and threw it as far as he could into the ocean. Then he turned, smiled and said, "It made a difference to that one!"

---

[1] Adapted from, Eiseley, L. C. (1979). *The star thrower*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to thank my dissertation committee, Drs. Perry Glanzer, Nathan Alleman, Rishi Sriram, Tony Talbert, and Kevin Dougherty. Each of them spent precious time with me, encouraging me, listening to my ideas, and teaching me the finer nuances of bringing a dissertation research study to fruition. I am especially grateful for their lessons in helping me find my voice and in teaching me how to advocate for myself.

Dr. Perry Glanzer, my dissertation director and mentor, has continually challenged me to learn how to "own" my insights, think more deeply about the *quality* instead of *quantity* of writing I produce, and encouraged me in my growing passion for community college student affairs administration. He also continues to model an encouraging, thoughtful, and caring presence, which has proved immeasurable valuable in this process. Thanks to him for reminding me that success does not have to be measured in terms of accomplishments, but instead comes through the love we have, share, and demonstrate for Jesus Christ and our fellow brothers and sisters. To Rhonda Glanzer, his wife: your kind gifts and generous spirit have shown me to the love and care of our Lord. These living gifts of Christ's love deeply remind me of what it looks like to shepherd others in all aspects of their development.

To the other members of my dissertation committee: Thanks to Dr. Nathan Alleman for pushing me to argue for my thoughts and ideas, and for not EVER letting me settle for scholarship that is less than my best. Your prodding has served to help me grow in my weaker areas and has helped me to develop skills that I did not think were possible

(i.e., long-windedness, or parsimony for lack of a better term). Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for taking the time to turn this study into a product that I'm genuinely proud of. Thanks to Dr. Rishi Sriram for his original support of this idea in his student success class. Your passion and excitement for the—and I quote: "potential for this dissertation study to become *the* book on community college success coaching." Without this inspiring reminder, I do not know if I would have completed this study. Thanks to Dr. Tony Talbert for the multiple meetings about the finer nuances between various methodological traditions, as well as the laughter we shared together. Your presence in these meetings was a constant reminder that even the smallest of gifts, like laughter shared between colleagues, makes a world of difference when completing a challenging task. To Dr. Kevin Dougherty: thanks for the care and concern you showed for me both as a person as well as an emerging scholar. This support proved to be especially meaningful at the most trying and discouraging times throughout this process.

Special thanks go to Alicia Sepulveda, Christopher Pisarik, and Bill Johnson, co-researchers that I delightedly happened-upon, who also want to understand the essence of success coaching in higher education. Your welcoming acceptance and challenge of my thoughts, as well as connections to the coaching community in higher education have proved invaluable to getting this project to its current status. Your partnership in developing an empirical base to ground this emerging profession upon continues to invigorate my excitement for this research topic for years to come.

Thank you, as well, to four other groups of people. First, I would like to thank my family for their undying support for this project. Both my own parents as well as my in-laws constantly prodded me to continue exploring my love for the community college

DEDICATION

To Stefan Robinson, my dearest friend and confidante.

To my mother and father for their unconditional support.

To Dr. Perry Glanzer, for his constant reminder that

success in this life can never be measured by the number of our accomplishments,

but is instead found in the love we demonstrate for our neighbors,

Finally, to Paul Hoffman, for his constant reminders that

our care for others *"makes a difference for each one."*

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Interviewer: "So what do you want your students to get out of meeting with you?"

Participant: "If nothing else, I want them to get a sense that they aren't alone and that at least someone who works at this institution is trying to help them and at least one person is trying to show them that the college cares about them."

—Mia, Community College Success Coach, Tennessee

This qualitative dissertation explores the growing phenomenon of community college success coaching. In particular, it examined a group of 44 participating community college success coaches' views about the nature of student success and the means of facilitating this construct, in order to discover the formal or informal theories they use to guide their work with students. I also compared their individual approaches to the dominant philosophies about community college student success as a way to understand the consistency of their practice with these current outlooks. This comparison was made in an effort to understand how current theories about community college student success inform practices and how these theories may need to be expanded to incorporate the lived experiences of this growing group of non-academic student support professionals.

Therefore, this introductory chapter begins by reviewing the current mission and purpose of community college student affairs work. This exploration functions to provide a context and background for this study. The problem statement, purpose statement, and research questions follow this initial overview and support the rationale

and significance for this study. I continue by presenting a list of the operationalized definitions of key terms I used in this study. This chapter concludes with an outline of the contents of the remainder of this dissertation.

Background to the Study: The Community College Context

Since their origins, community colleges have provided access to postsecondary education for a subset of students who are typically considered non-traditional (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014), on the margins of higher education (Dowd, 2007), and possess characteristics that are "negatively associated with educational attainment" (Burns, 2010, p. 35). These include high percentages of: part-time attenders (62 percent, NCES, 2018); academically-underprepared students who need remedial education (60 percent, NCES, 2018); under-represented minorities (15 percent, NCES, 2018); non-traditionally-aged students (49 percent, NCES, 2018); students who work full-time (40 percent, NCES, 2018); first generation students (36 percent, NCES, 2018); single parents (17 percent, NCES, 2018); students who claim a disability (12 percent, NCES, 2018); second-career students with prior bachelor's degrees (12 percent, NCES, 2018), non-United States citizens (seven percent, NCES, 2018); Pell Grant recipients (six percent, NCES, 2018); and veterans (four percent, NCES, 2018).

Since community colleges enroll almost 40 percent of the current undergraduate population, it is widely accepted that the two-year educational sector presents a feasible option for students who "are not being served by traditional institutions of higher education" (Cohen et al., 2014, p. 35). Additionally, community colleges are guided by a myriad of missions, including: (1) transfer preparation (Baldwin, 2017; Cohen et al., 2014); (2) workforce certification (Ayers, 2017; Sanchez & Lanaan, 1997); (3)

continuing education (Callan, 2017); and (4) community education, especially prominent in developmental education or English language course offerings (Bailey, 2009; Boroch et al., 2010; Dougherty et al., 2017; Guzman, 2014; Hagedorn & Li, 2017; Taylor, 2017). As multi-faceted in their offerings, they tend to function as comprehensive institutions (Dougherty, 1994).

Due to these competing foci, conversation continues to emerge about understanding appropriate outcomes for community college students (Baker et al., 2017; Fong et al., 2017). Since many community college students enroll in this environment without intentions for degree completion, measuring community college student success by typical measures of increased graduation, retention, and completion rates may be inappropriate for this context (Braxton et al., 2013).

Nevertheless, current community college rates indicate that though the two-year educational sector boasts a large percentage of national student enrollment in postsecondary education, composite student persistence rates for this sector continue to dramatically lag behind the rates of four-year university students (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015). Overall, only about 28 percent of community college students persist to degree or certificate completion within a six-year timeframe (ACT, 2010; Radford, Berkner, Wheeless, & Shepherd, 2010). This figure stands in stark contrast to the reality that four-year degree completion rates tend hover around 60 percent from year-to-year (Schreiner, 2015). When considering that nearly seen million students attend community colleges throughout the United States (McFarland, Hussar, de Brey, & Snyder, 2017, Table 303.70), these statistics serve as poignant reminders that almost five million students who begin their educational endeavors at two-year community colleges fail to

reach their original goals. Though students enroll in these institutions for a wide range of reasons, this discrepancy remains troubling.

This phenomenon is captured by the ever-widening achievement gap between community college enrollment rates and the actual outcomes demonstrated by its students (Goldrick-Rab, 2010), especially when measured by graduation, retention, and contrasting attrition rates (Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2005; Cohen et al., 2014). Therefore, over the past two decades, conversation about the mission, purpose, and function of community colleges shifted *from* its original focus on increasing student access and enrollment *to* actively promoting students' completion rates (Brown et al., 2008; Calcagno, Crosta, Bailey, & Jenkins, 2007; Jenkins, 2011; Juszkiewicz, 2014, 2015; Mellow & Heelan, 2014; Mullin, 2010; Seidman, 2005; Wyner, 2014). Although they largely accomplished the former goal of providing increased *access* to postsecondary education (Bailey et al., 2015), community colleges do not demonstrate as robust of graduation, retention, and completion outcomes.

The Community College Completion Agenda

In response to the push for increased completion rates, a myriad of major reform efforts emerged to help community colleges deliver upon the promises they made to the American public (Wyner, 2014). Five of these initiatives bear special mention, which, when grouped together, comprise the "Community College Completion Agenda." First, in 2004, the Lumina Foundation for Education sponsored the Achieving the Dream (ATD) initiative, which called for the gathering of a body of evidence-based practices that increase community college students' persistence rates (Bailey et al., 2015; McLenney, 2013; Rutschow, et al., 2011). Within this initiative, special attention was

paid to practices outside of the classroom that promote students' credential completion. Interestingly, in a recent survey administered by the Achieving the Dream foundation (2018), graduates from community colleges that are part of this network reported higher measures of well-being and explained that they were more likely to feel supported by campus professionals than their national counterparts.

Second, four years later, in 2008, the Gates Foundation introduced its Postsecondary Success program, which aimed at promoting academic persistence among traditionally-aged, lower-socioeconomic college students (Mullin, 2011). Due to the type of students that were the focus of this initiative, many of these programs were located at two-year community colleges.

Third, five years after the launching of the Achieving the Dream initiative, former president Barack Obama (2009) launched his American Graduation Initiative (AGI), and declared his goal of graduating five million more Americans from community colleges by 2020. This initiative generated increased momentum for community college leaders to focus on their individual campuses' curricular and co-curricular efforts to meet the goals of this mandate (Bailey et al., 2015).

Fourth, a few months after Obama's announcement, the Lumina Foundation mirrored this same vision, and publicized its "Goal 2025." This document declared this Foundation's commitment to increase the total percentage of postsecondary degree-holders in all United States' educational sectors to 60 percent (Lumina, 2017, "Our Goal," https:// www.luminafoundation.org/lumina-goal). The Lumina Foundation also provided financial backing for the Community College Research Center (CCRC), an organization that gathers empirical evidence about the effectiveness of these reforms

(Bailey et al., 2015). The overarching goal of the Community College Research Center is to create increasingly operative and useful policies for the two-year educational sector (Bailey et al., 2015). As a result of the work of this organization, several studies emerged in the past ten years that explore co-curricular campus practices aimed at increasing student completion, retention, and graduation rates (Karp, 2011, 2016; Karp & Bork, 2012; Karp, O'Gara, & Hughes, 2008).

Finally, an effort Bailey at al. (2015) termed the "Guided Pathways Movement" has also recently emerged, which is guided by the assertion that community college students will complete their degrees in a shorter amount of time if they are guided by an academic plan, which should be developed early on in their community college careers. According to Bailey et al. (2015), this plan must be supported by an increasing amount of guidance by non-academic student support services professionals than what is typically provided in this setting. Bailey et al. (2015) contend that the academic guidance provided by these co-curricular staff members function as the ultimate difference-maker in community college students' abilities to persist to eventual certificate or degree completion (p. 1).

In light of the current attention received as a result of these movements, community colleges continue to develop new and innovative approaches to supporting their students' efforts towards degree or certificate completion. Despite the best intentions of their administrators, however, many community college students may continue to find these complex environments as mimicking "shapeless rivers" (Scott-Clayton, 2011b, p. 1), and busy cafeterias, and may find themselves lost among a sea of options (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 15). Both metaphors depict community colleges as

complicated, confusing, and isolating organizations that are difficult to navigate, leaving participants to traverse these settings without much additional assistance (Venezia, Bracco, & Nodine, 2010). Students often struggle in these environments, and may end up "making poor decisions about which programs to enter, what courses to take, and when to seek help when lost" (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 1).

Unfortunately, due to the organizational complexity of the community college setting paired with a lack of intentional, administrative support, many students may remove themselves from this environment entirely, therefore abruptly halting their educational progress (Bailey et al., 2015). From the perspective of the Community College Completion Agenda, attrition is unacceptable, and student affairs practitioners must due their due diligence outside the classroom to promote and increase their students' successful completion and graduation (Gill, 2016a).

Community College Student Affairs Practice

Despite the current emphasis on promoting student success within community college student affairs departments, "there has never been a consistent agreement in the literature about the exact mission of these divisions" (Creamer, 1994, p. 9). Additionally, Creamer's (1994) statement remains true when considering the current academic scholarship on this subject: "the literature on this subject remains downright skimpy" (p. 9). Prior to 1930, community college student affairs professionals were viewed as those who kept institutional order and provided career guidance for their students (Cohen et al., 2014; McAlmon, 1931). Overall, this guidance did not focus on broader issues of facilitating students' identity development or increasing their flourishing and well-being, but instead remained focused on providing students with important information about the

process of obtaining a future occupation (Creamer, 1994). The earliest community college student affairs professionals also functioned as key administrative assets in handling transfer paperwork (Hanson, 2017), primarily existing as managers with little room for role expansion (Hanson, 2017).

A more comprehensive understanding of these professionals' roles, however, started to emerge at this same time. The supporters of this new vision maintained that community college personnel work must not only function as a service, but must also consider their students' personal development. Calling for a larger emphasis than academic persistence or occupational certification (Cowley, 1935, p. 441), Humphreys (1937) challenged community college student affairs practitioners to create supportive environments outside the classroom that explicitly fostered their students' holistic formation, which included their students' moral, spiritual, psychological, and professional development (Creamer, 1994). This more comprehensive vision carried the community college student affairs profession forward and promoted the expansion of various roles within these divisions, each tasked with managing a different facet of their students' development (Brumbaugh, 1950; Lounsbury, 1946).

This continuing expansion continued into the 1960s and culminated in the Carnegie Corporation's (1967) function of the "Project for Appraisal and Development of Junior College Student Personnel Programs." Chaired by McConnell (1967), this group of scholars classified the 24 most essential functions of community college student services departments into seven major categories (Collins, 1967). This document concluded with a proposal for community colleges to hire trained professionals to provide all of the necessary non-academic support services to their students, aimed at helping

them navigate anything especially "deep-seated" or "extremely personal" (McConnell, 1967, p. 12).

A few years after this original document was produced, O'Banion, Thurston, and Gulden (1972) promoted a student services model guided by human development theory, echoing these desires for a more expansive focus within community college student affairs work. Despite the emergence of this model, little evidence of its use materialized in the actual practices of community college student affairs departments. In 1987, the League for Innovation in the Community college issued a secondary statement that clarified that the developmental, student-centered mission should guide community college student services departments. Echoing this statement ten years after its original publication, O'Banion (1997) noted that community college student affairs professionals continue to find themselves caught between these two visions (i.e., the holistic v. utilitarian visions guiding their work). Reflections of this tension continue to appear in the most recent conversations about the proper focus of community college student affairs work (Knight, 2014; Ozaki & Hornak, 2014; Tull et al., 2015).

Current Focus of Community College Student Affairs Practice: Student Success

Though community college student affairs departments have historically focused on promoting student welfare (Harbour, 2015), the debate over the exact mission and ideal focus of community college student services carries on, with two different educational philosophies as especially prevalent (Cohen et al., 2014). One perspective argues that due to the utilitarian, mass-education nature of the two-year college, student services departments cannot and should not take a great deal of responsibility for fostering the additional, non-academic and non-economic success of their students

(Levin, 2015). The other viewpoint adopts a vision of educating the whole student and holds to the belief that *the* fundamental part of the purpose of community college student services includes their developmental responsibility, which must be reflected as demonstrations of care for each part of their students' well-being, academic and non-academic alike (Creamer, 1994; Harbour, 2017; Monroe, 1972).

Supporters of the more holistic student development mission maintain that community college student affairs professionals do not solely provide services to assist their students in navigating the bureaucracy of this system (Cohen et al., 2014), but instead, "focus on developing the 'whole student,' and attend to the developmental needs in order to help these students be academically successful" (Helfgot & Culp, 1995, p. 17). These scholars assert that the community college has long been interested in promoting the corporate welfare of its students (Harbour, 2015), which is evidenced by the continual creation of co-curricular programs and services to take care of its students as they are enrolled in this educational sector (Cohen et al., 2014; Tull et al., 2015). More recently, Lichtmann (2010) noted that since community college students often appear at these institutions at times of liminality or impasse, community college student affairs professionals must provide a holistic system of academic, social, moral, and financial supports to sustain these students' during these seasons of their lives. It has become increasingly important for community college student services professionals to support their students' continued success inside as well as outside of the classroom, and therefore, as a result of this support, bolster the success of these departments (Karp, 2011, 2016; Williams, 2002).

Despite this essential aspect of community college student services departments, critics content that a bottom-line, business-oriented culture continually dominates the ethos of these institutions (Levin, 2015; Tull et al., 2015). From this perspective, students are often viewed as consumers of an educational product and are not seen as people whose ultimate success needs to be developed in a more holistic manner (Levin, 2015). This focus has emerged largely due to declining revenues for community colleges, and supporters of this Neoliberal movement, continue to advocate for a focus on narrower economic priorities (e.g., credentialing and occupational certification), than promoting the broader aims of student learning and development (Holtzer & Baum, 2017).

Common Community College Student Success Outcomes

According to the Community College Completion Agenda, community college student success outcomes should be measured by increased degree completion, retention rates, or student grade point averages (Bailey et al., 2015). Despite this clarity, these measures may not be appropriate for the community college population. In fact, as was elucidated by the previous sections, community college students attend their institutions for a myriad of reasons, including those that directly compete with the stated goals of the Community College Completion Agenda (Gill, 2016a). The current conversation about community college student success typically focuses on reducing student attrition, and does not leave room to explore the full reality of what it could mean for a community college student to be successful in her academics, as well as in areas outside of her educational endeavors (Kinzie, 2012). Since community college students' goals during their time at their respective two-year institutions prove to be increasingly diverse, and

may involve other goals than degree completion, the basic definition of student success as degree completion does not suffice for this student population in this sector (Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinback, 2006).

Additionally, community college students' educational goals tend to be much more diverse than those of their four-year counterparts (Cohen et al., 2014). In addition to earning their associate's degrees and transferring to a four-year institution (Cejda & Kaylor, 2001; Fong, 2017; Hoachlander, Sikora, & Horn, 2003; Monaghan & Attewell, 2015), these students' goals may also include: obtaining job-related skills (CCSSE, 2005; Jepsen, Troske, & Coomes, 2014); seeking personal enrichment (Dy, 2015; Xu & Ran, 2015); gaining the necessary knowledge to change careers (Bailey et al., 2015); fulfilling general education requirements prior to transfer (Santos-Lanaan, 2000); or completing certificate programs (Juszkiewicz, 2015).

With this diversity in mind, it becomes readily apparent that the current, normative definition of student success as degree completion fails to capture a concrete description of the myriad of outcomes that could comprise success for the community college student population (Lax, 2012). This becomes especially provocative when considering that many students do not enroll in their local community colleges with the intention of completing a credential. Indeed, it is becoming increasingly common within community college student success literature to continue to investigate the diverse goals of this population (Morest, 2013).

Therefore, it is a mistake to assume that there is one consistent, mutually-agreed upon definition of community college student success. In fact, we should not be surprised to understand that community college student success remains a multi-faceted

concept, informed by a multitude of academic disciplines, including: sociology (Hirschy et al., 2011), developmental psychology (Habley et al., 2012), economics (Perna & Thomas, 2008), and organizational theory (Kuh et al., 2006). Furthermore, any exploration of student success must consider the demands of the current society, the type of colleges and universities under examination, as well as the students served by these institutions (Perna & Thomas, 2008). Since community colleges work to increase the public good by providing education to nearly seven million undergraduates each year (NCES, 2018), merely measuring student success by accumulated credit hours, increased grade point averages, and graduation rates does not suffice (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). Therefore, garnering an expanded understanding of student success that includes the exploration of possible, additional outcomes for the community college student population becomes necessary (Harbour, 2015; Mullin, 2012).

Emphases in Community College Student Success Literature

Current empirical research that explores contributing factors to community college student success typically emphasizes one of three elements: (1) individual students' characteristics and accompanying behaviors that may help or hinder their academic success (Fong et al., 2017; Martin, Galentino, & Townsend, 2014; Weis, 2018); (2) institutional practices aimed at increasing typical measures of academic success (Calcagno et al., 2007; Hatch & Bohlig, 2016; Jenkins, 2007; Price & Tovar, 2014); and (3) positive interactions between students and their institutional environments, dominated by the foundational concepts of *involvement* (Astin, 1993), *integration* (Tinto, 1987, 1988); *engagement* (Kuh et al., 2005), and *validation* (Rendón, 2006).

Emphasis #1: Individual Student Success. The first category of studies, focusing on individual student success, primarily explore how students' demographic characteristics assist or hinder their academic achievements in their postsecondary settings (Weis, 2018). These studies also examine how community college students' psychological attitudes and behaviors affect their persistence to educational goal attainment (Cohen et al., 2014; Fong et al., 2017; Habley et al., 2012; Morest, 2013). In this body of literature, the outcomes of student persistence (Fong et al., 2017); individual academic achievement (Fong et al., 2017); and learning dominate the focus of current empirical studies (Harbour, 2015; Hanson, 2017). Studies exploring community college student thriving and flourishing are much less common (Dy, 2017).

Overall, these studies do not typically focus on the role that community college student affairs professionals play in helping their students to achieve their stated outcomes. In fact, the preponderance of community college student success literature focuses on the student and his or her individual characteristics, rather than on gathering the important perspectives of those employed by these community colleges about how their roles assist their students in their continued development.

Emphasis #2: Institutional Success for Community Colleges. The second category of studies that concern student success primarily emphasize on ways to promote institutional effectiveness by increasing students' graduation and completion rates (Bailey et al., 2014; Harbour, 2015; Juszkiewicz, 2015; Price & Tovar, 2014; Sutter & Paulson, 2017), transfer rates (D'Amico et al., 2014; Jenkins & Fink, 2016; Monaghan & Attewell, 2015), and retention rates (Holtzer & Baum, 2017; Windham et al., 2014). Within these studies, success is typically defined in terms of high enrollment rates,

numerous academic program and co-curricular offerings, and large amounts of institutional resources allocated toward the promotion of these outcomes (Morest, 2013). The body of empirical literature that focuses on co-curricular services tends to provide descriptions of program offerings (Crisp & Taggart, 2013), empirical analyses of students' uses of these services (Hatch, 2017; Hatch, Mardock-Uman, & Nelson, 2017), and students' perspectives about their experiences with using these services (O'Gara, Karp, & Hughes, 2009). Once again, this part of the literature base has almost completely overlooked the perspectives of those employed to administrate these services, and leaves the academic community without a deep of an understanding of the goals and purposes of these programs. This becomes especially poignant when noting the lack of empirical research that explores the specific meaning or essence of success that these services aim to foster in the students who use them.

Emphasis #3: Student Success as the Positive Relationship Between Student and Community College. The final category of studies primarily emphasize the various ways students interact with their institutional environments and prioritize understanding exactly how these interactions assist or hinder students' realizations of their educational goals (Bean, 1983; Habley et al., 2012; Harnell & Holcroft, 2012; Morest, 2013; Pike & Kuh, 2005a; Strange & Banning, 2001; Tinto & Pusser, 2006). This group of studies includes a recent, explicit focus on harnessing funds to support institutional resources and programs that help students to: (1) feel supported in their progress toward academic goal completion (Hatch & Bohlig, 2016; Karp, 2016); (2) grow in their relationships with faculty (Price & Tovar, 2014; Tovar, 2015); and (3) become increasingly involved in co-curricular programs (Waiwaiole, Bohlig, & Massey, 2016). These studies also explore

students' perspectives on their involvement (Briggs, 2016; Chaves, 2006; Miller, Pope, & Steinman, 2005), engagement (Hatch, 2017; Schuetz, 2008; Schuetz & Schuetz, 2005), and integration into the two-year college environment (D'Amico et al., 2013; Fike & Fike, 2008; Karp, Hughes, & O'Gara, 2010). Once again, these studies do not include the perspectives of student affairs professionals who are tasked with developing their students' success. The current body of empirical literature has not yet examined whether community college student affairs professionals perceive that they aim to increase student engagement, involvement, or integration into the fabric of their institutions, or if they use different frameworks to guide their practices.

Common Elements within Each Framework. Overall, empirical research reveals that interaction between students and "institutional agents" (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p. 1) is important for increasing retention rates (Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2015; Moschetti & Hudley, 2015; Schreiner et al., 2011). In their study on students' who are at higher risk of attrition perceptions of the key supports to their persistence in the academic environment, Schreiner et al. (2011) found that students mentioned that the respect, care, and attention campus representatives paid to them was the most motivating factor in their continued enrollment at their institutions. The findings from this study underscore the reality that faculty and staff members have a crucial role in helping this group of students to believe that they are valuable members of their institutions. Through these active demonstrations of support, these institutional agents help students gain the necessary confidence to continue persisting towards their goals.

Furthermore, common to all three of these categories of studies is the finding that a relationship with a faculty member is one of, if not, the key contributor to community

16

college students' success. This statement becomes especially potent for underrepresented

or nontraditional students, which are both categories of students who typically make up a

large portion of the community college student body (Kim & Sax, 2009; Levin et al.,

2017; Price & Tovar, 2014; Rendón, 2006; Schreiner et al., 2012; Zell, 2009). This type

of support may be especially helpful for students in the community college setting due to

the limited amount of time they spend on campus (Braxton et al., 2013). This form of

support may also function in practice as a way to shift the dominant emphasis on

academic success in this sector to a broader, more holistic understanding of student

success (Morest, 2013).

Missing Element within Each Framework. Although empirical research has

demonstrated the importance of a personal relationship with faculty members for

promoting students' success (Kim & Sax, 2007), significantly less information exists

about how non-academic community college student services professionals foster student

success (Decker, 2013), especially for non-traditional students who are at higher risk of

attrition (Bensimon, 2007; Kuh et al., 2006; Robinson, 2015; Schreiner et al., 2011).

This lack of empirical research remains especially ironic for two reasons: first, research

has demonstrated that one-on-one interactions with campus representatives is a key factor

for promoting students' success (Pascarella, 1980; Schreiner et al., 2012; Stanton-Salazar,

2011); and second, non-academic student support professionals are some of the

institutional agents that students most commonly interact with during their time at their

respective community colleges (Bensimon, 2007; Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

This gap in the literature becomes especially poignant when considering that

community colleges in the United States employ 61,522 full-time student and academic

affairs administrators (NCES, 2017, Table 314.30). These vital staff members manage their institutions' daily functioning by providing a vast amount of support for their students (Tull et al., 2015). Levin and Kater (2012) explain that due to their "presence, student affairs staff are becoming increasingly likely to become the face of their institutions: they are the staff members that students most rely on for both academic as well as non-academic support" (p. 49). Though community college student affairs professionals were once considered "supplemental" (Cohen et al., 2014, p. 222), they now play an extremely integral role in community college students' experiences at their institutions (Tull et al., 2015). This reality becomes especially important when understanding that success in community college setting does not solely depend on students' academic efforts (Karp, 2016), but also on the successful enactment on other, important non-academic skills (i.e., time management, budgeting, etc., Karp & Bok, [2012]).

Overall, the current empirical literature lacks a robust exploration of community college student affairs professionals' perspectives about what success means and looks like for community college students. We also do not have a robust understanding of their perspectives about their role in the facilitation of their students' success. A few studies have gathered community college faculty members' points of view on their roles in promoting their students' success and have generally found agreement in the necessary emphasis on increasing their students' academic success through developmental teaching methods and mentorship opportunities outside of the classroom (Babb, 2012; Barnett, 2011; Hagedorn, Perrakis, & Maxwell, 2007; Levin et al., 2017; Tovar, 2015; Zell, 2009). Nevertheless, similar, empirical research is missing that explores community

18

college student affairs professionals' perspectives about their roles in the development of their students' success (Karp, 2016). Most of the existing studies on community college student affairs practices focus on program descriptions (Crisp & Taggart, 2013), or on quantifying students' uses of these services (Hatch & Garcia, 2016; Saenz et al., 2011).

This gap in the current scholarship becomes especially difficult when understanding that community college student affairs professionals tend to use theories about student success created from samples of traditional, four-year university students to guide their work (Gillet-Karam, 2016). These theories may not be of much assistance for working in the community college context due to the apparent differences between the two-year and four-year educational sectors and their students (Ozaki & Harnack, 2014). this "borrowing" of theoretical perspectives may lead to confusion about the desired goals and outcomes for the students these support systems are designed to service. Bensimon (2007) explained, "if we, as scholars of higher education, wish to produce knowledge to improve student success, we cannot ignore the reality that practitioners play a significant role in this process" (p. 445). Therefore, increasing current empirical understanding about facilitating their students' success will provide the academic community with a more realistic understanding of the telos, ethos, and purpose of their work. In turn, this more nuanced understanding will help both scholars and practitioners gain a more holistic and comprehensive picture of the needs of the community college student population, as well as the type of support these students require when pursuing their academic goals.

In light of the growing acknowledgement of the importance of non-academic student support, specific calls are being made to re-envision the specific purposes of

individual practices within community college student services divisions (Bailey et al., 2015; Gillet-Karam, 2016; Karp, 2016). Community college student affairs professionals are beginning to develop a myriad of programs to help students develop the non-academic skills necessary to achieve their intended goals (Karp 2016). Five co-curricular practices continue to emerge as especially prominent and relevant, which include (Hatch, Mardock-Uman, & Nelson, 2017): (1) mandatory academic advising (Donaldson, McKinney, Lee, & Pino, 2016; Garing, 1993; Karp, 2011, 2016; O'Banion, 2011; Varney, 2007); (2) compulsory student-led new student orientation (Derby & Smith, 2004; Fike & Fike, 2008; Sandoval-Lucero, Antony, & Hepworth, 2017); (3) required first-semester student success courses (Cho & Karp, 2013; Hatch & Bohlig, 2016; Roark, 2013); (4) in-house mental health counseling services (Gallagher, 2015; Katz & Davidson, 2014; Reetz, Krylowicz, & Mistler, 2015); and (5) enhanced supplemental instruction (Crisp & Taggart, 2013).

A new role, at least by title, continues to emerge in community college student affairs divisions: the student success coach. Although this new, non-academic student support service is purportedly distinct from other, similar services on community college campuses, this role has received minimal empirical attention when compared to the previously-mentioned five initiatives. Though scant, studies continue to emerge that differentiate this role from other, one-on-one support roles, including mental health counseling, academic advising, and tutoring (Robinson, 2015; Sepulveda, 2016; Strange, 2015). In her dissertation, Robinson (2015) offered the following definition of college academic/success coaching:

> Academic/success coaching is the individualized practice of asking reflective, motivation-based questions, providing opportunities for formal self-assessment, sharing effective strategies, and co-creating a tangible academic plan. The coaching process offers students an opportunity to identify their strengths, actively practice new skills, and effectively navigate appropriate resources. This process ultimately results in skill development, performance improvement, and increased persistence. (p. 126)

This empirically-generated definition marked a turning point in the literature on coaching in higher education. It remains the first, empirical attempt to offer an answer to the question, "what is academic/success coaching?", as a distinct practice from academic advising, mental health counseling, and tutoring. Robinson's (2015) primary and most distinctive contribution is, of course, the generation of this definition from first-hand perspectives of practicing academic/success coaches.

Statement of the Problem

The basic philosophy supporting the academic/success coaching profession is as follows: as non-academic student support professionals, academic/success coaches promote student success by providing their students with high-quality services that meet the assorted needs of an increasingly diverse student population (Barnhart & LeMaster, 2013; Clough & Barnes, 2016; Marks, 2015; Robinson, 2015; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010). Overall, only four empirical studies exist that examine in-house academic/success coaching programs at colleges and universities in the United States (Barnhart & LeMaster, 2013; Robinson, 2015; Sepulveda, 2016; Strange, 2015). Most of the available, published literature on academic/success coaching in higher education is either contained in non-empirical, practitioner-opinion pieces (Clough & Barnes, 2016; Dalton & Crosby, 2014; Keen, 2014; Marks, 2015), or describes a coaching program at a single institution (e.g., Neuhauser & Weber, 2011). Robinson's (2015) dissertation study stands

as one of the only pieces of available, empirical, academic scholarship that generated a description of this practice across multiple institutions, drawn from the perspectives of the coaches themselves.

Despite these initial explorations, the four studies mentioned previously have either solely focused on academic/success coaching at four-year universities (Barnhart & LeMaster, 2013; Sepulveda, 2016), or have combined all institutional types in the same sample, and therefore, did not isolate the community college as a separate context (Robinson, 2015). In fact, only 14 percent of Robinson's (2015) participants were employed by community colleges. She mentions that her study's findings may be skewed in favor of the four-year university setting.

This conglomeration of institutional types remains problematic when understanding that community college students may name very different goals for their educational pursuits than their four-year counterparts (Sanchez & Lanaan, 1997), and may require a more intrusive type of support due to their demographic characteristics (Karp, 2011, 2016). Furthermore, the majority of Robinson's (2015) participants identified themselves as directors of coaching programs: responses from coaches made up the smallest portion of her sample. Due to their departmental roles and heightened work with individual students, coaches may hold different perspectives than the majority of Robinson's (2015) participants.

Furthermore, due to the needs of their student populations, community college success coaches may draw upon different theories to guide their work. This gap in the current literature becomes especially concerning when considering that consensus has never been reached about the explicit purpose of community college student affairs

divisions (Cohen et al., 2014; Culp & Helfgot, 1998; Elsner & Ames, 1998; Matson & Deegan, 1985). It remains to be seen whether community college success coaches' experiences of working with students align with current theories about academic/success coaching (Robinson, 2015; Sepulveda, 2016), or if they use different models to guide their work.

The single available study that has explored success coaching in the community college restricted its evaluation to rural community colleges in the state of Virginia and primarily provided descriptions of different institutional practices in response to a state-mandated initiative (Strange, 2015). In essence, Strange's (2015) was limited to community colleges in one state and did not explore the myriad of success coaches' experiences in other states. She also primarily assumed an *academic coach* framework and did not tease out any potential nuances contained in the *success coaching* role.

Finally, Strange's (2015) study used the coaching program as its unit of analysis and focused on the services provided by these professionals. She did not provide an in-depth understanding of these practitioners' understandings of the nature and ultimate telos of student success. She also did not explore the various theories her participants used to guide their practices. This study was different than hers in two major ways: first, I included additional community college success coaches outside the state of Virginia; and second, instead of merely providing another description of this service (i.e., similar to Robinson's [2015] study), I provided a robust exploration of the theories and associated ideals and concepts my participants used to guide their conceptualizations of the ultimate purpose of this service in the two-year community college setting.

Similarly, two of the other three empirical studies also continue to merge the terms *academic coach* and *success coach*, without first exploring whether any difference in the ultimate aims and goals of these two positions exists (Robinson, 2015; Sepulveda, 2016). Though slim, the current body of literature on academic/success coaching focuses primarily on the *academic* support provided by these coaches, especially in its continual presentation of the specific strategies coaches use to promote their students' persistence to degree completion (Barnhart & LeMaster, 2013; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010). Barnhart and LeMaster (2013) explored various emphases between *academic coaching*, *success coaching*, and *academic-success hybrid coaching* programs, they limited their sample to five research universities and did not include community colleges in their study. In turn, a missing piece of the empirical literature includes a more comprehensive exploration of community college success coaches' efforts to develop their students more holistically.

Therefore, my study functioned as a response to a desire to understand if participating community college success coaches solely aimed to support their students' success in an academic manner, or if they also sought to support their students in other areas of their lives, outside of their educational endeavors. If the latter is the case, then this emerging service primarily mimics the dominant academic focus of these four empirical studies. If the former is the case, then success coaching in the community college setting may be a response to original heartbeat of community college student affairs departments in their efforts to care for any student concerns that are "deep-seated or extremely personal" (McConnell, 1967, p. 12). Since success means many different things to many different community college students and those who work with them

(Ender, Chand, & Thornton, 1995; Pizzolato, Olson, & Monje-Paulson, 2017; Weis, 2018), and since this concept continues to evolve as multi-faceted (Kuh, 2007), exploring and understanding the formal and informal theories that community college success coaches use to promote their students' success becomes key to understanding the ultimate purposes and ends of this service. Overall, we do not understand exactly how those in this role make sense of what it means and looks like for a community college student to be successful. Furthermore, although the establishment of coaching programs at community colleges may be a response to the Community College Completion Agenda, assuming that promoting degree or certificate completion consumes the focus of these professionals' roles limits our understanding to only one of the many focuses contained within this emerging role.

Although Robinson's (2015) study forms a conceptual foundation off of which I situated my study, I sought to fill the following gap with this dissertation: empirical studies do not yet exist that provide a robust exploration of community college success coaches' experiences with promoting their students' success. This remains especially problematic when understanding that these are the emerging non-academic student support professionals who are tasked with facilitating their students' success. Without this in-depth exploration, the scholarly community is left without a robust understanding of the ends, means, or content of this emerging non-academic student support service within the two-year educational sector. Please see appendix A and the conclusion of this dissertation study for my personal perspective as to the ideal function of community college success coaching.

Research Questions

This statement led to the initial two research questions that guide this phenomenological inquiry, which included:

(1) What does it mean to participants to be a success coach in the community college setting?

(2) According to this group of participants, what does it mean and look like for a community college student to be successful?

Like Robinson's (2015) dissertation, this study also drew directly from the perspectives of participating success coaches to answer these questions. Unlike Robinson's (2015) study, however, I drew solely from the perspectives of success coaches employed at two-year *community colleges*. I focused on gathering multiple participants' perspectives as to what it means to be a success coach in this setting to generate a more complex understanding of the ends and purposes of this emerging role. Since community colleges have separated the success coaching role from other, quite similar non-academic student support services (i.e., academic advising, mental health counseling, tutoring, etc.), it was important to understand what, if anything, makes this role particularly unique. This was important in light of my desire to understand if the community college context makes this role unique in comparison to what we currently understand about academic/success coaching in the four-year university setting.

Once I generated answers to these initial two questions, in my analysis process, I explored two additional questions, which included:

(3) What formal or informal theories about student success did these participating success coaches use to guide their coaching practices?

(4) In what ways did their approaches compare to and differ from the dominant philosophies and/or theories about community college student success?

Although Robinson's (2015) participants named eight different categories of theories they used to guide their work, she did not provide specific delineations as to which participants used which theories. In other words, she did not reveal the dynamics of the institutional contexts in which these professionals worked. Therefore, it was especially important to understand my participants' responses to these two questions in light of the specific context of this study (i.e., community colleges).

Since a part of the qualitative paradigm includes a comparison to pre-existing theories to make sense of participants' lived experiences with a given phenomenon (i.e., student success), in my discussion chapter, I also compared my participants use of formal or informal theories in their practices to the dominant theories about community college student success. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) support this approach when they explain, "second-tier research questions may be used to explore theory-driven research questions… but these can only be gotten at after the first stage of more descriptive research takes place" (p. 48). The research questions guiding this study were intentionally designed to support this essential piece of a phenomenological study: my first two questions provided a description of participants' interpretations of the outcomes of community college success coaching, and my second two questions explored the informal and formal theories they stated as useful for guiding their work.

The goal of these final two questions was the comparison between the relevant theories about community college student success to the theories that community college success coaches use to guide their practices, and vice versa. I wanted to understand how each side of the conversation (i.e., theory) influences the other (i.e., practice). This aim became especially apparent when understanding that the propensity of student success

research focuses solely on the students and typically excludes significant perspectives of faculty and staff who are employed to assist them in developing this construct (Babb, 2012). The voices of community college practitioners who exist outside of the classroom to promote their students' success are missing from current scholarship (Babb, 2012; Bensimon, 2007).

Although it may be natural and even expected that the majority of community college student success literature focuses on students' perspectives, it was of utmost importance for this study to consider that students are not the only individuals responsible for their success: other staff, faculty, and personnel all work together to promote these outcomes. Without gaining a full understanding of the lived experiences of these non-academic student support professionals, a complete picture of this vital piece of the community college student success puzzle does not yet exist (Kuh, 2007).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to develop an in-depth understanding of community college success coaches' perceptions of what it means to be success coaches in the community college setting, and then to more fully explore what these practitioners' thought it meant and looked like for their students to be successful. The central phenomenon under investigation was community college student success, and the unit of analysis was the participating success coaches' experiences with its facilitation. To achieve these purposes, I explored my participants' descriptions of their lived experiences with their roles to discover the formal and/or informal theories they use in their success coaching practices. By comparing the various ways my participants' experiences aligned with or departed from current theories about community college

student success, I gathered a more robust understanding of the phenomenon of student success from the perspectives of these community college student affairs professionals, which emerged as a point of view that was typically omitted from this body of literature.

The current body of empirical research about community college student affairs work tends to focus on providing descriptions of different types of non-academic student support programs (Crisp & Taggart, 2013; Hatch, 2016; Hatch & Bohlig, 2016; Karp, 2016), students' uses of these services (Hatch, 2012, 2017; Hatch & Garcia, 2017; Saenz et al., 2011), and, to a lesser extent, qualitative explorations of community college students' perspectives about their experiences with these programs (O'Gara, Karp, & Hughes, 2009). Despite these strands of literature, the perspectives of those who administrate these programs remain continually overlooked. Current empirical studies have not provided a robust understanding of community college student affairs' professionals perspectives on their purpose of their roles—studies in this vein tend to offer descriptions of the services offered by these departments.

Therefore, understanding community college success coaches' lived experiences with the facilitation of their students' success also becomes necessary when considering the reality that different institutional agents (i.e., faculty, administrators, and student affairs professionals alike), may hold competing visions of the ultimate essence and meaning of student success (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). As was evaluated in my literature review, certain theories focus on increasing student's academic success (Morest, 2013), and other theories focus on a more holistic outcome, such as flourishing and thriving (Schreiner et al., 2011). Still, other theories focus on institutional success (Habley et al., 2012, p. 35), and other studies focus on increasing students' positive interactions with

their institutions (i.e., Rendón, 2006). Since the terms "coach" and "student success" are buzzwords in community college student affairs language (Gillet-Karam, 2016; Harrell & Holcroft, 2012; Karp, 2016; Levin, 2015; Morest, 2013), this study furthered the current empirical understanding of this concept by gathering the lived experiences of those tasked with facilitating this outcome: the community college success coaches themselves.

After I completed this first, more descriptive task, I then explored the different ways that community college success coaches made sense of what it meant and looked like for community college student to be successful to understand my participants' perspectives about the essence and ultimate heartbeat of this non-academic student support service in this context. I used Robinson's (2015) definition of academic/success coaching as a base of comparison in order to understand what, if anything, might be unique about the ways that community college success coaches interpret this process, especially when considering the unique needs of the community college student population (Karp, 2011, 2016). To summarize, the first two research questions explored both community college success coaches' interpretations of the meanings of *student success* as well as the way they develop this construct in their students. By understanding this second question, I furthered our understanding of the unique function of success coaching in the two-year educational context.

The role of theory in student affairs practices is a widely-debated topic, and is typically polarized by two sets of opinions: (1) critical perspectives that bemoan the lack of *explicit* theory that guides this work, and assert that this absence leads to problematic practice (Babb, 2012; Evans & Guido, 2012; Reason & Kimball, 2012); and (2) supportive perspectives that encourage practitioners to use and primarily rely upon

informal theories to guide their work, which typically include personal experiences, beliefs, assumptions, and deeply-held values (Bensimon, 2007; Love, 2012). Reason and Kimball's (2012) model proves helpful in this discussion in that it incorporates both *formal theories* as well as *informal theories*, and pays special attention to the *institutional contexts* in which these professionals work to gain a fuller understanding of the way these professionals use *theory*, as well as associated ideas and concepts, to guide their professional *practices*.

Although I used Robinson's (2015) findings as a base of comparison for my initial two research questions, I created additional space to explore the other possible theories that community success coaches use to guide their practice. This became especially important when considering that community college student affairs professionals enter this profession from a multitude of different backgrounds, including social work, counseling, higher education, teaching, and business administration (Ozaki & Harnack, 2014).

Finally, this study explored the ways that the success coaching profession is currently informed by, or needs to be augmented by, the dominant, formal theories about community college student success. By engaging in this comparative process, this study explored the ways that current theories about student success need to be augmented by success coaches' lived experiences with their students, as well as the ways that incorporating formal theory into these coaches' work could assist in guiding the future direction of this emerging profession.

Significance of Study

It was imperative to explore how co-curricular practice regarding the ends of and means to community college student success compares to the current theories about this phenomenon. This exploration was necessary since current theories about promoting community college student success tend to exclude practitioners' lived experiences with this construct. Therefore, it was important to discover the informal or formal theories these professionals relied upon to guide their practices. Community college success coaches' perspectives about how they facilitate their students' success revealed necessary additions to the body of widely-accepted student success theories. In turn, these theories revealed necessary expansions to this practice, a description of which is contained in chapters six and seven of this study. Therefore, this study aimed to fill in these current gaps in the literature regarding the perceive formal and informal theories about various ways community college success coaches facilitate their students' success. I explored this gap in the empirical literature to generate a deeper understanding about how academic theory, associated concepts and ideas, as well as co-curricular practices interact in the two-year community college educational sector.

Practically-speaking, the findings from this study also had additional outcomes. First, this group of practitioner's perspectives helps community college policy-makers and faculty members to understand the full range of their students' needs, including their psychosocial, moral, or cognitive outcomes, which have yet to be studied in as much depth in the two-year as the four-year context. The findings of this study also assist community college administrators in determining the appropriate foci and responsibilities of the emerging success coaching role. Finally, the findings from this study will assist

community college senior-level administrators in deciding whether to incorporate this

position in their student affairs divisions, or to revise their current non-academic student

support services to incorporate this function in an already-existing departmental role.

Operationalized Definitions of Key Terms

- *Academic/Success Coach:* Defined as distinct from academic advisors or mental health counselors, academic/success coaches function to address student-specific needs, and "create individual development plans and milestones to help students address their academic and non-academic concerns" (Robinson & Gahagan, 2010, p. 4). *Academic/Success Coaching* is the service performed by academic/success coaches to assist their students in their continued development.

- *Community College:* By focusing my study on the two-year educational context, I used Cohen et al.'s (2014) foundational definition, which states that a *community college* is: "any not-for-profit institution regionally-accredited to award the associate in arts or the associate in science as its highest degree" (p. 5). It was important to note that this definition also includes two-year technical colleges.

- *Community College Student:* For the purposes of this study, a *community college student* was defined as anyone enrolled at the community college for at least one class in any given semester. The students this study tertiarily focuses on are those who have met with a success coach employed by these institutions.

- *Community College Completion Agenda:* In this study, the *Community College Completion Agenda* was defined as national attention and allocation of institutional resources to promoting community college students' persistence to degree completion. This movement signals a paradigmatic shift from the original *access*-focus of the community college sector toward the more expanded focus of providing "*access as well as success for the nation's population*" (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 3).

- *Formal Theory:* In this dissertation, formal theory was defined as the "models of student development most student affairs professionals learn in graduate school" (Reason & Kimball, 2012, p. 361).

- *Individual Student-Focused Theories of Student Success:* This category of student success theories focuses on students' individual success and commonly explores students' demographics and/or personal attitudes and behaviors that promote continued movement towards students' self-defined educational outcomes (Habley et al., 2012).

- *Institutional Student-Focused Theories of Student Success:* This category of theories focuses on the institutional practices used to promote student success, which are typically measured by objective, measurable, and quantitative increases in retention, graduation, and/or transfer rates (Morest, 2013).

- *Interactional Student-Focused Theories of Student Success:* This category of theories focuses on increasing the positive interactions between students and their institutions, using the paradigmatic terms of *involvement* (Astin, 1993), *engagement* (Kuh et al., 2005), *integration* (Tinto, 1987), and validation (Rendón, 2006).

- *Informal Theory:* Informal theory "refers to the theoretical perspectives that practitioners hold about student development based on their interpretation of formal theories through the lens of their own experiences" (Reason & Kimball, 2012, p. 361).

- *Non-Academic Student Support:* In this study, I used Karp's (2011) definition of *non-academic student support*, which she defined as follows, "the provision of activities outside of the classroom that encourage success but are not overtly academic" (p. 1). *Non-academic student support services professionals* are the employees who are hired to fulfill these functions. Although this term is synonymous with *co-curricular*, I did not use this term since "co-curricular" is not as commonly used in community college student affairs literature.

- *Student Success:* At its most basic level, *student success* is concerned with "enabling students to gain access to college and complete a degree or certificate" (Kinzie, 2012, p. xiv). Although enhancing degree completion is sometimes used as a measure of community college student success, this dissertation explored other possible conceptualizations of student success in the community college setting.

- *Theory:* In this study, theory was defined as a set of guiding assumptions and beliefs that direct one's actions and practices (Sriram, 2017). Theory functions as a way to understand a given phenomenon at the institutional, small-group, or individual levels (Parker, 1977; Reason & Kimball, 2012).

Conclusion: Chapter Summary and Outline of Remainder of Study

I opened this chapter with a detailed summary of the background factors that led to the emergence of the community college success coaching role, which primarily included community college administrators' efforts to increase student persistence, retention, and degree completion, each ways of measuring student success. In light of

this context, this dissertation explored the following issue: although community college student success theories typically focus on individual students' incoming characteristics and/or behaviors that help or hinder their academic success, institutional efforts to follow this same approach, and interactional theories that promote a more positive connection between the students and their institutional contexts, student affairs practitioners perspectives on what it means for community college students to demonstrate success are continually left out of this body of literature. The absence of these non-academic student support professionals' perspectives may lead to an assumed focus on *academic success*, and may continue to exclude other ways of making sense of this concept.

To sustain this profession, it is imperative that theory continues to inform emerging community college student affairs practices. To be fully inclusive of the unique features of the community college context as well as students' individual needs, it is also imperative that practice also informs current theories about what it means and looks like for community college students to demonstrate success. Therefore, this study explored the implicit or explicit theories community college success coaches used to guide their coaching practices to investigate the ways that theories about community college student success could be augmented by practitioners' lived experiences. I also explored ways that this emerging non-academic student support services could be augmented by more intentional uses of current community college student success theories.

I continued this study in chapter two by presenting the body of literature that outlines the current knowledge base about academic/success coaching in higher education, as well as the major theoretical perspectives about community college student

success. This section includes an explicit focus on the three common emphases within community college student success literature outlined previously in this introductory chapter. Special consideration is given to empirical studies that explore community college student affairs professionals' perspectives in each group of theories. In the third chapter, I review the phenomenological approach I used to achieve the goals of my study. I also present the accompanying methods I employed to gather the necessary data to bring about this in-depth understanding of community coaches' perspectives about what it means for community college students to demonstrate success.

Then, in the second half of this dissertation, I present my findings in two different chapters. The first findings chapter (chapter four), offers a master textual synthesis of my participants' thoughts as to what comprises success coaching in the community college setting. The second chapter (chapter five), then presents the master structural synthesis of my participants' five major conceptualizations of the meaning of community college student success. I offer a discussion in chapter six that offers a comparison of my participants' responses to the dominant literature on community student success I presented in my literature review and introductory chapters. Then, in chapter seven, the final chapter of this study, I offer a proposal to bring this profession into closer alignment with one body of literature that my participants continuously overlooked: that of positive psychology.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

>   Interviewer: "Can you please summarize for me what you think it means for a
>   community college student to be successful?
>
>   Participant: "I just think life is messy, and it's really hard to define what success
>   would look like for the general community college student, because every single
>   student is different. There is no general community college student. The easy
>   answer would be, 'To graduate with a degree'… but success is really just so much
>   more than that."
>
>   —Emma, Community College Success Coach, Texas

In light of the overall goals of this dissertation, this literature review includes

three major sections. First, in an effort to provide a foundation from which to explore

community college success coaches' lived experiences with promoting students' success,

I begin by exploring what is currently known about the college and university

academic/success coaching profession. Second, drawing primarily from Robinson's

(2015) seminal study, I continue by reviewing the various theories that college and

university academic/success coaches may use to guide their coaching practices. The third

section of this literature review provides an overview of the various theoretical paradigms

commonly used to elucidate what is meant by community college student success.

Special consideration is placed upon the empirical and theoretical pieces that explore and

provide conceptualizations for the purposes of student affairs professionals in this setting.

Academic/Success Coaching in Higher Education

Though coaching language came into vogue in educational circles in the late 1990s (Stober & Cox, 2010), the current body of literature primarily focuses on the coaching role of K-12 teachers. In fact, coaching topics have only appeared in higher education literature in the last 15 years (Van Niewerburgh, 2012). Non-empirical definitions of academic/success coaching in higher education include descriptions of coaching as "a human development process that involves structured, focused interaction… promoting desirable, sustainable change for the students' benefit" (Cox et al., 2010, p. 1). Other definitions describe academic/success coaches as performance experts (Spaulding & Smith, 2012), encouragers (Lyons & Pinnel, 2004), co-learners (Puig & Froelich, 2007), and service-providers (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2007).

Despite the growing number of published definitions of academic/success coaching in higher education, a consistent, empirically-generated definition of academic/success coaching from the voices of the coaches themselves did not exist until Robinson's (2015) dissertation study. As was mentioned in the introduction, Robinson (2015) gathered the following definition of academic/success coaching from an empirically-generated set of 160 academic/success coaches' descriptions of their roles. She states that academic/success coaching is:

> The individualized practice of asking reflective, motivation-based questions, providing opportunities for formal self-assessment, sharing effective strategies, and co-creating a tangible academic plan that offers students an opportunity to identity their strengths, actively practice new skills, and effectively navigate appropriate resources. This process ultimately results in skill development, performance improvement, and increased persistence. (p. 126)

In her study, Robinson (2015) distinguished academic/success coaching from other non-academic student support roles, especially those of tutoring, academic advising, mental health counseling, and mentoring, and carved out an emerging niche for this profession. Due to Robinson's (2015) empirical work, this role is now defined as a separate non-academic student support service, aimed at helping students with their study skill development and performance improvement (65 percent of participants' responses), academic planning recovery (65 percent of participants' responses), planning and goal-setting (55 percent of participants' responses), institutional navigation (47 percent of participants' responses), and provision individualized, ongoing support through attention to students' personal concerns (14 percent of participants' responses). Despite the comprehensive nature of Robinson's (2015) findings, one finding remained consistent: academic/success coaches understood their services as tailored to their individual students' needs (p. 84).

Similarly, in her exploratory study on the roles and responsibilities of four-year university academic/success coaches, Sepulveda (2016) also describes academic/success coaching as a service that is distinct from academic advising and mental health counseling. She contends, however, that this service is often confused with a myriad of other non-academic student support programs on college and university campuses, academic advising and mental health counseling included. Hampered with role ambiguity, Sepulveda (2016) offers a similar, empirically-generated five-part description of the emerging practice of academic/success coaching, including academic/success coaches': (1) focus on populations that are at higher risk of attrition; (2) cultivation of intentional relationships with students; (3) emphasis on increasing students' holistic

39

development; (4) assistance in helping students meet their academic goals; and (5) creation of spaces where students can ask follow-up questions about academic processes (p. 74).

In a customized research brief commissioned by the *Educational Advisory Board*, Barnhart and LeMaster (2013) isolated three different types of academic/success coaching program, including: (1) *success coaching programs* that "outline general plans for students' academic and non-academic improvement" (p. 4; a description shared by Neuhauser & Weber's [2011] participants); (2) *academic-success hybrid coaching programs* that include this focus but also incorporate "similar academic support elements, including effective study strategies and test preparation exercises" (p. 4); and (3) *life coaching programs* that offer "semester-long coaching sessions for no more than ten undergraduate students" (p. 4) that aim to help students make progress toward a single, self-declared goal (p. 4). Similar to Robinson (2015) and Sepulveda's (2016) studies, Barnhart and LeMaster (2013) concluded that success coaches support students' academic and non-academic concerns (p. 4). Despite the dual focus on students' academic and non-academic student success, what is meant behind the term *success* within these studies remains vague and unclear, especially in settings outside of the four-year university context (Barnhart & LeMaster, 2013; Neuhauser & Weber, 2011; Robinson, 2015). Therefore, this dissertation study aimed to understand the focuses and goals of community college success coaches, and offer a more robust explanation of what is meant by community college student success by a group of non-academic student support professionals.

The distinction between academic coaching and life coaching may prove artificial since many of the conversations with an academic coach may include discussions of students' larger life or personal goals. This conflation of emphases is captured by the way statements about the job responsibilities of an academic/success coach include generalized provisions of support for students' "holistic development in many areas" (Sepulveda, 2016, p. 78), especially in terms of their: "executive, professional, life, leadership, relationship, and/or career needs" (McWilliams & Beam, 2013, p. 2). Still, another definition of academic coaching in higher education explains that this is an effective tool for "education, future career, and personal development" (Wisker et al., 2008, p. 22). Students do not live completely segmented lives: their identity roles overlap. Each role effects the development of other roles and effects students' holistic success (Glanzer & Ream, 2009). Therefore, academic/success coaches may also provide opportunities for their students to discuss personal as well as academic concerns in their coaching appointments.

Although each of these studies provides a helpful orienting device and base from which to compare my participants' responses, none of them isolated the community college as a unique context. Many of the recent students on academic/success coaching are also non-empirical and primatily offer descriptions of academic/success coaching programs at individual institutions (Ashcraft et al., 2017; Carr, 2017; Ralston & Hoffshire, 2017; Tippets & Kirby, 2017). From the empirical literature, Barnhart and LeMaster's (2013) and Sepulveda's (2016) studies solely focused on four-year university academic/success coaches, and did not include community college academic/success coaches in their studies. Robinson (2015) included community college success coaches

in her study, they only made up 14 percent of her sample. Although Strange's (2015) dissertation isolated the academic/success coaches in the community college context, she only focused on community college success coaches in the state of Virginia. She also primarily provided description of the *services* provided by academic/success coaches, instead of examining the theories they use to guide their work.

Since the community college student population remains distinct from its four-year counterpart, success coaching in the two-year sector may have a fundamentally distinct purpose than four-year university academic coaching. In light of this potential disconnect, this study explored my participants' lived experiences with success coaching in community colleges to gain a deeper empirical base to increase our current understanding about the ends, functions, and purposes of this growing service in the community college sector.

Types of Students Served by Academic/Success Coaches

Although academic/success coaches may claim that they provide support to all students, each of the four, recent empirical studies of this service reveal that this role is particularly tailored to meet the needs students that are at higher risk of attrition (cited 26 percent of Robinson's [2015] participants), due to the individualized student attention they offer (Bettinger & Baker [2014]; Molnar & Moore, [2017]). Since community colleges typically attract a student population that possesses characteristics that are "non-traditionally and negatively associated with educational attainment" (Burns, 2010, p. 35), community college success coaching may prove especially helpful for the academic success of this population. Unlike their four-year counterparts, community college students often find themselves unable to "muster up" the strength to persist in their goals,

typically needing additional support to learn how to manage the competing demands of their lives (Miller, Pope, & Steinman, 2004). Therefore, academic/success coaching may be particularly beneficial for community college students who cannot give it "the good old college try" (Dougherty, 1994), which remains a significant portion of the community college student body (Townsend & Wilson, 2006).

Theories that Guide Academic/Success Coaching

Robinson's (2015) dissertation study revealed that just over one-third of her participants used explicit, formal theories or conceptual frameworks to guide their coaching practices. More specifically, her participants mentioned eight theoretical frameworks they use to inform their work. Therefore, this section explains each of these theories in turn, drawing from community college literature, when available, for support. The following table (table 2.1), drawn from Robinson's (2015) dissertation, is displayed below (p. 79):

Table 2.1

Conceptual Frameworks Robinson's (2015) Participants Used for Service Delivery

Framework	Frequency	Percent of Total Responses (n=68)	Percent of Total Responses (n=56)
Appreciative Advising/Inquiry	19	27.9	33.9
Intrusive/Proactive Advising	7	10.3	12.5
Student Development Theory	4	5.9	7.1
Bloom's Taxonomy	3	4.4	5.4
GROW Coaching Model	2	2.9	3.6
Self-Regulated Learning	2	2.9	3.6
Life Coaching	2	2.9	3.6
Motivational Interviewing	2	2.9	3.6

Appreciative Advising/Inquiry

The most common framework Robinson's participants cited was appreciative inquiry, defined as the "intentionally collaborate practice of asking positive, open-ended questions that help students to optimize their educational experiences and achieve their dreams, goals, and potential" (Bloom, Huston, & He, 2008, p. 1). As an asset-focused, student-centered way to promote student success, appreciative inquiry aims to help students "form a vision of what they might become, and then assists them in developing their life and career goals" (Bloom & Archer-Martin, 2002, p. 1). From this theory's perspective, academic/success coaches primarily function as mentors for their students and use basic helping or counseling strategies to challenge, support, and guide their students to realize their goals (Robinson & Gahagan, 2010). Although appreciative inquiry has received wide support within community college academic advising literature, it is unknown whether community college success coaches also use this model to guide their practices.

Intrusive/Proactive Advising

Previous literature described academic advisors as the non-academic student support professionals who primarily concern themselves with assisting their students with appropriate course selection and registration (O'Banion, 1994; Scrivener & Weiss, 2009), a newer understanding of the goals and purposes of academic advising has started to emerge (O'Banion, 2011). Called intrusive or proactive advising, this newer model of enhanced academic advising seeks to "blend the practices of advising and counseling into a form of student intervention that allows advisors… to identify factors that may inhibit students' success in an effort to create an early strategic framework to mitigate them"

(Varney, 2007, p. 137). Quite similar to appreciative inquiry, this academic advising model was intentionally developed for the community college setting (O'Banion, 2011), and aimed to change the passive student support functions of the academic advising relationship, to more active student support service by increasing the level of advisor's inquiry in these appointments (Bloom et al., 2013). This model also offered a challenge to academic advisors to understand their support of students' academic progress as one purpose among the many services they provide (O'Banion, 2011). This newer emphasis contrasts with developmental or prescriptive approaches that typically assume a deficit perspective that aims to fix students' problems from a more bureaucratic manner (Schreiner & Anderson, 2005). Instead advisors who use appreciative and proactive models view their students as inherently-talented, and fully-able to implement the necessary changes needed to achieve their goals, ultimately, becoming successful.

Student Development Theory

Though stated less often than the previous two theories, some of Robinson's (2015) participants mentioned relevant student development theories they used to guide their work. The most prevalent student development theories included Astin's (1993) theory of student involvement, Sanford's (1967) theory of challenge and support, Schlossberg's (1995) theory of student belonging, and Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory of college student identity development. Robinson's (2015) participants did not name explicit student development theories in their responses, other than these four theories, it is important to recognize that her participants consistently mentioned ideas and concepts related to these frameworks as helpful in their academic/success coaching practices.

This finding becomes especially noteworthy when considering that most student development theories typically assume a four-year university setting instead of isolating the community college as a unique context (Gillet-Karam, 2016; Ortiz, 1995). Since Robinson (2015) also did not break down the use of these theories by institutional type, it is unknown whether community college success coaches used in her study student development theories to guide their work.

Motivational Interviewing

Some academic/success coaches in Robinson's (2015) study mentioned motivational interviewing as a technique they used to guide their practice. Defined as a basic counseling technique, motivational interviewing "relies upon identifying and mobilizing the client's internal values to stimulate behavior change" (Miller & Rollnick, 2009, p. 129). In this practice, the counselor explores her clients' motivations and/or resistance to change, to achieve the ultimate end goal of increasing clients' beliefs that they are capable of making the necessary changes in their lifestyles and habits to meet their stated goals. In turn, due to the potential difficulty of life situations experienced by this student population, motivational interviewing may be a prevalent strategy that community college success coaches use (Rollnick & Miller, 1995). Current community college success coaches may indeed focus on helping their students believe that it is possible to meet their goals, whatever they may be.

Self-Regulated Learning

Similar to *motivational interviewing*, some of Robinson's (2015) participants cited self-regulated learning theory as a useful framework to guide their coaching

practices. Although there are many different conceptualizations of self-regulated learning theory, Zimmerman's (2002) definition remains generally-accepted throughout the empirical literature. In this theory, self-regulated learning is comprised of "students' self-generated thoughts and actions that are guided by their personal goals and are enhanced by their commitment to them" (Roth, Ogrin, Schmitz, 2016, p. 226).

Three factors of self-regulated learning theory arise as especially important for this study. First, it is important to understand that self-regulated learning is continuously helpful for increased academic achievement and persistence towards completion of educational goals (Zimmerman, 1990; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990). Second, self-regulated learning is inherently connected to a student's ability to manage her study time, control her effort, develop her self-efficacy, and gain motivation to complete her assigned tasks (Roth et al., 2016).

The third component of self-regulated learning focuses on the role of goals in a college student's postsecondary journey (Zimmerman & Pons, 1990). Overall, higher levels of self-regulated learning are achieved most effectively when goal-setting becomes central to the students' educational experience (Zimmerman, Schunk, & DiBenedetto, 2015). Similar to the goal-setting ethos of the GROW model in academic/success coaching, which will be reviewed in the next section, learning how to set and then make progress towards self-defined goals assists students in believing that they have control over their immediate situations as well as the outcomes of their decisions (Winne, 2017). Since Robinson's (2015) study is the only empirical study on academic/success coaching that mentions academic/success coaches' uses of self-regulated learning theory, it is

important to explore whether community college success coaches also use this concept to guide their coaching practices, or if other theories remain more central.

GROW Coaching Model

Three percent of Robinson's (2015) participants mentioned that they use the GROW coaching model to guide their coaching practices. In this theoretical model of coaching, Grant (2011) describes the first stage, *Gather*, as involving coaches' continual clarification of the participants' goals, academic, professional, and other life goals alike. Helping their participants' to achieve these stated goals then becomes the focus of the other coaching sessions (Robinson & Gahagan, 2010). This model then moves into a second phase, *Reality*, in which participants are asked to assess their current situations to understand if these realities facilitate or hinder the successful attainment of their previously-stated goals (Grant, 2011). The third phase of this model, *Options*, emphasizes solution-oriented brainstorming and thinking, and encourages the participant to list various ways she could achieve her goals (Grant, 2011; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010). The final stage, *Way Forward*, involves the development of a specific plan to help participants achieve their goals (Marks, 2015).

In their *About Campus* description of academic/success coaching, Robinson and Gahagan (2010) demonstrate that some four-year university academic/success coaches use the GROW model to create two different, tangible plans for their students. First, they describe an *Academic Plan* for students that does not solely focus on course selection, but instead emphasizes on students' "motivations, academic history, and goal-setting" (Robinson & Gahagan, 2010, p. 27) in order to "develop concrete steps students need to take to achieve their academic objectives" (Robinson & Gahagan, 2010, p. 27).

48

Robinson and Gahagan (2010) also explain that academic/success coaches outline a corollary plan for their students, which they term a *Student Engagement Plan*. This secondary plan helps students set goals for additional experiences they would like to pursue during their post-secondary educational careers, like study abroad and/or faculty research opportunities (Robinson & Gahagan, 2010).

Despite their succinct description of the ways that academic/success coaches use the GROW model, this body of theoretical literature, once again, primarily focuses on the four-year context, and does not explore community colleges success coaches' use of this model. These two-year non-academic student support professionals may very well use the GROW model to direct their coaching practices, no empirical literature is available to support the potential use of this theory in this context.

Bloom's Taxonomy

Several of Robinson's (2015) participants also mentioned their use of Bloom's taxonomy, which includes a six-level typology, that isolates various ways that students learn information about a subject. This pyramid begins mere comprehension of a given subject and ends with synthesis analysis of the subjects' various parts (Bloom, 1956). In light of the continual underprepared nature of community college students, Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of learning may be a natural fit for community college success coaches' practices. This finding would also resonate with the group of Robinson's (2015) participants who focused on developing their students study skills when teaching them how to have more control over their academic habits.

Life Coaching

Still, a final group Robinson's (2015) participants named life coaching as a model they used to guide their coaching practices. As a term that gained popularity in the business sector in the late 1990s (Kilburg, 1996), life coaching is now used outside of corporations to assist in individual clients' in their personal as well as career development (Clough & Barnes, 2015). Marks (2015) offers that "college life coaching involves a collaborative, professional relationships between a coach and the individual being coached, with the focus on facilitating the individual's personal *and* professional growth, *as well as* enhancing their well-being" (p. 320). Though life coaching make take a more expanded approach than academic coaching, it includes a similar focus on students' continued progress towards reaching their stated goals. Despite these descriptions, very little empirical research exists to determine a difference between these two types of coaching, especially in the community college sector.

Conclusion

Despite the student-centered, growth-oriented emphasis within this body of theories, these concepts' disparity as well as diversity remains striking. One of Robinson's (2015) participants even noted that the theories coaches use depends on "the coaches' educational backgrounds and professional training, almost exclusively" (Robinson, 2015, p. 80). This finding only further confirms the inconsistency of theories guiding this emerging profession due to its nascence. Additionally troubling, only one-third of Robinson's (2015) participants from two-year contexts named a formal theory they used to guide their work. Since community college student affairs practitioners' educational backgrounds tend to be much more varied, and typically including social

50

work, business administration, mental health counseling, higher education, and K-12 teaching, (Knight, 2014), the theories these success coaches use to practices their work may be even more expansive than those cited by Robinson's (2015) primarily four-year university participants.

Theories about Community College Student Success

Three types of theories that community college success coaches may use to guide their coaching are presented in this section, including theories regarding: (1) individual student success, (2) institutional success, and (3) the positive interaction between the student and the institution. The following table (table 2.2) is presented as a model to depict these varying emphases.

Table 2.2

Varying Emphases within the Community College Student Success Theory Landscape

Individually-Focused Theories	Institutionally-Focused Theories	Interactionally-Focused Theories
Student success as *persistence*	Institutional success as *increased retention rates*	Student success as *student involvement* (Astin)
Student success as *academic achievement*	Institutional success as *increased graduation rates*	Student success as *student engagement* (Kuh)
Student success as *learning*	Institutional success as *increased transfer rates*	Student success as *student integration* (Tinto)
Student success as *thriving* and *flourishing*	Institutional success as *increased career placement rates*	Student success as *student validation* (Rendón)

Theories about Individual Student Success

Though a multitude of theories exist regarding individual student success (Habley et al., 2012), as a way to concentrate this section, this part of the chapter reviews the most prevalent theories in community college scholarship.

Student success as persistence in the educational environment. When examining terms concerning students' individual success, students' persistence and motivation to complete their academic goals emerge as the most common conceptualization. In its most basic definition, persistence concerns "continued enrollment after original matriculation" (Habley et al., 2012, p. 4), and is typically measured in terms of students' continued year-to-year re-enrollment at the same institution as their matriculation. Persisters typically have three characteristics, including: (1) continuous enrollment at a single institution without delay or breaks in attendance (Lenning, 1980); (2) full-time attendance with a goal of degree completion (Astin, 1975); and (3) appropriate length of time-to-degree (four years for university students, and two years for community college students) with graduation as the final, culmination of their educational experiences (Guthrie, 2002). According to most persistence models, persisters are typically traditional students that have linear degree processes (Habley et al., 2012).

This definition becomes problematic when applied to the community college sector, due to students' common stop-out and drop-out patterns (Crosta, 2014). The *minority* of community college students are what would be considered traditional—the *majority* of community college students enroll part-time and are employed in full-time occupational roles outside of their educational contexts (Ozaki & Harnack, 2014). These outside commitments often hinder community college students' abilities to persist in these environments and cause them to demonstrate rampant states of "educational swirl" (Crosta, 2014). Due to these patterns, two years may not be a realistic expectation of time-to-degree for many community college students (Crosta, 2014). For most students, it may take much more longer to reach their educational goals (Crosta, 2014). In light of

this reality, community scholars continually argue for a definition of community college student persistence measured by continuous term-to-term enrollment, instead of year-to-year rates (Seidman, 2015).

Despite this tension, studies continue to emerge that promote new models of community college student persistence (Fong et al., 2017; Terriquez, 2017). These studies explore community college students' internal characteristics as well as external conditions that help or hinder their persistence. In their foundational model that explores external factors that inhibit non-traditional student attrition, Bean and Metzner (1985, 1987) maintained that integration into the academic environment was *the key factor* in increasing non-traditional students' abilities to persist, and that social factors played a much less important role for this student population. Though not originally about the community college, this model has been widely-accepted in this sector due to its explicit assessment of the role of the external environment for non-traditional students, who comprise a large percent of the community college student body (Ozaki & Harnack, 2014).

Other studies on community college student persistence focus on students' internal motivations. This group of studies has found that students with a higher level of confidence in their abilities to persist also demonstrate higher levels of self-efficacy, self-concept, and internal locus of control (Fong et al., 2017). Overall, this group of students demonstrates higher rates of motivation to persist than those with lower amounts of these psychological characteristics (Bean & Eaton, 2000; Fong et al., 2017).

Although much of the persistence literature in the community college setting has focused on measuring levels of community college students' persistence or qualities that

have helped them to persist, fewer studies have focused on the non-academic professionals' perspectives about their students' success. Though a three articles have explored faculty member's perspectives about ways to increase students' academic motivations (Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya, 2010; Lundberg, 2014; Tovar, 2015), community college student affairs professional's perspectives about the ends and means of student success remain largely left out of this conversation.

Furthermore, Bettinger and Baker's (2011) quantitative study on the efficacy of outsourced, *InsideTrack* coaching demonstrated that students who met with a coach during their first semester were five percent more likely to persist than non-coached students, most of whom were considered non-traditional. Since this characteristic represents the majority of community college students, increasing student persistence rates likely remains one of community college success coaches' most important goals. Despite this potential, current scholarship lacks an explicit empirical understanding of community college success coaches' perspectives, since these have largely been left as unexplored.

Student success as increased academic achievement. Although community college students' continued academic achievement is often touted as a close proxy for their continued persistence, academic achievement is measured differently, typically understood as increased GPA rates instead of solely achievement of educational goals (Price & Tovar, 2014). Therefore, according to this conceptualization, a student achieves success when she demonstrates improvement in her academic coursework, and receives higher grades each semester (Gershenfeld, Ward Hood, & Zhan, 2016). These GPA

increases serve to motivate students towards eventual achievement of their ultimate

academic goals (Gershenfeld, Ward Hood, & Zhan, 2016).

In two recent studies exploring the relationship between motivational factors and

community college students' academic achievement, Nakajima, Dembo, and Mossler

(2012) as well as Fong et al. (2017) found a positive association between these two

constructs. In other words, students with higher levels of motivation also had higher

GPAs, than those with lower levels of both factors. This finding becomes especially

noteworthy when understanding that GPA data was the second most common way that

Robinson's (2015) participants assessed the effectiveness of their coaching programs (p.

92). Interventions like success coaching that aim to increase students' goal attainment

may also be especially focused on providing the necessary support for students at high

risk of attrition to increase their academic achievement (Crisp & Taggart, 2013).

Student success as learning At the end of the twentieth century, a revolution

occurred in the way that scholars thought about college teaching, culminating in what is

now known as the learning college movement (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Hanson, 2017;

Harbour, 2015). This movement shifted the linguistic focus in higher education from

teachers' instruction to students' learning. According to the learning college movement,

student success is defined as the amount of learning that college students experience

when they are enrolled in their educational institutions (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Boggs,

1995). Community colleges that are guided by a learning college philosophy have shifted

their attention away from degree-production and have chosen to adopt an intentional

focus on enhancing the extent, quality, and depth of their students' learning (O'Banion,

1997; Hanson, 2017). This group of community colleges maintains that students'

continued gains in learning as the primary measure of their success.

According to the learning college paradigm, success is not reserved for just a few

students, nor is success an *individual* accomplishment (Barr & Tagg, 1995). Instead, this

theory assumes that each person who works at the institution plays a vital role in

facilitating the students' learning: fostering students' success is a corporate endeavor.

Each faculty, staff member, and administrator has a vital role to play in the creation of a

learning environment, and must view their students as intellectual beings who have been

designed for success (Boggs, 1995). Chickering (2006) promoted the aims of the

learning college movement when he maintained that "personalized feedback on students'

strengths and weaknesses was critical for their success" (p. 2). The academic/success

coaching literature adopts a similar perspective, positioning academic/success coaches as

a supportive developer, focused on increasing their students' learning capacities

(Robinson & Gahagan, 2010).

Though 58 percent of Robinson's (2015) participants cited academic assistance as

a major of outcome of their coaching programs (p. 89), the direction and focus of this

learning is left unknown. Questions like: does this focus primarily include

academic/success coaches' assistance in helping students learn course material and

persist through their studies, or does it also include larger life issues?, remain

unanswered, especially for the community college sector. Interestingly, Robinson's

(2015) study revealed over 130 unique responses from her participants, including:

academically- and personally-focused concerns, as well as larger, institutionally-focused

concerns (p. 83). It remains to be understood, however, if community college success

coaches understand their work in this same way or if they view their work as explicitly-focused on just one of these emphases.

Student success as flourishing and thriving. Although the dominant theories about individual student success focus on persistence, academic goal attainment, and student learning (Kuh et al., 2005), a new perspective concerned with promoting student thriving, incorporates insights from positive psychology and human flourishing, continues to emerge in student success literature (Schreiner et al., 2012). This new conceptualization does not necessarily focus on student success as survival to degree completion (Kinzie, 2012; Schreiner et al., 2012; Schreiner, 2015), but instead examines the quality of students' educational experiences and their levels of satisfaction with their institutional environments. Located in the psychological paradigm, this theory of college student thriving primarily focuses on creating environmental conditions that increase students' academic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal well-being (Bowman, 2010; Schreiner, 2015). Contending that "there is much more to a successful college experience than simply earning a degree" (Kinzie, 2012, p. xxvii), the theory of thriving does not solely focus on fostering students' academic success, but includes the "relationships, perspectives, and psychological well-being that allows students to gain maximum benefit from their college experiences" (Schreiner et al., 2012, p. 2). Holistic in nature, the theory of student thriving focuses on gains in learning, civic engagement, commitment to community improvement, and promoted self-understanding as lifelong learners (Kinzie, 2012).

A key difference emerges from this theory's conceptualization of success when compared to other dominant student success theories: instead of using a deficit model that

assumes that students will eventually drop-out of their educational environments if not acted upon by another force, this theory focuses on positive assets that help students to thrive in their institutional settings (Keyes & Haidt, 2003). Thriving students are "filled with emotional vitality and function positively in the private and social realms of their lives… they rise to meet challenges, make the most of setbacks and adversities… and they look beyond themselves to help others to find lasting meaning and satisfaction in life" (Keyes & Haidt, 2003, p. 6). Understanding students as positively responsive to change, Schreiner et al. (2012) argue that interventions to promote students' holistic flourishing provide the greatest assets to their eventual success.

Since the empirical validation of the Thriving Quotient (2009), only three research studies have examined this concept specifically in the community college environment. Though two of the three studies were quantitative in nature, they each found that students who participated in faculty-led student support programs (i.e., learning communities and/or on-campus student groups), demonstrated higher scores on the thriving quotient than those who were not engaged in these supportive mechanisms (Briggs, 2016; Dy, 2017; Romero, 2015). Briggs (2016) compared involved and non-involved students' self-reported perceptions of their levels of thriving and found that the results varied significantly between the two groups. Those who considered themselves to be more involved in faculty-led campus programs reported higher levels of thriving than those who were not involved in these programs. She hypothesized that this difference was due to the validation that these students receive from being part of this type of community.

Focusing solely on students' understanding of their supportive relationships with faculty as her unit of analysis, Dy's (2017) qualitative study revealed that faculty served a crucial role in promoting students' levels of thriving through their formal and informal roles as mentors, course advisors, and mental health counselors. These acts of support were most powerful when they extended beyond the classroom and validated students in their personhood, and affirmed their belonging as valuable members in the community college context (Rendón, García, & Person, 2004). Similarly, Romero (2015) found that community college students who reported higher levels of thriving also reported higher levels of student-faculty interaction.

Interestingly, each of these studies once again overlooked the potential influence that student affairs professionals may have on their community college students and did not consider the potential benefits of this type of non-academic support. Romero (2015) explained that he would not think it unreasonable to conclude that his findings may be extended to include "any campus employee who fulfills such roles at a community college" (p. 109). Since current academic/success coaching literature describes this role as holistic (Sepulveda, 2016) and ultimately focused upon increasing students' self-awareness (cited as an intended outcome of 53 percent of Robinson's [2015] participants), theories about college student thriving may guide this emerging practice. Without empirical evidence to explore whether community college success coaches use the theory of thriving or associated concepts to direct their coaching practices, this potential remains unknown.

Conclusion. As can be seen from this section, theories regarding how to best promote individual students' success remain disparate, especially in terms of the types of success they aim to promote (i.e., personal, academic, and professional). Although most theories about community college students' individual success tend to emphasize academic success, one theory about student success (thriving), continues to include attention to students' personal development. This theory underscores the reality that students are not purely academic beings, and holds colleges and universities responsible for promoting success in all parts of their students' lives (i.e., academic success as well as personal success). In turn, the theory of college student thriving contends that achieving these outcomes will also increase institutional success, especially when measured by increasing rates of student retention, completion, and transfer.

Theories about Institutional Success

A second group of student success theories focuses on the actions that institutions take to become increasingly effective in the wider educational stratosphere. The theories that are reviewed in this section are the predominate measures of student success, including increasing community college student retention, graduation and completion, career placement, and transfer rates.

Institutional success as increased student retention rates. Since student retention is continues to remains as a national concern, empirical studies about promoting this outcome have now become the emphasis of much of the student success literature, especially about community college settings (Habley, et al., 2012; Kinzie, 2012). Despite this focus, student retention is a difficult term to define, and scholars continue to maintain

that a commonly agreed-upon definition of retention may never exist (Braxton, et al. 2013; Habley, et al., 2012; Hagedorn, 2005). Despite these contentions, the basic definition of retention maintains that students must "stay in school until their degrees are completed" (Habley et al., 2012, p. 91).

Despite the dominant focus on increasing students' retention rates, especially in light of the Community College Completion Agenda, two major critiques emerge from community college scholars about its current definition and measurement. First, scholars critique the current retention literature for its assumption that all students undergo a linear process of education, starting and completing their college careers at the same institution (Berkner, He, & Cataldi, 2002; Crosta, 2014; Hagedorn, 2005). This assumption does not accommodate for the realities of the community college student body, especially since many community college students transfer between institutions (Jenkins & Fink, 2016), take courses from multiple institutions at the same point in time (Cohen et al., 2014), "stop out" of their institutions with intentions to return (Shapiro et al., 2016), and often take much longer than the prescribed two years to complete their degrees (ACT, 2010). Though it is expedient to assume that time-to-degree is a linear process, this characterization is not helpful or accurate when examining the current reality of community college students' enrollment patterns.

Second, current retention literature tends to assume that students enter their educational environments with the goal of completing a degree (Habley et al., 2012). Although this assumption may hold true for most full-time, traditional students at four-year colleges and universities, many community college students do not share this same goal (Crosta, 2014). Often these students enroll part-time with intentions to transfer after

61

only completing part of a degree (Morest, 2013; Sanchez & Lanaan, 1997). They also may enter their community colleges to take courses for a specific reason, such as personal enrichment or adult basic education (Bean, 1983; Clagett, 1995; Gardner, 2009). This concern becomes especially telling in light of the results of Tinto's (2017) most recent study, in which he found that his participants did not seek to retain at their institutions, but instead, sought to persist to degree completion. In other words, Tinto (2017) argued that there is a continual imbalance in these two perspectives: the institution focuses on increasing the number of students who graduate, even when the "student body's interest is to complete a degree often without regard to the institution in which it is earned" (p. 254).

Despite these confounding issues within retention literature, national attention continues to focus on community college accountability measures, especially in light of the Community College Completion Agenda (Bailey, et al., 2015; Gill, 2016a). Critics maintain that low community college retention rates signify institutional failure (Morest, 2013), and therefore call for more intrusive efforts on the part of the institutions to retain their students at higher rates (Cohen et al., 2014). Scholary attention has now turned to institutional practices at community colleges that will promote students' continued enrollment and prevent their attrition (Bailey et al., 2015; Calcagno et al., 2008; Hatch & Bohlig, 2016). These types of studies typically maintain that faculty, staff, and administrators increase students' retention rates by functioning as institutional agents who provide the academic and social capital necessary for their students to achieve their goals (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). For example, Fabio's (2016) mixed-methods analysis of California Educational Opportunity Programs called for all community college

professionals to consider themselves "retention officers." Still, many other community

colleges have adopted a "no-excuses policy," and are guided by a conviction that

everyone who works at these institutions, from the custodial staff to the president, must

be in the business of increasing this outcome (Golann, 2015).

The majority of Robinson's (2015) participants also agreed that increasing

retention rates was the most important motivation for starting success coaching programs

(70 percent of responses, p. 89). Most of her participants also cited the use of retention

data as one of the primary means of assessing the effectiveness of these programs (pp.

91-92). Interestingly, Robinson (2015) found that two-year schools used different titles

for this role, most notably including retention, graduation, or college skills coaches (p.

86), signifying a more obvious connection between these roles and increasing students'

retention rates.

Despite these findings and despite the clear implications of coaching as a response

to the Completion Agenda (Gill, 2016a), the assumption that success coaches operate

merely in the business of retention may exclude potential, additional theories, ideas, or

associated concepts that success coaches may use to guide their work with individual

students (Ralston & Hoffshire, 2017). If retention theory *is,* in fact, the ultimate goal of

this emerging non-academic student support function, then the term "retention coach"

may be a better descriptor for this position. Without empirical research to support this

proposition, this possibility remains unknown.

Institutional success as increased graduation and degree completion rates.

Similar to retention theories, increased graduation and completion rates are another way

to measure institutional success. Both measures are commonly expressed as "the

percentage of students who complete a degree within a certain time period" (Habley et al., 2012, p. 10). Completing a college degree is currently seen as the key factor in increasing an individual's, economic advancement, and has moved from a "nicety to a necessity" (Habley et al., 2012, p. 58; Perna & Thomas, 2008). Using an economic model of success (Perna & Thomas, 2008), this theory understands that a completing a postsecondary degree helps students' gain increasing profit in the labor market (Bailey et al., 2015), and assumes that college students are "rational actors who can identify a range of outcomes and associate each with a value" (Perna & Thomas, 2008, p. 14).

When reviewing literature on efforts to promote community college student completion rates, it became clear that the Community College Completion Agenda describes student affairs practitioners as staff members who exist outside of the curriculum to guide their students in their curricular choices, and support them to eventual degree completion (Gill, 2016a; Wyner, 2014). In essence, increased non-academic for students allows for increasing assistance for course progression and progress towards completion of the community college credential (Jenkins & Cho, 2012). Again, guided by a belief that time-to-degree is more efficient if students have increased academic and non-academic support (Bailey et al., 2015), this movement calls for increasingly proactive co-curricular practices, especially intrusive advising, to promote their students' time-to-degree or time-to-certificate completion (Bailey et al., 2015).

Simply assuming that completion is the appropriate outcome for every community college student, and that completion is the model guiding the work of community college student affairs practitioners may reveal some major limitations. The conceptualization of success prioritized by the Community College Completion Agenda is largely marketed

towards the needs of the labor market. Unfortunately, this framework does not necessarily take into account the transformation or development that can occur during a student's educational career (Cohen et al., 2014), and does not make room for the more holistic understanding of student success as guided by the ideals of human flourishing (Schreiner et al., 2015). Though community college administrators and faculty members may help students persist to the successful achievement of their goals, if predominately guided by a retention framework, students who are not retained are understood as "leavers" and may end up hindering institutional measures of effectiveness.

If guided by this theoretical framework, community college success coaches may understand themselves to be completion or graduation coaches, and may focus on what they can do to help students finish their credentials in order to obtain a specific type of career, increase workforce-oriented skills, and therefore, be rewarded for their efforts with a job in the labor market (Perna & Thomas, 2008).

Assuming that community college success coaches solely adopt this approach might very well be short-sighted, especially when understanding that some students may need additional guidance to understand which careers could be best or most desirable to pursue. Additionally, community college success coaches may not name their primary goals as assisting students to complete their intended credentials—they may, instead, have a shorter time-frame in mind, which could include helping students to persist to the next semester. Without empirical research the potential distinctions brought about by these guiding theories remain unexplored.

Institutional success as preparation for and placement in a career. Similar to the previous section, the community college has long supported the democratic goal of preparing an educated workforce (Gleazer, 1968). Although career preparation is a relatively recent development in empirical community college student success literature (for more information, please see Ayers, 2017), the community college sector has always been understood as a vital contributor to the needs of the economic workforce due to its provision of occupational certification through vocational education offerings (Harbour, 2015). Therefore, though obtaining a vocational degree and subsequently, a professional career is not cited as a marker of institutional success nearly as often as increased retention, completion, or transfer, this ultimate emphasis provides a salient background factor and acts as an assumed, more immediate goal for at least a portion of community college students (Sanches & Lanaan, 1997; Wyner, 2014). Whether community college success coaches more intentionally assist a more vocational, or transfer-oriented population, or whether they more generally assist their students' persistence to degree completion remains to be seen.

Institutional success as increased transfer rates. A focus on increasing students' educational advancement by increasing university transfer rates appears as a common marker of institutional effectiveness in the literature on community college student outcomes (Wyner, 2014). Guided by the understanding of the community college as a sending institution (Mellow & Heelan, 2014), a successful community college transfer student is one who understands the necessary steps to the transfer process (D'Amico et al., 2014), and is well-prepared to succeed academically in her university experience (Leigh & Gill, 2004). In the most recent analysis of the Community College Student

Survey for Engagement (CCSSE, 2017), transfer to a four-year university was the stated goal of nearly half of survey participants. Although a continual debate exists over whether transferring to a four-year university helps or hinders a students' progress towards his or her goals (Burton-Clark, 1960; Dougherty, 1994; Jepsen et al., 2014; Rhoads & Valadez, 2016), promoting successful transfer is still seen as one of the most prominent functions of the community college (Cohen et al., 2014).

Therefore, increasing the clarity of articulation agreements (Monaghan & Attewell, 2015), transfer advising services (Foote, Kranzow, & Hinkle, 2015), and guided pathways are practices that have emerged as a result of this larger movement (Bailey et al., 2015). In this conversation, community college student affairs practitioners are described as transfer facilitators: they not only help students understand and choose between various university options, but they also elucidate the requirements of the transfer process for them (Webb, Dantzler, & Hardy, 2015). If informed by theories about helping the institution be more successful by increasing its transfer population, community college success coaches' conversations with their students may be more product, instead of process-focused. Once again, without gathering an empirical understanding of success coaches' perspectives, this possibility remains unknown.

Conclusion. As can be seen from this brief review, institutional success is not necessarily equivalent to individual student success and may not be the best way of measuring student success as a whole (Morest, 2013). In fact, many community college students may not be interested in remaining at their institutions throughout the entire course of their degrees due to their original enrollment decisions at their individual community colleges. Retention theories tend to assume that degree or certificate

completion is the goal of every community college student, which truly may not be the case Harrell & Holcroft, 2012). As Morest (2013) notes, "it has long been held by community college leaders and staff that student goals must be the drivers of success, because what could be more meaningful than helping students achieve their goals, no matter what these might be" (p. 8). In other words, current retention theories may actually thwart community college's measures of institutional success due to the diverse goals of the student body.

From the available literature, academic/success coaching is portrayed as a retention initiative that aims to help postsecondary students complete their degrees in a timely fashion (Molnar & Moore, 2017; Robinson, 2015; Strange, 2015). These studies note that the coaching role is primarily focused on working with students to set academic goals and co-create action plans to meet them (Robinson & Gahagan, 2010). Since relatively little literature explores community college success coaches' perspectives on their efforts to promote their students' success, this study aimed to fill this gap.

Theories about Students' Positive Interactions with their Institutions

This section explores the four paradigmatic terms framing student success as the positive interactions between students and their institutions, which include: involvement, engagement, integration, and validation. Like the previous sections in this chapter, attention is focused on the studies that operationalize these terms in community college literature.

Student success as student involvement. In the earliest theory about college student outcomes, Astin (1984) defined student success in terms of students' increased

academic and personal growth. Due to its foundational status in higher education literature, "involvement has been linked via empirical research to almost every positive outcome of college" (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009, p. 412). According to Astin (1993), involvement includes the "amount of physical and psychological energy a student devotes to his/her academic experience" (p. 519). This theory focuses on students' investment in both academic and social activities on their college and university campuses, and assumes that greater investment in these experiences lead to greater learning (i.e., academic) and personal outcomes (Habley, et al. 2012, p. 11). In his original theory, Astin (1984) made room for students' personal and academic development. Despite this dual-focus, in a later work, Astin (1999) revised his statement and noted that this theory of involvement primarily focused on ways to increase academic involvement, instead of their holistic success.

Despite Astin's (1993) focus on the individual student, his theory of involvement also maintains that the college or university environment is an important facilitator of students' increased (or hindered) success. Astin (1999) maintained that by studying students' incoming characteristics (their inputs), as well as their interactions with institutional factors (the environment), scholars and practitioners could gain a better understanding of the results (the outcomes) of these types of exchanges. When comparing these empirical outcomes to the theoretical outcomes, scholars and practitioners could gain a more realistic picture they could use to guide their work. As Astin (1984) notes, "the theory of student involvement is more concerned with the behavioral mechanisms or processes that facilitate student development in conjunction with the environment impact on [these mechanisms and processes]" (p. 522). The

simplicity of his theory continues to attract attention in both scholarly as well as

practitioner-related literature.

Since it has been well-documented that significant gains in both personal growth

and academic learning occur outside as well as inside of the classroom (Baharom & Idris,

2017; Bergen-Cico & Viscomi, 2011; Dean, 2015; Fisher et al., 2017; Habley et al.,

2012; Martin & Seifert, 2011; McCarthy, 2017; Meents-DeCaigny, & Sanders, 2015;

Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), student affairs professionals have unique roles in Astin's

(1993) theory of involvement. Astin (1999) hypothesizes that personal interactions with

a campus support professional is key to higher retention rates and increased persistence.

As a "heuristic device" (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2012, p. 412), the theory of

involvement functions as a way to help student affairs practitioners design co-curricular

environments where students' participate with great amounts of psychological energy.

Despite its simplicity, Astin's (1993) theory of involvement demonstrates mixed

support from the perspectives of community college scholars (e.g., Chaves, 2006).

Community college scholars who support this theory maintain that it is important to

promote community college students' involvement early on in their educational

experiences, especially through participation in new student orientation programming,

student success courses, and intrusive academic advising (D'Amico, et al., 2014;

Friedlander & MacDougall, 1992; Milem & Berger, 1997; Tinto & Russo, 1994). In their

study exploring the ways that community college academic advisors promote early

academic involvement, Hatch and Garcia (2017) concluded that academic advisors'

support prior to the start of the first semester is critical to first time in college students'

academic success, especially since this relationship motivates their students to name and then persist to achievement of their academic goals.

When applied to the community college setting, critics raise one resounding criticism against Astin's (1993) theory of involvement: due to the limited amount of time they spend at their community college campuses, two-year college students may not want or even need to become involved in their institutional communities. Astin (1984) noted that his theory may not be adequate for the community college context since "community colleges are places where the involvement of both faculty and students seems to be minimal" (p. 524). In fact, the Community College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CCSEQ), a survey modeled after Pace's (1984) original College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ), demonstrated the same result: community college students are typically not as involved in what are considered "typical college student experiences" (Douzenis, 1994). This finding has been replicated several times in other research studies since this initial conclusion (Lundberg, 2014; Moore & Shulock, 2010; Strayhorn, 2015).

In other words, critics assert that the goal of community colleges may not be to help their students become increasingly involved in the social fabric of the institutional environment itself, but may instead be to help students to complete their degrees in a reasonable manner of time (Chaves, 2006; Milem & Berger, 1997; Pruett & Absher, 2015). When examining the multiple roles that community college students fulfill in their daily lives, including student, worker, often parent, and/or spouse, (Burns, 2010; Jinkins, 2009), it simply may not be reasonable to expect community college students to become increasingly involved in the social life their campuses (Levin, 2015). As Ozaki (2016) explains, "these students' external lives (i.e., job, family, children, etc.) may have

a greater impact relative to the campus environment" (p. 27). In essence, the narrative

about the necessary socialization for students to become involved in the activities of the

community college in order to succeed may not necessarily be as high of a priority for

community colleges (Morest, 2013).

More recent studies, however, indicate that a supportive relationship with a

faculty member, staff member, or administrator, lead to increased academic involvement

in the community college atmosphere (Price & Tovar, 2014; Schreiner et al., 2011;

Tovar, 2015). In fact, some of the current literature on community college student affairs

practices, especially found in studies exploring the effects of enhanced advising practices

at the community college, tend to underscore the importance of these relationships for

increasing students' motivation for and investment in their academic studies (D'Amico,

et al., 2014; Donaldson et al., 2016; Strayhorn, 2015). The same finding may be true for

community college success coaches, but, empirical literature does not yet exist to support

this finding. Since Astin's (1984) original theory maintains that involvement may look

different for diverse student populations, in light of the disparities between these

contexts, community college success coaches may still use the theory of involvement to

guide their work.

Student success as student engagement. Though quite similar, a second

paradigmatic student success theory emerged nearly 20 years after Astin's (1984) original

theory of involvement. Borrowing from Pace's (1980) efforts to measure the quality of

college students' effort they put into their academic studies, Kuh et al.'s (2005) theory of

student engagement departs from Astin's (1984) original work due to its focus on quality

of effort rather than solely relying on measuring students' external behaviors. According

to Kuh et al. (2005), student engagement focuses on two different, though highly corollary, factors: (1) the amount of mental, physical, and psychological energy students' put into their postsecondary academic and social experiences (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009); and (2) the intentional effort that their institutions put into organizing academic and non-academic services to increase their students' effort (Kuh, et al., 2005). Unlike Astin's (1984) focus on individual students' behavior, Kuh et al.'s (2005) theory takes a more institutional-level approach in its focus on "high-impact practices" that promote or hinder students' academic success.

Student engagement theory also more intentionally incorporates the role of the student affairs professional, than Astin's (1984) involvement theory. In an updated edition of his theory, Kuh (2007) argues that student affairs professionals must be seen as key partners in students' academic success, described as those who work in collaborative partnership with the faculty to increase their students' positive outcomes. This explicit attention to the importance of student affairs professionals in promoting students' success remains unique, especially when compared to the abundance of empirical studies that focus on faculty members' roles in the promotion of their students' success (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Schreiner, et al., 2012). In turn, nearly 46 percent of Robinson's (2015) participants cited improving student engagement as an intended outcome of their work (p. 89). Despite this prominence, Robinson (2015) did not delineate this finding by institutional type—it remains unknown whether community college success coaches use student engagement theory to guide their work with students.

Following national attention on student engagement, a research center was founded to promote community college student engagement (CCSSE, 2005). Like the

comments about the CCRC mentioned in the introductory chapter, the CCSSE focuses on advocating for effective practices to promote community college student learning, persistence, and educational goal attainment (McClenney, Marti, & Adkins, 2006). Furthermore, studies on community college student engagement also explore the campus environment's role in fostering increased student investment in their educational experiences to increase students' academic persistence, completion, and graduation (Schuetz & Schuetz, 2008).

Kuh et al.'s (2005) theory has been much more widely accepted by community college scholars than Astin's (1984) theory of involvement. This positive reception becomes especially noteworthy when examining the number studies that explore ways to increase the academic engagement of under-represented groups of students, especially common to the community college population (Guzman, 2014; Pruett & Absher, 2015; Wood & Ireland, 2014). Despite this growing number of studies, the role of the community college student affairs practitioner in increasing student engagement remains under-explored (Scrivener & Weiss, 2009). Since community college students typically have characteristics that increase their likelihood of attrition, it seems likely that increasing non-academic student services could be a way to address students' barriers to engagement in this environment (Karp, et al., 2008).

Unlike the four-year university literature, the available empirical literature on community college student engagement does not demonstrate the same promotion of the role of the community student affairs practitioner as a shared partner in students' success (Gulley & Mullendore, 2014). The majority of the literature on community college student engagement, instead, focuses on faculty members as the major promoters of

community college students' success (Tovar, 2015), and maintains that this role is especially important due to the lack of time that community college students spend in co-curricular, on-campuses social activities (Braxton, et al., 2013). In an exploratory analysis of community college student engagement patterns, Saenz et al. (2011) echoed this statement in their description of the strikingly sparse amount of empirical literature surrounding the role of student affairs practitioners in promoting community college students' engagement.

Similar to theories about student involvement, whether increased engagement in non-academic, high-impact activities also increases community college students' personal development and flourishing remain under-researched in the empirical literature, and in need of further exploration. This gaping hole becomes even more striking when understanding that CCSSE (2017) results found that a minority of students rated "support for learners' social and personal thriving" (p. 1) as the factors that were *least* emphasized by these community colleges' staff and faculty members. Since community college success coaching could eventually become a high-impact practice designed to promote student engagement with additional, empirical evidence (Rallston & Hoffshire, 2017), it remains to be understood if community success coaches use student engagement theory to guide their practices, or if they more heavily draw on other theories to promote their work.

Student success as student integration. As the most often cited student success theory, the third paradigmatic theory in this section is Tinto's (1993) theory of student integration. Due to its foundations in Durkheim's (1951) sociological exploration of egoistical suicide and VanGennep's (1960; 2013) concept of rites of passage, this theory

is primarily sociological in nature, and is especially concerned with factors of person-environment fit. It explores the extent to which students make a successful formal and informal transition into their institutions' academic and social fabric. Tinto (1975) hypothesized that student commitment mediates the relationship between academic and social integration as well as likelihood of persistence to graduation. Therefore, students who are more committed to their institutions and to their goals to graduate are more likely to persist to degree completion than those who are not as committed to these same factors (Braxton et al., 2013).

Furthermore, Tinto's (1975) depiction of retention describes the transition to college as a transition between cultures (Braxton et al., 2013; Wolf-Wendel, et al., 2009). This process involves three phases: first, the student psychologically departs from her original environment. Second, the student encounters a period of transition, "during which the person begins to interact in new ways with the members of the new group into which membership is sought" (Tinto, 1993, p. 93). Third, the student must adopt the values of the new group to complete this transition successfully (Tinto, 2007). A student who removes herself from this environment prior to successful completion of this transition has not become integrated into her new educational environment and commits educational suicide, or what he terms as attrition(Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Like Astin (1993), Tinto (1975) argued that personal interactions with campus professionals boost students' persistence and retention rates. In light of the academic focus of his theory, student affairs practitioners are those who primarily support faculty members' efforts, existing outside the classroom as collaborators who help students clarify their educational goals (Tinto, 1993). Tinto (2000) maintains that these types of

relationships can be key to supporting students' persistence, especially if these conversations are focused on promoting increased academic involvement. This type of integration improves students' depth of learning and increases their amounts of positive interactions with faculty in both formal classroom and informal outside of the classroom settings (Tinto, 2012). Therefore, to support their faculty colleagues most effectively, community college student affairs practitioners must provide "clear and consistent information about the requirements and expectations of the institution and the academic program" (Cox, McKinley, & Hanson, 2017, p. 325). Therefore, according to integration theory, student affairs professionals help to increase retention by taking a more supportive than primary role in this process.

Despite the paradigmatic status of Tinto's (1993) theory and its increasing focus on under-represented student populations (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Tinto, 2012), community college scholars raise three major criticisms to the concept of integration(i.e., Tierney, 2000). First, especially after its initial publication, critics questioned its applicability to non-traditional student populations outside of the four-year university (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Tierney, 2000). According to Tinto's (1993) original model, students who have more external commitments are less likely to become integrated into their institutional environments, and therefore, are less likely to persist towards completion of their academic goals.

Due to their external commitments, students at two-year community colleges are less likely to become integrated into the academic and social fabric of their institutions. In fact, these students are more likely to "locate their social lives off-campus, outside of the institution" (Ozaki & Harnack, 2014, p. 27). Despite these realities, what academic

77

and social integration actually looks like at the community college may be much different than Tinto's (1993) original conceptual definitions, especially since they were based on his experiences with traditional populations on four-year residential campuses (Ozaki & Harnack, 2014; Tierney, 2000). Students on residential campuses become socially-integrated through their participation in residence hall communities, membership in student organizations, and frequent conversations with their peers (Braxton et al., 2013). Community colleges do not have a great ability to increase this type of integration due to students' minimal time on campus, thus making it more difficult to establish deep bonds between students and their institutions (Morest, 2013).

This second group of critics also argue that Tinto's (1993) model does not fully consider the potentially positive influences of students' external commitments, and contend that this theory portrays these commitments as negative and eventually leading students' withdrawals from these institutions (Astin et al., 2012; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Studies on non-traditional student retention have explored the positive ways that their external commitments and communities have promoted increased motivation in their function as agents of support for these non-traditional students (for more information, please see Dy [2017]; Hurtado & Carter [1997]; Perna & Titus [2005]).

Therefore, a summative third critique continues to emerge about Tinto's (1993) theory when applied to colleges outside of the four-year, residential institution. Interestingly, despite its paradigmatic status, the theory of integration lacks robust empirical validity (Braxton et al., 1997). Although most community college studies that explore Tinto's (1993) theory find that students who have clearer goals demonstrate better persistence rates in their academic efforts, the social integration component often

generates mixed empirical reviews (Karp, Hughes, O'Gara, 2010; Martin, Galetino, & Townsend, 2014). This finding becomes especially noteworthy when understanding that the propositions about students' social integration demonstrate the least amount of empirical support in both two- and four-year contexts (Pascarella, Smart, & Ethnigton, 1986; Wood & Palmer, 2014). Since community college students tend to locate their social lives outside of the institution (Jinkins, 2007), integration into the social fabric of the community college may not be as necessary for their persistence (Deil-Amen, 2011). The dominant theories about student success have primarily focused on traditional students in the four-year university context, and therefore are not fully appropriate for a non-traditional student population in a two-year college environment.

Overall, Tinto's (1993) framework remains dominant in student success literature. One practitioner-oriented publication describing a specific success coaching service explained that "success coaches serve as the link between the academic and student affairs sides of campus" (Neuhauser & Weber, 2011, p. 43). If guided by Tinto's (1993) framework, community college success coaches may primarily understand their roles to foster academic success. In turn, community college success coaches may adopt the prevailing academic coach model, instead of providing support for their students' personal development. Therefore, two-year community college success coaches may truly be functioning as academic coaches that promote students' persistence towards the accomplishment of their academic goals and may not be as concerned with increasing their students' well-being. This distinction continues to remain unknown without supporting empirical data.

Student success as student validation. Less prominent than the previously discussed theories, Rendón's (1994) theory of validation focuses on the institution's role in promoting the success of under-represented students. Arguing that these students need "active intervention from significant others to help them negotiate institutional life" (Rendón, 1994, p. 8), this theory defines student success as students' transformation into powerful learners in direct response to support provided by institutional agents (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Four propositions support this process-oriented, developmental theory, which include: (1) inside- as well as outside-of-class structures focused on supporting both students' academic and personal development; (2) students' beliefs about being personally capable of handling their academic demands; (3) faculty and staff members' recognition of their students as valuable components of their institutional environments; and (4) increased acts of validation from institutional agents at the beginning of students' educational careers (Rendón, et al., 2004). Although Astin (1993) described the involved student as investing psychological energy in the campus environment, Rendón's (1994) theory recognizes the complexities that prevent certain types of students from demonstrating this same amount of investment. Instead, Rendón (1994) holds the institution as ultimately responsible for its students' outcome.

In her updated theory, Rendón (2006) compels faculty members, staff members, and administrators alike to "take the initiative in reaching out to students in order to assist them in learning more about college, helping them believe in themselves as learners, and facilitating their positive college experiences" (p. 5). Due to their increased need for encouragement as a result of the numerous barriers they face to their stated academic goals, this approach proves especially fitting for students at higher risk of attrition

80

(Rendón, 2006). According to validation theory, successful students are those who perceive themselves as capable of academic success and feel validated in their personal identities by important members of the institution (Rendón & Muños, 2011).

This theory has demonstrated a great amount of support from community college scholars due to its focus on underrepresented, non-traditional students, which is the largest portion of the community college student body (Jenkins, 2007). Barnett's (2011) study on the effects of faculty validation for non-traditional community college students echoes similar findings. Her participants explained that they felt validated when their faculty members helped them understand that they were someone who was known, valued, cared for, appreciated, and mentored. These students also indicated their increased intentions to persist due to the ways that these supportive relationships helped them become more academically-integrated in their institutions.

When considering the roles of student affairs professionals from the perspective of validation theory, Rendón and Muños (2011) note that it is not enough to simply offer co-curricular services with the expectation that students will take advantage of them. Instead, student affairs staff members must "actively reach out to students and design activities that promote [students'] active learning and interpersonal growth" (Rendón & Muños, 2011, p. 26). By exploring student success from a positive perspective, validation theory focuses on staff and faculty members' abilities to unlock the assets already present within their students (Rendón & Muños, 2011). By "seeing students as whole human beings" (Rendón & Muños, 2011, p. 25), validation theory makes room for student affairs professionals to increase their students' emotional, social, and intrapersonal development, along with their academic development. Unlike Tinto's

(1993) focus on factors that lead to student departure, Rendón's (2006) theory focuses on increasing positive, caring contact between students and their institutional agents in order to promote their holistic success. Once again, if community college success coaches use validation theory to guide their work, empirical literature has not explored this possibility.

Conclusion. This section reviewed the four major student success theories that focus on students' positive interactions with their institutional environments. Though each of the theories emphasizes the role of student affairs practitioners to a different extent, further empirical research is needed to understand this under-researched component in the community college setting, especially when considering the emerging role of the success coach. When exploring the practice of community college success coaching, the outcomes desired by these institutional agents may be very different depending on the theory that each individual coach uses. Therefore, to provide empirical support for this emerging profession, it was of crucial importance to understand which theories participating community college success coaches perceived as most relevant to their work in their daily contexts.

Summary of Gaps in the Literature and Conclusion

Several gaps emerge from this body of literature. First, current information on student affairs practices in community colleges continues to lack a robust understanding of the perspectives of those employed to fulfill these roles. This becomes even more apparent when examining the scant body of academic/success coaching literature, especially since only four empirical studies that explore in-house coaching services in

82

higher education exist to date. As was reviewed at length in the opening section of this chapter, each of the four studies either focus exclusively on the four-year context (Barnhart & LeMaster, 2013; Sepulveda, 2016); fail to isolate the community college as its own setting (Robinson, 2015); or provide an overview of the services offered by success coaches at a single institution, foregoing an exploration of the theories these professionals use to guide their work (e.g., Strange, 2015). Although Robinson's (2015) study provided a national overview of this emerging profession, she did not capture the lived experiences of these professionals in the two-year sector in as much detail as those in the four-year context.

Second, when considering the community college student success literature, the preponderance of the empirical literature is quantitative. Lacking from this body of research studies are empirical explorations of qualitative narratives about what comprises student success from community college student affairs practitioners' perspectives.

Third, the preponderance of the literature focuses on the student as the subject of the empirical investigation (Babb, 2012). Although quite natural and expected, this focus has nearly eclipsed other valuable perspectives of those who have been employed to facilitate this construct in their students outside of the academic environment. Babb's (2012) dissertation study elucidated community college faculty members' perspectives on their role in promoting their students' success, but community college administrators' perspectives have been continually left out of this discussion. In fact, community college students are not the only people involved in the process of developing their success— without gathering the lived experiences of student affairs administrators, our understanding of how to enhance these vital outcomes remains incomplete.

Finally, much of the available literature on community college student success assumes a predominate focus on cultivating retention, persistence, completion, and transfer outcomes. In turn, these studies tend to leave out other outcomes that could result from students' community college experiences, including increased gains in learning and human flourishing. Since success coaching is described as a holistic practice (Sepulveda, 2016), this study explored whether community college success coaches aim to facilitate students' success outside of their academic endeavors, or if they primarily focus on traditional, academic measures of success.

This study gathered an empirical description of participants' conceptualizations of what it means to be community college success coach and then explored their perspectives on how their roles help facilitate their students' success. These findings fill in the crucial gap in current, scholarly understanding of the purpose and focus of this emerging service in the community college sector. I also presented a more nuanced understanding of the theories that this group of practitioners use to guide their coaching practices. The following chapter describes the methods I used to achieve these purposes.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods

Interviewer: "So what initially attracted you to this position?"

Participant: "Only through experience and being open and willing to connect with others are you really able to figure out what you want to do and who you want to be. There shouldn't be a rush with it. To me that is an evolution—and I just want to sit in that mess with students and experience it with them."

—Sienna, Community College Success Coach, California

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions of what it means to be a success coach in the community college setting. The ultimate goal of this project was to explore how community college success coaches' perspectives compare to or contrast from the dominant theories about what student success means and looks like for community college students. In this chapter, I outlined the interpretative phenomenological method I used to achieve this goal, as described by Moustakas (1994) and Smith et al. (2009). This chapter reviews the qualitative tradition in which this study was situated, followed by the sample details and recruitment procedures, research design, data collection strategies and methods of analysis, ethical considerations, and measures of trustworthiness I employed when conducting this study.

Overview of Qualitative Methodology

This study approached the lack of understanding about what it means to be a success coach in the community college setting by using a social-constructivist approach

to gain an in-depth understanding of this emerging phenomenon in this specific context (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). The qualitative approach was especially important due to the social-constructivist principle that "meaning is constructed via the interaction between humans… and cannot exist independent of the human interpretive process" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 17). Therefore, in this study, I did not concern myself with the effectiveness of success coaching as measured by quantitative increases in students' GPAs or graduation rates (i.e., one of the main findings from Bettinger & Baker's 2011 study), but instead illuminated this group of student affairs professionals' beliefs about the essence of community college student success and their perspectives on their role in the development of this construct in their students.

In this study, I depended on insights from my community college success coach participants as the "knowers" in order to gain a deeper understanding of how they interpret the meaning of student success and explain their role in in its facilitation. Overall, the unit of analysis in this study was the success coaches' perceptions of and reflection on their lived experiences with helping to facilitate the success of their students (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Since my study aimed at providing a deeper understanding of success coaching in the two-year community college context, I geared many of my questions to gather my participants' opinions and conclusions about the ways that this setting influences their work.

Smith et al. (2009) maintain that in *interpretative phenomenological analysis*, "analysis always involves interpretation" (p. 35). In other words, the phenomenon under investigation is always held in tension with the researcher's interpretation of it. As Smith et al. (2009) explain: "There is a phenomenon ready to shine forth, but detective work is

required by the researcher to facilitate the coming forth, and then to make sense of it once it has happened" (p. 35). Therefore, my role as interpreter of the participants' responses as to what it means to be a success coach in the community college setting included both my meaning-making from the narratives provided to me, as well as the meaning that my participants made about the ultimate ends and purposes of community college success coaching. This was an ongoing process of interaction between me and my participants as brought forth from my data collection: I made sense of and interpreted their words and narratives about their experience after they made sense of the experience for themselves.

In other words, simply understanding what it means to my participants to be success coaches in general did not fully capture the ultimate aims of my study: I chose the community college as a specific context for my investigation, and therefore captured the lived experiences of *community college* success coaches as a response to a specific environment in which they work. Since the qualitative paradigm "posits that the only way to understand social reality is from the perspective of those enmeshed within it" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 17), and since the aims of my study are inherently connected to specific participants' (*community college success coaches*), lived experiences with a given phenomenon (*student success*), in a specific context (*community college student affairs departments*), situating this analysis within the qualitative, phenomenological research tradition was an ideal fit for this study.

Overview of the Phenomenological Approach

The primary research question guiding this study was: "what does it mean to participants to be a success coach in the community college setting?". Secondary research questions gathered success coaches' perspectives about what they think it means

and looks like for a community college student to be successful, as well as questions that gather enough information to make a relevant comparison of participants' responses to the dominant body of student success literature. As both descriptive and exploratory, these questions lent themselves very well to a phenomenological approach, especially in terms of their philosophical framework and the specific research methods described by *interpretative phenomenological analysis*. Therefore, the remainder of this section reviews the key points of Smith et al.'s (2009) *interpretative phenomenological analysis* that guided my study.

At its core, phenomenology is a "philosophical approach to the study of lived experience" (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 11). All phenomenological studies are interested in portraying the essence of a certain human phenomenon or condition of everyday life since the phenomenological tradition asserts that experience is intrinsically understandable, and only needs a description to bring about its conception. To this end, Van Manen (2001) explains:

> Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature of meaning of our everyday experiences… [it] does not offer us the possibility of effective theory with which we can now explain and/or control the world, but rather it offers us the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world. (p. 9)

The goal of phenomenology is not to generate theory; instead, phenomenology is concerned with understanding, describing, and presenting the very essence of a given experience. At the end of a phenomenological study, the reader should have a deeper understanding of what that specific experience was like for the participants involved in the study (Creswell, 2007).

88

The roots of phenomenology are found in a philosophical approach to science that grew out of the eighteenth-century German philosopher, Edmund Husserl's (1859–1938), frustration with the growing emphasis within the rational, empirical naturalistic paradigm to downplay people's perceptions of their lived experience (Smith et al., 2009; Sokolowski, 2000). Therefore, Husserl (1973) argued that we must "go back to the things themselves" (p. 53) and understand our participants' conscious experiences as the starting point for any investigation (Welman & Kruger, 1999). Moustakas (1994) explores this tension when he notes, "internal self and external world are inseparable components of meaning" (p. 28). As a philosophical approach to empirical research, phenomenology does not aim to create a generalizable theory. It is instead more interested in providing a robust description of the essence of a given experience (i.e., for this study: the facilitation of community college students' success).

Ontologically, the phenomenological tradition assumes that reality is defined by the perspectives of those who experience it. For this study, this included my participants' perspectives on what it student success means and what their role is in its development. Therefore, I was not looking for an objective measure of their effectiveness, nor was I trying to generate a theory about what it means to be a *good* community college success coach. First and foremost, I tried to describe the essence of their experiences with promoting student success in the community college setting.

Epistemologically, phenomenology assumes that knowledge is created from researcher's "involvement in making sense of their participants' experiences" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 46). In other words, the phenomenological tradition aims to examine *how* people make sense of their experiences in order to elicit the various meanings that

89

specific participants make from a given phenomenon. As these experiences are "made

salient by participants," different features of this phenomenon could come to light (Smith,

et al., 2009, p. 46). Overall, the phenomenological study paints a robust picture of these

realities to capture the essence of a given phenomenon as experienced by an individual or

individuals (Moustakas, 1994).

Four Key Distinctives of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

This section explores the four key distinctives of using the *interpretative*

phenomenological analysis method to guide a research study. These four emphases

include: (1) The use of *intentionality* within IPA research; (2) The *idiographic* nature of

the IPA study; (3) The researcher's role in the *interpretation* of the IPA research study;

and (4) the *epoche* or *bracketing process* in the IPA research study.

(1) Intentionality in IPA research. Phenomenologists use the term *intentionality*

which "refers to consciousness, internal experience of being aware of something"

(Moustakas, 1994, p. 28), embracing the belief that our reasoning about an experience is

never separate from our attitudes and reactions to that experience. Phenomenological

intention is not about taking an action that is intended upon by the subject (i.e., "being

intentional" as the more modern understanding of the definition of this word), but is

instead about the participants' cognitive understanding of the "object of consciousness"

(Moustakas, 1994, p. 29). Therefore, through the practice of *intentionality*, the researcher

starts to piece together a picture of how the participants in her study make sense of their

lived experiences with a certain phenomenon (Sokolowski, 2000). Moustakas (1994)

breaks this down into two different categories, the *noema* (i.e., the phenomenon in

question) and the *noesis* (i.e., the meaning participants' make about the phenomenon). For this study, the *noema* was community college student success, and the *noesis* was the success coaches' interpretation of their role in the facilitation of this construct.

   (2) The idiographic nature of IPA research. Phenomenology is also *idiographic* in nature, meaning that it is concerned with finding the particulars of a given phenomenon according to the perspective of a specific group of participants (Smith et al., 2009). Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) explain that *interpretative phenomenological analysis* concerns itself with, "in-depth analysis of single cases that examine individual perspectives of study participants, in their unique contexts" (p. 3). Since one of the main tenets of the phenomenological tradition is concerned with the necessity of understanding the *lifeworld* of the participants, this methodological approach pays special attention to the context of their participants' daily life experiences. Romdenh-Romluc (2011) explains that the ultimate task of the phenomenologist "is to study all aspects of the participants' life-world, and uncover the essential structures of their experience" (p. 13). In contrast to the objective empiricist who studies solely the measurable aspects of the participants' world (i.e., more quantitative measures of academic success such as GPA increases or accumulated credit hours), the phenomenologist focuses her attention on the individual nature of participants' experiences in order to provide a richer description of a given phenomenon.

   Therefore, this study was be *idiographic* in two ways. First, I created depth in my analysis by being thorough and systematic in my description of my participants' experiences with coaching their students to success. Second, since phenomenology is "committed to understanding how particular experiential phenomena have been

understood from the perspective of particular people in a particular context" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 29), I did not choose to explore academic coaching at all types of colleges and universities but limited my exploration to the *community college setting*. This delimitation pairs nicely with one of the main issues within academic coaching literature: although we have a preliminary understanding of the main ends of academic coaching in the four-year university setting, our understanding of the essence and meaning of success coaching in the community college remains lacking. Therefore, a descriptive study exploring success coaching in the two-year setting was necessary in light of the lack of explicit exploration of this role in this context.

(3) The researcher's interpretive role in the IPA study. Different perspectives exist as to the amount of emphasis placed upon the researcher's interpretation (for more information, please see Van Manen's [1990] description of *hermeneutic phenomenology*) versus the promotion of the participants' understanding of their experiences (for more information, please see Moustakas' [1994] description of *transcendental phenomenology*). Despite these differences of opinion, I situated this study within the *interpretative phenomenological tradition,* which understands that phenomenology "is an explicitly interpretive activity" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 25). Its analysis takes a middle-position between letting participants' descriptions speak for themselves versus being subject to the researchers' interpretation of them. Furthermore, Smith et al. (2009) describe the necessity of the double-hermeneutic circle between researcher and participant, in which "the researcher makes sense of the participant's recollections who is making sense of *x* phenomenon" (p. 35). This type of interpretive process was appropriate for this phenomenology study, as long as the researcher aims to explore the

essence of the participants' experiences; and not her beliefs about what her experiences *should* be like. Despite this iterative process, the researcher must be cautious about interpreting the phenomenon during the interview itself: this "is best left for subsequent stages," and largely occurs in the analysis process (Smith et al., 2009, p. 66).

(4) The ongoing epoche process in the IPA study. Achieving this understanding requires the phenomenologist to undergo a robust exploration of her taken-for-granted beliefs about the phenomenon of her study.   Described as a human being's "natural attitude" (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 49), Sokolowski (2000) argues that humans make sense of objects or experiences in our external world in response to our certain biases about them. Often this occurs without an investigation of *how* or *why* this process occurs (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). These assumptions bind the researcher to uncovering the essence of *her* experience with the phenomenon, instead of helping her to uncover the ultimate essence of the phenomenon itself (Moustakas, 1994). In light of this tendency, Moustakas (1994) describes the importance of undergoing the *epoche* process, the Greek for *abstain* (p. 85), throughout a phenomenological study.

When engaging in the *epoche* process and in an effort to become an empathetic and charitable towards the participants' experiences with the phenomenon, the researcher sets aside as many of her preconceived notions about the phenomenon as possible. The researcher must "bracket" her prior experiences so that only the previously described natural attitude is evident (Schmitt, 1968). Moustakas (1994) notes that "this is a difficult task and requires that we allow a phenomenon or experience to be just what it is and come to know it as it presents itself" (p. 86).

Since this is nearly impossible, the goal of this portion of a phenomenological study includes the researcher's efforts to engage in the bracketing process, no matter how successful she may be in its actual practice. Therefore, in an attempt to set aside both my biases about what success coaching *should* look like in the community college settings as well as any cynical views about the actual focus of promoting student success in this sector, I underwent the *epoche* process prior to each step in this study. To do this, I wrote a paragraph journal entry about what I hoped these success coaches focused on in their work with their students. I then contrasted this synthesis with all the possibilities of what they *could* be focusing on in their work with their students. I engaged in this practice to bracket and become aware of my biases and desires prior to engaging in interviews or analytical procedures with my data. It is important to note that this bracketing process was not just a one-time event, but continued throughout the duration of this study, and functioned as a means to engage in a constant enhancement of my reflexivity as the lead researcher in this study (Smith et al., 2009). For an example of what my *epoche* process entailed, please see my positionality statement in Appendix A. For an example of how this process was used at each point in this study, please see Appendix B.

The overarching goal of a phenomenological investigation is to get at the essence of participants' experiences with a given phenomenon and then to ultimately reduce these reflections into a composite description of the phenomenon. Overall, the phenomenological tradition is not interested in reduction in terms of taking away the central components of a given experience. Instead, phenomenology examines what all participants have in common with a given experience to understand the essential meaning of the phenomenon under investigation. Smith et al. (2009) describe this

phenomenological reduction as understanding "the set of invariant properties lying underneath the subjective perception of individual manifestations of the phenomenon of study" (p. 14). Therefore, this study did not reduce success coaching to its disparate parts, but instead provided a robust description of what student success means and looks like according to a group of 44 participating community college success coaches in the United States.

Methods and Study Design

The goal of this study was not to generate the one, true theory about community college success coaching (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 19), but was instead to understand how *particular* community college success coaches construct meaning from and make sense of the phenomenon of community college student success (Creswell, 2013; Crotty, 1998; Merriam, 2009). This approach became especially important when understanding that qualitative research is inductive, and occurs "from the ground up, rather than handed down entirely from a theory or from the perspectives of the inquirer" (Creswell, 2007, p. 19). With its focus on sensitivity to participants' lived experiences, the in-depth, personal nature of phenomenological research, allowed each participant to frame their own understanding of what success coaching means in their given community college contexts.

Despite the flexible nature of the phenomenological approach, Smith et al. (2009) remind readers that "successful data collection strategies require organization as well as flexibility. Successful analyses require the systemic application of ideas and rigor; but they also require imagination, playfulness, as well as reflective, critical, and conceptual thinking" (p. 40). In light of this reflection, I aimed to hold both the flexibility as well as

organization in my data collection and explication processes in tension to fully represent the ultimate essence of community college success coaching according to this sample of participants.

Participants

In total, 44 success coaches participated in this study, with their demographics as listed in table 3.1 on the following pages. Painting in broad strokes, the majority of this sample consisted of females (75 percent of sample; 33 participants), participants who identified as White (63.6 percent of sample; 28 participants), heterosexual (90 percent of sample; 40 participants), and predominately Christian in religious identity (59.1 percent of sample; 26 participants). Despite these dominant characteristics, this sample displayed a wide range of varying identity markers in almost every category listed. Educational master's degrees represented the largest percentage of the sample (43.1 percent of sample; 19 participants). Additionally, the majority of participants were housed in student affairs divisions (77 percent of sample, 34 participants; as opposed to the 23 percent of academic affairs divisions represented; 9 participants), and the overwhelming majority represented Achieving the Dream Institutions (75 percent of sample; 33 participants), as opposed to Aspen community colleges (25 percent of sample; 11 participants). Texas represented the largest state of employment (just over 30 percent of sample; 14 participants) and almost 40 percent of participating success coaches worked at smaller community colleges, ranging between 5,000 and 10,000 students (17 participants). The largest category of coaches had worked at their institutions for between one to three years (36 percent of sample; 31 participants). Overall, though emphasized at points, these figures demonstrate a well-rounded sample, consisting of a

broad range of diversity within each category. For display purposes, the following table

presents the data in aggregate. For extended information about individual participants',

please see Appendix L.

Table 3.1

Characteristics of Sample

Demographic Category	Identifier	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	33	75
	Male	11	25
Ethnicity	American Indian	2	4.5
	Asian	2	4.5
	Black	10	22.7
	Hispanic	1	2.27
	Multiracial	1	2.27
	White	28	63.6
Sexual Identity	Bisexual	1	2.27
	Heterosexual	40	90.9
	Queer	1	2.27
	No Answer	2	4.5
Religious Identity	Agnostic	2	4.5
	Atheist	2	4.5
	Catholic	2	4.5
	Generally Protestant Christian	26	59.1
	Lutheran	1	2.27
	Mormon	1	2.27
	Native American Indian Religion	2	4.5
	Non-Religious	6	13.6
	No Answer	1	2.27
	Spiritual	1	2.27
Types of Master's Degrees	Education	19	43.1
	Higher Education, Adult Education, or Student Services	9	20.4
	Educational Leadership	4	9.09
	Curriculum and Instruction	1	2.27
	Urban Education	2	4.5
	Counselor Education	2	4.5

(continued)

Demographic Category	Identifier	Frequency	Percentage
	Educational Psychology	1	2.27
	STEM Degrees	2	4.5
	Mathematics	1	2.27
	Exercise Physiology	1	2.27
	Business Degrees	5	11.4
	Business Administration	3	6.81
	Communication	2	4.5
	Helping Professions	13	29.5
	Counseling	3	6.81
	Social Work	5	11.4
	Master's in Divinity	3	6.81
	Criminal Justice	2	4.5
	Social Sciences	3	6.81
	International Studies	1	2.27
	Journalism	1	2.27
	Sociocultural Anthropology	1	2.27
Academic Division	Academic Affairs	10	22.7
	Student Affairs	34	77.2
Member Institution	Achieving the Dream	33	75
	Aspen Prize	11	25
State of Community College	Alabama	3	6.81
	California	1	2.27
	Florida	2	4.5
	Maine	1	2.27
	Maryland	1	2.27
	Michigan	2	4.5
	Montana	1	2.27
	Nebraska	2	4.5
	North Carolina	4	9.09
	Oregon	3	6.81
	Pennsylvania	1	2.27
	South Carolina	1	2.27
	Tennessee	5	11.4
	Texas	14	31.8
	Virginia	1	2.27
	Washington	2	4.5

(continued)

Demographic Category	Identifier	Frequency	Percentage
Size of Community College	75,000 students or above	3	6.81
	50,000 – 75,000 students	2	4.5
	25,000 – 50,000 students	4	9.09
	10,000 – 20,000 students	11	25
	5,000 – 10,000 students	17	38.6
	3,000 – 5,000 students	3	6.81
	1,000 – 3,000 students	3	6.81
	Less than 1,000 students	1	2.27
# of Yrs as a Success Coach	6 – 8 years in role	6	13.6
	4 – 5 years in role	7	15.9
	2 – 3 years in role	16	36.3
	1 year in role	15	34.1

Additional Sampling Procedures Used

Sampling strategy. In this study, I used the technique of purposeful sampling to "select information-rich cases for in-depth study… from which to learn a great deal about the issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry" (Patton, 2002, p. 230). As was mentioned previously, the goal of qualitative research is not to produce a generalizable statement, but instead, to "elucidate *both* the particular *and* the specific" (Creswell, 2007, p. 126). Phenomenological analysis is concerned with criterion sampling, defined by Creswell (2007) as the sampling strategy that gathers a fairly, small homogeneous sample where "all cases meet some aforementioned criterion" (p. 127). The homogeneity of a sample for a phenomenological study helps the researcher to understand what may be similar in terms of participants' experiences with a given phenomenon.

Despite these potential similarities, it was important to avoid treating all participants as if they have the exact same experience with the phenomenon under

investigation: every experience is as unique as each participant. Smith (2009) explains:

> By making the groups as uniform as possible according to obvious social factors or other theoretical factors relevant to the study, one can then examine in detail psychological variability within the group, by analyzing the patterns of convergence and divergence which could arise. (p. 50)

Therefore, I used purposeful sampling techniques with a criterion-related sampling strategy to select my participants in order to gather an "information-rich" picture of this practice in this context (Merriam, 2009). The criteria for participation included:

(1) Participants were community college success coaches who are employed in such a role with this specific title. Although there are several terms for this function (i.e., retention coach, academic coach, completion coach, career coach, etc.), this study explored what participants believe it means to be *success coaches*.

(2) Participants worked at exemplar community colleges that have been publicly recognized for their active commitment to student affairs work (i.e., they must be part of the *Achieving the Dream* network or the *Aspen Institute*). Since this study was not necessarily geographic in nature, and since success coaching programs exist at many different community colleges, I did not feel a need to choose a specific location or area of the country from which to gather my sample. This delimitor was crucial in delimiting my study from Strange's (2015) study, in its focus on community college success coaches in Virginia.

(3) These community colleges created a role, separate from academic advising, or other types of student service functions, which distinguishes the success coaching service from other very similar services. This criterion aimed to answer the question, *what does the facilitation of students' success mean and look like when this role is stripped away from all others (i.e., academic advising, mental health counseling, etc.), especially with this goal is the primary function of an employee's role?*

(4) Some of these programs are volunteer mentorship programs. In this study, I interviewed participants who are paid to fulfill this function in a full-time capacity.

Recruitment process. Upon putting together my master list of all *Achieving the Dream* and *Aspen Community College Prize Nominees*, my master list of community

colleges included 520 community colleges, which represent almost half of all community colleges in the United States. Out of these community colleges, 245 employed some type of non-athletic, student affairs position they called "a coach." Since these names ranged from academic coaches, to academic success coaches, to career success coaches, I focused on the 117 institutions that housed success coaches within this group of community colleges. It is important to note that most of these institutions employed at least two success coaches, if not more than two. Interestingly, 70 percent of this list of community colleges employed mental health counselors, success coaches, and academic advisors. Every single one of my 44 participating success coaches were employed at institutions that also employed counselors, academic advisors, and success coaches.

After gathering the master list of potential institutions from June to July 2018, I examined these college's employee directories to understand if they actually employed a position that is called "success coach." I then made sure that this position was housed as separate from other non-academic student support services, especially academic advising and mental health counseling. I used this list as a primary source from which to gather my participants. Overall, 282 success coaches, employed at 82 institutions were sent this initial email. The community colleges typically employed from one to seventeen success coaches. Thirty-two states were included in this master list. Finally, 54 of these schools were part of the *Achieving the Dream* network, and 28 of these schools were nominees for the *Aspen Prize of Community* Colleges. Only five schools were part of both organizations.

Participant recruitment. In August of 2018, I sent out a primary invitation letter via email to all participants who met the criteria in my sample. In this email, I explained

the purpose and significance of the study, described the process of the study as well as the required participants' research activities (a 90-minute, in-depth, recorded interview, a demographic survey, and an emailed copy of the participants' job description, each of which are laid out in more detail in the following section), and invited the potential respondents to reply if they were interested in participating in this study. Finally, to create rapport with my potential participants, I also clarified my history with the role of community college success coach. Attached to this initial email was be a link to a Qualtrics survey that includes short demographic survey for the participant to fill out. Please see Appendix C for a copy of this invitation email and Appendix D for a copy of this demographic survey.

After two weeks, a follow-up email was sent to all remaining community college success coaches who had not yet responded to the initial email. After two more weeks (one month after the initial email was sent out), a secondary follow-up email was sent to any remaining community college success coaches who had not responded. All interviews took place between September and November of 2018 (44 interviews total). Four participants were interviewed face-to-face. I engaged in phone interviews with the remaining 40 participants due to costs on my time and personal finances. Participants were employed at a total of 33 different community colleges in 16 different states. Additionally, many of these coaches existed in difficult to reach locations (i.e. Connecticut, Upper Michigan Peninsula, etc.). Finally, participants were also given a 25-dollar Starbucks gift-card as a thank you gift for their participation in this study.

Participant interview preparation. After receiving my participants' informed consent documents (Appendix E), I asked each participant to send me back a

demographics survey, and their a job description. Although demographics (i.e., gender,

class, ethnicity, etc.) were not a part of the selection process, but were included in this

chapter as well as in Appendices C and L to maintain rigor. These success coaches'

states of employment are presented in the findings chapter. Overall, I allowed the criteria

mentioned previously to guide my sample selection, and not specific demographic

categories. These delimitations were especially important due to the nature of my

research question (i.e., the focus on success coaches' perception of student success, not

on how *female success coaches* make sense of this phenomenon).

A note on sample size. Though there are differences of opinion within the

phenomenological tradition regarding the appropriate number of participants to include in

a study, the general understanding within *interpretative phenomenological analysis*

includes a smaller sample size (Creswell, 1998; Smith et al. 1999). Seidman (2013)

pushed this number up to 25 participants, arguing that he "would err on the side of more

rather than less" (p. 58). Despite this tension, I aimed to gather the perspectives of 40

community college success coaches across the country.

Sample size remains a widely-debated topic within phenomenological research,

and most studies seek to create small samples, ranging from anywhere between three to

twenty participants. Furthermore, Van Manen (2014) suggested that the term *sample*

connotes the wrong aim for a phenomenological study. Sampling implies the collection

of a large amount of data for generalizability, which is not the agreed-upon purpose of

phenomenology. Instead, Van Manen (2014) noted that a better term was "example" or

exemplar cases of the phenomenon being studied. Patton (2002) explained that "the

meaningfulness and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the

information-richness of the cases selected and the analytical capabilities of the researcher than with the sample size" (p. 245). Therefore, by following the previously outlined criteria, I found an exemplar population from which to draw a smaller group of robust interviews to give my readers an in-depth description of what it means to coach students to success in the community college setting.

Therefore, I chose to gather the views of 44 community college success coaches for four different reasons: first, thinking about seeking a smaller sample size, at first, was helpful. It focused my efforts on gaining rich interviews, rather than a large body of thinner, less robust recollections from my participants. Second, I quickly discovered that each of my participants' conceptualizations of student success were uniquely tailored to their employment histories, religious perspectives, and educational preparation for their roles. Third, Lincoln and Guba (1980) urge qualitative researchers to continue the data collection process until saturation of categories is reached. Finally, I wanted as much geographic representation as possible since I understand that community colleges tend to be much more responsive to their local needs than their four-year counterparts (Eddy, 2012).

In light of each of these concerns, I continued conducting interviews until I reached the total number of participants and reached a decent saturation of my major categories, while still leaving enough room to demonstrate a wide diversity of opinions and perspectives as to the meaning of community college student success. The sample I collected is laid out in table 3.1.

Data Collection Approaches

To gather answers to my major research question and to maintain the rigor of my study through triangulation, I engaged in four types of data collection, which included: in-depth, phenomenological interviews, a modified photo elicitation discussion, secondary document analysis of participants' job descriptions and content analysis of participants' websites.

In-depth phenomenological interviews. Unlike other types of qualitative methods, phenomenological studies typically rely on longer interviews with open-ended questions as their primary form of data collection (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). This is important because a phenomenological study aims to gather a robust description of participants' lived experiences with a given phenomenon. Smith et al. (2009) note that "a good interview is essential for phenomenological analysis… in that it must engage deeply with participants and their concerns, with attentive listening into the lifeworld of the participant" (p. 58). Additionally, Wimpenny and Gass (2000) explain that the phenomenological interview diverts from other interviews, especially the grounded theory interview, since "the phenomenologist remains centered on eliciting the experience of respondents so that the phenomenon can be revealed" (p. 1491). Furthermore, the in-depth phenomenological interview functions as an open space for participants to more fully describe the topic under investigation (Seidman, 2006).

Overall, "the purpose of in-depth interviewing is not to test hypotheses, and not to 'evaluate'" (Seidman, 2006, p. 9), as in other types of qualitative studies. The very core of the phenomenological interview is "an interest in understanding the lived experience of others and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 2006, p. 9). Since I

105

was interested in getting at the core of what student success means and looks like for the community college student, the in-depth interview functioned as my primary method of data collection.

A debate exists among phenomenological researchers regarding the amount of structure and number of interviews to conduct with each participant. Sometimes an interview guide is used (Moustakas, 1994); other times, interviews are left very unstructured (Seidman, 2013). The *interpretative phenomenological research* tradition contends that in-depth, open-ended semi-structured, 90-minute single interview functions well for the purposes of an *interpretative phenomenological analysis* (Smith et al., 2009). Smith et al. (2009) argue that by "constructing an interview schedule, the researcher thinks of virtual maps for the interview, which can be drawn upon if, during the interview itself, things become difficult or stuck" (p. 59).

Despite the guide that I created for my interviews, I held to the protocol loosely, allowing the participant to be the "experiential expert on the topic at hand, and would be given much leeway in taking the interview to 'the thing itself'" (p. 58). Overall, I followed Smith et al.'s (2009) advice that cautions novice qualitative researchers to view the protocol as a map to follow rather than as a detailed list of directions, in order to keep the phenomenon of the interview in focus (p. 59). To this end, I did not cling to the protocol as a script, but instead allowed the participants' insights to guide the focus of each section of our time together, making sure that each of the major content areas were addressed the interview process unfolded.

During these interviews, I followed Smith et al.'s (2009) advice and "take my time, listening to what I am being told by my participant," therefore allowing my

participants' meaning-making to guide the interview (Smith et al., 2009, p. 66). It was more important to me that I understood the true essence of community college success coaching from each of my participants' perspectives, rather than getting each of the questions in my interview guide answered. Although I made allowances for it being the case that the 90-minute session could end and I had not covered some of the topics in my interview guide, I did not find this extra time necessary. This interview guide was also piloted on two current community college success coaches, and additional changes were made to this document prior to collecting additional data. Please see Appendix F (Abbreviated Interview Guide) and Appendix G (Expanded Interview Guide) for a copy of these documents, representing the changes to the interview guide following my pilot interviews.

Even though Seidman (2013) argues for the need for three, 90-minute interviews in phenomenological research, the traditional method for a phenomenological study includes a single, longer interview with participants in order to maximize their meaning-making in a boundaried time frame (Moustakas, 1994). In an article describing *interpretative phenomenological analysis,* Reid et al. (2005) caution against multiple interviews with each participant due to participant reluctance to contribute to the study.

Instead, they maintain that a single 90-minute interview proves ideal for a phenomenological study since this method provides the full amount of information necessary for the study. Flowers (2008) notes that three other profits result from the single interview session, understanding that this structure creates a singular event that benefits: (1) the limited time span "encourages the participants' production of coherent narratives into which to contextualize detailed accounts" (p. 25); (2) for the interviewer

since there is an "ease" of stepping into the participants' lives for "one-time only, and providing a safe space for the enhanced disclosure of sensitive information" (p. 25); and (3) finally, for the sake of maintaining consistency within the project, especially since the one-time event keeps the "analytic process simple and clean" (Flowers, 2008, p. 25). I followed Flowers' (2008) recommendation for the interview invitation to only include one interview per participant.

Though I followed Flowers' (2008) recommendation and planned for additional interviewers when this reality emerged, follow up conversations were not necessary, as all of my questions were answered during each interview session with each participant. Therefore, I chose the single, 90-minute interview for the following reasons: first, this method is considered standard for *interpretative phenomenological analysis* (Smith et al., 2009). Second, a 90-minute interview provided me with more than enough time to get at the details of my participants' experiences and avoided being overwhelmed by additional nuances and perspectives that lay outside of the experience of community college success coaching (Moustakas, 1994).

Third, this choice of doing a single, longer interview avoided taxing participants and functioned as a practical means of respecting their time, availability, and willingness to participate in this study (Englander, 2012). Finally, I expected that the nature of the success coaching in the community college setting to be fairly consistent from day-to-day. Although I could foresee some situations in which a longer interview would be necessary (i.e., if I was interviewing students about their perspectives of the true meaning of student success), I predicted that a 90-minute interview was sufficient for my study's purposes.

I followed the three-part interview process as outlined by Seidman (2006) and then adapted by Bevan (2014), beginning with the first part of each interview focused on my participants' history with the phenomenon under investigation ("putting the participant's experience in context by asking him or her to tell as much as possible about him or herself in light of the topic up to the present time" [Seidman, 2006, p. 21]). For this study, the first part of each interview included the participants' history with the success coaching role as well as their educational preparation. I continued by trying to flesh out the details of the participants' experience, "concentrating on the concrete details of the participants' present lived experience in the topic area of the study" (Seidman, 2006, p. 21). This portion of my interviews concerned the details of my participants' experiences with success coaching in the community college setting as well as the implicit and explicit theories and associated concepts that they use in their success coaching practice. I concluded each of these interviews with a deeper reflection on success coaches' interpretations of their students' success and their perceptions of their role in the facilitation of this construct. This final section of the interviews addressed "the intellectual and emotional connections between the participants' work and life" (Seidman, 2006, p. 22), and their meaning made about the ultimate nature of success coaching in the two-year educational sector.

In order for participants to describe their experiences to the fullest extent in these interviews, it was important for me, as the researcher, to create a sense of rapport between herself and her participants (Seidman, 2006). The phenomenological interview must begin with "general conversation or a meditative activity aimed at creating a relaxed and trusting atmosphere" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 114). Therefore, I left room for relaxing

into this topic at the beginning of these 90-minute interviews, and helped my participants

to focus on their experiences by asking them to explain what they most and least enjoyed

about their roles as well as what they found particularly unique about them. I also

mentioned that the essence of success coaching should be self-defined by the participant.

To create deeper responses, I asked questions that probed at the community college

success coaches' thoughts about the ultimate ends and meaning of facilitating their

students' success.

Finally, interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder, and I took field

notes to capture facial expressions and other non-verbal cues during the session itself.

These are what Groenewald (2004) terms as "observational notes" (ON), or what Smith

et al. (2009) terms as "descriptive notes" (DN). They functioned to remind myself of

"what happened" during the interview. During the data explication process, I

incorporated these notes as I created the textural description of each of my participants'

experiences. These memos also included methodological notes (MN) about

methodological issues that came up, and highlighted areas or questions that needed to

change throughout this process, in order to remain true to the goals and procedures of a

phenomenological investigation (Groenewald, 2004). These methodological notes

concerned specific questions that need to be re-worded, and specific areas in my

interview guide that proved more enlightening to participants' experiences of promoting

student success than others.

To continue my bracketing process and to start my process of creating my

participants' individual textural descriptions, at the end of each interview, I also wrote a

one-paragraph, analytic memo (AM) describing my initial response to my participants'

reflections and made room for any deeper theoretical notes that emerge at this time (TN) (Groenewald, 2004). As I continued to engage in this process, I allowed my theoretical notes to guide each, subsequent interview. Even though the majority of these interviews occurred over the phone, I found this process immensely helpful as I continued my data explication process. It kept my attention focused on understanding the double hermeneutic circle and increased my reflexivity throughout this process.

Although I originally intended to transcribe my own interviews, I hired a transcriptionist to complete the transcription. I also reviewed each transcription within 48-hours of receiving the completed document. Once I received the copy of each participants' transcription, I sent the appropriate document to each participant to have them check the accuracy of the transcription. Furthermore, throughout this process, I continued the epoche process as I reviewed the interview transcripts, constantly checking for my biases, and setting them aside as a means to understand the essence of this phenomenon.

Modified photo elicitation discussion. Steger et al. (2013) explored the use of photo elicitation as a means of capturing qualitative information about participants' perceptions of a given topic of interest, by arguing that "images provide a more direct record of the phenomena of interest than any other data collection method used by social science researchers since they capture the immediate moment when taken by the photographer" (p. 533). Since phenomenology is not concerned with objective reality, but is instead concerned with participants' lived experiences with a certain phenomenon, the use of pictures in an empirical study can be extensively informative. Therefore, once the informed consent document was returned, one part of the interview involved showing

111

the participant eleven different pictures of what student success *could* look like, and asked them which picture best represents student success. After this discussion, I asked them to tell me if any image is missing, and if so, what type of image they think should be included. I gathered these eleven different pictures from the major student success outcomes as described in the research brief, *Community Colleges: Core Indictors of Effectiveness* (Harris, 1998). For an appendix of these pictures, please see Appendix H.

I used this *modified* photo elicitation activity to demonstrate the community college success coaches' perspectives as to the meaning of student success by placing this question into a conversation about graphic images that portray "success." Some of these images included visual depictions of traditional markers of student success (i.e., students posing up for graduation, studying, being in class, and being involved in non-academic activities). Other images included depictions of non-academic success (i.e., parents with a child, pictures of people earning great amounts of money, pictures of people working at a job, etc.). By placing this part of the interviews in discussion with graphic representations of these concepts, I wanted to bring about differences in perspectives than simply generating answers to interview questions. Additionally, since most of my participants answered this question in a similar manner (i.e., most participants chose the graduation picture), a theme began to emerge about the ways that community college student success was understood by those who are employed to facilitate this construct. Again, please see Appendix H for a list of these eleven images.

It is important to note that each of these images was retrieved from presented to the participants were either stock images, or publicly-available images, retrieved from wikimedia-commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page), a public domain

website that produces free photographic resources. In the instances when these images were not available, I purchased stock image copyright from a different stock image website (www.shutterstock.com). Since the images were either stock images or publicly available, there was no need for any oversight of those items. When phone interviews were conducted, I emailed participants the document that is in Appendix H that contains these photographs. Participants whose interviews were over the phone answered the same questions about the pictures as those who interviewed in person.

Secondary document analysis: Analysis of job descriptions and website content. Since the goal of phenomenological research is not to produce a theoretical definition of a phenomenon, secondary sources of data serve to confirm and further explicate the phenomenon in question (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Therefore, prior to the in-depth interview, I also asked participants to email me a copy of their job descriptions. Although this dataset was more objective (i.e., it provides the community college administrators' perspectives on the point and purpose of success coaching), it served as a counter-balance to my participants' responses. At minimum, this provided a subtle message about the institutional point of view about the purposes of community college success coaching (i.e., the context of participants' *lifeworlds* as described by Bogdan & Biklen [2003]). Secondary document analysis was appropriate for this study since these job descriptions and website mission statements provided a potential contrasting position off of which I compared my participants' responses.

Finally, in order to more fully understand the institutional point of view of community college success coaching, I also engaged in website content analysis. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) recommends a *summative content analysis* procedure, in which the

researcher "searches for occurrences of important, identified words" (p. 1285), and then explore this usage "to discover the range of meanings that a word can have in normal use" (p. 1285). Overall, this has three advantages: first, I used this method to understand a big-picture point of view of success coaching; second, this procedure was unobtrusive and lent itself very well to this stage of my analysis; and third, engaging in this type of analysis helped to provide that final point of contrast off of which to base my participants' responses.

Therefore, prior to the interview, participants were asked to email me a copy of the signed informed consent document, the demographic survey, and a copy of their job descriptions. Although the in-depth interviews functioned as the primary source of data, the job descriptions and website statements served as a secondary source of data to support or provide a source of contrast for my interviews. Gathering in-depth interviews that were supported by additional forms of data to elicit a number of different perspectives and pieces of participants' narratives was appropriate for a phenomenological study, since I created a robust account of my participants lived experiences as they sought to promote their students' success.

Data Explication Processes

This section is based on a combination of Smith et al.'s (2009), Creswell's (2007), Hycner's (1999), and Moustakas' (1994) outlines of the appropriate data analysis procedures for a phenomenological study. Van Manen's (2014) perspective is largely omitted from this section due to his primary focus on explicating the philosophy underlying phenomenology and his lack of focus on its specific methods.

The term "analysis" was deliberately changed in this heading since certain phenomenologists raise concerns that the term *analysis* can have implications that pull a phenomenological study in a different direction than its intentions. To this end, Hycner (1999) mentions, "the term analysis usually means a breaking into parts and therefore often means a loss of understanding the essence of the entire phenomenon… whereas explication implies an investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context whole" (p. 166). Therefore, I followed the subsequent procedures in terms of my desires to understand the ultimate essence of community college success coaching. I underwent this same process for both the individual interviews and the secondary data analysis (i.e., website statements and job descriptions.

Epoche process. First, prior to every interview, I engaged in the *epoche* process to bracket my assumptions about what I thought the focus of community college success coaching should be (i.e., for an example of this process, please see Appendices A and B). Hycner (1999) describes this process as "a deliberate and purposeful opening of the researcher to the phenomenon in its own right and in its own meaning" (p. 143). For me, this process included the writing of many memos and notes to myself to give myself a check on my own assumptions in order to learn to hold myself accountable to impartiality as a researcher (Moustakas, 1994).

Reading and re-reading. Second, Smith et al. (2009) urge the phenomenological researcher to "immerse oneself in the original data… reading and re-reading the data over and over again" (p. 82). I followed their recommendations and read through all of the original data at least once prior to starting the analysis process. This included the

115

participants': demographic responses, job descriptions, website information, and transcriptions. Describing this a "phase of active engagement with the data" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 82), they maintain that this first reading facilitates an overarching understanding of each of the participants' responses. To track the most significant quotes, after re-reading each interview transcript, I cut and pasted the most important quotes from each participant into a separate word file and gave them each a code name.

Horizontalization. Third, Smith et al. (2009) note that the researcher then must begin to analyze the data by going through it a second time, making an initial noting of any "semantic content and language use on a very exploratory level" (p. 83). Prior to engaging in this phase of the study, I made sure I obtained the participants' confirmations of the accuracy of their transcriptions (i.e., the process of member-checking, explained below). In this step, I went through each piece of the participants' data to provide a "close analysis that produces as comprehensive and detail a set of notes, memos, and comments on the data as possible" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 83). Moustakas (1994) describes this step of the process as *horizontalization*, in which the researcher assumes that each part of the data collected "has equal value as we seek to disclose its nature and essence" (p. 94). The main goal of this step was to continue the phenomenological reduction process by understanding what about this given phenomenon that "would give it a distinct character" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 95).

In this stage, I borrowed from Saldaña's (2009) values coding method, which explores the values, meanings, and attitudes participants may have about a given phenomenon. In this sense, Saldaña (2009) defines *beliefs* as "our deeply held convictions about the way things are" (p. 89), *values* as "things that hold deep meaning

116

to the individual" (p. 89), and *attitudes* as "the ways we think and feel about the world around us" (p. 89). Since I conducted a phenomenological study, examining success coaches' deeply held values, attitudes, and beliefs about their roles in terms of how they support community college students in their developing success was fitting. Therefore, in this first round of coding, I examined each participants' attitudes, beliefs, and values about the nature of their roles and their thoughts about what it means for a community college to be successful. I also held to these categories loosely, understanding that the data shifted away from this scheme at times. Overall, reading through all of these transcriptions and doing this initial analysis gave me, as the researcher, a sense of the whole of my data as well as an introductory grasp of the most important pieces before trying to more deeply understand the underlying meanings my participants made of their experiences.

Again, I kept notes to myself through this initial stage of data analysis and made sure that I used the three types of comments as outlined by Smith et al. (2009), which included: *descriptive comments* that simply stated the content of what was said (p. 84), *linguistic comments* that paid attention to the types of words chosen (p. 84), and *conceptual comments* that focused on getting at the more "interrogative level of the data" (p. 84) and functioned to begin to bridge into the next step of data explication. I understood that this was an iterative, and not step-wise, process. In this, I strove to pay attention to all three levels of commentary within this initial run-through of the data I collected. I went through this process for each participant prior to moving on to the next in order to understand the full meaning of each participants' experience before comparing them to one another.

Units of meaning. Fourth, Smith et al. (2009) explain that after this initial

analysis, it is important to begin to develop emerging themes, or what Hycner (1999)

calls *units of meaning.* Even though this part of the data explication process is sometimes

referred to as "open coding" (Saldaña, 2015), it differs in that it does not look across all

of the transcripts as a whole, but instead works carefully through each participants'

transcription or collected body of data, one at a time in order to make meaning out of

each, individual participant's lived experience with the phenomenon under investigation.

Creswell (2007) describes this process as finding and isolating the specific statements

that serve to illuminate the phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) also notes that a list of *units*

of meaning from each interview or piece of data should be compiled at this step, and

redundancies should be eliminated, prior to moving to the next narrative. To assist in this

part of the process, I kept a code book in which I created a code and an accompanying

definition, with an example quote for reference. To eliminate potentially redundant

codes, I examined the context, content, and number of times a given "meaning" was

mentioned throughout the course of an interview. Though I did not bind my analysis and

understanding of the significance of a unit of meaning to its common usage, I used these

numbers as a means of gathering a master snapshot of emphases within this data set.

Clustering. Fifth, Hycner (1999) notes that the phenomenological researcher

must cluster these meaning units to form themes. Once again bracketing my

presuppositions, I continued this elimination process until I can "elicit the essence of the

meaning of units within this context" (Hycner, 1999, p. 150). Going through this process

participant-by-participant, I grouped different units of meaning together to create a list of

the most important themes for each participants' narrative (Moustakas, 1994). Creswell

(2007) warns the phenomenological researcher not to come up with too exhaustive of a list of original themes and instead focus his or her explication on answering the question, "*what does this participant mean when he or she makes this statement in relation to the phenomenon under investigation?*" (p. 236). As a self-proclaimed splitter within qualitative data analysis, I paid special attention to this characteristic and continuously asked myself this question as I went through what is commonly called "first cycle coding" (Saldaña, 2015). I also followed Creswell's (2007) recommendation and avoided developing more than 30 themes with this initial elimination process.

Individual textural and structural descriptions. As a final part of the process, Hycner (1999) recommends writing up two summaries that incorporate all of the themes of each of the participants' narrative that provides the researcher with what he calls a holistic context to their experiences. Moustakas (1994) terms this the use of "imaginative variation" (p. 98), or the researcher's attempt to get at "the *what* and the *how* of the individual participants' experiences" (p. 98). In essence, the researcher is trying to answer the following two questions for each participant: "*what* did each participant experience in light of this phenomenon?" (textural description; Hycner [1999], p. 98) and "*how* did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it currently is for the individual participant I am explicating?" (structural description; Hycner [1999], p. 98). Sanders (1982) terms these the *individual textural* and *individual structural* descriptions, each trying to capture a description of the meaning of the phenomenon in both cursory (external) as well as essential (core) levels. It is important to note that this second step (the *structural description*) focused much more heavily on understanding the various implicit and explicit theories that community college success coaches use to guide their

119

practices, instead of on their descriptions of their roles. Following Creswell's (2007) guidelines, I created no more than ten themes for each type of description (*individual textural description* or *individual structural description*).

Moustakas (1994) notes that this step within the qualitative research process cannot be systematized. The researcher must rely again upon her creativity, sensibility, and interpretation to make sense out of the data explication that has occurred. In this situation, I worked with my director and other interested academic/success coaching researchers from the *National Academic Advising Association* and engaged in the debriefing process to make sure that my meaning-making processes remained true to the lived experiences of my participants. Smith et al. (2009) call this the process of "bringing it all together" (p. 99), and maintained that this spirit of collegiality provides a book-end to the bracketing process that phenomenological researchers must engage in prior to moving to the next participants' dataset. At the end of this step, I wrote up two summary paragraphs for each participant: (1) an *individual textural description* (the *what* of each participant's experience); and (2) an *individual structural description* (the *how* of each participant's experience).

Composite textural description through data patterning. Sixth, after this process has been completed for each participant, Smith et al. (2009) recommend that the researcher begin to look for patterns of analysis across each of the participants' individual textural descriptions. Again, involving imaginative variation, the goal of this step is to move towards a textural description of the *what* of the phenomenon under investigation (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) describes this phase as "revealing the structures of the experience, or the conditions that must exist for something to appear" (p. 98). Here, I

followed Hycner's (1999) advice and "look for the themes common to most or all of the interviews as well as the individual variation between them" (p. 154). This step gathers an understanding of the overall *what* of the experience, and created a composite textual description of the shared experiences of all of the participants. This approach is very similar to what Saldaña (2015) describes as pattern coding, a second-cycle process of developing the "'meta-code'—the category label that identifies similarly coded data. Pattern codes not only organize the corpus but attempt to attribute meaning to that organization" (p. 150). Again, I followed Creswell's (2007) recommendation and reduce the picture to no more than ten themes across the entire data set that describe my participants' experiences.

In this phase of this study's data explication processes, I paid attention to two different issues that could have arisen: first, I took care to avoid the clustering of themes that did not belong together if significant differences become apparent. This process was especially important when negative cases presented themselves, or when unique themes appeared in individual participants' data. Since this study was phenomenological in orientation, I needed to pay explicit attention to allowing specific participants' voices to emerge as especially noteworthy. Second, intention was also placed upon my role as interpreter of these participants' experiences. Following Smith et al.'s (2009) advice, I aimed at striking a careful balance between what they term as a "hermeneutic of empathy" and a "hermeneutic of suspicion" (p. 106). To elucidate their point, Smith et al. (2009) explain that "one starts with a hermeneutics of empathy but it is fine for one's interpretation to become more questioning as long as it is prompted by close attention to the text" (p. 106). This attitude provided additional support for my continual bracketing

process since I needed to investigate participants'' words on their own account, without reading my personal desires into them.

Overall, the important outcome for this part of the data explication process was the ultimate generation of a textual description of the phenomenon that is a composite summary of all the participants' experiences, that "depicts the experience of the group as a whole" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 138). To gather this information, I looked over each of my participants' individual textural analysis paragraphs and synthesize them into a master description of what occurred for these participants in this process. As was mentioned in the section describing the individual structural analyses, I focused mostly describing my participants' experiences with community college success coaching in this part of my data explication process. The culmination of this process is presented in my first findings chapter (chapter four).

Composite structural description through data patterning. Seventh, this composite textual description is also matched with a composite structural description. Here, Moustakas (1994) describes that as "a way of understanding the co-researchers as a group experienced what they experienced" (p. 142). This stands alongside of the composite textural description and functions to provide a composite description of the *how* of the participants' experiences with a given phenomenon. In this part of my study, I synthesized all of my participants' *individual structural descriptions* and created a master description of *how* the success coaching phenomenon was experienced by my participants. Similar to the previous section on individual structural analyses, I focused much more explicitly on the theories that community college success coaches use in their work in this section of the analysis. Following Creswell's (2007) guidelines, I once again

aimed for creating no more than ten themes in presenting my *composite structural analysis*. The product of the second part of my data explication process is presented in my second findings chapter (chapter five).

Arriving at the essence. Eighth, Moustakas (1994) calls for a synthesis of the textural and structural meanings to portray the ultimate essence of the phenomenon, or the ultimate *why* of the study. Through this synthesis, the reader should invariably understand the ultimate "essence of the experience and provide for the reader the culminating aspect of the study" (Creswell, 2007, p. 159). Since the aim of phenomenology was to get at the true essence of the phenomenon of investigation, all of my data, memos, and initial summaries were incorporated into this final statement. By reading this section, the reader should walk away with the following thoughts: *"I understand what it is like, now, to be a community college success coach and participate in the facilitation of community college students' success. I also understand the most important explicit and implicit theories that these non-academic student support professionals use to guide their work"* (adapted from Creswell, 2007, p. 195). Once again, following Creswell's (2007) guidelines, I captured no more than the ten most important themes found within all of my data. Appendix I provides a master list of steps that I followed when explicating my data.

The Use of Computer Programs in an IPA Study

Although the use of computer programs in phenomenological analysis is also widely-debated (i.e., for a review of this debate, please see Polkinghorne, 2005), I chose to use NVivo coding software to the manage this project. Heeding Bodgan and Biklen's

(2003) advice, I understood that data must be well-organized to avoid the sloppiness that can result from collecting a large amount of data. Each of the materials for each participant were kept on my personal computer, with back-up files on an external hard drive as well as a USB drive. Hard copies of each piece of data were also kept in a file cabinet to which I only have access. I also created a password-protected folder in my computer named after each of the participants' pseudonyms. I placed the list of documents recorded in Appendix J within each participants' folder.

Due to the depth of analysis that can result from this process (Kelle, 1995), hand-coding is sometimes recommended for a phenomenological study. Despite the merits of this recommendation, I chose to use a computer program (NVivo) to manage the data within this process. Since "the understanding of the meaning of phenomena cannot be computerized because it is not an algorithmic process" (Kelle, 1995, p. 3), and since "there is no one software package that could do the analysis in itself" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 169), the use of NVivo software helped systematize the data and therefore, the resulting explication process, to remain organized.

Trustworthiness Measures

Since quantitative standards of objectivity, validity, and reliability are not appropriate for this study, trustworthiness in this qualitative study were maintained by following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) outlined procedures of *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability,* and *confirmability*. *Credibility* is defined as "congruence of the findings with the social reality of participants" (Guba, 1981, p. 84), and typical procedures include the adoption of well-established research methods (i.e., the data explication process), triangulation of data (i.e., the five major points of data), iterative-questioning (i.e., the

interview guide), negative case analysis (i.e., including diverse findings), peer-debriefing (i.e., explained later in this section), researcher reflexivity (i.e., my epoche process), thick description (i.e., included in the findings chapter), and member-checking (i.e., explained later in this section).

Each of these strategies were promoted in this process, but most importantly, after every interview, I sent the transcript of the interview to each participant and ask for feedback from them regarding their perceived accuracy of my transcription (i.e., member-checking). I changed any piece of the interview based on their responses. I also kept a researchers' journal to keep track of my initial impressions of the data and any other thoughts I had about this process in order to maintain my reflexivity in the bracketing or *epoche* process. Finally, I also included negative case analysis and brought in any responses that ran counter to the aims of the study. This was achieved through presenting any responses about negative parts or challenges of success coaching within this context. I paid attention to participants' responses that speak of aims to facilitate students' academic as well as personal, or larger life success. It was only by including both the positive and negative accounts of each of my participants' experiences that a robust description of the community college success coaching phenomenon can be achieved.

Transferability is the process of logical generalizability (Guba, 1981). This means that the claims that I, as the researcher, made are understood to be logical and that other researchers could make the same claims. To reach this level of trustworthiness, I adopted four different strategies. First, I spoke with my dissertation chair about my proposed methods and reviewed my interview guide with him in order to maintain agreement as to the point and purpose of each piece of data I collected in this study.

Second, I also asked another doctoral candidate in my department to read through and code one interview that I have made anonymous, and then compared her codes with mine. We spoke about any conflicting codes that may have come up in our initial interpretations, and then changed the codes to get after the specific participants' meanings made of his or her experiences more explicitly. Third, I also submitted my final textural, structural, and essential descriptions to my dissertation advisor for review. Finally, I maintained monthly contact with a team of academic/success coaching researchers from the *National Academic Advising* Association, and discussed my emerging findings with them. Throughout this peer-debriefing process, I continued the bracketing process to check my biases and strove to represent the lived experiences of my participants in as realistic of a manner as possible.

Dependability is the proxy in qualitative research for quantitative reliability (Guba, 1981). Therefore, *dependability* aims at understanding whether or not this study could be reproducible in another context. To achieve this third level of trustworthiness, I sought to describe the research design as well as the implementation in painstaking, operational detail in the participant recruitment, selection, introduction, data gathering, and data explication processes. I also described the use of overlapping methods by which to gather similar pieces of data off of which to support my description of community college success coaching. This was followed to generate reproducibility in my data explication process.

Fourth, *confirmability* is taken as the fourth measure to assure that the findings of my study are a result of the meaning-making of my participants and are *not* a result of my preferences (Guba, 1981). Since objectivity cannot be reached in a qualitative study, the

126

goal of *confirmability* in a qualitative study is impartiality, and depended on me, as the

researcher, to admit my own predispositions and provide clarity as to how these biases

may affect the outcomes of my research study. Quite similar to the phenomenological

epoche process, I created a robust description of the role of the bracketing process I used

throughout this investigation. I continued this *epoche* (Moustakas, 1994), bracketing

(Smith et al., 2009), or reflexivity (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011) process throughout my

study, and made sure that I stay continually aware of my biases throughout each

remaining step of this study. Triangulation of data, member-checking, and peer-

debriefing were also put in place to try to reduce any potential biases I had as the lead

researcher of this study.

Finally, I made sure that I was be able to respond affirmatively to Creswell's

(2007) standards for a sound phenomenological study, which include:

1. Have I conveyed an understanding of the philosophical values of
   phenomenology?
2. Do I have a clear phenomenon of investigation?
3. Have I employed a well-known data analysis procedure that aligns with the
   phenomenological tradition?
4. Have I produced rich descriptions of my participants' experiences within a
   given context where the experience took place?
5. Have I demonstrated appropriate reflexivity throughout the process of this
   study? (p. 260)

Overall, Patton (2002) reminds the qualitative researcher that she cannot be "completely

value-free in her inquiries" (p. 93), but instead must be transparent in her methods and

her aims, and especially "discuss the possible influences of our biases in reporting our

findings" (p. 93). In this chapter, I have tried to follow this directive by outlining the

specific standards I followed during this investigation.

Participant Protection and Ethical Considerations

Any ethical qualitative research project needs to follow specific measures to protect participants. Three fundamental factors are most important to consider to maintain an ethical research project, which include: (1) the gathering of IRB approval for a study; (2) the use of informed consent to avoid deceiving the research participants; and (3) protection of participants' anonymity throughout this process. First, the most important procedure to follow within qualitative research was gaining institutional approval through the institutional review board (IRB) for the study in question. In order to avoid bringing any type of harm to my participants, I received Baylor University's approval of this project prior to engaging in the data collection process with any of my participants, and I followed all of the appropriate guidelines for research with human subjects (Appendix K).

A second fundamental principle of the ethical qualitative research project is the use of informed consent. Prior to engaging in any type of research interview, I reviewed the focus, purpose, and significance of the study with each participant, and informed him or her of the research procedures that I used in this study. Within this initial conversation, I also reminded him or her of the voluntary nature of the project, the risks and potential benefits of participation, and his or her right to stop this research at any point in time he or she deemed necessary. I also reviewed the features of a qualitative investigation at the beginning of each interview, leaving room for the participant to ask any final questions before engaging in the interview itself. The research process did not begin if the participant did not return the signed informed consent form to me. Furthermore, the participants were *not* pressured to participate in the study in any way.

The final ethical principle within qualitative research includes the protection of participants' anonymity. This involves the use of participant pseudonyms, which participants were made aware of during their initial phone conversation, as well as the use of making the content of the in-depth interviews anonymous. Participants were informed that any identifying information in the interviews (i.e., names of employing community colleges, other locations, relevant people, etc.), were changed and were only be seen by me, in my function as the lead researcher in this study. Participants were also made aware that I presented their demographic data in aggregate in the presentation of the final study (please see Appendix L for the detailed dataset, or table 3.1 for a condensed version).

At this point, it is important to note the distinction between confidentiality and anonymity, which I also made clear to my participants. In this study, I could not guarantee that my participants information would not be seen by others, especially the readers of my dissertation (i.e., confidentiality). I made sure, however, that my participants understood the crucial term of representation, as described by Smith et al. (2009), as the reality that my participants' "experiences would be represented, and their voices heard, but not at the cost of anonymity" (p. 53). I let my participants know that I displayed their experiences in as descriptive of a manner as possible without giving away any identifying information (i.e., anonymity).

Finally, participants were also made aware that all data was stored on my computer and was backed up on an external hard-drive, both of which were password-protected. I also created a pseudonym for each participant and was be the only person with access to the key. Each transcription was kept in a password-protected, locked file

on my computer, and transcription data was not released until all names, details, and identifying information was changed so as not to give away my participants' identities.

Summary of Chapter

This study was intended to increase our understanding of what it means to promote community college student success from the perspective of the community college success coaches. Phenomenological in orientation, both in its methodological philosophy as well as its methods and procedures, the goals of this study were to provide a deeper understanding of community college success coaches' lived experiences to the growing body of academic/success coaching research in higher education. The literature review in chapter two indicated that though extensive research on community college success has been conducted, student affairs practitioners' perspectives have continually been left out of this conversation. Furthermore, until the completion of this study, current academic/success coaching research had not isolated the community college context as its own, unique space, and has not explored what possible differences might emerge for those professionals working in the two-year sector. Therefore, I conducted this study to understand what community college success coaches think it means to be a success coach and how they interpret the meaning of student success. Finally, special consideration was placed on understanding the implicit or explicit theories they used to guide this process. The remainder of this dissertation presents and discusses the findings that emerged as a result of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings, Chapter One

Interviewer: "Thank you for doing this study with us."

Participant: "You are very welcome. It will be very interesting to read your work to try to get a grasp of what we are even supposed to be doing."

—David, Community College Success Coach, Florida

The current and following chapters provide the master synthesis of data collected for this project, which includes interviews with 44 community college success coaches employed in 32 community colleges, across 16 of the United States. Included in these chapters is also commentary on secondary data analysis, which included content analysis of institutional websites and job descriptions, as well as a modified photo elicitation piece of this project, included in each participant's interview. This secondary data collection served as a buttress and potential spot of comparison for the success coaches' primary interview data and aimed at gathering additional insights as to the purpose, function, and ultimate essence of this newly emerging role in the community college context.

Therefore, this chapter provides the opening analysis to my first research question, which was: *what does it mean to participants to be a success coach in the community college setting?*. The first goal of this phenomenological dissertation study was to create a composite textural description—an answer to the "what" of these participants' experiences with a given phenomenon (Smith, 2009). Moustakas describes this opening step as "describing the conditions that must exist for a given phenomenon to

appear as it is" (p. 98). Therefore, this primary description was a particularly fitting and

necessary piece of this study due to the lack of explicit, empirical understanding of the

function and characteristics of this role within the two-year community college settings.

This opening chapter was also necessary when understanding that very little empirical

data has been collected from the voices and perspectives of community college student

affairs professionals themselves (Creamer, 1994). Before we are able to understand the

potential implicit and explicit guiding principles and theories these success coaches use in

their daily coaching practices, we must first understand how they conceptualize their

roles, and what, if anything, makes their roles potentially unique.

Four major themes emerged as a result of this portion of my data explication

process, which included community college success coaches' descriptions of: (1) their

typical student populations and timings of these interventions; (2) unique aspects about

the community college environments in which they serve; (3) the specific types of

support they provide for their students' and (4) any inherent difficulties within their roles.

In the next chapter, I will provide additional insights as to my participants' descriptions

of *why* they serve, including their thoughts as to the specific purpose of this role, as well

as descriptions of the implicit or explicit theories they named as useful.

Theme #1—The "Who" of Community College Success Coaching: Participants' Descriptions of Their Typical Student Populations

The participants in this study described their typical student populations with a

great deal of similarity as to the published literature base I reviewed for this study (for a

detailed explanation, please see chapter two of this study). In almost every interview,

participants explained that their student populations were at high risk of attrition, and

battled extremely high barriers to their academic success. The most common barriers included lack of basic needs (i.e., housing, transportation, and food; mentioned by every participant, for a total of 67 different occurrences); a lack of academic preparedness (mentioned by 23 participants); and a lack of financial literacy (mentioned by 17 participants).

Susan, a success coach at a community college in Oregon, explained that the students she serves are typically, "employed full-time in addition to being college students. Too often, they're trying to be full-time employees and full-time college students… They have families, and children… and are challenged by transportation issues. And housing issues. And personal mental health issues—by drugs and alcohol, by traumatic life experiences." To support this point, Rachel, a success coach in Montana, explained, "I can't tell you how many students I've heard cry over things... like, 'I don't have a house, but I have to go home because school is done for the day'." Antonio, a success coach in North Carolina, explained that the majority of his students are dealing with "outside factors … Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. They're trying to meet these basic requirements and are also trying to take classes. They're kind of back against the wall regardless." Furthermore, a substantial majority of the job descriptions I reviewed made explicit concessions for service to one or more non-traditional student groups, including: first-generation students (22 job descriptions), disabled students (13 job descriptions), adult learners (15 job descriptions), and specific minority populations (10 descriptions).

Interestingly, several participants also mentioned specific physical and psychological attributes of their typical student populations, which included specific

descriptions as to: (1) the exceedingly strenuous paces of their lives due to the multiple roles they fulfill; (2) the ways they have been "left behind" by the educational system; and (3) their displays of grit and resilience due to their circumstances. Iris, a coach in North Carolina, described her students' lived reality this way:

> People will come in and say, "well, I work 40 hours a week and I want to take a full load," and I'm like, "Well, let's talk about this. Are you married? Do you have kids? Are there other people who are going to want some time from you?" Because working 40 hours a week and trying to take 12-15 hours is in and of itself not easy to do.

Samuel, a Pennsylvania resident, explained that his office often has "students that we come in contact with have a lot of things going on their lives. They have work and families and a lot of other things vying for their attention. I consider it an honor when they can even make it to us in the first place."

A general understanding these students have been "left behind" by the larger educational system also came across from the majority of participants in this sample. Allison, a success coach from Texas, stated quite directly, that "so many of our students have been left behind by the system, and we try to be that bridge for them." Kendall, a resident of Alabama, explained that her office encounters students "with a lot of trust issues. They've been hurt by the educational system and sometimes, even larger societal systems, and they've had backs turned on them before and a lot of times they are reaching out for help one last time. You know, it's important to remember that this may be their last effort before they just quit." Since many other participants echoed these sentiments, it became clear that my participants understood that these students were largely on their last leg and were responding to these interventions as an almost "last ditch effort for some type of hope to support them" (Cassie).

Interestingly, a smaller portion of my respondents (11 participants), did not solely comment on the overlooked nature of their student populations but also described their students as resilient. Emma, one of the longest-tenured success coaches in my sample (eight years), explained that prior to working with community college students were less "gritty" than their four-year counterparts. When expanding upon her experience in working with this population, she noted that "what I quickly learned was that students who had had a harder life were really more gritty—grittier because ... it was easier for them to experience grit, they just would never call it that." Allison also explained, "I've just seen so many students that may be deemed high risk that have a depth of resilience that I never saw in your four-year highly-resourced student." Roxanne, a success coach in Nebraska, summarized this perspective particularly aptly when she said, "some of them already have a lot of grit and resilience: it just looks different than what we would normally think these qualities would look like." This group of participants did not just understand their students as "left behind" by the system, but also saw their students as extra persistent due to the way they overcame their life circumstances to engage in for their community college careers.

Even though these comments may not be vastly different from the body of literature on community college students, it is important to provide a description of the typical student that these community college success coaches described serving. Throughout my data explication processes, it became clear that these success coaches supported the students at highest risk of attrition in an educational sector whose students already demonstrate low persistence and completion rates. In light of these comments, the next section of this chapter will turn to understanding my participants' comments

135

about the unique features of the community college setting that shape their success coaching practices.

Theme #2—The "Where" of Community College Success Coaching: Participants' Descriptions of the Unique Influences of the Community College Setting for their Work

When examining participants' comments as to the unique influence of the community college setting on their coaching practices, they provided responses about three major aspects of their community college settings. First, like the previous section, all but four participants made specific comments as to the type of student that the community college tends to attract (40 participants). Second, over two-thirds of participants in this study mentioned specific aspects of the community college that impacted their coaching practices. Finally, half of the success coaches I interviewed provided perspectives about the essence of the mission of their community colleges, defending the importance of these missions for their work.

Participants' Comments about the Community College Sector of Higher Education

In this study, a sweeping majority of participants, (all but four), mentioned that their roles as coaches were unique due to the "typical community college student that is drawn to this sector of education" (Clara, a success coach in the state of Washington). When asked to elaborate upon this statement, Clara explained, "you know, the type of population, non-traditional, high-risk, and oh yeah, first-generation." Other success coaches echoed similar comments, like Mia, a Tennessee resident, when she explained:

136

We have a lot of non-traditional students who are older, working full-time jobs, have families, or are coming back to school because of [Pell Grant] scholarship opportunity. We have a lot of first generation students. We have a lot of students who come from diverse backgrounds in terms of economic status. We have students who come from different racial backgrounds, more diverse, than the four-year colleges.

When asked why this population is so prevalent with the students with whom she works, Mia explained, "there's a lot of poverty in my area of the country, and in my specific city. I think the community college, as an institution, in general, draws on this type of student population in a pretty intense manner." Gregory's comments reflected a similar sentiment when he noted that a lot of his students are "the ones who don't have access to four year university level or to education period, a lot of our kids are kids who just finished high school and they might be the first ones in their family to finish high school. They might be the first ones in their family to go to college. A lot of them are first time mothers, or single parents—college is not the only thing they have going on."

Jonathan, a success coach in Michigan, explained that he thinks that the community college student population "can't leave their home lives behind and come to college and focus on college 24/7 – live on campus, have people them around them that also are focusing on college 24/7." When asked why he thinks the community college attracts this type of student population, he explains, "you know, people here are focusing on college when they're here, and then they go back and all of the outside things are still there. That's the challenge of it, but that's what also makes it unique—students can get their education and pursue their careers at the same time."

Success coaching as a response to poverty. Almost one-third of success in this study, (11 participants), mentioned that much of their work is, in fact, a response to

137

poverty within the community. Luke described his students as "in need of more assistance in getting through school because their safety nets are smaller, you know, due to poverty, and all that—less access to resources." When noting the difficulties inherent to her position, Delia, a success coach in North Carolina, explained, "you see some … poverty cycles… mindset cycles, some of them just aren't willing to break… A lot of my job is figuring out who will respond and who has too much going on due to their difficult life situation." To this end, Cassie summarized this development when she stated,

> Unlike the four-year, it really just seems like the community college is starting to take the lead on a lot of things relating to poverty and students. It seems like that's increasingly the expectation—you know—stepping in to meet the community's needs once they make any sort of touch with our institutions.

From these comments, it became clear that these participants understood that much of this role emerged as a response to the increasing poverty in their individual communities.

Students' lack of knowledge about the community college system. Finally, eight participants mentioned that, due to the previous two factors, their community colleges tended to draw a specific student population that demonstrated a lack of knowledge about higher education. Giovanna noted that, "you can think about it in terms of what the research shows in terms of being less academically-prepared. I do think all of that when I'm visiting with them, because a lot of them really needed to be walked through the entire process." Yvonne, another long-time success coach in Tennessee, stated that "not everybody who comes into community college is well prepared for college. Especially here in our area, we seem to have a little bit of a disconnect between K-12 and college and students are just ill-prepared." Interestingly, she described this characteristic as a

138

typical reality for the typical community college, and once again, talked about this as a unique feature of the two-year college setting.

Summary. Although these statements may also not be much different than what has been revealed in current community college literature, it becomes striking when understanding that participating success coaches in this study characterized the community college as a type of institution that attracts these groups of students, and spoke of these qualities as contributing to a shared reality that shaped and guided their coaching practices. The second reality of this setting, the specific institutional characteristics, are described in the next section.

Participants' Comments as to the Unique, Institutional Features of their Community Colleges

Over two-thirds of the participants in this study named specific, institutional features of their community colleges that influenced their work, which included the diversity of academic programs to support a myriad of students' academic goals (12 participants), the fast-paced nature of the community college system (five participants), and the large number of student support services available (five participants). Additionally, 11 participants described their community colleges as having a "special, family-feel" (Jennifer) that could be missing in other contexts.

Diversity of community college programs and students' goals. First, just over one-quarter of participating success coaches in this study mentioned the diversity of academic programs available, that supported a wide range of students' goals. Delia explained that the student body will, "run the gambit from the 55-year-old retiree coming

back for the second... for a second career – to the veteran who's coming back to community college to the true 'I just graduated high school yesterday and here I am.'" To support this point, Samantha, a fairly recent success coach employed in Tennessee, mentioned a swatch different goals that community college students may have for their time at their institutions, including students who are coming back to "college… never went to college, your traditional just-out-of-high-school students, those super motivated ones in high school, or who may not have done so well in school coming back, students looking to jumpstart their careers—pursuing a particular employment certificate." Overall, this sub-group of participants noted that this diversity truly makes the community college unique, causing the success coaches to look at each student individually, not just as "that four-year student with largely the same goal" (Antonio).

The fast-paced nature of the community college. A minority of participants mentioned two distinct institutional features unique to the community college setting, which included: (1) its fast-paced nature (five participants); and (2) the large number of student support services (five participants, discussed in the next section). When describing the fast-paced nature of the community college environment, Renee, a South Carolinian success coach, explained, "I think a lot of times they're so in and out they think 'I'm here from 12:00PM to 3:00PM, and I am getting my classes done, and at 3:00PM I go home. Then, I do it all over again.'" When asked how this affects her role, she explained that it puts pressure on her face-to-face interactions, and means that she "really has to make every single moment with my students count" (Renee). David explained this reality in a slightly different manner, "At one moment ... the reality is in two semesters they could be so far down the path towards exiting the college that there's

140

very little that you're able to do." When asked to share his perspective about how this reality affects his work, David explained, "I really just try the main, underscoring reality of letting my students know that this system tends to be very fast paced." Mia summarized all of these comments when she noted, "I think most of the time our interactions with students tend to be very short—just providing critical support in those times of particular need or duress."

The vast number of student support services functions. The five participants who described the large number of student support services on campus highlighted both the number of services available as well as the potential confusion they could cause students trying to navigate them. Each of these participants explained that success coaching may be similar to other well-known programs, especially those created for specific populations, including cohort-based models aimed at former foster youth (Alice), disabled students (Jonathan, Stella), first generation students (Clara), and especially, the nationally-acclaimed Trio Student Support Services program (Georgina, Jonathan, Stella, Clara, and Alice). Georgina, however, captured the essence of this uniqueness when she explained, how it must be "incredibly confusing to students because there are many different success programs on the campus, which I think is common. So they have a choice of TRIO, Jobs for Maine Graduates, Embark, Navigating Success, or Path to Graduation. Now who wouldn't be confused by that?" When reflecting on how this affects her coaching, she mentions, "it contributes to this feeling of student lostness. There's a lot of help, but students don't necessarily know where to turn."

The small, family-feel of community colleges. Finally, and most surprisingly, one-quarter of success coaches in this study mentioned that their community colleges were unique due to their small size that helped them to maintain a "family-feel" (Jennifer). It is important to note that each of these success coaches were housed the smallest community colleges in this sample. Sharing his description, Gregory elaborated that he thinks "the amount of love and support that students get here is really special. They're not just a number here." Helen, a Texan success coach, voiced that her community college is "just a small community and everyone knows everyone… it's a more personable atmosphere than at a four-year university because they're usually so big and students just kind of get lost in the shuffle." Romeo, an Oregonian success coach, mentioned that he enjoys how the students at his community college "receive more access to us, since we're smaller—we're more approachable. Smaller campus provides more of an opportunity to see those students when we're walking around campus in between meetings, in between classes… we're more accessible to those students." This subgroup of participants championed the idea of the small, communal nature of their institutions, and supported the essence of Jennifer's description, "a place where our students really see you care, and where you're not just a number."

Summary. Overall, these comments as to unique institutional aspects of the community college highlighted four features of two-year college settings, distinguishing them from four-year universities. Two additional sets of comments emerged from this sample, however, that expanded upon these themes, and captured fundamental pieces of the community college mission. The next section will review these insights.

Participants' Comments as to the Uniqueness of the Community College Mission

Over half of my participants mentioned aspects of the community college mission that influenced their work in a particular manner, which fell into two different themes: first, 14 participants mentioned the workforce preparation focus within the community college setting, and second, 11 participants mentioned their belief in the community college as a vehicle for upward social mobility.

Workforce preparation role of the community college. When examining the 14 perspectives that specifically mentioned the workforce preparation role that the community college plays, comments like, "this setting is more concentrated on career readiness" (Oliver) became quite common. Continuing with his explanation, Oliver explained that "the majority of my students are not transferring on to a four-year, so I help them find employment after they graduate." When commenting on the reasons for starting her role, Jane, a success coach living in Alabama, explained that her role started in response to the "2012 recession. Several major businesses in the area were laying off some of their workers. We have a wide range of our service area, so we wanted to address the needs of our community." Luke and Cassie also supported this notion when they mentioned almost identical statements of the community college being more responsive than the four-year to "the needs of the immediate, surrounding community," especially in terms of connecting the students "with job opportunities that can also support their futures." Interestingly, each of these 14 participants' job descriptions also mentioned that developing students' career plans and workforce connections functioned as a major part of their role.

Community college as a vehicle for students' social mobility. Still, other participants mentioned a core belief that the community college functioned as a vehicle for upward, social mobility (11 participants). Jade summarized this idea when she commented that, in her office, "I always put up my associate's degree, my bachelor's, and my master's–I do that on purpose, because I value my associate's as well as I value my other ones, because they both took time and energy and my money." Comparing the access mission of the community college to its workforce development mission, Gregory stated:

> While the community college may be a front door to higher education, it is also a last chance institution for some people to get a secondary credential, to literally change the income of their life with a certificate, or with a training program, or with a degree.

Similarly, Chloe advocated for her, "love for community colleges. I believe in what they do. They give people, I mean I don't know how many times I've heard students say that 'they've given me a second chance.'" Each of these comments reflected a larger understanding that working in these institutions afforded them the privilege to champion their students and provide an access point for the possibility of increased social mobility.

Overall, these statements echoed the overarching theme that these participants' perceived that the community college, due to its typical student population, institutional characteristics, and mission, influences the success coaching role in a myriad of ways, effecting the type of support provided by these coaches. The next section will elaborate on the specific type of support the participants in this study described they provided.

Four types of support emerged from my analysis process, including: (1) an individual emotional and psychological support function; (2) an academic mentorship function; (3) an institutional guidance function; and (4) a student services generalist function. This section will explore each of these, in turn, and provide an empirical description of their functions, gathered from participants' responses.

The Success Coach as a Source of Emotional and Psychological Support

Participants in this study described the emotional and psychological support they provided to their students through four distinct terms: (1) cheerleaders; (2) advocacy; (3) safety-nets; and (4) barrier attention. This section will explore coaches' comments as to each of these four different descriptions.

Success coaches as cheerleaders for the academic journey. The most prevalent theme that emerged from each of the participants in this study was that of the individual student support function, especially in terms of the emotional and psychological support these coaches provided for their students. Answers to questions like, "*what terms would you use to describe your role?*" commonly included terms such as: "mentor", "supporter", or "cheerleader." Eighteen participants saw themselves as "thought-partners for the students' academic journeys" (Allison). Charlotte described this feature of her role as particularly attractive when she participated "in the meat of what students were doing and helping them be more successful in the process." Sienna, a success coach in California, captured this idea eloquently when she explained, "I just more so kind of... I think about it more as a mentor. You know? Where you're kind of checking in with us

145

about how you're feeling about your academics and how you're feeling about your

personal stuff." Descriptions like Mia's were quite common,

> Sometimes I'm just a face, you know, for the institution… I'm short and I have a
> very smiley face and so I feel like I'm a face that's not intimidating the student.
> I'm a person. I tell them, you know, "Just come by. Stop by my office. You can
> see me. I'm not intimidating. You can come talk to me. You don't even have to
> know what you need, as long as you know you need something. If you feel like
> you need something, come talk to me. It's my job to try to figure out how we can
> help you.

Each of these participants also commented that this supportive piece, though not directly

mentioned on their job descriptions, was one of, if not *the most*, vital pieces of their role.

Success coaches as student advocates. Sometimes, this success coaching role was

described as more than just a companionship but took on a more direct form of advocacy

for individual students (14 participants). Laughing, Chelsea, a success coach in Virginia,

explained that she gets to "sit on some committees that help influence community college

policies. I don't always win a lot of friends with that, because I'm always on the

student's side as an advocate. It's really important to me to have my voice in some really

important places." Emma echoed this idea when she noted that she really enjoys being "a

voice of hope for them during their time in the larger, messy institution." Lauren, a

success coach in Tennessee, mentioned that she is very passionate about "student

advocacy. If they only have one person in their corner on campus, then at least that can

be me." Overall, these comments echoed not only success coaches' understandings of

their roles as supportive, journey-members for their students' educational careers, but

also functioning as more active forms of personalized support.

146

Success coaches as students' "safety-nets" and "life-lines." Other participants

mentioned their roles as safety-nets and life-lines for their students. Stella explained that

her office "wants to be there as that safety net for our students—if we can keep someone

going forward in the right direction." Luke explained that his students "just don't have

the same number of safety nets as others do" and continued by noting that much of his

role functions as "that supportive space for them." Rachel mentioned that she just "sees

so many students falling through the cracks, that this institutional life-line is just really

important to provide for our students." Distinct from both supporter, and advocate, these

participants described themselves as a "landing spot for students to fall back on when

everything gets messed up" (Antonio) and echoed a strong desire to provide that space on

campus for them.

Success coaches as barrier reducers. Finally, every participant that I interviewed

mentioned their role as a person employed by the community college to pay attention to

students' barriers that could keep their students from successful academic persistence.

Additionally, half of the job descriptions mentioned something about "barrier attention"

or "basic needs fulfillment." Ruby, a success coach in Tennessee, described her

department's basic philosophy when she said, "we just try to reduce or eliminate

whatever barriers are in their way." Joy distinguished between two different types of

barriers she saw as common for her students:

> There's this individual, like I myself have barriers that I have on my own sleeve,
> my own things in my own life, "Oh, can I really do this course? Can I really get
> this job that I want?" So then they're limiting beliefs that I put on myself. I see a
> lot of my students doing that. And then there are more external barriers, like
> oppression in society or a lot of times people say certain types of people can't do
> this thing.

When asked which barriers she has to focus on, more often, with her students, Joy explained that she feels the need to "fixate on both. But, you know, it really depends on what the individual student is facing at that time." When describing what they find most challenging about their roles, each of these coaches explained that the most difficult parts of their roles involved seeing "these barriers in students' lives. Some will do something about it, and some just won't" (David). Continuing, David noted, "you don't always get the happy ending, but that can't change your desire to help them get over whatever barrier may be blocking their academic success."

Summary. Overall, the first theme that emerged when coaches described the individual support function of their roles included specific attention to providing their students with emotional and psychological support. Although perspectives ranged in the intensity of this support (i.e., journey-partner, v. advocate, v. lifeline), each participant mentioned the importance of their attention to individual students' barriers that could prevent their students from academic success. This, however, was not the only success coaching function that emerged from this analysis. Therefore, the next section will explore coaches' more academically-focused function.

The Success Coach as an Academic Mentor

All but four participating success coaches mentioned the academic mentorship function inherent within their roles. Distinct from the previous theme of success coaches' provisions of psychological and emotional support for their students, this emphasis centered up support for the students' academic progress. The relevant strands that emerged from the analysis process included the success coaches': (1) supervision of

students' academic progress; (2) mitigation of students' academic recovery from crises; and (3) provision of motivation for their students' continued academic persistence.

Supervision of students' academic progress. When explicating participants' responses, seventeen participants explained that a common part of their roles involved monitoring their students' academic progress. Clara explained that she "really sees her role as just checking in on them, you know, keeping up with how they are doing in their classes." Antonio explained that he spends a great deal of time, "communicating with students about how they're really doing in school—you know, sometimes they don't know if they are failing classes or what not." Curtis noted that he described "much of my work as 'check-ins', you know, 'how are classes going? What's going well, and what isn't going well?'." When asked why he thought this was so important, he explained that he wants his students "to know that they aren't alone, and that someone knows how they're doing in school." Overall, participating success coaches in this study noted that this supervisory role functioned to help assure students "when they are off track, if they are getting off track, and what can be done to prevent that" (Allison).

Mitigation of students' academic crises. Sometimes, this supervision became more serious, especially when students entered what 13 participants described as "academic crises." These academic crises most commonly included failing classes (mentioned eight times), going on academic probation (mentioned three times), or dropping out of the community college system all together (mentioned seven times). Susan explained that in her one-on-one meetings with students, she tries to "calm all the crazy down. So here, we have ten week terms, which moves quickly. So, really, we

149

respond to those who haven't shown up in the first week of class, and handle those types

of crises throughout the semester." Curtis echoed a similar sentiment when he explained,

"school is hard. They aren't aware of the full breadth of options that they may have, and

we try to do whatever we can to keep them from just dropping out." Antonio described

his role as "the first line of defense. Whenever anything goes wrong, academically, for

our students, we are seen as the first-responders to assist in those situations."

Motivation for students' continued academic persistence. Along these same lines,

ten participants described the academic mentoring aspect of their positions in a more

positive manner, capturing the essential role they play as providing: "encouragement with

teeth" (Emma); "belief in the students' inherent capabilities" (Allison); and "perspective

changes" (Chloe). Emma noted that she is not just about "the fluffy stuff, but, you know,

being that cheerleader to provide encouragement, well, with teeth when students really

need it." David captured this sentiment when he noted that "motivation is a prime factor

in my role. Without motivation it's quite difficult for students to succeed—if I can help

them to get motivated about some type of academic pursuit, I've done my job."

Expanding upon her idea of being a "perspective changer," Chloe said, that she

understands that "sometimes, school is hard. And you feel like you want to quit

sometimes, but I kind of help them see, I guess, the gold at the end of the rainbow. To

help them realize that if it were easy, everybody would do it."

Summary. Although the intensity of the academic support function ranged within

success coaches descriptions, all but four participants clarified their academic mentorship

function as a major piece of their coaching role. Interestingly, the four that did not

mention this aspect were either fairly new to their roles (Madeline and Amber), or were much more highly focused on helping students manage various difficulties in their personal lives (Stella and Melissa). Interestingly, a third form of support was widespread among participants, which focused on comments about success coaches' roles as navigators and guides for their students through their institutions. This sub-function will be reviewed in the following section.

The Success Coach as a "College Guide"

When understanding the third form of support provided by these participants, terms like "navigator", "guide", "translator", and "connector" emerged as common in every success coach interviewed for this study. This piece of the success coaching position was also referenced in 33 of the job descriptions I analyzed and was publicly displayed on half of the success coaches' websites I reviewed. Due to this prominence, it is safe to speculate that the institutional navigation function may be quite a common feature of the emerging success coaching role in the community college sector.

Success coaches as institutional navigators. All but eight of the participants in this study described success coaches as institutional "guides" or "navigators" for their students. Though this description echoed themes of the psychological and emotional support piece of the coaching role, these descriptions focused much more explicitly on helping students to understand the requirements of their community college departments, offices, and services more deeply, so that they could persist to degree completion. Yvonne explained that when they first created her role, as a team, the administrators:

Sat back and started thinking about what kind of success initiatives can we put in place to not only get students in the door and to simplify that onboarding process, but to keep them here… we also realized about that time, that our operations were very siloed, in that financial aid was over here in this section of campus all by itself. And they didn't talk to admissions or records, which was way over here on this other side. And nobody talked to their advisor. And so a student may come in for one visit, to get one question answered and they may end up at ten different offices all over campus.

She concluded by explaining that her office functions as "that connecting piece. Like, when a student doesn't know where to go, we show them." Samuel explained that "I'm literally like the search function for the college setting. You know, like, when students don't know where to go, they think—'Go ask Samuel. He'll help us figure it out.'" Renee compared herself to a GPS system and noted that she helps students "who don't know where they're going, get there. I'm like their navigator, or their compass."

Still, others connected this piece of their role as especially helpful due to their students' high amounts of barriers and lack of understanding of the community college system. Mia explained that "finding the way that they're going to navigate the system is sometimes difficult for them, particularly first generation students, because, you know, they don't necessarily understand the educational system as well as those with more, resources." Georgina commented on the knowledge-transfer part of her role when she explained, "The college experience is very, very complicated and confusing for many students. And I'm in a position where I've been there long enough and I have enough institutional knowledge that I really can help them figure out whatever the question is." Clara concluded by explaining that her students "know that if they have something that's going on to come see me cause I'll help them navigate that process."

Success coaches as translators of institutional policies. A similar theme emerged from just over half of this study's participants regarding the importance of the institutional translation piece of the success coaching roles (26 participants). Distinct from helping students to navigate their institutions and "get through the educational process" (Samantha), participants' comments about this function tended to center upon translating institutional policies and procedures so as to make them understandable for their students. Roxanne explained that she does "a lot of explaining of processes to them, because they don't even know what that looks like or how to find information." Orion, a success coach in North Carolina, explained that much of his role is about "passing along my knowledge of higher education systems to my students." He commented that he felt that his department does,:

> an especially good job of getting those students the information and not assuming that every student knows exactly what to do. our welcome packet we have commonly used acronyms on campus, like AA, or AS, or GPA, or financial aid, because we are in this space every day and we know what happens in-between each one of these walls, that a lot of our students don't know those things.

Similarly, Amber noted that she feels very much like a middle-man in her role, saying, "I just basically work as a middle-man, assuring them that, 'okay, yes, you did talk to the right person.' And then sometimes going a step further, and explaining to them what that person meant.'"

Success coaches as on- and off-campus resource connectors. The largest and most prevalent description within this third type of support emerged from participants' comments as to their functions as a connection point to on- and off-campus resources. Mentioned by each coach in this study, terms like "facilitator", "connector", "link", "tool-

kit", or even "Swiss Army knife" emerged as quite common throughout each of the

interviews. Describing this piece of his role, Romeo explained that he sees,

> us as success coaches, as having a Swiss Army Knife, if you remember those…
> Swiss Army Knives where there's different tools in each knife, but it's using that
> specific tool for that purpose. So if students really leave with their questions
> answered, feel like they're supported, encouraged, and have a place to come back to
> if they do encounter some barriers or can't receive the information they're looking
> for, that they have a place to come back to. So primarily it's about the student, their
> success, and helping them navigate college.

In this quote, Romeo highlights the ability he has within his role to function as a point of

connection for his students, helping them to understand what assistance they need to be

academically successful, and providing the specific, physical supports to meet those

needs. He explains that he envisions success coaches as "literally walking around with a

toolbox. And we carry around a toolbox or have a toolbox. And each student is very

different, and they come in with different needs and different questions. And so we're able to

use our toolbox and get resources, tools, skills, abilities to those students in more of a specific

manner."

Interestingly, success coaches did not just mention their role as a connection point

to on-campus resources, but they also mentioned their role as a connection point to off-

campus resources as well. Matthias, a Texas success coach, explained that he

understands that his most important goal is, "at least to point them in the direction or to

resources that can help them, especially community partnerships, and stuff like that."

Chelsea explained that she has "connected students to more community food banks than I

can count." She continued by explaining the following episode,

A couple of years ago I had a young woman, excellent student, really engaged in the classroom, she was a young mother, two small children, and she came to my office and she was out of sorts and she'd not done well on a test and I started talking to her and I could just tell something was wrong. I could just tell that she was kind of spinning, like the spin cycle, and ... I finally looked at this young woman and I said, "Sweetie, what... did you have breakfast this morning?" She just looked down. "Well, I didn't." I said, "Well, when did you have your last meal." It had been three days.

This narrative echoes many of the other participants' comments as to providing connections to community resources to support their students' basic needs. Others mentioned helping provide students with access to community housing agencies, temporary job placement services, or clothing banks. Susan summarized this function particularly succinctly when she described that success coaching in this setting, "serves, I think, individuals in their immediate life needs, particularly individuals who are nontraditional students, who need a bit more assistance."

Finally, one participant, Luke, explained that he sees himself as a "utility resource" of sorts, and described his role as without "a specific office ... I don't work specifically in the financial aid office. I don't work specifically in the counseling office. I don't work specifically in the admissions office. I don't even work specifically for the county food back or CPS services. My role has inherently touches on all those spaces, and I'm able to help provide connection to all of those spaces for my students." Echoing themes of institutional navigation, Luke's concluding comment enumerates the importance of the community college success coaches as connection points for students to understand and then access these on- and off-campus resources to promote their continued success.

Summary. This group of responses echoed the success coaches' commitment to not only motivating their students to persist, but also to guiding their students through their institutions. This finding becomes crucial in light of these participants' comments about their typical student populations, especially when considering their status as at higher risk of attrition. These participants understood themselves not as tutors or as instructors, but as institutional agents tasked with teaching their students the larger, societal expectations of what it means to be a college student, and how to navigate various academic realities to persist successfully to completion their postsecondary experiences.

The Success Coach as a Student Service Generalist

A vast majority of participants in this study mentioned the generalist nature of the success coaching function, explaining that: (1) it is different from academic advising or mental health counseling (all but two coaches noted these features); (2) it requires a "jack of all trades" approach (12 participants); and (3) it incorporates a specific case management and "triage" function (20 participants).

Not academic advising or mental health counseling. All but two of the community college success coaches who participated in this study noted that their roles were highly different from both academic advising and mental health counseling. Interestingly, the only two participating coaches who did not mention these emphases held counseling licenses (Melissa and Stella), and saw themselves as functioning as an extension of the counseling system at their institutions. Overall, however, participants

156

distinguished clear boundaries between these three roles, which will be reviewed in this section.

Success coaching and mental health counseling are different. When describing the major differences between success coaching and mental health counseling, coaches in this study commonly referred to mental health work as "above my pay grade" (Luke). Almost every coach described students' emerging mental health needs as "a perfect reason to refer to mental health counseling services" (Cassie). Madeline noted that she "definitely has boundaries as far as what I can discuss with the students and what I have been trained really well to know our boundaries. That if there is something that crosses the line that really needs a professional then I am able to step away, step down the hall and get a professional."

Other participants explained that success coaching differed from mental health counseling in terms of its emphasis. Jonathan explained that in his role, he "only deals with outside issues to the extent that they have an impact on the academic side of things for students. It's not so much about making sure that every student is one hundred percent mentally sound." Georgina went so far as to admit that "there are times when it is similar to mental health counseling." She quickly added, that "however, the difference I see is that my role is to especially be focused on their experience as learners. And when I keep my mind focused on that, though I do care about their well-being… But I always bring the conversation back to their experience as learners, cause that is their primary role as college students." Many more coaches echoed this sentiment, explaining that their roles primarily focused on helping students to manage their academic lives, overcome given barriers, and resolve certain academic crises before they got out of hand.

Success coaching is not academic advising. Still, almost all of the participants noted that success coaching is a different practice than academic advising. Comments like Iris' were quite common among my participants, in which she explained, "we are here to follow through, not just put them in the classes, but also follow through and make sure that they are meeting their goals and staying on track, and going to class, and doing those kinds of things – to be successful." Cora, a success coach in Oregon, highlighted a similar perspective when she said that "academic advising is more about the nitty-gritty part of getting the right classes and following that line of your trajectory with your degree. Whereas the success coach role is more about skill-development and learning how to do college well." Allison succinctly summarized this difference when she explained, "We say we're not the experts in course selection, and we say this on purpose because there's a whole team across the hall that get to be those experts." This distinction between success coaching focusing on more than just course selection emerged in almost every participants' description of their roles on their campuses.

Participants also contrasted between the perceived transactional nature of academic advising, and the perceived transitional nature of success coaching. Clara explained that, "Yeah, academic advising, I feel like it's as far as the college that I work at, super transactional. Whereas me, with my students and when we're working together, it's more like working together and I'd say not at all transactional." David highlighted the more expansive coaching role when he explained that success coaching allows the coach "to understand a person well, the student and the person, and their goals. What they're actually planning to accomplish, what's going on in their life, how sometimes college can fit but also what obstacles they're encountering along the collegiate path."

158

Finally, Clara concluded that she saw herself as not "just an advisor. It's just I do more than just advising: we really do help with anything."

Case management and "triage" function. Just under half of the coaches in this study mentioned that they view their roles in terms of triage functions. Each of these twenty participants' job descriptions also echoed this sentiment and adopted the social work language of "case management" to describe the duties of these positions. These comments echoed the perspective outlined in the previous section that described success coaching as more expansive than academic advising. Madeline explained that she particularly enjoys this aspect of the role, in contrast to academic advising since she believes that she "can establish relationships with students… and you know really help them with their transition to college and their planning to transfer to university, or whatever their goals are. It's just more a hands-on model than academic advising. It's meeting all of their needs for a caseload of students." Charlotte echoed this emphasis when she explains that she often "liken my role a lot of times to being a case worker. Like for somebody who is outside of higher education and they don't understand what an advisor does—it's more than just telling a student what classes to take."

"Jack of all trades" approach. Finally, twelve success coaches mentioned that they felt compelled to use a "jack of all trades" approach to their role, once again highlighting the generalist nature they felt like their jobs required. Chelsea explained that at her college, "I get to sit in some very interesting gaps. We're a very, very small school. I literally can stand in my hallway and see everything there is to see on my campus. We're one building, we're all here, and it's cozy." She continued by noting that

159

this vantage point allows her to understand different departments within the community college and has trained her "to learn the language that each department uses." Similarly, Charlotte said that she feels like she has "to be a jack of all trades. We have to know... there's the idea of somebody being a generalist who knows a little bit about everything." Alice echoed these comments when she mentioned that she "doesn't feel like I can be an expert on any one subject," but instead "know which channel to refer our students to when they struggle."

Still, two other community college success coaches described this role as the triage function for the community college, acting as a "one-stop shop" (Antonio, Charlotte, Yvonne), for their institutions. Roxanne commented, "I sometimes feel like we're the triage office, where if a faculty is having an issue with a student or the student says that they're having an issue, the faculty will often send them to us, expecting us to fix whatever the issue is and send them back again." Using a different metaphor, Stella characterized her work in the following manner:

> I think that there's a role for the success coaches at the community college, because it's that clearing house. It's that place where some people stick, and they stay with us forever. And they need the coaching. They need whatever we're giving. And some people … we're saying, "Here's what you need." And they're like, "Yeah, that's what I need," and so then they're fine.

Even though each of these descriptions use different metaphors, overall, they provide an implicit understanding of this role as assessing the urgency of certain situations, and then meeting their students' immediate needs to assist them in reaching their goals.

Summary. What becomes striking about this group of comments is its focus on success coaches functioning as generalists. Descriptions like "helping the whole student" emerged as common in this phase of my analysis and proceeded to provide further

160

understanding as to the type of support these coaches provided. Most of these participants noted that their generalist function allowed them to provide a more individualized type of support for their students. Despite this hopeful portrayal, my participants voiced several difficulties in their roles, which will be covered in the next section of this chapter.

Theme #4—The How of Community College Success Coaching, Part Two: Participants' Descriptions of the Inherent Difficulties within Their Roles

As was mentioned previously, participants voiced several difficulties they encountered when trying to fulfill the duties of their roles. These difficulties were classified in two different manners: institutional difficulties, and difficulties that arose when working with individual students. This section will review participants' perspectives as to each type of difficulty, highlighting their differences, as well as the various ways they affect the participants' work.

Challenges that Arise from Working with the Institution

Participants voiced three major challenges in their roles that arose from institutional conditions, which included: (1) the inherent vagueness of the coaching position; (2) the high demands placed on success coaches; and (3) students' lack of utilization of these services. This section will explore each of these critiques in order, offering comments and examples from the participant interviews for support.

Vagueness. Just over half of these participants (26 success coaches) mentioned the inherent vagueness in their roles. A common sentiment these coaches expressed included an ethos of "needing to be everything to everyone" (Cassie). Explaining how

161

her role has evolved, Yvonne noted that she "was originally supposed to be one thing, and they've grown into something—I'm not going to say different, but much more complex. And with that comes an increased workload. And so sometimes you feel like you don't have all the time that you'd love to give every student." Similarly, Emma noted that "the role itself of success coach is pretty misunderstood. I think that oftentimes people did not understand that we were not only academic coaches, but we were life coaches, and what that meant."

Still, other success coaches commented not just on the overarching vagueness of their roles but also noted the lack of explicit understanding of success coaches' specific tasks and duties. Luke captured this tension when he said:

> I think the term "success coach" is one that's very, by its own nomenclature, a positive one, but is in some ways a little bit vague in what the actual follow-through is, or what success coaches do. It comes down to the literal question: "What does it mean to help a student be successful?" And that can look different from what is in the job description versus what is actually comes through on the day to day.

Participants did not only mention this lack of clarity as personally frustrating, but also cited difficulties that this lack of specificity provides for the students, as well as faculty and administrators across campus. Explaining the effects of this confusion for administrators, Cassie explained, "we're the place that people send students to when they don't know what to do with those students. So, they don't know what we do, but they assume that we can do the things that they don't know how to do." Commenting on this effect on students, Chloe stated, "students don't really know… We're still trying to define our role to them. I still get an awful lot of calls about advising or financial aid… So, we are right now trying to help the students understand how we… what role we play in their journey." She went so far as to laugh and explain, "it would be great if there was

162

a giant poster of me saying this is what I do, this is what I don't do. But I try to be as helpful as I can to the students, even if I don't have the answer."

High demand. Nine participants also mentioned their inherent weariness from the high demand that came along with the vagueness of their roles. Kendall explained that she is "only one person. I can burn out so easily. Keeping students in school really needs to be a team approach." Matthias explained the irony of helping his students juggle their multiple demands, as "I know something about pressure, about demands. And... that come upon you. It's like I'm having to deal with these multiple, institutional demands as my students are trying to juggle their own demands." Reflecting on her witnessing of other schools' merging the advising and coaching roles into one, Delia exclaimed, "It's all or none: you really can't do both of these roles well." Samuel summarized this tension when he explained, "sometimes, I feel like I'm putting out fires all day long, and this role really teaches you how to prioritize. But, putting those fires out safely and successfully, though exhausting, when it works, can be really rewarding." Still, Georgina mentioned that she has developed the practice of meditation to cope with the stress of her demanding role. She explains that this tool is particularly helpful because her, "role is particularly stressful. Meditation affects me all day, and it seeps into the rest of your world and It i allows you to be more rooted in the present moment, and not get so hung up on everything."

Students' lack of utilization. Surprisingly, only two participants (Jonathan and Matthias) mentioned the frustration they felt based on students' lack of utilization of these services. When examining their job descriptions, it became clear that these

163

participants functioned as more general success coaches and did not necessarily target a specific type of student. Commenting on the difficulty of getting students to come in to the office, Jonathan explained, "they don't want to come in if they're not going to be on campus, which makes sense because a lot of them travel quite a distance to be here." Similarly, Matthias noted that:

> a lot of my students are hard to connect with. A lot of them don't check their emails until either when they're looking for information for financial aid, or their disbursements, or toward the end of the semester. Some check at the beginning of the semester, but there is that lull in there where they don't check email. Maybe it's because they're just too busy.

In light of this reality, Matthias noted that he spends a great deal of time "trying to figure out how to become more visible to my students. Whether it's through email, text, social media: whatever we can do to get them in the door." Even though these comments are not echoed across the entire sample of participants in my study, it is important to note that this sentiment emerged in the fewest number of participants' concerns about their roles.

Summary. Although participant's comments about difficulties of this role due to their institutional contexts were numerous, most of these concerns arose from a common consensus that the success coaching role is rather vague and difficult to describe. In my interviews, coaches commonly articulated hunches like, "It's just really hard to define, you know, this role—which is, I bet, a reason why you're doing this study" (Cassie). Even though the aim of this study was *not* to provide a definition of this emerging profession, comments like these reveal participants' overarching lack of consensus or understanding as to the implicit and explicit goals of this emerging profession.

Challenges that Arise from Working with the Students

Still, nearly every success coach who participated in this study mentioned specific difficulties that arose from working with a higher-risk student populations. These included: (1) inherent difficulties in students' life situations; (2) students' exhibiting of "learned helplessness"; and (3) students' utilitarian thinking about their educational careers. Remaining distinct from the previous category of challenges in terms of the differing sources of these frustrations, success coaches in this study described this second group of difficulties as even more emotionally-challenging and hard to bear than the previous, institutional issues. The remainder of this section will follow the first, will present each of these issues in order, supporting them with direct quotes from participant interviews, and explaining their meaning for the group of participants as a whole.

Students' difficult life situations. A significant majority of participants in this study (29 coaches) mentioned difficulties emerging from witnessing hardships in their students' life situations. Echoing the psychological and emotional support functions described previously, success coaches often explained that they had continually to accept the reality that "you can't save and you can't help everyone" (Samuel). Antonio described this feeling of powerlessness when he said, "the student can't be saved, but it's just there's really not an email you can send or a phone call that you can make or a door that you can knock on to help that student get over the hump that they're facing." Cassie explained that, "a lot of times there are problems that cannot be solved. And you're just kind of having to be there with the students and in those times, it just feels really empty." Jane noted that she would describe difficult as "emotionally difficult, it's hard to walk through some of the difficulties a lot of the students work through. Even though that's

part of the job that I enjoy, it's part of the job that I think is the most difficult." Time and time again, these coaches mentioned that they often felt like "just one part of the machine" (David), "offering what they could" (Melissa), but knowing that "a lot of times, what these students need is above what my role is as a coach" (Jane).

Students' learned helplessness. Still, seventeen participants commented on students "learned helplessness" as a result of their difficult life situations. Alice shared that she struggles the most with students who make "excuses for their hardships in higher education… I can't make someone have confidence in themselves. I can help, and I can then try to bring that out in them. At the end of the day, I can't force them to take the resources I'm giving." Jonathan mentioned that "a lot of students I see come in because they're just lost in general and need the help. There are quite a few students that are lost and are okay with saying, 'I'm lost' and not really doing much else from there." Similarly, Roxanne describes her hardest group of students as those that "are not gritty or resilient and have gone the other way. They've learned helplessness."

Students' utilitarian thinking and "small scope." Fourteen success coaches in this study mentioned that they grew weary of their students' utilitarian thinking about the point and purpose of education. Mia noted that most of the time, her students' "scopes are just very small. Like their perspective is, 'I need to do this right now and get it done.'" Though Roxanne looks for every opportunity to widen their scope, "it seems like we're always so busy talking about how to be successful now that it is difficult to get that big picture in there." When choosing the picture that represents students' visions of success the most clearly, Alice explained that she chose "the one with lots of money. I

166

think a lot of students, if they come into to higher education and why they choose their major is because they want to be in a career that they will be financially stable in. I just want them to think about their passions and not just about the money." Jonathan echoed her sentiment when he explained that he thinks there is a "large cultural emphasis a lot of times on the making money piece – that you're not only getting a job, but you're getting a job where you're paid well." He continued by noting, "I wish I could change that, and help students to realize that true success is pursuing your passion."

Summary. Overall, success coaches in this study described three major challenges when working with their student populations at high risk of attrition, which each centered upon different deficits that these participants perceived as present within their students' situations. Overall, these coaches characterized a "nasty cycle" (Jonathan) that is prevalent within their students' lives, including difficult life situations that present barriers, making students feel helpless and powerless, causing them to narrow their scope, and leaving them "just barely scraping by" (Mia), so that they can "make it to their next obligation" (Emma).

When viewed from this theme, participants in this study did not accept success coaching in the community college setting as a cure-all or panacea. Giovanna even went so far as to note that success coaching is not, "foolproof work," as she explained, "it isn't work that is successful one hundred percent of the time. We have many students who leave and don't complete and we have many who maybe work with us once and then never come back." Several other success coaches noted the difficulty with the vagueness of their roles which they found with their job descriptions, captured by Joy's comment: "my role has grown, morphed, and changed over the years. And that's just not

167

necessarily something that can fully be captured in a written job description." Since certain participants emphasized one area of struggle as more strenuous than the other (institutional difficulties, v. individual student difficulties), it was crucial to mention the participants' commentary on the inherent difficulties within this newly emerging position on community college campuses.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to provide a composite summary to participating community college success coaches' answers to the research question, "*what does it mean to participants to be a success coach in the community college setting?*" Participants' responses centered around comments about: (1) the typical students they serve (the *"who"*); (2) any unique effects the community college setting has on their role (the *"where"*); (3) the specific type of support functions these coaches described as inherent to their roles (the *"how"* and *"when"* of their roles); and (4) an expanded understanding of the *"how"* of their roles through a presentation of their descriptions of perceived difficulties with their jobs.

This first chapter was necessary due to the lack of empirical scholarship on this emerging role in the two-year college setting, and provided holistic description of the textures of this experience for this group of participants. The next chapter will provide a composite answer to the second research question guiding this study, *what does this group of participants think its means and looks like for a community college student to demonstrate success?* Since this opening chapter provided a contextualized description of the "what" of the community college success coaching experience for this group of participants, the next chapter will investigate the underlying structures that support this

role and aim to understand the specific theories, guiding philosophies, and other beliefs

they used to frame their understanding of the ultimate *telos* or purpose of their roles.

CHAPTER FIVE

Findings, Chapter Two

Interviewer: "Why do you think students come in to see coaches in your office?"

Participant: "I think a lot of students come in because they're just lost in general and need the help. And I think that's a big part of it—if they can, if they leave here with at least a small sense of direction … I mean that might sound vague, but if they leave here even with the smallest sense of direction, then I've done my job."

—Jonathan, Community College Success Coach, Michigan

This second findings chapter provides the explication of my second research question, which was: *According to this group of participants, what does it mean and look like to participants for a community college student to be successful?*. Therefore, the second goal of this phenomenological dissertation study was to create a composite structural description—an answer to the "why" of my participants' experiences with a given phenomenon (Smith, 2009). This second description will further flesh out the primary chapter and will compare and contrast the various understandings of community college student success that my participants presented. This chapter becomes increasingly more vital after considering the reality that Creamer's (1994) statement, "the literature on this subject remains downright skimpy" (p. 9) still remains true today. Again, even though the amount of empirical literature on community college student success has grown enormously over the past decade, many of these studies continue to focus on students, and do not consider the "pivotal role that practitioners play a significant role in this process" (Bensimon, 2007, p. 445).

Without this empirical understanding, we are left with a hole in our conceptualization of student success, and are lacking in our understanding of which implicit and explicit concepts, ideas, and theories these success coaches use to guide their daily coaching practices. Therefore, in light of this gap, this chapter aims to present a composite description of the essence of what community college student success means according to this group of participants.

After analyzing this body of data, five major focuses within participants' visions of student success emerged, which included: (1) an utilitarian focus; (2) a post-college focus; (3) a student-authored focus; (4) a student-centered focus; and (5) a holistic focus. Within each of these groups, participants noted different: outcomes they desired for their students; focuses of their relationships with students; theories they used to guide their coaching practices; and other, personal guiding believes and experiences they used to support their work. In light of these relevant "student success types" that emerged from this study, the remainder of this chapter will present a full description of each sub-type. I will continue by presenting a description of the group as a whole, followed by a robust description of the major distinctions between each student success type.

Part One: Description of the Sample as a Whole

Prior to exploring the distinctions among each of the five major "success types" that emerged from my analysis, this opening section provides a description of the sample as a whole. This opening section is broken into four different sections, which include: (1) the different focuses of conversations within these success coaching relationships; (2) an explanation of success coaches' desired goals and outcomes for their students; (3)

theories used to support their roles; and (4) other personal beliefs and experiences this group of coaches uses to guide their practices.

Focuses of Success Coaches' Conversations

Though seventeen participants explained that the focus of the conversations varied based on the time of year or individual needs of the student, three major focuses of these success coaching relationships emerged as a part of this study. These foci included an academic focus (mentioned by 37 participants); a career focus (mentioned by four participants); and a personal focus (mentioned by four participants). When analyzing the most frequent topics of conversation, success coaches who prioritized discussions about students' academic progress most commonly mentioned focusing on study skills and time management strategies. Susan, a success coach in Oregon echoed a quite common refrain when she said that she and her students "always end up talking about time management and how much time do you have to study and having a broader conversation around that, and how that affects their academics." Jane, a success coach from Alabama, explained that the majority of her conversations end up being about "how are you going to manage your time as far as traveling to and from school, building in your study time, so it's a lot of just planning, organizing time management." Course selection, a typical task of academic advising, was actually mentioned by the fewest number of participants, with one even saying, "success coaches are very limited in what they can do, and we are not experts on course selection, and that is on purpose" (Allison).

When analyzing the other eight participants' viewpoints, it became clear that the minority of success coaches focused exclusively on other types of conversations with their students. In other words, academic management took up the majority of these

172

success coaches' time. Within the smaller group that viewed themselves much more explicitly as career coaches, career exploration emerged as a common topic of conversation. To this end, Oliver, a success coach from Nebraska, bluntly explained that the picture that most accurately represented student success was the picture of the person "landing a job." When asked why, he explained that "graduation doesn't mean much unless you get a job from it." Samantha, a success coach in Washington state, noted that she thinks that most of her students are focused "getting the job. I feel like a lot of students who come to community college are just looking for that next step in the promotion of a job." Overall, for these four coaches the career exploration piece became a much more explicit focus than teaching their students professional skills (i.e., interviewing, writing a cover letter, etc.).

The four participants who explicitly emphasized caring for students' personal lives most commonly emphasized their role in helping their students to manage their stress. Reflecting on her proudest moment coaching a student, Melissa, a success coach in Texas, shared that she "really helped my student with her stress level and her frustration, realizing that she can control how she thinks and receives and changes herself." Sienna, a Californian success coach, shared that she worked with a student who she connected to the counseling center. Reflecting on his transformation as a result of that referral, she said, "he was able to navigate his home life a lot better, so he wasn't creating the same level of stress or anxiety for him. He was super on track. He's actually transferred; he's graduated this past spring. He still checks in with me. And he's way less stressed now than ever before." As mentioned previously, community service and getting "involved" socially on campus were not mentioned by these four participants, as

173

other "more pressing needs of the moment" emerged as more relevant for these coaches (Jonathan).

Success Coaches' Desired Goals and Outcomes for their Students

Furthermore, success coaches voiced different outcomes they desired for their students, which included: (1) short-term outcomes, understood as supports and resources students needed "in the moment to get through the next major crisis" (Luke); (2) intermediate outcomes, understood as supports and resources students needed to "persist and make it to completion of their educational endeavors" (Emma); and (3) more long-term outcomes, understood as, "the stuff that really matters, you know, that doesn't just change from year-to-year, or program-to-program" (Joy).

When reviewing success coaches' desired short-term goals for their students, it became clear that teaching them how to ask for help was their consistent focus. Jane, a success coach in Alabama, said "I really just want them to know that it's okay to ask a lot of questions because we learn by asking questions." Renee, a success coach in South Carolina, expressed this sentiment similarly, when she clarified, "My work is really just getting down to the meat of what's going on and is there anything I can help with… it's almost like they don't know how to ask for help, or they don't think that they should have to ask for help." Rachel, a success coach from Montana, explained the point of asking for help in the following manner, "when our students feel like giving up, I want them to know that they always have somebody to step in and say, 'No, you're doing good. You've got to make it through this little bit, and things will get better again.'" Each of these examples echoed my participants' larger desire to help students learn: (1) what they need to be successful; and (2) how to spot any type of deficit and learn how to refill that

174

area of their lives before an academic crisis hits. Interestingly, participants seemed to focus more explicitly on the larger skill of asking for help in times of trouble than more technical points of assistance, such as writing resumes or preparing for interviews.

Overall, community college success coaches' *overwhelming* focus within this sample was on helping their students to name and realize intermediate goals, or necessary goals to reach to progress through the academic system. The most commonly emphasized pieces of this group of desired outcomes included setting and reaching academic and career goals (mentioned by 22 participants); creating academic "game plans" (Orion; also mentioned by 22 participants); increasing students' abilities to deal with and overcome barriers (mentioned by 20 participants); and growing students' self-confidence (mentioned by 17 participants). Once again, it is interesting to note that "getting involved" was only mentioned by two success coaches, both of whom explicitly stated that they work with a more traditional population, "you know, just fresh out of high school" (Amber).

More long-term goals (i.e., increasing certain virtues or forming students' identity development) was the category of outcomes that were mentioned the least often by this group of participants. Perhaps unsurprisingly, naming a career was mentioned the most often within this group (noted by 11 participants), and finding fulfillment or purpose was mentioned the least number of times (noted only twice in all of the interviews). Curtis, a Texan success coach, explained that he wanted his students to find, "that thing, you know, I'd say for most people that's purpose. So, I want my students to be able to just be clear and concise, and say: 'this is what my situation is and this is what I'm going to do about it.'" Sentiments like, "I want students to name a career" (Oliver), or "I want

students to really understand *why* they want to pursue a certain career" (Allison, a success coach from Texas), represented the typical ethos of the career-minded outcomes participants voiced.

Theories Success Coaches Use to Support Their Roles

When examining the theories and concepts that success coaches in this study used to guide their work, individual theories and associated ideas that received the largest emphasis, with persistence, grit, and motivation being mentioned at a much higher rate than any of the other individually-focused theories. When describing the best part of her job, Ruby, a success coach from Tennessee, explained that she loves how, "when you work with them one on one you can see their progress so much more closely. You can really see it follow through." Roxanne, another success coach from Nebraska, described the importance of focusing on students' persistence in this way, "It's really great when you get those moments when students do make those leaps – when they start to put things together and they get excited about things and they can see that, 'Wow, I have come a long ways.'" Theories about development of individual character traits, however, were mentioned the least often when considering the group as a whole.

Participating success coaches also focused on certain institutional theories and associated concepts or ideas. Though these were mentioned less often than the individual theories, every single success coach in this sample mentioned retention as an important, or even assumed concept or theory guiding their work. Delia, another success coach from Alabama, echoed a common sentiment among participants when she explained that success coaching "was all tied in, of course, with proven retention and increasing graduation rate. Tied in with a lot of those metrics that just obviously you want to

improve upon." Kendall commented similarly, "There are a lot of things that go into a student's ability to graduate. But, overall, we are here to help nudge that student towards that goal." This finding was also supported when understanding that 24 participating success coaches cited the graduation picture as the most representative of community college student success. Sienna explained, "I like the graduation picture—because they made it. Regardless of all of the other stuff that's happening, they made it there, and that is the most gratifying, because that's their goal."

In contrast, attrition, though brought up by some participants, was specifically mentioned by a minority of participants. David, a success coach in Florida, said "with our particular academic success coaching, our goal at the end of the day is retention," and even continued by stating "everyone here is in the business of 'proactive retention management.'" Despite this expression, David remained one of only five participants who mentioned "guarding against attrition" more than once in his interview.

Finally, theories focusing on the interaction between the community colleges and their student were the *least* often cited group of theories and associated concepts by my participants. When mentioned, however, the theory of validation was the most common focus of these types of responses (cited by 24 participants). Jane commented, "sometimes they just need that validation that steps they're taking are good ones. And they just need someone to encourage them, to listen, to validate, and then encourage them, to keep moving forward." Georgina, a success coach in Maine, said it in this way, "I think that validation research by Rendón (2006) really informs some of this. That I think we may have students who never really have been validated. And I think to have someone, at least one person, believe in them, can make a difference." When discussing

177

integration and engagement, the vast majority of success coaches in this study solely focused on the academic pieces of these theories, and did not reference the more social side of students' interaction with their community colleges.

The guiding roles of theory v. wisdom. It is also important to explain that each participant distinguished between theory and wisdom, commonly defining a theory as something they learned "in their formal education," (Lauren), and wisdom was something they learned, "you know, throughout my life experience, outside of any of that education stuff" (Clara, a success coach in Washington). Overall, 22 participants justified their conviction that success coaches should hold a balance between theory and wisdom to inform their coaching practices. Comments like Chelsea's, a success coach in Virginia, were common within this group of participants, when she stated, "I think research gives us new ways to look at problems, wisdom gives us the ability to tailor it to the individual student." Other participants, like Renee, voiced concern over the common theories being written for four-year, white male populations. She explained her concern in this manner:

> I remember when I first started grad school I had to read the Foundational Theories. I don't like to call them the "old school fuddy-duddy theories," but that's what they are. I didn't really enjoy those because I felt like they didn't adhere to me. And I knew that if they didn't adhere to me, then they would definitely not adhere to the population of students that I would be working with – whatever it was at that time.

Although several participants shared this sentiment, other participants mentioned rich backgrounds that they drew from to support their work with students, including deep wisdom that they gained from persisting through difficult situations, or other pearls gleaned from "my people, you know, those things that just stick with you forever" (Orion).

For the remaining groups of participants, 14 mentioned that they saw theory as a bedrock for their practice. Curtis explained that theory "functions as a toolbox for me. It provides a common language for working with students." Roxanne offered a similar response, "I think using theory is always helpful because it's really just... it's not something that you apply. It's not like a technique that you apply to students, it's using it to understand their situation and their perspective and what they've gone through." Overall, the success coaches who voiced their support of the explicit use of theory often compared it to a lens or compass to guide their work.

Surprisingly, the smallest group of participants (eight success coaches), explained that they found their personal wisdom to be much more useful when working with a student than their theory, with four of these non-academic student support professionals as unable name an author that they spent time reading in the recent past that spurred a change in their coaching practice. Furthermore, six of these eight success coaches were in their mid-forties and laughed when asked about theory, due to their "absence from any formal education system for quite a long time" (Charlotte). Charlotte continued by saying, "now, it's more personal experience that I tend to rely on. I don't know if that's all that great, but it's what I've got."

Other Important Guiding Experiences and Beliefs

Success coaches in this study mentioned several other guiding experiences and beliefs for their coaching practices. These factored into two different categories: (1) explicit theories participants mentioned (which included explicitly stated religious beliefs); and (2) implicit, deeply-held beliefs or experiences that shaped their understanding of their coaching practice.

179

Additional supports: Religious beliefs. Participants' religious beliefs also played an interesting role in this study. Three-quarters of participants (33 success coaches), claimed a Christian religious identity, and each mentioned, to varying degrees of emphasis, that this perspective informs their role. Romeo, a success coach from Oregon, explained:

> I think specifically what we call discipleship really can be… a lot of those aspects as what discipleship is in the church world can be applied to being a success coach, being committed to a student, walking alongside them, helping them provide resources and information and supporting them.

Similarly, Orion made the following connection, "a lot of what I do is based in principles and principles from the Bible and so just always trying to look for the good in every situation, or the lesson in every situation, so that's a lot of what I try to pass down to our students." Participants' statements connecting their Christian faith and their role as success coaches emerged as overwhelmingly common within this sample.

Even though 11 participants claimed a more spiritual, agnostic, or even secular identity, each of them mentioned a strong belief in a sense of calling, and consistently named a desire to help students understand the "impact they want to have on the world" (Rachel). Jonathan, a success coach in Michigan, explained that he wants his students to ask, "Who am I? I mean that's really, to me, and to really ask the question… I think once you understand who you are, finding your way becomes a lot easier." When asked if that connects at all to a religious faith, he explained, "no, I'm agnostic. That comes from Frankl and Yalom—not a religious preference." Cassie, a success coach from Texas, explained that she does not necessarily think her agnostic preference hurts her coaching in any way because, "I still think everyone has a mark to leave on this world, like, what really matters to them." Therefore, whether these participants named a larger, religious

180

understanding as important for their role, a larger theme of helping students to understand some type of general life direction was important to this group of participants.

 Additional supports: Implicit, formative experiences. Overall, every participant mentioned specific, personal experiences that they thought shaped their understanding of their role. Most commonly, participants mentioned experience with community college students as providing them with a central point of understanding for their population. This either came through their vast number of years employed in community colleges (i.e., Rachel's comment, "my mother worked here, I went here, and now I work here"), or through their navigation of the community college system themselves when they were students. Jennifer, a Texan success coach, mentioned that she can "remember being in a high-risk population myself when I was an undergraduate. I was a first-generation, low-income student. When you're in that situation, you gotta be ready for whatever, because you never know what you are going to get." Oliver mentioned, "I'm a non-traditional student to begin with. I got my bachelor's degree when I was thirty-three. So, I understand what most of these students go through." Overall, these participants held their understanding of community college students as a paramount asset for their communication with their students.

 Second, success coaches in this study often mentioned academic or personal struggles in their background they overcame to maintain their current life situations. Overcoming barriers due to poverty and persisting to graduation surfaced as the most commonly-mentioned experience of importance for this group of participants. Cassie, a success coach from Texas, said that she thinks, "it's really important to have some kind of struggle in your background that you can share. You know, it just makes you more,

well, relatable." Drawing from his own community college experience, Samuel, a

Pennsylvanian success coach, explained,

> I think I can help by being an example of someone who came from similar surroundings. Someone who possibly and probably dealt with a lot of the same situations and issues that they go through growing up. Also someone who is connected through different organizations and family from that same community in which I'm now working.

These, and other similar responses, echoed a common theme of participating success

coaches seeing themselves as ordinary role models, offering the belief, "If I did it, you

can do it, too" (Jade, success coach from Texas).

Additional supports: Implicit, guiding convictions. Although certain difficult

experiences were quite helpful for participants in this study, three convictions emerged as

especially important across this group of participants. First, as was covered in the

previous chapter, each participant mentioned understanding their student populations to

encounter higher barriers to academic success than the typical student, with each coach

mentioning that at least part of their role went to helping students navigate these barriers.

Second, as was also covered in the previous chapter, many of the coaches in this study

mentioned believing in the community college as an institution as an access-provider and

as an agent of social transformation.

Upon further analysis, each participant mentioned a deeply-held belief that

"success must be individually-defined by each student" (Emma). Comments like Ruby's

were quite common, "they need to figure out what success is to them. And understand

that that definition is going to change as they get older. But what it means to be

successful, that's so contextualized, especially with where they are in their life." Lauren

echoed Ruby's comment when she said, "I would tell them that it is based on their own

definition. So you have to really evaluate what your short-term and long-term goals are and then come up with your definition." Even though this individually-defined understanding of success ran across the sample, some participants emphasized this sentiment more than others and held on to different conceptualizations of what this term could mean or imply.

Summary. Participating success coaches in this study used a variety of beliefs, goals, and theories to guide their work. In addition to these major themes that emerged, a typology of different "student success perspectives" also rose from my analysis. The remainder of this chapter will explore the nuances within each group, comparing and contrasting these sub-types to one another. A final, graphic model of these findings will be presented in the conclusion to this chapter.

Part Two: A Typology of Perspectives

As mentioned previously, five major subgroups of different conceptualizations of student success emerged as particularly relevant to this study. The remainder of this chapter will review each sub-group, providing a more robust description of the group's ethos, the desired student outcomes of the group, the major theories used by the group, the group's understanding of the most important focus of the coaching relationship, and the other guiding, explicit or implicit supports for their coaching practice.

Sub-Group #1: Utilitarian Perspective

This group of six coaches, including Giovanna, Helen, Iris, Madeline, Samuel, and Yvonne, primarily mimicked the measures commonly thought of to describe student success, which include increased retention, grade point average, and student persistence

rates as determined by number of credit hours completed. Each of these coaches held a master's degree in some form of education (K-12, higher education, etc.), and had worked in their roles between one to four years. Interestingly, each of these community colleges were larger in size (all above 10,000 students), and each coach in this group mentioned an overwhelming feeling like they needed to be "everything to everyone" (Yvonne, a success coach from Tennessee). Additionally, each of these coaches was housed in the student services division of the community colleges, and their job descriptions were primarily phrased as "generalist" success coaches, not naming a specific student population towards which these coaches could direct their efforts.

Coaches' desired goals and outcomes for their students. When examining the goals and outcomes they would most like to see their students reach, each success coach in this sub-group prioritized helping their students learn how to ask for help. Giovanna, a success coach from Texas, summarized that she ultimately wants to see her students, "just being more self-sufficient and independent to being total rock stars. I don't think they can do that without asking for additional assistance." When asked why asking for help is so important, Iris, a success coach in North Carolina, explained, "Because it's their education and they need to be... it's not something that's just, 'Oh, by the way, I think I'm going to try this out today.'" Other coaches in this sub-group focused on wanting their students to create a "game plan" (Samuel) for their time at the institution. Yvonne explained that she"

> feels like I barrage my students with questions. It's like, I immediately go into, "Tell me about yourself. What do you wanna do? What are your interests?..".
> When they tell me what they wanna do, of course I try to have a reality check with every student. So if they tell me they want to do nursing, then I just kind of reiterate, "So tell me what it is about nursing that really attracts you?"

184

Similarly, Iris stated that she wants her students "to feel like they understand... and they feel like they are a part of their own academic progress or success." Even though other coaches echoed similar ideals, Yvonne remained the coach within this sub-group to mention specifically any type of goal larger than the typical retention, persistence, and grade point average increases common to much of the current student success language.

Theories and associated ideas or concepts. Though this sub-group of success coaches continued to prioritize the use of individually-focused theories in their work, they did mention graduation as the ideas that drove their work more often than other sub-groups. When relating her ultimate success story, Madeline (a success coach in Florida), explained that she was most proud when she realized that her favorite student, "turned out that he really was successful, which meant he graduated and got accepted to University of Florida Engineering School." Furthermore, each of these coaches mentioned that the graduation picture was the most representative picture possible for student success out of all of their options.

Overall, however, this group of participants was highly focused on using the associated ideas with the concept of persistence to help students reach the goal of graduation. Samuel mentioned that he enjoys helping students see "the small victories made today… it's most meaningful when they've worked through it and knowing that I was able to help them take that one more step forward in that process." Similarly, Giovanna said that her students' ultimate success, meaning graduation, is "going to be one of those things that probably isn't going to happen overnight and so they kind of have to be able to continue to work through it, pivot if needed, and then they'll eventually get to that place." Every time these coaches mentioned persistence, however, the focus

185

included a specific emphasis on the end goal of graduation, with explicit connections to larger, utilitarian conceptualizations of this phenomenon.

Though participants' comments hardly focused on their students' interactions with the college (as well as the entire sample, overall), when discussed, this commentary tended to revolve around *validating* students' experiences at their specific community colleges. To this end, Iris mentioned that she, "thinks we need to do a better job of making sure that people feel like they're an important part of what goes on here—the students." Madeline supported this perspective by saying, "I like students to think that they… that there's someone that they can connect with. I like to feel a connection. I like it when they reach across the desk and take one of my cards and they ask, is it okay if I ask for you when I come back? I'm validating that I made them feel comfortable enough that they're asking can I ask for you." Overall, validation, according to this sub-group within my sample, functioned as the vehicle to help students move from point A (matriculation) to point B (graduation). These comments stand as markedly different from comments from other student life professionals in four-year settings who want to increase students feelings of being "involved" in campus activities or more deeply "engaged" in academic coursework.

Focus of success coaching relationship. Perhaps not surprisingly, the majority of these success coaches focused on academic strategies with their students, especially in terms of helping their students to practice good time management skills. In fact, as was mentioned previously, only one participant, Yvonne, used career-oriented language. Interestingly, however, in her description of her focus on career exploration, she mentions that much of her conversations feel like "bringing students down to earth,

186

showing them the reality of not just the career, but also how to get the schooling to make it happen." Additionally, not one coach in this subgroup mentioned focusing on anything explicitly personal. In fact, Helen, another Texas success coach, framed this as an explicitly retention-focused enterprise, citing that "getting into too much personal stuff makes me feel like I may have crossed a line."

Other guiding supports. Although five of the coaches in this sub-group mentioned a Christian, religious preference, and one of them echoed a more secular understanding of calling, this group of participants did not offer comments that connected their religious perspective to their work to the same extent as other sub-groups. The majority of these coaches echoed a desire for a balance between theory and wisdom when guiding their coaching practices, with Helen even saying, "the theory I use, I guess, the *Power of Positive Thinking*, isn't necessarily related to my work. I just think it's an important piece of wisdom to remember." Helen went so far as to say that she does not really think of any theories necessarily that come to mind, but she just wants her students to "Do what makes you happy." In turn, she looked at her role as a success coach as someone who "reaches out and says, 'Let's look at things that you like to do and then maybe we can find some educational degree or something that you've really would excel in.'" Comments like these allude to the potential reality that these success coaches may have ingested the institutional messaging wholesale and use it as a guiding narrative, more so than prioritizing other theories they find helpful or intriguing.

Interestingly, however, each of these coaches also mentioned two major factors that influenced their coaching to a much greater extent than other sub-groups. Each coach mentioned their shared, non-traditional background with their students that they

187

work with, and stemming from this, belief in demonstrating care for each, individual student who they serve. Samuel mentioned:

> I am a product of the Public Schools system in my area, which is where we get a large amount of our students coming out of there. So I just think that relatability of the students being able to see someone who literally went and sat in the same classrooms that they did and grew up in the same neighborhoods, and having those same experiences, even though there are generationally-separate, at the same time a lot of those experiences are the same.

Helen echoed a similar sentiment when explaining her first-generation status, "My parents, my dad only went to the eighth grade, my mom went through first year in high school. she was sixteen when she got married. I have that background of going off to college and no one helping me. I just had to figure it out myself." Both Samuel and Helen commented on a desire to overcome their barriers that their difficult circumstances put in them, captured by Samuel's statement, "I think that there was a level of just grit and determination that I learned in my upbringing. Nothing was ever handed to me—I had to fight and scrape for what I wanted. One of those being my education."

Summary. Overall, this sub-group of coaches understood student success in a similar manner as the larger narrative about student success measured by institutional terms like retention and persistence. This sub-group seemed to focus on persistence a bit more explicitly than retention and described their persistence through difficult circumstances as helpful in motivating their students to continue in their educational journeys. Though only one participant mentioned career-oriented theories, the next sub-group includes participants who are much more explicitly-focused on larger, post-college conceptualizations of student success.

Sub-Group #2: Post College Perspectives

The second sub-group of participants that emerged from this sample included a group of 11 participants who focused on post-college markers of success, namely in terms of landing a career (Alice, Amber, Charlotte, Chloe, Cora, Curtis, Jane, Luke, Oliver, Orion, and Susan). This group was largely mixed when it came to educational background, including holding degrees in business, public administration, as well as adult and vocational education. Seven of these success coaches claimed a Protestant Christian identity, and four claimed a secular identity. Furthermore, nine of these community colleges were what these participants described as "completely mixed in focus, with many traditional and non-traditional students." This group of participants represented the most diverse group in terms of background as well as emphasis within their particular community colleges. Like the previous group, all but one of these success coaches was considered a "generalist" coach and did not have a specific student population who they were responsible to serve.

Desired outcomes. Although this group of success coaches focused much more explicitly on short-term outcomes than the previous, utilitarian sub-group, the intermediate goals of completing an educational degree remained crucial for the post-college student success sub-type. As could be expected, the majority of these participants focused on helping their students to set and reach both academic as well as career goals. Amber, a success coach from Florida, described an activity that she provides for her students called *True Colors*, in the following manner:

We go in depth with it, and we help them determine, "What is your ideal? What is your ideal workplace? What is your ideal salary?"... And after we help them identify that, we sit down, and make a plan and say, "All right, what are you going to do in order to achieve this? What's your goals?"… We then work on smart goals, so we develop a long-term plan, and help them figure it out.

Though similar to the "college game plan" that the previous sub-group mentioned, this second sub-group held a more explicit focus on framing students' educational pursuits as preparation for a future career. Oliver supported this idea, but took a more long-term view when he explained that he wants to teach students how to ask questions like, "Where does this get me? Is this the right path I'm going? I think a lot of students that are misguided as far as what degree they're trying to obtain and what they want to do career-wise."

Theories and associated ideas and concepts. When examining the important theories that success coaches in this sub-group used to guide their work, though graduation/completion (institutionally-focused theories and concepts), and validation (interactionally-focused theories and concepts) were still mentioned by this group of coaches, individually-focused theories and concepts continued to remain prevalent. Like the previous group of coaches, increasing students' persistence was a commonly-mentioned concept, idea, or goal, but coaches in this group also mentioned learning as another, important theory that guided their work. This new focus was not necessarily about subject-matter knowledge. This emphasis was, instead, about teaching students how to navigate the academic system. Alice, a success coach in Michigan, explained, "I would say learning how to advocate for yourselves is what makes people successful in life. Being your own coach or being your own cheerleader for yourself and never taking no for an answer." When asked what areas of life that theory could apply to, Alice

190

continued by noting, "oh, everything, life, school, but especially what you do after school." Similarly, Luke explained that he really has a "passion for seeing... a 'light bulb moment,'… when something clicks I'm able to almost see in real time the gears start turning and students starting to understand, 'Okay, this is where I understand what I want to do with my life.'" Again, distinct from the previous category, Luke echoed an explicit focus on wanting to help his students name a career and literally, in his words, "go after it."

Focuses of the success coaching relationship. Surprisingly, like the utilitarian sub-group, academic conversations took precedence for this group of coaches. Like the previous sub-group, this sub-group's academically-focused conversations revolved around teaching their participants' study skills as well as time management skills. Distinct from the previous group, however, four people mentioned that academically-oriented conversations were tied with career-focused conversations (2 participants), and that these same meetings were tied with personally-focused conversations (2 participants). As expected, the two participants that mentioned that academic- and career-focuses were tied largely voiced their role in students' career exploration (Amber and Charlotte). The other two participants who mentioned that academic- and personal-focuses were tied primarily focused on stress-management, using this focus as a means to develop professional skills upon which they could build their careers (Chloe and Susan).

Other guiding supports. Although the previous group also included a majority of participants who identified as Christian, this group of participants more explicitly

connected their religious perspective to their coaching practice. Luke described this effect in the following way:

> I would say that my faith very much does, in the sense of I really draw from my faith and how I want to be able to love each one of these students in the same way... that Jesus Christ loves us… and my role getting to work with students that have a lot of challenges that come into their life a lot of these are coming from the high risk ... these are the ones that can be vulnerable and therefore need to be cared for and loved even more so than I may think in a daily practice sort of way.

Oliver commented similarly, when he said, "I think my Christian faith does blend in with my caring for others. Kind of the whole thing of washing other people's feet idea." All in all, these seven coaches described their roles using servant-type language, even going so far as to understand that, as Orion noted, "a lot of what we do is based in principles and principles from the Bible and so just always trying to look for the good in every situation, or the lesson in every situation."

When examining these participants' perspectives on the use of theory in their role, it became clear that they preferred to use practical wisdom over theories learned in their formal education. Eight coaches mentioned that that there should be a balance between wisdom and theory, and three mentioned that they did not use theory in any capacity to inform their coaching practices. Like the previous group, however, the majority of success coaches in thus sub-group focused on their shared experiences with community college students, either from their background or from their work history at the community college. Oliver recalled his own, difficult community college experience when he said:

> As a non-traditional student… I understand the struggles that my students go through… And so, knowing the struggles that he went through, knowing the struggles I went through, my wife and I were both in school at the same time, so we struggled financially, so there was resources that I had to break down and say, "Hey, this is what I need to go do to get through this so I can get us an income."

192

Alice mentioned a similar story when she said, "my whole life growing up was very difficult, and I left home when I was a junior in high school, because of my parents' addiction. And I moved from one state to another to start school. So I attended this community college. Which is where I work today." This sentiment of "giving back" to communities that supported them echoed throughout each of these participants' responses. This ideal is further supported when understanding that the majority of this student population mentioned that their experiences helped them to "really appreciate the community college, you know as an institution" (Amber), which was a belief that those in this sub-group commonly referred to as especially helpful in forming their coaching practices.

Summary. Although similar to the first sub-group, the post-college group assumed a more explicit understanding of their students' success as naming and landing an eventual career. In essence, most success coaching conversations were focused on helping students to name a career goal and working to shape their students' academic journeys so that they would support this eventual pursuit. This group of success coaches also used service-oriented language to guide their work, as well as used difficult experiences in their personal backgrounds to continue to develop their empathy for those who they serve.

Sub-Group #3: Student-Authored Perspectives

A third sub-group of perspectives emerged throughout my analysis process, which included a group of six success coaches that focused on helping their students to create their own definitions of success (Antonio, Lauren, Matthias, Mia, Renee, Stella). Though

the "success must be individually-defined" sentiment was mentioned by each coach in this study, this group of six coaches demonstrated a special, more explicit focus on this self-advocacy piece of students' success. Four of these coaches held counseling degrees, and the other two held a master's of divinity and one held a master's in communication degree. Each success coaching in this group took a more psychological approach to their success coaching roles. Four of these coaches were housed in academic affairs departments and two were located in student affairs divisions. All of the success coaches in this sub-group identified as strongly Protestant Christians, and the majority of them were located in states whose governments sponsored the success coaching program through a state-wide grant aimed at increasing success for low-income students at their two-year institutions.

Desired outcomes. Like the other two sub-groups I described, this group of success coaches also mentioned a deep desire for students to learn how to ask for help. This group differed in two different ways, however, from the first sub-groups I reviewed. First, this group focused much more explicitly than any other on wanting to help their students learn how to deal with and overcome their barriers during their pursuit of their community college educational degrees. Matthias, a success coach from Texas, explained that he wants his students to leave his office, "feeling like they got a booster shot. That's why we're here, myself and the other success coaches, we want them to feel like they can ask for what they need to overcome their barriers and really make it." Stella, a social worker by background, explained that she is attracted, "as a social worker to try to help people overcome barriers that more traditional college students don't even experience." Second, and perhaps unsurprisingly, more than any other sub-type, this

194

group of participants echoed a desire to help their students increase their ability to

advocate for themselves. Renee, shared that:

> I say all the time to my students, "Let me tell you something. I can only help you.
> I can't do it for you. A closed mouth don't get fed." And when students ask me, I
> say: "No, literally, how are you going to eat if you're mouth is closed? Then in
> this sense how is your grade going to improve if you don't talk to your
> instructor?"

Although the other sub-groups mentioned wanting to teach their students how to ask for

help, this sub-group almost took this idea a step farther, speaking about self-advocacy as

a vital skill that these students could take with them, outside of their academic

experiences.

Theories and associated ideas or concepts. As is common to these success

coaches, individually-focused theories and ideas continue to take precedence over

institutionally-focused or interactionally-focused theories and ideas. Though mentioning

graduation as an important, institutional metric, this sub-group focused on advocating for

students as well as helping students learn how to advocate for themselves in order to

increase their motivation towards degree completion. To this end, Antonio explained that

he keeps his students focused on "pushing forward. That's really what I try to get them

to see. It doesn't matter what happened last semester. It doesn't matter what happened

on that last test. Progression is the key." Renee offered a similar perspective when she

said, "I can talk about what their motivation was, you know, what their determination

was to actually do this. Sometimes, getting them to say it is the key to their success."

Interestingly, this group of participants also mentioned the importance of

validating their students to a greater extent than either of the previous two groups. Mia, a

success coach in Tennessee, explained, "I think sometimes we don't remember that they

195

are people who have their own troubles, and people who have their own issues. And sometimes they're not doing their homework because they have something going on in their life that's making it difficult for them." She continued by stating, "I think that it's important that they don't feel alone. And that's my role: to help them feel connected, and not alone." Stella articulately concluded, "I just want to let them have someone who can normalize their experience a little bit and be a friendly person to them."

Focuses of success coaching relationship. Perhaps most interestingly, only one participant in this group of success coaches mentioned that she took an explicit personal or career focus in their conversations with their students. Though this finding may seem odd at first glance, Lauren, a Pennsylvanian success coach, insightfully explained this reality in the following manner:

> For the community college the word "retention" is like a buzz word. And of course, so is GPA. And so what we were looking for is, in a nutshell, are students more successful? The ones that interact with the ... receive the one-on-one coaching, are they more successful than students who don't?

Matthias also mentioned a similar issue when he explained, "right now we are facing a lot of retention alerts. We deal specifically at this time part of what we do is we deal with academic performance, and we try to help in the case of attendance, and things like that." The one success coach who did speak about students in a different manner, Stella, came from a social work background, and used this to her advantage. Drawing on the resource connection piece of her role, Stella mentioned, "I like being able to sit down with a student who is having a hard time and work through with them how to come to a solution that they didn't even think was possible." Overall, however, it seemed like this sub-

group spent much more of their time and energy focusing explicitly on academic-related issues than explicitly assisting students in their career-related or even, personal, struggles.

Other guiding supports. Each participant within this sub-group identified with a generally Protestant Christian religious identity. Stella explained that she thinks "the most Christian way to approach someone is with humility, not with pride or anything else." This becomes especially poignant when understanding that she explicitly desired to work with "a lower socio-economic status and under-dog type of population." Matthias speaks about how he tries to live the Golden Rule out every day in his work with students, when he articulated, "in the words of our Lord, 'as you would have others do unto you, you do unto them'… because, as a Christian I am compelled to love and show others the love of Christ." Throughout my analysis, it became quite clear that this group of success coaches chose to use their religious perspectives as support for their roles, allowing them to advocate "for the widow and the orphan" (Stella).

Although this group was evenly split on the role of theory in their work (two mentioned it should be balanced with personal wisdom, two mentioned it should be considered foundational, and two mentioned they do not use this theory at all), a strong sense of demonstrating care for individual students shown through this group's answers. Mia even went so far as to explain that:

> I think that we have to remember that the students are not some cohesive amorphous blob of faces, right? Every student is an individual with their individual things going on… Sometimes they have fear. Sometimes they have mental issues. Sometimes they have depression. Sometimes they have anxiety. Sometimes they're homeless. I think that we forget that sometimes. So I think sympathy and empathy, listening to them and believing them, I think go a long way. I would rather believe a student who's lying to me than not believe a student who's telling the truth.

197

Furthermore, Renee explained that she chooses not to use what she terms as "big flower-y language with them… because that's not integral to their life. What's important to them is how is school is going to affect them, and I'm here to help navigate that process."

Summary. This third sub-group of coaches focused much more explicitly than the first two groups on helping their students to learn how to voice their own needs, as well as learn how to create success for themselves. This group differed from the first two in that they did not focus as explicitly on institutional measures of success (i.e., retention and graduation), and they did not simply understand success in terms of post-college related outcomes. Instead, they focused on helping students learn how to advocate for their own academic needs and learn how to use this new-found skill as a way to persist and navigate through their community college systems.

Sub-Group #4: Student-Centered Perspectives

A fourth sub-group emerged, which included a group of nine participants who each focused on explicitly student-centered conceptualizations of student success (Allison, Chelsea, Clara, David, Emma, Georgina, Jade, Kendall, Samantha). Though similar to the previous group (i.e., student-authored sub-type), these nine participants tended to expand their perspectives even further, noting that they wanted to help students "in any way they need, personal, academic, or whatever" (Emma). This group of coaches included participants with backgrounds in counseling, journalism, and anthropology, and all worked in student services departments at their institutions. Seven of these participants identify as Christian and the other two identify as primarily secular in

perspective. Furthermore, this group of participants contained the largest community

college in the sample (76,000 students), as well as the smallest community college in the

sample (725 students).

Desired outcomes. Like the other sub-types, this group of coaches also focused

on teaching their students how to ask for help, as well as helping their students to name

and reach academic and career goals. Perhaps most distinctly, however, included this

group's focus on helping students to understand their personal strengths and weaknesses

(mentioned by five participants). To this end, Georgina mentioned that she wants to

teach students to understand the true meaning of the phrase:

> "Know thyself." Because I think the more they know about their own values,
> about what it is that really, truly is meaningful to them, the more they know about
> their personality, their strengths, their passions, their academic interests – the
> more they know about themselves, the more they're going to get engaged in what
> they're studying because they'll be choosing the right courses; they'll be choosing
> things that truly matter to them.

Similarly, Jade explained that she wants her students to really understand that "we all

have different strengths in different areas, and that's okay. It should be." Exploring the

weaknesses side of this sentiment, Allison, a success coach in Texas, commented,

"success doesn't need to be this beautiful, straight path. It takes some failure, hard work,

and really is a journey. It takes knowing yourself and who you need beside you to help

you along the way." Of all the groups, this group of participants most prominently

highlighted focusing on the individual student when voicing their desired outcomes,

desiring to help students on an individual basis, and on meeting their students' individual

needs.

Theories and associated ideas and concepts. Common to the findings presented in this chapter, individual theories continued to take the focus of this group of success coaches' reflections. Within the individually-focused theories, ideas associated with persistence, motivation, and grit were most-commonly cited. In addition to these emphases, these coaches also mentioned classic student development theories, including: challenge and support (Allison, "I always go after the good old Stanford challenge and support… I know that's a little bit more basic, but its an important one to think about when coaching."); basic principles of integrity (David, "I really try to impress upon my students that though we are not in control of the resources that are given to us or what happens to us, we are responsible for our response"); and hope (Samantha, "belief and hope are such huge things in our culture… and if I can help a student be more hopeful, I've done my job").

This sub-group of coaches also spoke about validation and belonging in a much more explicit manner than the previous four groups. Kendall explained that she understands how:

> scary it could be for any student coming into an unfamiliar environment taking this big step in a career or in their lives, I could see how having someone to talk to, and having someone trained to help you open up and talk about your fears or your problems, or your desires and dreams, could really be beneficial to your success.

Emma explained that she felt especially helpful when she was able to "hear a student say, 'I've never had anyone tell me, 'you can do it.' I was able to be that person, and it was so damn rewarding." Chelsea also explained that she feels like she "ultimately went with the theory of mattering – marginality and mattering. Letting them know they matter here. It is probably the most critical thing that those qualities give. If you can help a student

connect and know that they matter, you win – and they win." Kendall explains that she understands the realities of "an open-access institution," and in light of that reality, she sees herself as a place "where it may just be one place that students really can belong." These and other similar sentiments demonstrated that this group, more than any other sub-group of success coaches, relied upon a well-known "student affairs mentality" to guide them through their work, that emphasized care for the "whole student" (Allison, Chelsea) and helping them to become "valuable members of the institution" (David).

Focuses of success coaching relationship. This sub-group demonstrated the most variation when it came to the focuses of their individual conversations. Academics and career were mentioned by six success coaches as the explicit focuses of their conversations (Academic: Allison, Georgina, Jade; Career: David, Kendall, Samantha); and personal was mentioned as tied with academics by the three remaining success coaches (Personal: Chelsea; Clara; Emma). David, Kendall, and Samantha each mentioned that their conversations focused on helping students to explore possible career topics, "eventually ending on one that can give them the motivation to make their community college experience worth it" (David). Allison, Georgina, and Jade each mentioned wanting to develop the necessary academic achievement strategies, and also helping students to how to manage their time well. Allison explained that she focuses on "trying to teach them to ask themselves: what's one thing I can do even in the next 24 hours that they can move towards my academic goals?". Chelsea, Clara, and Emma each mentioned that they want students to use the success coaching relationship as a way to understand their stress, and to learn how to manage it. When asked where their students' stress comes from, Emma explained, "maybe from academics, but maybe from their lives

201

outside of school. I don't care, as long as I can help them learn how to manage it." This group of coaches demonstrated the most variety, thus far, in both the spectrum of theories and associated ideas and concepts they used to guide their practice as well as the myriad of focuses that they allowed their conversations to take.

Other guiding supports. The majority of the success coaches in this sub-group identified as Christian, this sub-group of participants tended to use generic language about student development (i.e., "helping the whole student"; "providing space for everyone to belong"), rather than explicitly Christian language about discipleship. Five coaches also explained that they used these foundational theories as "like, a lens or a framework to look through" (Allison), and the others admitted that they "aren't really much of theory people. It's helpful, but not so much when a student is crying their eyes out to you" (Emma).

Additionally, this group of participants focused on two parts of their experience with individual students much more prevalently that many of the other coaches in this study. First, each coach mentioned how important it was that they had spent time in the community college system as administrators, previously, such that they "really understood that student population" (Chelsea). Reflecting on her previous tRio experience, Jade commented, "I just got a chance to get more deeper with students and they got deeper with me, and I really feel like I understand how this working with a very targeted population works to get deeper with students and build that rapport."

Summary. Unlike the previous sub-type, the success coaches in this fourth sub-group focused much more explicitly on using common and broad understandings of

student success, rooted in a typical student affairs mindset. Therefore, ideas like challenge and support, validation, and belonging emerged as common to this group of participants. These nine participants also represented the most diversity in terms of theories and associated ideas and concepts used to support their work, especially in their use different focuses within their conversations with their students. Finally, this sub-group remained markedly different because they continually emphasized meeting students' individual needs much more explicitly than any of the three sub-groups described previously.

Sub-Group #5: Holistic Perspectives

I labeled twelve participants as "holistic," due to their corporate focus on caring for their students' academic, career, as well as personal success (Cassie; Jennifer; Jonathan; Joy; Delia; Gregory; Melissa; Rachel; Romeo; Roxanne; Ruby; Sienna). This sub-group differed from the student-centered sub-group due to their expansive view of success, as well as their common topics of conversation. Each of these participants held a degree in a helping profession, including counseling, sociology, non-profit work, or education. Eight of these participants identified as Christian. Although the remaining four participants identified as secular, each participant named a strongly-held conviction and belief in a sense of calling. Furthermore, only three of these coaches worked for academic affairs departments, and the other nine worked in student affairs departments.

Desired outcomes. Even though the success coaches in this group echoed the desires of the other groups for students to learn how to ask for help, as well as name a future career, these success coaches differed in their desired focus for their community

college students. The majority of these coaches focused on emotional issues, such as wanting their students to grow in their self-confidence and start to believe more positive sentiments about themselves. These comments also reflected an understanding of the student as more than just an academic being, but included attention to other aspects of their identities. Joy, a success coach from Maryland, explained, "I believe that whoever is in front of me has something to offer, and something to give to this world. And I really want them to believe that too, and then just, own it." Melissa, a success coach in Texas, echoes a similar comment when she explains that she wants her students to learn how to be "easy on themselves. I think I want them to hear... be gentle with yourself, but I think I would rather say 'love yourself.'" Delia summarized this notion quite eloquently when she said, "I fundamentally coach by the principle, 'I cannot help how a student is when they come to me, but I can help how they are when they leave me.'"

Theories and associated ideas or concepts. Overall, the coaches in this group of participants echoed the theme of focusing more on theories that were more individually-focused, than dominant institutional measures or interactional perspectives. Upon examining these theories, it became clear that though this group of participants understood that traditional metrics of student success still guided their endeavors (as verified by statements on each of their job descriptions and coaching websites), this group of coaches emphasized a different set of individual theories, including concepts about increasing their students' well-being, as well as other character virtues. Gregory, a success coach in Texas, explained that he wants his students to "first, gain clarity, and understand their purpose. Then, understand the impact, or calling they want to have on the world." Comparing the institutional view of success to her personal view, she noted,

"I would think that my institution would hope that that student will feel like they can be a stronger student. Versus I guess my hope they've become a stronger person." Finally, Joy explained that "coaching is really helping the student articulate who they are and where they want to go and helping them to get there. It's not just degree completion or retention."

Focuses of success coaching relationship. This sub-group of coaches demonstrated even more variety in terms of the typical focus of their conversations than any of the previous sub-types. Personal conversations were mentioned as being tied with academics by eleven of the coaches in this group, and academic concerns were never mentioned as the sole focus of these conversations. The one success coach, Jennifer, who mentioned career within this sub-type explained, "I can't really give a focus of my conversations. Career, personal, academic—it's all tied together." In terms of personal relationships, most of these comments centered upon helping students to learn how to manage their stress in multiple areas in their lives a more helpful manner. Romeo, a success coach in Oregon, mentioned that his office is "not just helping them through their academic processes, but we are helping them to process what's actually going on in their lives." Rachel, a success coach in Montana, noted that she these conversations, "start opening those doors of options for them. In hopes that we relieve some of that pressure." Even Jennifer, the coach who mainly focused on career exploration, mentioned that along with her career coaching, "I do try to give advice that is more broad and more ethical that will help them to develop their own ethical mind." This group of coaches clearly demonstrated a much greater level of comfort with helping students their personal development that the other sub-groups in this study.

Other guiding supports. Though there were both Christian and secular representatives in this group of success coaches, the secular success coaches voiced the strongest acceptance of a non-religious understanding of calling. Jonathan, a committed Atheist, mentioned that he most deeply desires for his students to "leave my office with a stronger sense of purpose. You know, an answer to the question 'what am I doing here?' if they have sense that, 'I know why I'm here. I know what I'm doing here,' I think that's kind of the main point of, you know—everything." On the other side, Romeo, a Christian success coach in Oregon, explains that he would tell his students that:

> success is not just defined in college but defined in all of life. So what you do in your workplace, in who you are and how you act in your workplace and at home and all of life is as important as what you do in college. So I would say becoming who you are is an important process to be successful in all of life.

Interestingly, both secular and Christian success coaches alike in this sub-type emphasized a larger vision of success, drawing on similar sources of meaning, purpose, vocation, and calling to support their work.

Additionally, each member of this group held academic theory as foundational for their work and held theory in high regard. Citing the importance of counseling theories, Melissa mentioned using skills from Clinical Behavioral Theory (CBT) to help a single mother think about the messages she was telling herself, "just changing her thinking from always blaming herself, to slowing the tracks down just a bit." Sienna mentioned thinking deeply about how to not just, "you know, engage students or whatever, but actually get them invested in the process—like they actually care how it turns out." Roxanne mentioned that she structures her work so she" can be much more intentional about social and emotional development, as well as helping my students figure out their careers." Each of the coaches in the holistic sub-type mentioned an explicit theory they

learned in their formal educational preparation and brought to bear on their coaching practice.

Furthermore, this final group of participants expressed awareness of an explicit tension between seeing students as whole people and understanding the community college as an academic institution. Rachel mentioned that she "gets to hear what's truly bothering our students and trying to find a way to help them somehow navigate the realities of this system." To this end, Delia explained, "I am so grateful that our manager keeps phenomenal numbers and tracks things, you know, so we have all of that data and it's all very positive, but I said, 'You know? The one thing is I can't give you any data on how many hugs I got today.' It's tough because that's just not measurable.'" Perhaps more than any other group, the holistic success coaches named the tensions between working in a system guided by larger metrics of success, while also caring for the needs of their individual students.

Summary. The holistic success coaches encompassed the group of success coaches that held the largest conceptions of what success could mean or look like for their students. Looking past retention, graduation, or even persistence, each of these coaches mentioned wanting to help students learn how to ask bigger questions, or understand how their time at their institution formed them. In essence, this group of community college success coaches, while not echoing positive psychology language as much as they could have, did incorporate the largest understanding of success when compared to the other coaches in this study. Each of these twelve participants did not only want students to persist to graduation, but also included a specific focus on their

students well-being outside the classroom and worked to increase this facet of their students' lives.

Conclusion

This chapter presented a composite structural description in answer to the research question: *according to this group of participants, what does it mean and look like for a community college student to demonstrate success?*. Overall, participants mentioned that they hold different visions of what student success means, supported by different theories and guiding beliefs, as well as name different desired outcomes for their students as well as focus on different emphases within their individual meetings with students. In turn, a typology of five different perspectives on the meaning of student success emerged as a result of this study, which depicted in chapter six and serves as the main focus of discussion in the next and penultimate chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion

Interviewer: "In your opinion, what is the most important part of your job?"

Participant: "No matter what my job is, in the end of the day, I think my students really just want to know that someone hears them, because a lot of the time it's not a problem that we can fix. It's not something that's easy to fix. But just being able to hear and vent their problems or frustrations and knowing that someone is actually listening and at least attempting to find a solution goes a long way."

—Samuel, Community College Success Coach, Pennsylvania

In light of this study's goals, this discussion chapter has guided two major emphases: first, to provide a deeper understanding of the emerging success coaching profession itself; and second, to trace the explicit or implicit theories about student success these coaches use to guide their coaching practices. After these first two tasks are completed, I will then assess the ways these approaches compare to and differ from the dominant philosophies and theories about community college student success. I will close this chapter with a discussion of the study's limitations and the implications of this study for future theory, research, and practice.

Research Question #1: Success Coaching in the Community College Setting

The collected responses from participating success coaches in this study provided a full description of their roles, including commentary on their typical student populations that they served, unique features of the community college environment,

types of work performed, and challenges to their work. The following table (table 6.1)

presents a master snapshot of this information.

Table 6.1

The Who, What, How, and Associated Challenges of Community College Success
Coaching

Category	Participants' Description
Who?: Typical Student Population Served	• *Characteristic 1:* Students at *extremely* high risk of attrition and large number of barriers to academic success • *Characteristic 2:* Students as "left behind" by system • *Characteristic 3:* Diversity of academic programs and students' goals • *Characteristic 4 (Additional Finding):* Community college students as more resilient and "gritty" than four-year counter-parts
Where?: Community College Environmental Influences	• *Environmental Influence 1:* Community college as vehicle for social mobility and work-force preparation emphasis • *Environmental Influence 2:* Fast-paced nature of community college environment • *Environmental Influence 3 (Additional Finding):* Vast number of student support services • *Environmental Influence 4 (Additional Finding):* Community college has a small, family-feel
How?: Type of Work Performed by Community College Success Coaches	• *Function 1:* Success coach as student advocate, safety net, and partner for students' academic journeys • *Function 2:* Success coach as students' academic mentor • *Function 3:* Success coach as students "college guide" • *Function 4 (Additional Finding):* Success coach as student service generalist
When?: Challenges to Community College Success Coaches' Work	• *Institutional Challenge 1:* Vagueness of role • *Institutional Challenge 2:* High demand for role • *Institutional Challenge 3 (Additional Finding):* Minimal focus on students' lack of use of coaching services • *Student Challenge 1:* Difficulty of students' life situations • *Student Challenge 2:* Students' "learned helplessness" • *Student Challenge 3 (Additional Finding):* Students' utilitarian thinking

Who? Typical Student Populations Served

Each of the community college success coaches in this study mentioned that their

typical students were at extremely high risk of attrition with a large number of barriers to

their ultimate academic success, often seeing them as left behind by the system. Much of

the current community college literature describes these students in this manner (Burns,

2010; Cohen et al. 2014; Dowd et al. 2007; Jenkins, 2009; Jinkins, 2007; Karp, 2011,

2016; Mullin, 2011; NCES, 2018; Townsend & Wilson, 2006), describing them as

extremely busy with competing demands for their attention (Miller et al. 2004), spending

little to no time on campus outside of class attendance (Braxton, 2013; Morest, 2013)

with characteristics that are negatively associated with academic attainment (Burns,

2010). Furthermore, a minority of this study's participants mentioned the wide diversity

of student goals and academic programs at the community college setting (12

participants; for literature on community college students' characteristics, please see:

Cohen et al. 2014; Ender et al., 1995; Gill 2016; Morest, 2013; Pizzolato et al. 2017;

Sanchez & Lanaan, 1997; Weis, 2018).

These comments seem to reflect the current conversation about the ever-

expanding community college mission due to its access function (Cohen et al., 2014;

Dougherty et al., 2017). Interestingly, however, not a single success coach in this study

echoed the growing fear of the community college becoming "all things to all people" in

light of this lack of consistent agreement as to the appropriate mission for community

colleges (Baldwin, 2017; Barringer & Jaquette, 2018; Creamer, 1994; Dougherty, 1994).

Every participating coach who mentioned this diversity saw this as a unique and exciting

feature of the two-year educational sector, serving as a motivating factor for providing excellent success coaching services to a myriad of students.

Furthermore, this group of success coaches tended to see these students as "left-behind" by the college system, with one participant even explaining that: "so many of our students have been left behind by the system, and we try to be that bridge for them" (Kendall). Comments like these provided further understanding of a shared focus on under-represented populations in an already under-represented educational context (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Tinto, 2012). Although this focus does not necessarily differ from the academic coaching literature that explains though coaching "is for all students but focuses on those that need additional assistance" (Robinson & Gahagan [2010], p. 27; supported by Barnhart & LeMaster [2013]; Clough & Barnes [2016]; Dalton & Crosby [2014]; Keen [2014]; Marks [2015]; Robinson [2015]), these findings do highlight the reality of community college success coaching as focused on students that are at even higher-risk of attrition than the typical four-year university students involved in these coaching programs.

Along with these reflections, each coach also mentioned the large number of barriers that these students face to their academic persistence, including extreme personal circumstances that take these students' time and attention away from the college setting. This finding also provides support for the understanding that these social commitments outside of this environment will make these students less likely to persist (Astin, 2012; Tinto, 1993). Once again, these findings align with the body of literature describing community college students as filling multiple roles and locating their social commitments outside of the college environment (Cohen et al., 2014; Hurtado & Carter,

1997; Jinkins, 2007; Ozaki, 2016; Ozaki & Harnack, 2014). These participants' responses differ, however, from several studies that examine the potentially helpful demographics of the community college student population, especially in their focus on students' close relationships with family members that typically provide them with increased encouragement and motivation to persist in their academic endeavors (Dy, 2017; Habley et al. 2012; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Weis, 2018, Yosso, 2005).

Despite the lines of academic thought that view these outside commitments as assets to students' academic persistence, rather than hindrances (Dy, 2015; Perna & Titus, 2005; Yosso, 2005), many of the coaches in this study viewed these additional commitments as "inevitable hindrances to graduation" (Giovanna), and assumed that stop-out or drop-out, if not acted upon, would become an imminent reality for these students (Crosta, 2014; Shapiro, 2016). Furthermore, many of the community college success coaches in this study tended to assume that attrition from this environment was an inevitable reality for these students and saw themselves as working to prevent these situations by helping students to adopt specific attrition-prevention behaviors, including time management strategies, assignment completion, and study skills. This finding stands in sharp contrast to the recent group of theories that examine students' internal characteristics that help or hinder their success (i.e., grit, perseverance, etc.; Fong, et al. 2017; Martin et al., 2014; Weis, 2018). Overall, this repeated fear and assumption of the inevitability of attrition provides evidence of a potential deficit-perspective in this group of community college success coaches.

In contrast to this finding, a few coaches explained that they understood their students as more "gritty" than their four-year counterparts, due to the amount of barriers

that these students overcame. Emma mentioned that she quickly learned that her "students who had had a harder life were really more gritty—grittier because ... it was easier for them to experience." Supporting this point, Allison noted, "I've just seen so many students that may be deemed high risk that have a resilience that I never saw in your four-year highly-resourced student." Therefore, it would be a mistake to assume that community college success coaching is guided by a deficit-model: continued room needs to be made for understand where, when, and how asset-based thinking emerges from these coaches' perspectives.

Where? Community College Environmental Influences

Nearly half of the participants in this study echoed the common refrain in community college literature of the community college as a vehicle for access and social mobility (Bailey et al., 2015; Morest, 2013; Wyner, 2014). Comments like, "I want to help students persist, so they can get a good job to support their family" (Luke), were highly common among this group of participants, and overall, participants assumed that helping a student persist to completion of their degree would help this goal to become a reality. In essence, participants echoed a shared sense of working for "the common, you know, good for all community college students" (Matthias; NCES, 2018). These comments reflect the ultimate goals of the Completion Agenda (Bailey et al., 2015, Mellow & Heelan 2014), and align with the position in the body of literature that views the community college as a place of social transformation (for more information on this perspective, please see: Brint & Karabel, 1989; Grubb, 1991; Levin, 2000; Medsker & Tillery, 1971). It is also important to understand that many participants' comments focused on an economic or democratic understanding of success (Perna & Thomas,

2008), and held career placement as the ultimate measure of students' success. Degree completion, then, was described the vehicle to reach this outcome (Bailey et al., 2015; Wyner, 2014).

Considering this finding, it becomes important to understand that the more critical understanding of the community college as a second-rate institution was not mentioned by a single participating success coach (Beller & Hout, 2006; Beach, 2011; Burton-Clark, 1980; Ireland, 2015; Zwerling, 1976). The idea of the community college as "cooling out" students' original aspirations was also not mentioned by a single participant (Burton-Clark, 1960). Instead, comments about coaches' love for, and belief in the power of the community college to transform its students' lives dominated the focus of most of these interviews (i.e., Chloe's comment: "I have a deep love for community colleges. I believe in what they do… I don't know how many times I've heard that they give people a second chance").

Despite these positive sentiments, five participants mentioned their concerns about the fast-paced nature of the community college environment, and the ability for students to get lost in the frantic maze that the two-year sector resembles. Comments like these seem to echo the findings in the literature that community colleges are difficult to navigate (Venezia, 2010) and resemble busy cafeterias (Bailey et al. 2015) and shapeless rivers (Scott-Clayton, 2011b). Although increasing student support services outside of the classroom remains one of the ideals and emphases of the Community College Completion Agenda, especially in light of the Guided Pathways movement (Bailey et al., 2015), it is important to recognize the concerns raised by five of these participants who

do not want success coaching to become one more option in an already, overly-diverse and confusing environment.

Interestingly, in contrast to much of the literature that portrays community colleges as highly utilitarian and bureaucratic institutions (Levin, 2005; Schudde & Goldrick-Rab, 2015), four of this study's participants explained that they enjoyed the small, family-oriented feel of the community college setting (Amber, Chelsea, Chloe, Clara). Each of these participants echoed comments like, "you're not just a number here, but you are also a student." Sentiments like these almost echo the language used to describe small, private, liberal arts universities, and serve as a strong counter to the neo-liberal perception of community colleges as focused on increasing productivity, depicting students as highly-anonymous consumers of an educational product (Levin, 2005). Additionally, these comments seem to echo the original focus of the community colleges as "democracy's colleges", which is aimed at providing students with assistance for "anything deep-seated or extremely personal" (McConnell, 1967).

How? Emphases in the Practice of Community College Success Coaching

In her study, Robinson (2015) found that academic/success coaches provided a myriad of different services to their students, including: assisting students with vocalizing their academic and non-academic goals, developing an academic "game plan" to carry students through their academic careers to degree completion, and connecting them with to important resources to help them overcome their barriers to educational persistence. Additionally, Robinson's (2015) participants echoed a skill development perspective, which included helping students develop study skills and a heightened ability to identify their strengths and weaknesses. These services were all performed for the purposes of

216

increasing motivation to persist in their institutional environments (Robinson, 2015). The additional studies reviewed for this portion of this study echoed similar conclusions, framing academic/success coaching as an academic planning, goal-setting, and academic performance improvement mechanism (Barnhart & LeMaster, 2013; Robinson, 2015; Sepulveda, 2016; Strange, 2016). Interestingly, each of these studies purported a more developmental focus, all mentioning a crucial component of the coaching relationship, framed as helping students to name, resolve, or achieve their personal, non-academic concerns and goals.

Although many striking similarities between my participants' responses and the literature emerged as a result of data collection, four additional emphases regarding the type of work performed by participating success coaches also surfaced. The remainder of this section will explore each of these additional findings, and compare them to the literature reviewed in chapter two on this emerging practice.

Success coaches as students' advocates and safety nets. Upon examining the community college student success literature, it becomes readily apparent that a relationship with a faculty member is the key to increasing students' persistence to graduation and degree completion (Kim & Sax, 2009; Levin et al. 2017; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Price & Tovar, 2014; Rendón, 2004, 2006; Schreiner, 2012; Tovar, 2015; Zell, 2009). This group of studies echoes the reality that these relationships help students to feel known, valued, cared for, and mentored due to the respect and attention they receive from these institutional agents (Barnett, 2011; Schreiner et al. 2011; Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

The participating success coaches in this study mirrored this language, understanding themselves as students' advocates, teaching them how to speak with faculty and speak up for their individual needs. Approaching their roles from an academic mentorship perspective, a majority of participating success coaches mentioned the importance of demonstrating care for each individual student to provide the crucial support necessary for helping these students to complete their degrees. One coach, Georgina, even went so far as to call herself a "student support manager," explaining that it was most important for her to think about how she manages her "supportive attitude" in order that students may receive the most individualized attention possible. These comments echoed the increasing focus in the Community College Completion Agenda on increasing appreciative forms of non-academic support outside of the classroom (Gill, 2016a; Wyner, 2014), as well as representing a growing awareness that additional support from other institutional agents, other than faculty, will assist in increasing students' persistence rates (Bailey et al. 2015; Karp, 2011, 2016; Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Interestingly, although much of the previous research I reviewed for this study focused on helping students develop their self-assessment skills (Barnhart & LeMaster, 2013; Robinson, 2015), participants in this study did not mirror this emphasis on helping students to understand their strengths, weaknesses, and non-academic commitments (Chickering, 2006; Miller & Rollnick, 2009 Zimmerman, 2002). Instead, they primarily saw themselves as advocates for students in difficult situations and focused on creating academic game plans to act as a supportive mechanism for their students when life situations emerged that thwarted their academic goals.

Success coaches as students' academic mentors. As was mentioned at the

beginning of this section, much of the literature on academic/success coaching focuses on

the academic mentorship component of the success coaching role (Robinson, 2015;

Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Sepulveda, 2013). Overall, participants' comments in this

study echoed the academic emphasis of these previous studies' findings, especially in

terms of the individualized support community college success coaches provided for their

students, as well as the attention to connecting students with resources to help them

overcome their barriers to persistence, a finding supported by much of Karp's (2008,

2011, 2016) recent work.

These participants also commonly mentioned a shared expectation that forming a

plan would help students to gain clarity on their community college experiences, and then

increase their academic motivations. Their common hope was for students to find the

motivation to persist to completion of their academic goals as a result of receiving this

additional clarity and support. This finding seems to stand in sharp contrast to the

language of "personal development" echoed throughout the larger body of

academic/success coaching literature (Neuerhauser & Weber, 2011), as well as literature

about expanding the focus of non-academic student support services to include students

additional "life" concerns (Karp, 2011, 2016; O'Banion, 2011; Williams, 2002). These

findings point to the reality of the primarily academic focus of the Community College

Completion Agenda and also provide preliminary evidence that these new emphases

within community college student affairs departments largely mirror the ultimate goals of

their surrounding context (Tull et al. 2015).

Success coaches as students' college guides. One of the main findings that emerged from Robinson's (2015) study clarified the reality that her participating academic/success coaches did not consider themselves tutors, since they did not see themselves as helping their students master course-specific content. Instead, her participants viewed their roles as helping students to understand how to function as better students, and taught them several different college-level skills, including time management and study skill development. Although the participants in my study also echoed this study skill development and time management focus, they also focused much more explicitly on teaching their students about the expectations of their college cultures than Robinson's (2015) participants.

My participants did not see themselves as traditional tutors, but instead continually vocalized their roles as their students' institutional navigators as well as translators of institutional policies. Rachel explained, "we see so many students who have little to no college experience. A lot of my job is trying to help them understand the expectations of our college as well as what it looks like to be a good college student." Although this focus is understandable as a result of the reality of the typical community college student population, these comments also seem to echo the Guided Pathways movement within the Community College Completion Agenda (Bailey et al., 2015). This emphasis is especially telling in light of the ways that community college success coaches in this study described their provision of the necessary guidance and capital for their students to understand the expectations of the institution (institutional translation), and their assistance in helping their students to chart a path through the institution, culminating in degree completion (Bailey et al., 2015; Cox et al. 2017).

Success coaches as student service generalists. The current academic/success coaching literature in higher education also focuses on the apparent role confusion between academic/success coaching, counseling, and advising (Marks, 2015; Robinson, 2015; Sepulveda, 2016; Strange, 2015). Although coaches in this study did mention an inherent vagueness within their roles, they also each maintained that community college success coaching is not academic advising or mental health counseling but is its own, new role. When asked to articulate the main differences between each of these roles, it became readily apparent that though community each college success coach in this study provided clear information regarding the institutional expectations of their roles (i.e., policies, procedures, and general college-level knowledge; Cox et al., 2017), they did not concern themselves as much with explicit course selection, major selection, or management of transfer processes (O'Banion, 1994; Scrivener & Weiss, 2009).

This finding becomes surprising when understanding two different currently-emerging factors in community college student affairs work. First, in light of the Guiding Pathways Movement, mandatory academic advising is becoming an increasingly prevalent reality on community college campuses (Donaldson et al., 2016; Karp, 2011, 2016; O'Banion, 2011; Varney, 2007). Second, a new understanding of the focus of academic advising is emerging, termed intrusive or proactive advising which includes advisors' active inquiry into students' academic desires and non-academic commitments and life situations. It is hypothesized that this emphasis will, once again, motivate students to persist to completion and help them to overcome their barriers, knowing that they have a supportive presence at their institutions to continue in their educational journeys (Bloom et al., 2008, 2013; O'Banion, 2011; Varney, 2007).

Furthermore, each success coach mentioned that they are not mental health counselors and cited this as their referral function. These types of comments underscore statements in the body of non-empirical coaching literature that separate coaching from counseling (Marks, 2015; McWilliams & Beam, 2013), explaining that coaching takes on a briefer focus, working with healthy students to set goals and make forward progress towards an academic goal (Dalton & Crosby, 2014; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010), and envision a brighter future for themselves (Clough & Barnes, 2016; Wisker et al. 2008). This emphasis stands in sharp contrast to much of the counseling literature that focuses on helping students to overcome psychological issues in their past to maintain a healthier current state of being (Marks, 2015).

Although my participants saw themselves as active supporters in their students' success journeys, they did not necessarily investigate their students' personal desires or value commitments. Additionally, participants' tended to emphasize their roles as student service providers (Hasbrouch & Denton, 2007; Schreiner & Anderson, 2005), functioning as the "face" of these institutions for their students (Levin & Kater, 2012; a term coined by participating success coach, "Mia"). Most of these coaches saw themselves as student service generalists, providing as much individualized support as possible for their students. When recalling their comments about resource connection, they also fulfill a case management or social work function. Although these statements echo the original desire for community college student affairs departments to assist students with anything "deep-seated or extremely personal" (McConnell, 1965, p. 2), this role is not without its extreme challenges or difficulties, which will be reviewed in the next section of this chapter.

When? Inherent Challenges with Success Coaching Role

Two larger categories of difficulties within these roles emerged in this section, with one category focusing on challenges emerging as a result of working within the community college context; and the other emphasizing challenges emerging from working with student populations that are at higher risk of attrition.

Institutional challenges. The success coaches in this study continually explained the reality of the inherent vagueness of this role, a finding shared between my participants and the participants in Robinson's (2015) study. This was epitomized by Luke's comment that "It comes down to the literal question: 'What does it mean to help a student be successful?'". Since academic/success coaches are a relatively new position in higher education institutions (Robinson, 2015; Sepulveda, 2016; Stober & Cox, 2010; Van Niewerburgh, 2012), this finding is heightened by the fact that the focus of community college student affairs work has rarely been clearly articulated (Cohen et al., 2014; Culp & Heglfot, 1998; Elsner & Ames, 1998; Knight, 2014; Ozaki & Harnak, 2014; Tull et al. 2015) and lacks a robust body of supporting, empirical literature (Creamer, 1994). Some participants also mentioned concern of coaching being a fad, in light of the increasing "buzzword" nature of "student success" (Gilet-Karam, 2016; Harrell & Holcrot, 2012; Karp, 2016; Levin, 2015; Morest, 2013).

 Additionally, success coaches mentioned an inherent tension brought about in their roles between focusing on institutional goals that can be empirically-verified (i.e., namely retention, Bailey et al., 2015), while also maintaining an utmost focus on the heartbeat of their role: focusing on the success of their individual students. To truly do their jobs well, success coaches in this study had to learn how to hold both goals in

tension. This finding is also supported by the reality that only two success coaches in this sample mentioned students' lack of use of their community college success coaching services. Overall, this group of success coaches was much more focused on their students' individual success than about whether their success coaching programs furthered larger, more corporate institutional goals.

A second institutional challenge emerged from these participants' reflections which included a realization about the high demand for their role. One participant, Georgina, even mentioned that she has to assess her priorities almost "daily… to clarify what I think is most important to achieve in my day." When understanding the social work focus of these roles, it also became readily apparent that many success coaches struggled with the smallness of their roles, struggling with the reality that they could not fix their students' entire life situations. William, explained it in the following way: "I'm only one person, and while I can help, I can't do it on my own. I need the student to learn how to help themselves, too." Comments like these underscore the difficulty of working with a student population with a high degree of attrition (Cohen et al., 2014) in a sector that continually expands its offerings to be "everything to everyone" (Hanson, 2017). If community college success coaching continues to grow as a high-impact, non-academic practice, and if community college student affairs professionals continue to move from "supplemental to necessary" (Cohen et al., 2014), then these departments would do well to echo Fong et al.'s (2017) advice to continue the clarification of appropriate outcomes for these students.

Challenges arising from working with students. Although each coach mentioned the nature of their student populations as at higher risk of attrition, several of them also

mentioned the difficulty of seeing their students' difficult life situations (Berkner et al. 2002). Since community college students typically do not undergo a linear degree process (Crosta, 2014; Habley, 2012; Hagedorn, 2005), and since community college students typically spend minimal time on their campuses (Braxton, 2013), a sense of being "out of their league" naturally emerged from my participants' responses (Amber, Cora). Some of my participants even articulated a desire to increase their counseling and social work skills in order to enact their roles in a better manner. This finding was also supported by participants' comments about students' "learned helplessness," captured by Renee's comment about how she finds her "mouth hanging open with what they've dealt with" due to their difficult situations as well as their "utilitarian thinking and small scope" about the point and purpose of a community college education (Mia). The current literature on academic/success coaching tends to highlight the vagueness of the coaching role, instead of focusing on these additional, inherent difficulties that come from working with this type of population. In order to strengthen this profession, focusing on the nuances of working with specific student populations is a vital area of exploration for future studies in order to increase success coaches' professional development.

Conclusion. Although these focuses echo various emphasis within the empirical and non-empirical academic/success coaching literature, they serve as an excellent backdrop for exploring this study's second research question: *According to this group of participants, what does it mean and look like for a community college student to be successful?*. I will turn my attention to providing a discussion of this set of findings in relationship to the literature in the next section of this discussion.

Research Question #2: The Essence of Community College Student Success

In the second part of this study, success coaches articulated their understandings of what it means and looks like for a community college to demonstrate success. This piece of my discussion will provide an in-depth analysis of their responses, answering the final two questions proposed by this study, which include*:* first*, what explicit and implicit theories and concepts to these coaches use to guide their work,* and second, *how do these implicit and explicit theories and perspectives compare to body of available literature on community college student success?*

Assumed Findings

After reviewing the current literature on community college student success, it became readily apparent that three different focuses exist within this body of literature (Braxton, et al. 2013). These focuses included a primary focus on students' individual success, as characterized by increases in students': (1) persistence in the educational environment, (2) academic achievement, (3) gains in cognitive learning abilities, and (4) general flourishing, well-being and thriving. The focuses on institutional success prioritized increased retention, completion or graduation, transfer rates, and career placement. Finally, the third group of emphases tends to highlight paradigmatic theories guiding the focus of interactions between institutional agents and students, including: involvement, engagement, integration, and validation. Generally, my participants' focused on an individual perspective of student success, assisting their students' to persist to degree completion. Interestingly, the common ideals of increasing academic learning and assisting in transfer preparation were rarely mentioned by my participants. Instead,

my participants were much more focused on simply helping students to "make it" to graduation, overcoming barriers that tend to get in their way during this process.

Overall, the current bodies of academic/success coaching literature tend to prioritize two different emphases: first, they tend to focus on an individual perspective of students' success, seeing coaching as an ultimately individual enterprise (Barnhart & LeMaster, 2013; Robinson, 2015; Sepulveda, 2016). Second, they also assumed that providing this individualized support will enable the larger institutional goal of increased retention and completion to be achieved. This finding is also supported by the increasing goal of increasing student completion rates within community college student literature, especially in response to the current focus of the Community College Completion Agenda (i.e., for a fuller description of this movement, please see Bailey et al. 2015). Despite these focuses, the reality in community college student affairs literature includes a dual-focus captured by an original, holistic ethos (i.e., McConnell's [1967] deep-seated perspective), and the more recent criticism of the community college as a consumer-driven business, commoditizing an educational product (Levin, 2005). The following table, table 6.2, emerged as potential depiction of these split foci. The remainder of this second section will discuss the nuances between each of these types as compared to the dominant literature available on these perspectives:

Table 6.2

Major Emphases Within Community College Student Affairs Literature

Category	Emphasis #1: Utilitarian Emphasis	Emphasis #2: Holistic Emphasis
Guiding Value:	"Get students through school!" (Levin, 2015)	"Develop the whole student!" (Harbour, 2017)
Desired Outcome:	Provide students with career assistance and transfer preparation (McAlmon, 1931)	Assist students with anything "deep seated" or "extremely personal" (McConnell, 1967)
Major Belief:	Focus on increasing students' moral development and psychological development do not make sense in a sector with such low persistence rates (Cohen et al., 2014)	Help community college students develop into flourishing and thriving human beings (Humphreys, 1937; O'Banion, et al., 1972)
Primary Commitment:	The community college cannot and should not take responsibility for students' non-academic needs due to its credentialing, business-oriented culture (Levin, 2015; Tull et al., 2015)	Care for students' academic and non-academic well-being (Creamer, 1994) by offering services to help students get through times of impasse and liminality (Lichtmann, 2010)

Finding #1: "Student Success Sub-Types"

In this study, participating community college success coaches shared four common convictions about their roles. First, each coach explained that their roles focused on a student population with extreme barriers to overcome. Second, each coach also noted that they understood their roles to focus primarily on motivating students to persist to degree completion. Third, this group of success coaches held a general belief in the positive results of completing a community college education and a fundamental commitment to the access mission of the two-year setting. In essence, it became apparent that this group of success coaches understood that graduating from the community college would act as a vehicle for students' social and economic mobility and framed their responses with assumption in mind.

Finally, each participant also mentioned that success has to be individually-defined by each student and worked to help their students articulate their goals, while helping to make reaching them a possibility. Despite these commonalities, each of the five different "student success types" emphasized different parts and pieces of what Kuh et al. (2007) have termed the "student success puzzle." Understanding these nuances within these varying perspectives brings increasing depth and clarity to the very essence of community college student success. The following figure (figure 6.1), presents the major distinctions between these types.

Overall, this figure represents participants' major conceptualizations of the essence of community college student success, with descriptions that focus on the holistic nature of students and take their non-academic identities into account remaining at the top of the spectrum, and the utilitarian viewpoints on the bottom of the spectrum. The figure is presented as an upside-down triangle due to the finding from the data collected for this study that a success coach moves up this spectrum, his or her understanding of the meaning of student success grew larger and more focused on the students' overall well-being. Again, those at the bottom of this pyramid more closely voiced the utilitarian language of the Community College Completion Agenda and tended to focus on persistence to graduate as the ultimate marker of success. Finally, the arrow on the left- and right-hand sides of the figure represents the inherent tension in success coaches' focuses on the whole student (the holistic focus), and their focus on simply helping students get through school (the utilitarian focus). Participants who held the most sophisticated conceptualizations of student success (the holistic sub-types), most clearly articulated this inherent tension between the two ends of this spectrum. Finally, the

dotted lines between the different sub-types represent the nature of this figure as closer to a spectrum than a strict typology.
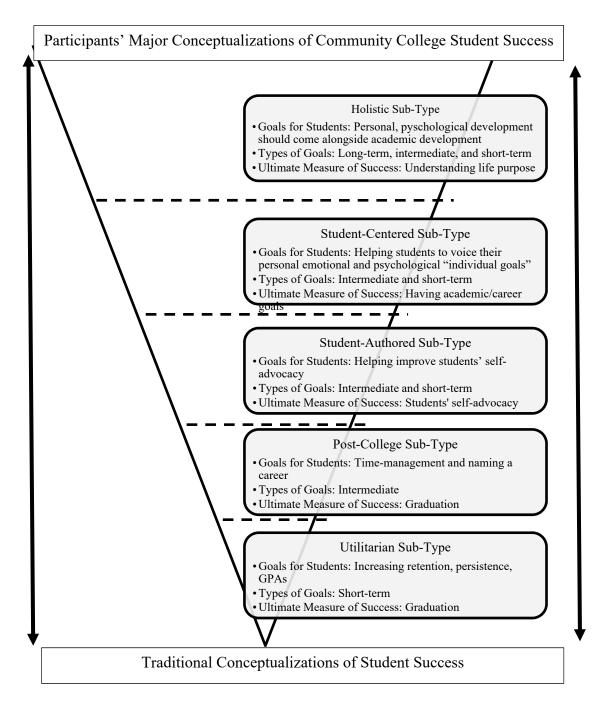

Figure 6.1: Graphic Representation of "Student Success Types

Student success sub-type #1: Utilitarian perspective. Although the literature I reviewed for this study related four different pieces of students' individual success, the most commonly-highlighted factor in this framework was increasing students' academic persistence to academic goal or degree completion. Though nearly every participant mentioned this outcome, the utilitarian sub-type that emerged most clearly aligned with this goal. Mirroring the most common refrain in community college student success literature (Bailey et al., 2015; Cohen et al., 2014; Fong et al., 2017; Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Hoachlander et al., 2003), this group of coaches echoed the growing concern about the disconnect between high student enrollment rates and low student persistence rates in the two year community college setting (seven million versus five million, McFarland, 2017).

This group of coaches' responses and reflections differed from the major body of literature on persistence in that they did not assume an expectation that students would attend full-time (Seidman, 2005), but would stay enrolled continually in at least one course after original matriculation without long breaks in attendance (Habley, 2012; Lenning, 1980). Only two success coaches in this group mentioned the reality that breaks in attendance could be necessary for ultimate degree completion. Despite these comments, the overall focus relied on continuous persistence to degree completion.

Furthermore, this group of coaches also focused upon increasing students' motivation for degree completion by helping them to articulate their academic interests and goals. This finding seems to correlate with the strands in academic coaching and community college student affairs literature that articulating a plan will increase students' persistence and forward momentum (Hatch & Garcia, 2017; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010;

231

Schuetz, 2005; Strayhorn, 2015). Interestingly, however, these responses differed from

the newer strain within community college persistence literature that focuses on students'

internal characteristics (i.e., grit, self-efficacy, self-advocacy, etc.) that assist in guiding

their persistence journeys (Braxton, 2013; Cohen et al., 2015; D'Amico et al., 2014;

Donaldson, 2016; Fong et al., 2017; Habley et al, 2012; Morest, 2013; Nakajima, 2012;

Terriquez, 2017). This group's primarily academic performance-based emphasis also

differs from Bean and Eaton's (2000) persistence model that focuses on increasing

students' self-confidence, motivation, and ultimate forward momentum in the community

college environment.

     Additionally, although some studies have made room for the reality that

community college students may not hold a shared goal of degree completion (i.e.,

students transferring after completing general education requirements, Sanchez &

Lanaan, [1997]; students taking multiple courses at multiple institutions, Cohen et al.,

[2014]; students taking personal enrichment courses, Braxton et al., [2013]), each of the

participants in this group assumed a shared focus on academic goal completion,

culminating in graduation. Overall, these six coaches primarily shared the more

utilitarian commitments of the Community College Completion Agenda and relied upon

these embedded values to guide the focus of their work, and therefore, align themselves

with the bottom portion of the figure I presented previously.

     Student success sub-type #2: Post-college perspective. The second student

success sub-type included an explicit focus on post-college success, phrased in terms of

exploring and landing a sustainable career. These eleven participants primarily echoed

Perna and Thomas' (2008) economic understanding of success, understanding that

receiving a postsecondary degree is a necessity for economic success (Bailey, et al., 2015; Habley, 2012; Perna & Thomas, 2008), upholding the positive belief of viewing the community college as an agent of social transformation (e.g., Dougherty, 1994). These findings also reflect the strand of community college literature that assumes that workforce preparation is a vital mission of the two-year educational sector (Ayers, 2017; Holtzer & Baum, 2017; Levin, 2015; Sanchzs & Lanaan, 1997).

Finally, these findings also repeat one of the continual focuses within community college student affairs literature, which is that of these non-academic student support professionals are largely responsible for providing career guidance, and assisting students in obtaining job-related skills (Cohen et al., 2014; CCSSE, 2005; Jepsen et al, 2014; McAlmon, 1930). This group of participants also supports Creamer's (1994) and Cohen et al.'s (2014) statements that in the two-year sector, helping students to obtain an occupation could, at times, be more relevant and pressing than promoting their individual flourishing, thriving, and well-being. Therefore, this group of participants demonstrates a more middling position in the tension between utilitarian and holistic foci of community college success—supporting their students ultimate career dreams was important to them as their comments supported the utilitarian vision of the community college as a credentialing agency (Levin, 2005).

Student success sub-type #3: Student-authored perspective. Interestingly, a third perspective, a student-authored perspective, emerged from this study's data collection which did not find any support from the current base of empirical and non-empirical academic coaching or student success literature. Although each coach mentioned that success had to be defined by the individual students, this particular group of success

coaches highlighted the need for students to learn how to advocate for themselves and understand their needs in a deeper manner. This became especially important when, as Orion said, "it all hits the fan," and "students really need to know how to reach out an ask for help in those times."

Although academic literature continues to focus on students' barriers to educational success (Baime & Baum, 2016; Bragg, 2001; Rouche & Rouche, 1993; Terriquez, 2017); as well as scholarship about the roles and focuses of community college student affairs professionals as especially focused on their provisions of emotional support for their students (Cohen et al., 2014; Karp, 2011, 2016; Karp et al., 2008; Tull et al., 2015) to increase their students' motivation to reach their academic goals (Braxton, 2013; Cohen et al., 2015; D'Amico et al., 2014; Donaldson, 2016; Fong et al., 2017; Habley et al, 2012; Morest, 2013; Nakajima, 2012; Terriquez, 2017), these studies commonly leave out a robust description of the necessary skills must learn to become successful, as well as a holistic understanding of the student affairs' professionals roles in assisting students with these processes. When examining the essence of this group's perspective compared to the original dichotomy presented (holistic to perspective), developing this skill almost acts as a fulcrum or ultimate tipping point in increasing student success, lying in the middle of these two different perspectives.

Student success sub-type #4: Student-centered perspective. The fourth group of participants echoed the typical, student affairs language about caring for the "whole student" and providing for "all of their needs." These responses reflected the varied focus in both student affairs literature as well as academic coaching literature that focuses

234

on caring for academic, personal, and professional goals (Barnharom & Idris, 2017; Bergen-Cico & Viscomi, 2011; Dean, 2015; Habley et al., 2012; Fisher, 2017; Martin & Seifert, 2011; McCarthy, 2017; Meents-DeCaigny & Sanders, 2015; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). This finding supports the recent emphasis within the Guided Pathways movement about the need for increased guidance for community college students during their educational journeys (Bailey et al., 2015; CCSSE, 2017). This sentiment also echoes a conception of education as caring for the "whole student," and support's Harbour's (2015) belief that if the community college is to continue functioning as "democracy's college," students' academic as well as non-academic needs and goals must be taken into account.

Furthermore, this perspective also echoes the original finding in the literature review that community college student affairs practitioners must also consider students' personal development along with their academic development (Cowley, 1935; McConnell, 1967). This type of attention could be incredibly helpful for students who are at times of liminality or impasse (Litchmann, 2010). Each success coach in this sub-type held a degree in a helping profession, and eschewed the more deficit-focused understanding of attrition and retention theories (e.g., Tinto's [1993] paradigmatic theory), and instead adopted a perspective closer to Rendón and Muños' (2011) theory of validation, seeing their students as human beings full of unrealized assets who are waiting to be unlocked (for more information on validation theory and its general positive perspective, please see Boggs [1995] and Rendón [2006]).

These success coaches also understood themselves as the primary contact point for the institution and took the responsibility upon themselves to reach out to their

students. Comments like these support their emphasis on the institutional responsibility to reach out and support these students, rather than functioning in a more reactive manner to students' demonstrations of interest. Despite this increasingly positive and holistic focus, these comments remained vague and non-descriptive, and potentially confusing towards understanding the full essence of this emerging service in this setting. Additionally, without explicit clarity in the focus of their goals, success coaches in this sub-type could also continually accept the guiding belief in student success as ultimately characterized by persistence to degree completion and avoid some of the larger tensions between adopting a more holistic vision of student success that may call into question some of the ideals of the Community College Completion Agenda.

Student success sub-type #5: Holistic perspective. The final student success type which emerged from this study included coaches with an extremely holistic understanding of student success guided by an ultimate focus on increasing students' personal thriving, flourishing, and well-being, as well as academic success (i.e., for more on the concept of thriving, please see Dy, 2017; Schreiner, 2012). Reflecting the understanding that student affairs professionals should have a vested interest in their students' development of meaning and purpose (Glanzer et al., 2017), this group of participants primarily described their practice as holistic in nature, caring for students' general development. They differed from the previous four subtypes in that they did not primarily focus on students' "student role," but instead paid attention to their students' non-academic roles (i.e., "mother," mentioned by Melissa and Gregory; "employee," mentioned by Jennifer and Rachel; and "friend," mentioned by Sienna and Romeo).

This finding also supports the body of academic coaching literature that includes an explicit "life coaching" emphasis (Clough & Barnes, 2015; Cox et al., 2010; Dalton & Crosby, 2014; Keen, 2016; Marks, 2015; Robinson, 2015; Wisker et al., 2008). These comments also reflect the original focus in community college student affairs work on showing care to students and helping them with their extremely personnel difficulties (Brumbaugh, 1950; Creamer, 1994; Helfgot & Culp, 1995; Humphreys, 1937; Lousbury, 1946; McConnell, 1967; O'Banion et al., 1972). Once again, these types of comments support a larger vision for the community college setting, promoting students' academic as well as non-academic welfare (Creamer, 1994; Harbour, 2015; Monroe, 1972). This also supports the most recent findings from an *Achieving the Dream* (2018) study which found that graduates of community colleges with a more explicit student development focus also reported higher well-being and a higher number of sources of non-academic support on average than their national cohort.

Several of the community college success coaches in this group also explained that their holistic understanding and vision of student success existed in major conflict and tension with the more utilitarian, institutionally-guided focus on promoting students' persistence. Cassie explained, "it's about thinking about the student as a person, not just as a student, and thinking about student success as the long-term end goal, not necessarily what's happening in this class and this semester." Similarly, Delia explained, "I get concerned in our current conversation that if you just focus on academic success, you won't get general success. But I think that if you focus on a more general idea, you, at least hopefully, will get both retention and student development." Echoing the importance of seeing students as holistic, human beings in Rendón's (2006) theory of

237

validation, these comments support the repeated concern that degree completion is not a large enough vision for student success (Kinzie, 2012; Lax, 2012; Xu & Ran, 2015), as well as the continual need to increase campus mechanisms that lead to increased thriving (Briggs, 2016; Romero, 2015; Schreiner, 2012).

This perspective also takes a much more positive perspective about students, not assuming that they will drop out from their educational endeavors unless acted upon, but instead seeks to understand and then provide the factors that will help them thrive in the community college environment (Bowman, 2010; Keyes & Haidt, 2003). Despite these ideals, adopting this perspective will mean that community college success coaches will need to learn how to mediate between the more utilitarian values of the completion agenda and their more idealistic and holistic visions of student success.

Comparison to community college student success literature. Three major discussion points need to be made as a result of these findings. First, my participants' dominant focus was on increasing students' academic persistence to goal completion. Concepts associated with individual theories (i.e., increasing students' motivation to persist to completion of their academic goals), remained dominant. Additionally, there was hardly any mention of interactional theories except for the theory of validation. An almost anti-traditional success theory mindset dominated these interviews, with many participants not even mentioning increasing students' engagement, involvement, or integration. Participants primarily seemed to simply focus on helping their students "make it" to graduation, without much attention as to increases in well-being or learning gains. This stands in sharp contrast to the vision of "community college as a learning college" that has dominated both the literature as well as the language used in community

238

college mission statements (i.e., language about being a learning college was listed on every one of my participants' community college websites).

Although the literature on the point and purpose community college student affairs departments has typically been conceptualized as involving a tension between a more utilitarian versus a more holistic focus, my findings revealed not just a dichotomy, but a spectrum of perspectives, displayed on the last page of my findings chapter. This spectrum ranged from a more utilitarian, narrower focus of student success as degree completion, to a wider, more holistic emphasis on students' well-being and flourishing. The higher participants moved up this spectrum, the more their ideals (i.e., well-being), conflicted with the reality of their situations (i.e., degree completion as the commonly-accepted measure of student success). It appears that this spectrum reveals a developmental process that these student affairs professionals might encounter, starting from the basic, commonly-held perspective, to a more expansive perspective. In essence, if student affairs professionals stay in their roles as community college success coaches, I hypothesize that their perspectives about the meaning and essence of community college student success, over the long haul, *may* grow more holistic and more sophisticated over time. Overall, this potential reality remains tentative. Future research will need to validate the reality of this finding among other participants in other community colleges across the nation.

Conclusion. A final, additional finding emerged from this study that was not expected and stands in sharp contrast to the dominant, available student success literature. The remainder of this section explores this interesting discussion point, and compares this

analysis to the ongoing, contemporary conversation about community college student success.

Finding #2: Additional Implicit and Explicit Influences on Success Coaches' Perspectives on the Meaning and Essence Community College Student Success

When examining the current literature on the student affairs professional's role in students' success, it appears that studies largely emphasize a student-focused process, drawing from Astin's I-E-O (1993) model, that examines various student demographics (inputs), student affairs' professionals' interventions (environmental influences), resulting in ultimate outcomes for students' success. After reviewing the supporting academic coaching literature, the following diagram emerged as a guiding understanding of the process of facilitating students' success:
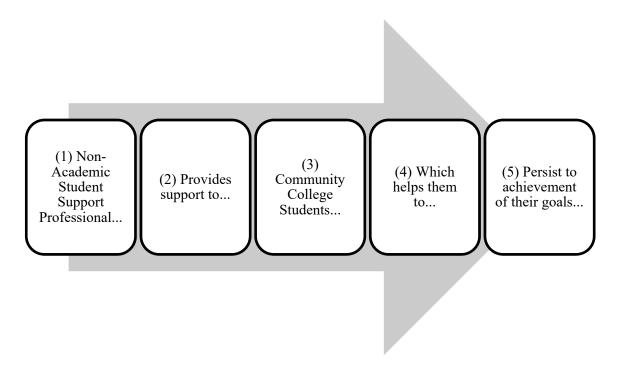

Figure 6.2. Current Representation of the Conceptualization of Community College Student Success

Despite these assumptions, participating community college success coaches' in this study named four different explicit and explicit influences on their understanding of the essence of student success. The following figure depicts the expanded understanding that these perspectives brought to this study:
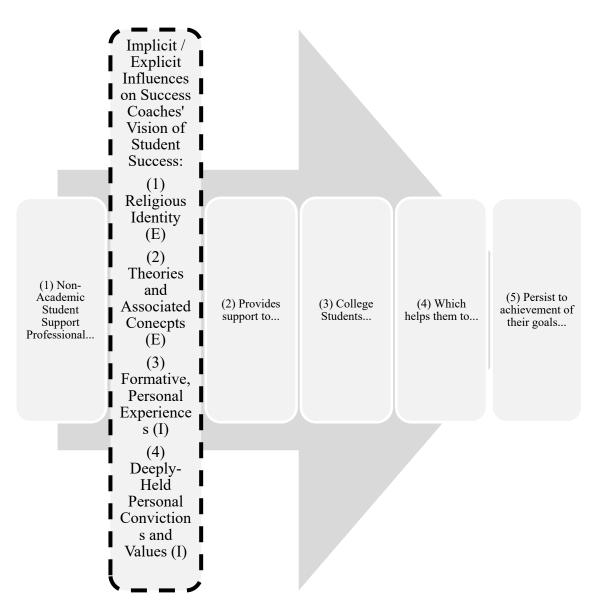

Figure 6.3. An Expanded Vision of the Conceptualization of Community College Student Success

These four "influencers" acted as different parts and pieces of these success coaches' understanding of student success, and guided the focus of their work. The remainder of this section will explore each of these influencers and provide a description of each of them.

Explicit influence #1: Religious perspectives. The majority of my participants in this study identified as Christians in their religious perspectives. Though they identified with various Protestant denominations, and named various levels of commitment to integrating their religious perspectives with their coaching practices, it remains significant that the majority of my participants used their Christian faith to frame their ultimate understanding of the true purpose of their roles. Though not everyone articulated their roles as ministerial in nature, these coaches demonstrated a shared commitment to serving those on the margins of society. Rendón (2006) hypothesized that student success may be influenced by students' spiritual and religious identities; therefore, these participants' responses seem to support the potential connection between respondents' religious perspective and their vision of student success. Future studies could continue this line of exploration, seeking to understand if this perspective connection to remain true with additional samples.

Explicit influence #2: Success coaches' preferred theories and associated concepts. Second, the majority of my participants mentioned preferred academic theories and/or associated concepts that they used to guide their work. As was mentioned previously, those identifying with lower levels of the student success spectrum tended to prioritize associated concepts with these theories, and did not speak in as academic of a

manner about student success. As participants grew more sophisticated in their

understanding of student success, they mentioned an increasing amount of theories that

guided their work and were more intentional to include these explicit theories in their

professional roles. Every participant mentioned the importance of practical wisdom in

their work. Those at the lower levels of this typology tended to prioritize practical

wisdom as a guiding tool, and those at the higher ends of the spectrum tended to see

theory as a bedrock for their role.

Implicit influence #3: Formative personal experiences. Success coaches in this

study also mentioned personal experiences that shaped their perspective on student

success, which included overcoming personal difficulties in their past, being a parent, and

specific factors in their educational backgrounds. Overall, community college success

coaches in this study connected the focus of their educational background to their work.

This was most striking among success coaches in the holistic and student-centered sub-

types, who all came from helping backgrounds, as well as success coaches in the student-

authored sub-type, who each came from psychologically-focused backgrounds. In

comparison, those in the first two sub-types (utilitarian and post-college types),

represented a mix of educational backgrounds, most namely education, business, and

public administration. Although these findings are too tentative to claim that educational

background is the major way a community college student affairs professional

conceptualizes student success, this finding presents a vital piece that shapes these

coaches' worldview.

The second major, personal experiences that these coaches mentioned as

explicitly formative was their overcoming of personal difficulties in their background.

Many of the participants in this study attended the community colleges in their past, and understood these experiences as marks of pride. These types of comments echoed a supportive emphasis of, "I did it, so therefore, you can do it as well," and echoed the current emphasis on the student affairs professional as a model of desired student outcomes (Cohen et al., 2014; Glanzer, 2013; Healy et al., 2013). Participating success coaches did not aim to hide their struggles, but instead brought them into their coaching practices, allowing the messiness of their lives to function as forms of encouragement for their students.

Finally, many participants in this study also mentioned the effect that having children had on their understanding of the role as a success coach. Comments like, "having kids has really helped me see my role in a different way" (Kendall) or "having more than one kid has helped me understand that success looks different for different people" (Oliver). These comments echoed an understanding of the personal nature of success, and made a deeper understanding of student success even clearer for these participants. Although these findings are also preliminary, participants' personal backgrounds played a major role in their conceptualization of the essence of student success, as well as their role in its facilitation.

Implicit influence #4: Participants' deeply-held value commitments. Finally, every participant mentioned a belief that student success must be individually-defined, and the majority of participants mentioned that the community college is an agent of social transformation. This combined focus positions those in this profession as incredibly positive and individualized. This finding does not necessarily contract the emerging coaching literature, but it does beg a question of alignment between success

244

coaches' personal beliefs and their institutional context. In essence, it appears, once again, that when value-commitments come into conflict with a larger environment, success coaches must learn how to live in this dichotomy, holding both perspectives in tension with one another. This tentative finding must be confirmed by future studies in other types of community colleges.

Conclusion. Overall, this study demonstrated that helping a community college student to become successful is not as simple as simply providing a positive, high-impact intervention (Kuh, 2007). Instead, four, larger factors influenced participating community college success coaches' perspectives as to the essence of community college success. Working together, these four factors acted as a lens or worldview for these success coaches' practices, and informed their ultimate desired goals and outcomes for their students. This study revealed that the "student success puzzle" (Kuh et al., 2007) is much more complicated than Astin's (1993) I-E-O model but also includes a worldview that lies between the non-academic student support professional and the interventions they provide for their students.

Limitations of Study

This study was ambitious and comprehensive in nature and intention, and in light of this quality, it presented several limitations. Three major limitations included: (1) given my methodology, this study involved a larger sample size; (2) the somewhat homogenous nature of the sample, and (2) the use of exemplar institutions. First, though qualitative research does not aim to be generalizable, the small sample size typically used in phenomenological studies does not necessarily lend itself to a robust understanding of

245

the ultimate purpose of community college success coaching. At the start of this study, I did not necessarily consider this limitation harmful to the goals of my project, since I was not interested in capturing the one, true picture of what it means to be a success coach. Instead, I was interested in increasing current, empirical understanding of the focus of this role in the two-year community college setting. Phenomenological studies are especially important to conduct when there is not a great deal of information from a given perspective about a specific subject, in a specific, under-studied context. Though a great deal of research on community college student success exists, empirical studies drawing their conclusions from voices from practitioners in these settings remain rare. Additionally, as a result of the findings of this dissertation, future research could use this "student success typology" with more quantitative, probability sampling to arrive at more generalizable results.

As was covered in my methods chapter (for more information, please see chapter 3 of this study), as the study continued, I began to realize that a multitude of factors affected participants' understandings of their roles and their conceptualizations of what it means for a participant to be successful. Although certain scholars have criticized larger phenomenological samples due to their ability to "water-down" the nuances in language between individual participants' responses (Seidman, 2015), I continued to interview until I reached saturation. The dichotomy between data saturation and prioritizing individual participants' expression will continue to consume phenomenological studies. Though this limitation is not damning, this tension needed to be stated to increase the validity of my approach to this study.

Second, the sample remained somewhat homogenous. Though I maintained

representation in each demographic characteristic, many of my participants were white,

Christian women in Southern states. Due to different regional cultures' emphases on

different virtues (i.e., hospitality), these comments could have swayed some of my data

and its analysis. This study's findings may have emerged as quite different with a

different group of participants.

Third, exemplar research has been criticized for only focusing on best-case

scenarios (Flyvbjerg, 2006). In other words, studying exemplar institutions does not

provide us with typical cases, but instead would only provide us with ideal cases. Again,

I did not consider this limitation crippling since phenomenology looks for in-depth

descriptions and information-rich examples. Since community college success coaching

is understudied in the empirical literature, it was important to understand best-case

scenarios to provide a more thorough understanding of the essence of community college

success coaching and this emerging profession functions in this context.

I only examined the effects of participating success coaches' religious

perspectives on their conceptualization of student success. I did not compare their

perspectives as to how their genders, races, social classes, or any other identifying

markers had on their understandings of their role or their students' success. These

additional factors could also affect their worldviews and perspectives about what student

success could mean or look like. Additional studies would need to confirm these

potential connections.

Finally, one additional limitation bears mentioning. Although this study

represents a robust empirical analysis of success coaching programs in the community

247

college sector, an empirical study has yet to be conducted that explores students' perspectives of their success coaches' roles, responsibilities, and support. Right now, we only have one part of the story. Although our empirical understanding of this emerging profession continues to grow, until students' perspectives emerge in empirical research, we will only be able to see though this looking-glass dimly.

Implications of Study and Suggestions for Future Research and Practice

This study holds several implications for the current bodies of academic coaching literature as well as community college student success literature. This section will explore this study's relevant implications for research and theory, practice, and policy-making, and will conclude by offering suggestions for future directions for community college success coaching in each of these areas.

Implications for theory and future research. First, these findings hold important implications for current academic theory about coaching and student success. This study primarily revealed that while it is not yet considered in this manner, success coaching could eventually become a high-impact practice (a term coined by Kuh et al., [2005]), due to its goal of increasing students' academic success. Overall, participants in this study tended to emphasize theories about students' persistence to degree completion and focused on their "student" role to a near exclusion of all the other roles that a student could fulfill in their lives (i.e., wife, father, friend, etc.). This contrasts from the comments in academic coaching literature about coaches being a generalized source of support that focus on helping students to vocalize their academic, career, and personal goals. From this finding, community college success coaching may be better named as

"academic persistence coaching," with an explicitly-stated guiding focus on increasing students' persistence.

Furthermore, these findings revealed an almost-exclusive prioitization of theories and associated concepts about students' individual success. Interestingly, when retention was mentioned as a goal, the emphasis remained on assisting students in their paths towards completion and graduation, with little focus on the actual institutional goal of increasing retention. Although this finding provides support for Tinto's (2017) most recent study that students focus more explicitly on their persistence than on a commitment to their institution, future research could more explicitly trace this distinction of language use.

Multiple success coaches in this study also eschewed the focus on the traditional theories about student success, including involvement (Astin, 1993), engagement (Kuh, 2007), and integration (Tinto, 1975). Although they tended to prefer Rendón's (2006) theory of validation, this body of concepts echoed concerns in community college scholarship about traditional theories not fitting non-traditional students in a non-traditional context. With one participant even calling these theories "old fuddy-duddy theories" (Jade), this finding implies that continued research needs to focus on creating theories that use the community college as their explicit context, instead of continually borrowing from four-year theories (Ozaki & Harnack, 2016; Tull et al., 2015).

Finally, these success coaches also mentioned the role of implicit wisdom and guiding convictions as important for their coaching practices. Studies about implicit theory in student affairs work as well as the role of wisdom remain minimal (Bensimon, 2007; Brown, 2004; Dalton, 2002; Love, 2012), when compared to the larger amount of

249

studies that explore the use of more explicit theory in student affairs practice (Babb, 2012; Evans & Guido, 2012; Reason & Kimball, 2012). If this continued emphasis on incorporating wisdom continues to emerge in the academic coaching literature, further exploration of the connection between wisdom and professional practice will become increasingly necessary.

Implications for practice and future success coach training and education. This study also holds specific implications for those involved in the community college as faculty, administrators, as well as the community college success coaching community itself. First, the majority of coaches in this study saw themselves as vital partners with the faculty in promoting their students' success. Many success coaches also understood themselves as mediators between students and faculty, advocating for their individual needs. This finding brings a fuller understanding of both sides of this academic and non-academic partnership and could help faculty to more fully understand the crucial differences between these two roles, therefore, bringing increasing understanding to the functioning of "both sides of the academic house."

Second, the success coaches in this study also mentioned a corporate understanding of the vagueness of their profession. Since this profession is incredibly recent, this finding holds a myriad of implications for training and professional development needs for these roles. Success coaches in this study made a strong connection between their educational backgrounds and their practices, and also mentioning a continual complaint about the vagueness of this role. Although training for these positions typically starts at the ground-level of individual-institutions, it is important to recognize that an increasing amount of professional development is needed

to carve out a unique niche for this emerging role on community college campuses. This suggestion calls for attention to a guiding need in administrative decision-making about budgetary expenditures, especially in an environment that is already over-stretched budget-wise (Cohen, et al., 2014; Tull et al., 2015).

Implications for policy-making. Finally, this study's findings hold two major implications for community college administrative and national policy-making. Overall, the ideals of the Community College Completion Agenda have largely transcended into the daily, non-academic culture of separate community colleges. A subtler argument, however, presented itself as this study emerged, which traced the reality that the community college's mission is growing increasingly vague in its continual espousing of broad goals like "student success" and "learning." Many participating success coaches also echoed that they thought they had to learn to live in the tension between these two conceptions, and felt challenge by this tension due to this reality, this finding begs for a continual refinement of goals and outcomes from community college administrators and policy-makers. In essence, these governing bodies would do well to avoid using generalized "student success" language, and instead use the typology presented in this dissertation to guide conversation about specific outcomes that they hope to see from their students and their institutions.

Conclusion

Though this chapter provided a discussion and synthesis of my study's findings, one final point must be explored. Participants in this study focused on the connection between success coaching and academic persistence. In fact, the minority of participants

focused on their students as holistic, human persons (12 participants). A recent

connection between specific ideals from positive psychology and the student affairs

profession continues to emerge in current literature about the roles and functions of non-

academic student support professionals (Karp, 2008, 2011, 2016). The next chapter of

this dissertation will provide a proposal for the future of community college success

coaching, drawing from a series of recommendations from positive psychology,

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion: A New Vision for Community College Success Coaching

Interviewer: "What do you want your students to get out of meeting with you?"

Participant: "I want my students to understand that no goal is unreachable. That there's always a way to find your way to your dreams. I want them to understand that. Setting goals is not just something we say, we actually want them to achieve those goals. I want them to be able to, you know, in a couple of years when they're graduating to come back and say, 'Thank you: your support not only changed what I wanted to do with my life, but it also changed who I am.'"

—Rachel, Community College Success Coach, Montana

This qualitative dissertation explored the growing phenomenon of community college success coaching, with a special focus on community college success coaches' understanding of the meaning of student success. As a role with two current buzzwords in the title ("success" and "coach") the goal of this study was to present an empirical understanding of the unique features of this position in this context ("coach"), as well as its ultimate essence ("success"), drawn from the perspectives of current community college success coaches.

Using Robinson's (2015) study as a model and base of comparison for this study, I gathered a sample of 44 community college success coaches' perspectives from 16 different states across the nation. Although Robinson (2015) provided a national overview of coaching programs and an empirically-generated academic/definition of success coaching from multiple coaches' perspectives at multiple institutions (i.e., four-year v. community college), the minority of her participants were located in two-year

contexts (14 percent) and were mainly directors of these programs. Although she found

that many different titles exist to describe coaching programs (i.e., college skills coach,

life coach, graduation coach, retention coach, etc.), she did not isolate the community

college as its own setting and did not explore the major theories and convictions used by

community college success coaches to guide their work. Furthermore though other

published literature on coaching programs continues to describe programs at individual

colleges and universities (Ashcraft et al. 2017; Carr, 2017; Ralston & Hoffshire, 2017;

Tippets & Kirby, 2017), this dissertation study stands as the first, in-depth exploration

into the essence and unique features of community college success coaching.

Furthermore, when examining community college student success literature, one

readily perceives that its preponderance is on the student (Babb, 2012): the perspectives

of community college student affairs' practitioners typically remain overlooked (Babb,

2012; Bensimon, 2007; Karp, 2016). This gaping hole in the literature becomes highly-

problematic and quite ironic when considering that nationally, the community college

sector has hired a total of 61,522 full-time student and academic affairs professionals to

manage the daily functioning of this group of institutions (NCES, 2017, Table

314.30). Though a fair bit of research has focused on describing various co-curricular

community college non-academic student support services (i.e., for an extended

description, please see: Hatch, Mardock-Uman, & Nelson, 2017; O'Gara, Karp, &

Hughes, 2009), missing from these studies is an extended exploration of community

college student affairs' professionals conceptualization of the meaning of student success

(Karp, 2016).

In light of these gaps in the literature, I used an *interpretative phenomenological approach* to meet my stated goals (for an extended description of *IPA* research, please see Smith, Flowers, & Larkin 2009). As a qualitative study, I was not interested in quantifiable measures of student success (i.e., increased graduation, GPA, and retention rates), but was, instead, interested in community college student affairs professionals' perceptions about what student success means and looks like for a given student population, as well as perceptions about the role of the community college student success in this process. Since *interpretative phenomenological analysis* "aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature of meaning of our everyday experiences" (Moustakas, 1994), this methodological choice was an ideal fit for this study.

Borrowing from Smith et al.'s (2009) phenomenological research question framework, this study was guided by two first-tier questions:

(1) What does it mean to participants to be a success coach in the community college setting?

(2) According to this group of participants, what does it mean and look like for a community college student to be successful?

Since a part of the qualitative paradigm includes a comparison to pre-existing theories to make sense of participants' lived experiences with a given phenomenon (i.e., student success), this study also compared my participants use of formal or informal theories in their practices to the dominant theories about community college student success.

Overall, this study revealed that though dominated by an academic success emphasis, five, varying emphases within conceptualizations of the meaning of student success exist among community college student affairs practitioners, a finding shared with the larger body of literature (Baston, 2018; Kaikkonen & Quarles, 2018; Taylor,

255

2017). The focuses within this body of academic/success coaching literature range from the role of the academic/success coach as primarily considered with increasing traditional measures of student success, including completion, GPA, and retention rates (Capstick et al., 2019; Valora, 2017), to an expanded emphasis in emerging literature on the academic/success coaches' roles in promoting students' more holistic, psychological well-being (McGill et al., 2018; Oreopolus et al., 2018; Tudor, 2018).

Placing attention on increasing students' psychological well-being includes creating intentional interventions aimed at enhancing their self-confidence, self-concept, self-efficacy, purpose in life, and life satisfaction (Bickerstaff, Barragan, & Rucks-Ahidiana, 2017); each of which are characteristics have been correlated with increased psychological well-being. Additionally, each of these characteristics that have been found to assist non-traditional (Schreiner et al., 2011), adult learner (Levinson, et al., 1978), or students at higher risk of attrition (Schreiner et al., 2011) in increasing their motivation to complete their educational journeys. It is important to offer a reminder that these three student populations make up the majority of the community college student body and could be particularly assisted by interventions designed to increase their psychological well-being.

Additionally, we know that increased support from an institutional agent increases students' sense of belonging and mattering (Robinson, 2015; Stanton-Salazar, 2011), as well as their academic and social integration into the fabric of the institution (Robinson, 2015). This finding is largely due to the validation, affirmation, and individualized attention, provided to the student from the institutional agent (Barnett 2011; Rendón, 2004, 2006; Schreiner et al., 2011; Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

Furthermore, as a result of Bettinger and Baker's (2014) seminal study on the efficacy of *InsideTrack* coaching, this emerging non-academic student support service continues to be linked to increases in student persistence and retention rates (Barnhart & LeMaster, 2013; Robinson, 2015; Sepulveda, 2016; Strange, 2015). In fact, according to Robinson's (2015) findings, the minority of her participants understood the major outcome of their programs as helping develop students' personal characteristics. Despite the empirical findings, however, current non-empirical literature continues to emerge that draws on a vision of coaching as supported by the aims, goals, and vocabulary of positive psychology (i.e., for an explanation and an example, please see Clough & Barnes [2015] as well as Dalton & Crosby [2014]). In fact, most of the current body of published literature about the telos of academic/success coaching consistently mentions that this service is focused on increasing students' gains in their academic, professional, and personal development (Barnhart & LeMaster, 2013; Keen, 2015; Marks, 2015; Sepulveda, 2016).

When reviewing these bodies of literature, it appears that two different visions emerge for the focuses of this emerging profession. First, an emphasis on life coaching emerges, which emphasizes improving students' personal well-being and reaching of personal goals (Barnhart & LeMaster, 2013). This group of studies draws from positive psychology and upholds the vision of a student as a whole person, emphasizing attention to their roles as both a student, as well as additional roles that they fulfill (Clough & Barnes, 2015; Marks, 2015). The more academically-oriented coaching literature takes on a more skills-improvement focus, and focused on the accomplishment shorter or more

immediate goals, including increased academic persistence (Clough & Barnes, 2015; Robinson, 2015; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010).

Though very much understanding success coaching as mechanism to promote persistence, my participants' continued focus was on the promotion of their students' individual academic success, and not as much on promoting their more holistic success. In fact, the conceptualizations of student success that emerged from this study included: (1) an institutional focus, consumed by traditional measures and outcomes of GPA and persistence increases; (2) a post-college focus, emphasizing helping students find a career; (3) a student-authored focus, with an explicit emphasis on helping students learn how to name and then advocate for their needs; (4) a student-centered focus, which echoed the driving ideals of traditional student affairs literature, but interestingly, only focused on the students' academic roles; and (5) a holistic focus that borrowed from positive psychology and took a larger view of success that was more than primarily about promoting academic success.

Only one group of participants focused on students' holistic success and borrowed from positive psychology ideals to guide their work. This finding leads to an additional conclusion, which includes the reality that, though resembling more of a spectrum than a typology, my participants' visions of student success were primarily dominated by two foci: an understanding of students' holistic success as compared to their academic success. Although, participants echoed a corporate understanding across all types about the importance of promoting persistence towards degree completion, only one type (the holistic) explicitly articulated the importance of this larger vision. The community college success coaches in this type disagreed with the larger ideals of the Community

College Completion Agenda and understanding that promoting holistic success in both the student and the non-student roles *may* call the ideals of retention and completion into question.

Therefore, the following questions about community college success coaching remain: what shape *could* the identity of this emerging profession become?; How can these findings become translated into guiding statements for this emerging profession in this context, rather than remaining as interesting, academic information?; And, ultimately, how can this gathered body of knowledge from current, practicing community college success coaches improve the lives of currently-enrolled seven million community college students across the United States?. In other words, how *should* our understanding of the five community college student success sub-types that emerged from this study's findings direct community colleges' actions and efforts towards increasing their students' success?

A Proposed, New Vision for the Focus of Community College Success Coaching

In light of these questions, the remainder of this chapter will present a proposed vision for the emerging profession of community college success coaching, drawing upon insights from positive psychology literature, student affairs research, and a "whole person" philosophy of education (Harbour, 2015). The remainder of this conclusion explores the answers to the previously-posed questions and proposes recommendations of these answers for enhancing the emergence and future direction of the community college success coaching profession.

The Essence of Positive Psychology and Community College Success Coaching

At its heart, the coaching profession has continually drawn from the goals, language, and heartbeat of positive psychology for guidance. This becomes especially relevant when examining the executive coaching literature that explains that overarching aims of coaching are typically stated in terms of improving their clients' psychological well-being (Mitchell et al., 2015; Stober, Wildflower, & Drake, 2006). In examining the content of psychological well-being, special emphasis is placed upon the roles of improving persons' senses of autonomy, self-efficacy, purpose in life, self-acceptance, and relationships with others in hopes of holistic life improvement (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Wood, Hilton, & Johnson, 2014). More recent studies have started to connect these constructs to the coaching relationship, especially regarding the coaches' roles in increasing their clients hope (Kaufman, 2006), fundamental motivations (a close correlate to life purpose, Huitt, 2011), self-esteem (which has been empirically documented as correlating with increased life purpose, Scheier et al., 2006), grit (Hill, Burrow, & Bronk, 2014). Each of these characteristics are each positively correlated with optimal human functioning, and increased levels of purpose in life (Bronk, 2014).

Furthermore, Bronk's (2014) continued work demonstrates that high levels of purpose are the most powerful predictor of psychological well-being in adults. It is important to reconcile the traditional definition of purpose in life from positive psychology from the way it is used in traditional nomenclature. Distinct from other similar terms, *life purpose* has emerged as a particularly salient feature of college student psychosocial, cognitive, moral, and spiritual development (Hill, Burrow, Brandenberger,

Lapsley, & Quaranto, 2009). Recent scholarship on this subject defines *life purpose* as

constituting three major elements:

> (1) *Life purpose* includes "a stable and far-reaching goal, more than low-level
> goals, such as 'getting to the movie on time'" (Damon, Menon, & Bronk,
> 2003, p. 121).
>
> (2) *Life purpose* is "different than *meaning*, in that it includes a desire to make a
> difference in the world beyond-the-self" (Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003, p.
> 121).
>
> (3) *Life purpose* is "directed at an accomplishment towards which one can always
> make progress" (Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003, p. 121).

Furthermore, other scholars have defined *life purpose* as a "pursuit of certain goals, the

reaching of resolutions, seeking results, and realizing particular objectives and ends, as

well as the larger destination students find at the end of their journey" (Glanzer, Hill, &

Johnson, 2016, p. 2). Studies have shown that discovering a sense of *life purpose*

provides pro-social values linked to well-being; including increased: hope (Burrow &

Hill, 2011), resiliency (Masten & Reed, 2002), and life satisfaction (Bronk et al., 2009).

Additionally, increased *life purpose* promotes avoidance of harmful or damaging

behaviors (e.g., suicidal ideation, academic dishonesty, or violence, for a review, please

see Bronk [2014]). Here, positive psychologists are not using the term *life purpose* to

connote simply a *sense* of a personal purpose, but instead maintain that this purpose must

be beyond the self and contribute to the goals of a larger, flourishing democracy in some

manner (Harbour, 2015).

Other studies have demonstrated the link between increased levels of

psychological well-being, especially life purpose, and increased student success measures

(for a review, please see Kuh et al. [2006]). Purpose also functions as a directional agent

across the lifespan (Bronk, 2014). Although empirical studies have found that a sense of

purpose peaks during emerging adulthood (Bronk, 2014; Froese, 2016), other studies

using Erikson's (1968) model have noted that the directionality that a clear, articulated

purpose can provide for one's life script almost acts like a bulwark in role changes that

enter in midlife (DeVogler & Ebersole, 1981; Hughes, 2006; Richardson, 2015; Ryff et

al., 1994). Increasing conversations with supportive others about life purpose and other,

similar topics may be especially helpful for non-traditional students in this setting,

especially since students tend to appear in community college settings at times of

liminality or impasse (Lichtmann, 2010).

Furthermore, adult learning theory holds a special emphasis on the roles of

supportive others in assisting students' meaning-making capacities about the deeper

significance of their life events (Kegan, 2009). These intentional conversations may also

act as a safeguard against the "student swirl" patterns that remain increasingly true of

community college students, especially the non-traditional student population

(McGregor, 2018).

Studies have also found that one's conception of their life purpose and their

psychological well-being is primarily based upon their surrounding environment

(Kesebir, Graham, & Oishi, 2010). Studies have also found that those who indicate a

strong belief in their mattering to others also demonstrate increased levels of purpose

(Dixon, Rayle, & Myers, 2004). Although my participants echoed a corporate

understanding of their desire to show care to their individual students, and although we

understand that increased social support also increases student persistence rates, these

coaches primarily did not include concepts associated with purpose in life or

psychological well-being in their success coaching conversations. A few studies on the

relationship between college students and their mentors have also demonstrated the crucial ability for mentors to act as models for them, helping them to further articulate their understanding of their life purpose and take steps to meet it (Bronk, 2014; Glanzer et al., 2017; Healy, Lancaster, Liddell, & Stewart, 2012; Robinson, 2014). Despite these important connections, it appears that success coaches in this study primarily took on an academic capital perspective (Winkler & Sriram, 2015), providing more than course content-specific remediation, while still sticking to a primarily academic focus in their conversations (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000).

Taken together, this current body of literature holds prominence for incorporation into the emerging community college success coaching profession. Arnett (2015) explained that the public has a general understanding of college as a place to find their life's work, and students are often looking for an outlet that deeply resonates with them. Furthermore, other studies have found that non-traditional students with increased levels of non-cognitive variables, including purpose in life, hope, and self-efficacy, were more likely to be motivated to persist to degree completion (McGuire, 2018). This reality was true even in cases where students entered into their community college environments with lower levels of academic preparedness than their counterparts (Taylor, 2017).

Despite these positive connections, nearly each of participants in my study used a deficit model and understood students' extra-curricular lives as hindrances to their persistence. This finding stands in sharp contrast with the previously-described literature that lies at the heartbeat of the coaching profession. Adopting a more asset-based focus in coaching conversations from positive psychology, understanding the students' as whole people may help both the students' persistence as well as their overall flourishing

263

and thriving. This proposal remains especially relevant when understanding the National Association of Academic Advisors' (NACADA) recent focus on an academic coaching approach to advising, focusing on increased exploration of students' personal goals (Larson, Johnson, Aiken-Wisniewski, & Barkemeyer, 2018).

Despite the potential expansion of language that could be used in the community college success coaching profession, most of these participants did not use an asset-based understanding of success and instead focused on a more deficit-oriented understanding. Seligman (1990) laid out his seminal shift in language about flourishing that argued that positive psychology does not just take on a whole-person focus, but instead must view its clients as people who are filled with potential. Critiquing current psychological measures, Seligman (1990) argued that for too long, psychologists had focused on vices or things that go wrong in clients' worlds, instead of seeing their positive capacities to demonstrate virtues that would propel them on more upward trajectories. While community college success coaching *could* benefit from taking a positive psychology approach, the more deficit-based understanding revealed in my interviews would also need to be re-examined. In other words, simply focusing on students as "whole people" is not enough: this focus occurred much earlier than the positive psychology movement. Instead, community college success coaches need to engage in more tangible discussions with one another as well as with their students as to how to have conversations about these important virtues they want to see developed in their students.

Therefore, in light of this new focus within the practice of academic advising, as well as the important findings that having conversations with a larger focus than persistence, it seems particularly fitting, helpful, and appropriate for success coaching in

264

the community college sector to take on this expanded focus. The next section will draw from general student affairs literature, as well as specific community college student affairs literature to support this enhanced focus for the emerging community college success coaching profession.

The Essence of Student Affairs Practice and Community College Success Coaching

As was reviewed in my introductory chapter, the community college student affairs profession has generally found itself caught between two perspectives. One perspective argues that the community college functions as a credentialing agent, and student affairs professionals in this sector should focus on helping their students persist to degree completion (Cohen et al., 2014; Levin, 2015; McAlmon, 1931; Tull et al., 2015). This first emphasis also echoes the current heartbeat of the ongoing Community College Completion Agenda, and positions its student affairs workers as those who manage students' Guided Pathways, as a means to support them in their educational progress (Floyd, 2018).

The other perspective echoes comments from the earliest focuses of community college student affairs work and takes a special interest in caring for the whole person (Creamer, 1994; Humphreys, 1937; Harbour, 2015; Lichtmann, 2010; McConnell, 1967; O'Banion, et al., 1972). Furthermore, concern for the whole student is a fundamental value in student affairs work, appearing in many of the guiding documents of the profession (ACPA & NASPA, 2010). Included in this "whole person" focus is a special concern for developing students' character, including their morality, ethics, and spirituality (Braxton, 2009; Shapior, Brown, & Astin, 2011; Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009).

Since community college student affairs professionals play a special role in understanding the needs, issues, and goals of a historically under-represented population (Stebelton, 2011; Stebleton & Alexio, 2011; also a finding mentioned by each of my participants), it seems likely that these professionals could be key players in increasing the prevalence of these types of conversations on their individual campuses. With this in mind, I will now draw from Harbour's (2015) presentation of a specific strand of beliefs on the ultimate aims and goals of public education as tailored to the community college, and explore a few of his philosophical ideas about democratic education that support this proposed change in emphasis for the emerging community college success coaching profession.

The Essence of Adopting a "Whole Person" Focus in Community College Success Coaching

Mirroring the ongoing dichotomy of perspectives about the focus of community college student affairs departments, two major perspectives also continue to dominate conversations about the purpose of community college education (Bragg, 2013). One side of this debate takes the position that two-year colleges, due to their function as ultimate access points to education for the general public, act as credentialing agencies and function as means to support continued, economic development (Levin, 2015; Wyner, 2014). The other side of this debate holds a more holistic perspective, and argues that public education holds a vital responsibility to helping the whole person to function as an engaged citizen (Harbour, 2015).

In examining this holistic perspective for public education, Harbour (2015) highlights the role of current, American community colleges as "democracy's colleges,"

266

prioritizing care for their individual students, and creating ways for these students to become educated citizens, capable of contributing to a democratic nation in meaningful manners. Furthermore, students' increased holistic development can affect their increased understanding of their mattering to the nation, as well as the possible contributions that they could make to this new, articulated vision of their future selves (Gregory, 2000; Harbour, 2015; Markus & Nurius, 1986).

This perspective articulates that it is part of the moral duty of public education to promote assist students in finding an individualized way to contribute to a productive democracy, with the idea of articulation of a purpose in life as a key component of this process (Harbour, 2015). Since coaching is described as a means for students to make positive growth (Robinson, 2015; Sepulveda, 2016; Stober, 2006), it seems as though increasing support to enhance community college success coaches' conversations with students to include explicit conversations about purpose in life and its associated correlates could prove helpful to helping community colleges enact this democratic vision in an even more robust manner.

Furthermore, there is a growing understanding that an increased sense of purpose, a key component of psychological well-being, is a vital piece of enhancing the goals of a democratic nation (Baxter-Magolda, 2004). Furthermore, if the goals of a democratic education are to help students live rich and meaningful lives, then having intentional conversations about students' purpose, self-worth, and well-being become highly appropriate in this setting. This line of reasoning also becomes especially important in light of understanding the community college's vital role as "democracy's college" in the current system of education in the United States.

This expansion of the success coaching conversations is also supported by the finding that a sizeable minority of participants in this study mentioned a belief in the community college as an access provider, and held out goals for their students to become productive and active members of society. Therefore, creating policies and training to support coaches' in having these extended conversations also seems like it would uphold this ultimate vision for a democratic education, as well as the essence of what it means for the community college to fully exemplify this vision (Harbour, 2015).

Conclusion: Important Realities that Arise from the Community College Context to Understand when Considering the Adoption of this Proposed Vision

Finally, research has demonstrated a connection between students' increased psychological well-being and purpose development to increased levels of student persistence and retention (Clydesdale, 2015). This correlation is primarily due to the support that students receive from their staff and faculty members in their purpose development processes (ACT, 2010). Overall, these conversations remind students as to why they are at college in the first place and serve as a motivating factor, and therefore increase student persistence and retention rates (Dewitz, Woosely, & Walsh, 2009). Additionally, students' who demonstrate higher scores in their purpose in life tests also demonstrate righter GPA rates (Martin & Martin, 1977), as well as other characteristics mentioned previously that function as more indirect supports (Philips, 1980; Sappington & Kelly, 1995; Walters & Klein, 1980). Furthermore, it has long been contended that increased self-efficacy increases students' ability to select between meaningful goals, and therefore retain at higher rates (Hseih, Sullivan, & Guererra, 2007; Moulton, Brown & Lent, 1991).

268

Readily understanding that all of these studies highlight the important connection between increased clarity of life purpose and increased likelihood of retention, community college success coaches also must recognize that not every student will come into their post-secondary experiences the same expectations about their colleges' roles in shaping their purposes (Robinson & Glanzer, 2016). Some students may align themselves with an the increasingly-prominent understanding of the community college as primarily an educational credentialing agency and not as an institution focused on promoting its students' holistic development (Levin, 2007, 2015, 2017). Therefore, to be truly effective in their roles, community college success coaches may need to first understand their students' expectations for their college experiences, then use these conversations as a base to explore their students' deeper desires, drives, and motivations.

If the community college success coaching profession is to adopt this focus, then some of the ideals of the Community College Completion Agenda may, at times, need to be called into question and held more loosely. This word of caution is supported by the finding that each of the participating success coaches in this study described the prevalence of their students' difficult life situations, and focused on providing interventions that met these immediate needs. Despite this focus, conversations about purpose, psychological well-being, and hope may serve as that extra step to assure students' of their ultimate matter in their personhood and ultimately, contribute to a more robust vision of a democratic society. It is as Stella noted, "if you focus on increasing retention, then you *might* get it. But my hope is that if you focus on really caring for the students, then you'll get a happier student as well as a retained student. If you don't get retention, then at least you get healthier person."

In summary, the 44 participating success coaches' voices illuminated the critical need for enhanced empirical understanding of the community college success coaching profession, as well as the continued role of innovative ideas for a clearer way forward to advance the purposes of democratic education. At the end of the day, it is my sincerest hope that the findings from this study do not only increase the chances of institutional survival, but also help community college faculty members, administrators, and policy-makers to create innovate non-academic student support mechanisms that promote institutional as well as individual student thriving.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Positionality Statement

Bracketing my Personal Story

As was mentioned previously, this section serves to help the reader understand my interest in community college success coaching and functions as a means to start the epoche process necessary to achieve as true of an account of my participants' lived experiences with success coaching as possible. In the spring of 2005, I declared a theology major. However, my main interest was not in systematic theology or the abstract study of religion. Instead, I declared a theology major because I wanted to obtain my undergraduate institution, Whitworth University's, certification in ministry, in which every class was design to study ways to increase others' spiritual and moral formation. While the "other" was typically assumed to be a church member, this concentration certainly made room for contexts outside of this presumption.

This interest in spiritual formation as the essence or the core of the minister's role took me to Fuller Theological Seminary where I obtained a Master's of Divinity, where I assumed that my studies at this fine institution would engage me in the same manner as this certification experience during my undergraduate years. I was grossly mistaken and quite upset when I realized the difference between academic formation (i.e., the process of becoming a scholar), and spiritual or personal formation (i.e., the process of becoming a better human being). While both were tied together during my undergraduate experience, my seminary education parceled out the academic formation and largely

focused on developing me as an academic. Yes, today, I can say that I have a Master's of Divinity and know at least a bit about theological reflection, but I am unsure if I could say that my seminary experience formed me, personally, in as deep of a manner.

This deep interest in the role of education in terms of its students formation drew me to Baylor University where I have studied for six years to understand what *exactly* it is about the postsecondary educational experience that helps form and develop its students. While I largely assumed that this type of experience was only something that occurred in private, faith-based four-year university contexts (something that my master's thesis on the meaning of a good student affairs mentor demonstrated to me), I was placed at Waco's local community college during my doctoral coursework.

Though I had previously worked at Baylor's Spiritual Life Center, something rather interesting occurred during my time at this community college. On my first day on the job, in late August of 2014, I asked my supervisor what my role was supposed to be in this community college student affairs department. To my great surprise, and as someone who had never worked in a two-year setting before, he explained, "Jessica, I am very interested in your scholarly insights on what it means to really support students and help them to succeed." Laughing to myself, I thought, "what on earth have I gotten myself into?". Frankly, I did not have the slightest idea about how to help a community college student succeed, nor did I really have a solid understanding of what success for the community college student would even mean, for those who worked in this setting. Despite this lack of knowledge or training, my supervisor told me to go meet with the senior success coach, a role, he explained, was highly different than academic advising.

273

After my initial conversations with these success coaches, I began to advise students, helping them understand their goals for their time at the community college, their desired "pathways", outcomes, and the eventual careers they would want to pursue. However, after the first year on the job, I started to realize that my students lingered, sometimes quietly, sometimes rather obnoxiously, in my office. It was like they were waiting for something, and it was like I was supposed to say something that would help their situation. Being a part-time worker who still knew relatively little about this student population or this context, I asked my supervisor about this pattern that I saw emerging. Smiling, he said back to me, "do you think they could want something more than just a conversation about what classes they should take?"

This question is the question that has continuously spurred my interest in success coaching at the community college. After he asked me that question, I began to offer assistance in different ways to my students, opening the door just a little bit wider to leave room for the conversation to continue. Some students took me up on this and we had conversations about subjects that were too deep and troubling for me to mention. Others simply needed a friend and someone with whom they could shoot the breeze. Others wanted help on talking with a professor, and still others did not want this additional assistance whatsoever. In some ways, if asked what my role was at the community college, I would say that I functioned as a success coach as well as an academic advisor. I became whatever my students needed me to be in that thirty-minute long session, and helped them take the next faithful step on their journey.

In 2015, the local community college I was working for hired a team of success coaches they termed *generalists*, and created a triage center that would work to connect

274

students to institutional resources, as well as have a group of people with whom struggling students could connect. Throughout the remainder of my time at the community college, I examined other community colleges in the state of Texas and found that many of them had created some type of function like this. The question became whether or not they merged this role with the academic advising and mental health counseling role, or whether or not they have isolated this role.

These lingering questions about the true nature of a success coach and the ideal outcome for the community college student population have become the heart of my interest in this study. In some cases, the current community college student success literature makes me cringe: I honestly do not know if it is the best idea for some students to be pursuing postsecondary education at this point in time in their lives. In other cases, I understand that I was caught between increasing institutional success rates and the personal success of the student. Therefore, I am interested in gathering more information about the nature of the success coaching role at the community college. Moreover, I am specifically interested in understanding what these professionals think about the true nature of student success, and what they understand their role to be in the process of this type of development.

When I functioned in this manner, I quickly understood that a commitment much deeper than any student affairs theory guided my work. Instead of drawing from Chickering's (1993) theory of vector development, I was guided by a core, theological conviction that educational experiences, no matter where they are, should help us understand ourselves better, and that as a human, I was called to help others in this process. Gregory (2000) makes this point well when he says, "our solidarity with others

means either that we have become converted to their ways of life—so that the same things make all of us happy or miserable—or that we empathize with them sufficiently to suffer and celebrate with them" (p. 448). He also names the goal of democratic education as to cultivate not only citizens, but *caring* citizens. Therefore, since community colleges are sometimes termed *democracy's colleges*, it seems only natural that their students would emerge as more caring, human beings.

Despite my deep commitments to the ideal notion of success coaching, I understand that it is both my duty and responsibility to understand community college success coaches' opinions about the nature of success and the best way to develop it, especially since their perceptions may be much different than my own. Each success coach I interview may not have a background in theology and ministry, and may draw on more secular student development theories to guide their work. In turn, since community college student affairs work tends to be highly interdisciplinary, drawing professionals from a myriad of backgrounds (Knight, 2014), these professionals may draw from theories I have not heard of previously. Overall, I understand that it was my ultimate responsibility to recognize these biases and went through this process prior to each step in the process of this study. I admit that I hope to hear that success coaches in this setting care more about their students' personal success than their academic success as typically measured by completion and persistence, but I must bracket my desire for this confirmation.

Furthermore, it is challenging for me to understand if my own position as "more than a part-time advisor" and "not really a full-time success coach" affects the process of this study. As well as bracketing, Merriam (2002) mandates that the researcher self-

examines to understand any possible factors that could potentially affect the investigation to preserve the trustworthiness of the study (p. 31). Therefore, engaging in the bracketing process becomes even more critical as I work through each part of this study. It is of utmost importance that I continue to look for the success coaches' explanations of student success, and that I learn how to be okay with the reality that they may simply be focused on students' academic success. Therefore, in order to establish rapport with them and learn about them, I planned for a meet and greet appointment, either in person or over the telephone prior to the actual start of the study. Seidman (2006) notes that, "at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 9). Therefore, as such, it is important that I do not take this concept of trust for granted. This prior meeting served as an additional means of me bracketing my pre-conceptions, as an additional way of informing the participant about the purpose and desired outcomes of my study.

APPENDIX B

Epoche Process per Participant

This appendix functions as an example of the types of questions I asked myself before coding and analyzing each participants' data. This functioned as part of my memo-ing and researchers' journal process while undergoing this study. I went through this process prior to sitting down to code or analyze each time as a way to "bracket" my assumptions and biases about what community college success coaching is, should be, or could be, in order to get at the purest essence of community college success coaching possible.

Participant #1:
Participant Pseudonym:
Date:
Step of Analysis:
What do I think success coaching should be?
What do I think success coaching actually is?
Where do these two line up?
Where do they not line up?
Therefore, what do I need to watch out for in my analysis?
Final, Concluding Thoughts:

Participant #2:
Participant Pseudonym:
Date:
Step of Analysis:
What do I think success coaching should be?
What do I think success coaching actually is?
Where do these two line up?
Where do they not line up?
Therefore, what do I need to watch out for in my analysis?
Final, Concluding Thoughts:

Please note that this process continued per participant and per stage until all the data was analyzed.

APPENDIX C

Participant Email Invitation

Dear [Name of Community College Success Coach],

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study exploring the ways that you understand what it means to be a success coach in the community college setting and your perspective on the nature of community college student success. You have been selected because of you are currently employed as a success coach at a community college within the United States. I am passionate about this subject because I have experienced what it is like to be employed as a success coach at a community college in the United States and believe that your perspectives will prove valuable to the advancement of this profession in this setting. Specifically, I am asking for: an emailed copy of your job description, a completed demographic survey (https://baylor.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6XVBT9f8BEpc6xL), and a single interview, lasting 60-90 minutes. In this interview, I will be asking you questions about your educational background, experiences with your role as a success coach, theories and frameworks used to support your work, and your understanding of what student success means as well as your understanding of your role in developing this trait in your students. Though it is my hope to keep this to a single interview session, if a follow-up interview becomes necessary, this will be scheduled at the end of the first interview.

The results of this data collection will be used, along with other community college success coaches' data, to help researchers, faculty, and administrators better understand the community college success coaching function and role. Be aware that you will not be identified by name or by description that would allow someone to figure out who you are: your participation is anonymous and confidential. This study has been approved by Baylor University's Institutional Review Board. You will also receive a $25 gift card for your participation in this study. Should you agree to participate, I will call you to set up and schedule an interview. Once we have scheduled the interview, we will meet at a location on your college campus. If this is not possible, we will be able to interview over the phone.

Thank you for considering this request. I know your life is quite busy, but I do believe your insights will benefit others, and that the interview conversation may benefit you as well. I look forward to hearing from you about your availability, and will check back in two weeks if I have not heard a reply one way or another. As well, please let me or my supervisor, Dr. Perry L. Glanzer know if you have any questions or concerns. Our contact information is listed below my signature.

Regards,
Jessica A. Robinson, M.S.Ed., M.Div.   Dr. Perry L. Glanzer, Ph.D.
Doctoral Candidate, Baylor University   Professor, Baylor University
Email: Jessica_Robinson1@baylor.edu   Email: Perry_Glanzer@baylor.edu
Phone: (303) 817-4800   Phone: (254) 710-7581

APPENDIX D

Demographic Survey

I am requesting the following information from study participants to further enhance the data I will collect for this study. Regarding the collection of this information from the participants in my study:

- Each question enables me to analyze and understand the unique feedback and ideas of my participants.
- Individual identities will not be shared without the indicated consent from the participant.
- Each question's response options have been listed to reflect the values of this study on inclusion of member identities and to minimize unintended micro-aggressions.
- Given the scope and complexities of social identities that exist worldwide, and acknowledging the limitations of existing data gathering capabilities, response options listed in the following questions are rooted in U.S. historical and cultural contexts.

Therefore, please fill out the demographic information below. Please note that your names as well as your institutional affiliation will be changed to pseudonyms in the final write-up of the study.

Personal Demographic Information

The following questions concern your personal demographic information. Please note that you will be given a pseudonym in the final write-up of this study.
First Name:

Last Name:

How would you describe your gender identity?
- Man or Male or Masculine
- Transgender Man or Male or Masculine
- Transgender Woman or Female or Feminine
- Woman or Female or Feminine
- Gender Non-Conforming or Gender Queer
- Intersex or Other Related Terms
- No Response
- Prefer Not to Answer
- Other (please describe):

How would you describe your racial and/or ethnic identity?
- African-American or Black
- American Indian or Alaska Native or Indigenous or First Nations
- Arab or Middle Eastern
- Asian or Asian American
- Hispanic or Latina or Latino
- Multiracial or Biracial
- Individuals who list two or more races
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White or Caucasian or European American
- No response
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (please describe):

How would you describe your sexual identity?
- Asexual
- Bisexual
- Fluid
- Gay
- Heterosexual
- Lesbian
- Pansexual
- Queer
- Questioning
- No response
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (please describe):

How would you describe your religious identity?

Highest educational degree completed:

Please list the name of the highest educational degree you completed:

Employment Information

These questions regard your employment information and your employment history.
Professional Job Title:

Number of years in your current position:

Please list names of previous, similar positions held and years you have been employed in each position:

Institutional Information:

These questions regard your current institutional information. Please note that your institutional name with be changed to a pseudonym in the final write-up of this dissertation.

College Name:
College State:

Institution Size:

Institution Type: Please select the appropriate answer from the list below:[1]
- Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges: Mixed Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges
- Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges: Associate's Dominant
- Associate's Colleges: High Transfer-High Traditional
- Associate's Colleges: High Transfer-Mixed Traditional/Nontraditional
- Associate's Colleges: High Transfer-High Nontraditional
- Associate's Colleges: Mixed Transfer/Career & Technical-High Traditional
- Associate's Colleges: Mixed Transfer/Career & Technical-Mixed Traditional/Nontraditional
- Associate's Colleges: Mixed Transfer/Career & Technical-High Nontraditional
- Associate's Colleges: High Career & Technical-High Traditional
- Associate's Colleges: High Career & Technical-Mixed Traditional/Nontraditional
- Associate's Colleges: High Career & Technical-High Nontraditional
- Special Focus Two-Year: Health Professions
- Special Focus Two-Year: Technical Professions
- Special Focus Two-Year: Arts & Design
- Special Focus Two-Year: Other Fields

Thank you for your time in filling out this survey. If you have any questions, concerns or other comments regarding the questions asked or response options available in this survey, please contact Jessica Robinson, Doctoral Candidate, Baylor University or Dr.

---

[1] Please note that these designations were borrowed from the Carnegie classification website. This can be accessed at: http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/classification_descriptions/basic.php

Perry L. Glanzer, Professor, Baylor University, by e-mail at
Jessica_Robinson1@baylor.edu or Perry_Glanzer@baylor.edu or by phone at 303-817-
4800 or 254-710-7581.

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent Document

This appendix provides a copy of the informed consent document that was used for this study. Prior to engaging in any data collection, the participant was required to return this document to me via email (Jessica_Robinson1@baylor.edu)

Baylor University
Department of Educational Leadership

Consent Form for Research

PROTOCOL TITLE: Community College Success Coaching: A Phenomenological Investigation into Community College Success Coaches' Lived Experiences with Promoting Community College Student Success

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jessica A. Robinson, M.S.Ed., M.Div., Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education Studies and Leadership, Baylor University

SUPPORTED BY: Baylor University

Introduction

Please read this form carefully. The purpose of this form is to provide you with important information about taking part in a research study. If any of the statements or words in this form are unclear, please let us know. We would be happy to answer any questions. You have the right to discuss this study with another person who is not part of the research team before making your decision whether or not to be in the study.

Taking part in this research study is up to you. If you decide to take part in this research study we will ask you to sign this form. We will give you a copy of the signed form.

The person in charge of this study is Jessica A. Robinson, doctoral candidate for Baylor University's Higher Education Studies and Leadership Doctor of Philosophy Degree, who is supported by Dr. Perry L. Glanzer, Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership at Baylor University. We will refer to this person as the "researcher" throughout this form.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this study is to explore the ways that you understand what it means to be a success coach in the community college setting and your perspective on the nature of community college student success.

We are asking you to take part in this study because you currently employed as a success coach at a community college within the United States.

About 25 participants will take part in this research study at Baylor University.

How long will I take part in this research study?

We expect that you will be in this research study for three months.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you agree to take part in this study, we will ask you to sign the consent form before we do any study procedures.

During this time, we will ask you to provide us with an emailed copy of your job description, a completed demographic survey (link below my signature), and a single interview, lasting 60-90 minutes. In this interview, we will be asking you questions about your educational background, experiences with your role as a success coach, theories and frameworks used to support your work, and your understanding of what student success means as well as your understanding of your role in developing this trait in your students. The results of this data collection will be used, along with other

community college success coaches' data, to help researchers, faculty, and administrators better understand the community college success coaching function and role.

Audio Recording:

We would like make a recording of you during this study. If you are recorded it will not be possible to identify you on the recording. We will store these recordings in a locked cabinet and only approved study staff will be able to access them. We will label these recordings with a code instead of your name. The key to the code connects your name to the recording. The researcher will keep the key to the code in a password-protected computer. Recordings will be held for three years after the initial interview has been collected and will be erased from the researcher's computer after that point in time.

Audio recording is required for this study. If you do not want to be recorded, you should not be in this study.

What are the risks of taking part in this research study?

No foreseeable risks: To the best of our knowledge, taking part in this study will not hurt you.

You may feel emotional or upset when answering some of the questions. Please tell the interviewer at any time if you want to take a break or stop the interview. You may be uncomfortable with some of the questions and topics we will ask about. You do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

Loss of Confidentiality

A risk of taking part in this study is the possibility of a loss of confidentiality. Loss of confidentiality includes having your personal information shared with someone who is not on the study team and was not supposed to see or know about your information. The researcher plans to protect your confidentiality. Their plans for keeping your information private are described later in this consent form.

Are there any benefits from being in this research study?

You may or may not benefit from taking part in this study. Possible benefits include deeper understanding of the focus of your role as well as the various theories that could be helpful to develop your students' success. Other community college success coaches, faculty, administrators, and policy-makers may benefit in the future from the information that is learned in this study.

Storing Study Information for Future Use

We would like to store your study information for future research related to community college success coaches. We will label all your study information with a code instead of your name. The key to the code connects your name to your study information. The researcher will keep the code in a password-protected computer.

Future use of study information is required for this study. If you do not want your information to be used for future research, you should not be in this study.

How Will You Keep My Study Records Confidential?

We will keep the records of this study confidential by changing participants' names as well as names of participating community colleges. We will make every effort to keep your records confidential. However, there are times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of your records.

Reporting child/elder abuse, if applicable: If, during your participation in this study, we have reasonable cause to believe that child/elder abuse is occurring, this will be reported to authorities as required by law. The researcher will make every reasonable effort to protect the confidentiality of your research information. However, it might be possible that a civil or criminal court will demand the release of identifiable research information.

Reporting risk of harm to self or others: If, during your participation in this study, we have reason to believe that you are at risk for harming yourself or others, we are required to take the necessary actions. This may include notifying your doctor, your therapist, or other individuals. If this were to occur, we would not be able to assure confidentiality.

The following people or groups may review your study records for purposes such as quality control or safety:
- The Researcher and any member of her research team
- Authorized members of Baylor University who may need to see your information, such as administrative staff members from the Office of the Vice Provost for Research and members of the Institutional Review Board (a committee which is responsible for the ethical oversight of the study)
- The sponsor or funding agency for this study
- Federal and state agencies that oversee or review research (such as the HHS Office of Human Research Protection or the Food and Drug Administration)

The study data will be stored in Waco, Texas.

The results of this study may also be used for teaching, publications, or presentations at professional meetings. If your individual results are discussed, your identity will be protected by using a code number or pseudonym rather than your name or other identifying information.

Study Participation and Early Withdrawal

Taking part in this study is your choice. You are free not to take part or to withdraw at any time for any reason. No matter what you decide, there will be no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are entitled. If you decide to withdraw from this study, the information that you have already provided will be kept confidential. You cannot withdraw information collected prior to your withdrawal.

The researcher may take you out of this study without your permission. This may happen because:
- The researcher thinks it is in your best interest
- You can't make the required study visits
- Other administrative reasons

Will I get paid for taking part in this research study?

You will not be paid for taking part in this study. However, you will receive a $25 gift card as a result of your participation in this study.

What will it cost me to take part in this research study?

There are no costs to you for taking part in this research study.

What happens if I am injured as a result of participating in this research study?

If you become ill or injured as a result of your participation in the study, you should seek medical treatment from your doctor or treatment center of choice. You should promptly tell the researcher about any illness or injury.

There are no plans for Baylor University to pay you or give you other compensation for your injury or illness. You do not give up any of your legal rights to seek compensation by signing this form.

What if I have any questions or concerns about this research study?

You can call us with any concerns or questions about the research. Our telephone numbers are listed below: Jessica Robinson (303-817-4800) or Perry L. Glanzer (254-710-7581).

If you would like to speak with someone **not** directly involved in this research study, you may contact the Baylor University IRB through the Office of the Vice Provost for Research at 254-710-1438. You can talk to them about:
- Your rights as a research subject
- Your concerns about the research
- A complaint about the research

Indicate your decision for the research discussed earlier in this form:

Consent for Audio recording:

Do you agree to let us make an audio recording of you during this study?

_____YES   _____NO   _____INITIALS

Consent for future research with study information:

Do you agree to let us store your study information for future research related to Community College Success Coaching?

_____YES   _____NO   _____INITIALS

Future Contact

We may like to contact you in the future either to follow-up to this study or to see if you are interested in other studies taking place at Baylor University.

Do you agree to let us contact you in the future?

_____YES   _____NO   _____INITIALS

Statement of Consent

SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT:

I have read the information in this consent form including risks and possible benefits. I have been given the chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in the study.

_____

Signature of Subject   Date

APPENDIX F

Abbreviated Interview Protocol

MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- What does it mean to participants to be a success coach in the community college setting?
- How do community college success coaches articulate and analyze the process of development towards student success?
- What formal or informal theories of student success do community college success coaches use to guide their coaching practices?
- In what ways do their approaches compare to and differ from the dominant philosophies and/or theories about community college student success?

SUB-QUESTIONS:

- What does it mean to participants to be a success coach in the community college setting?
    - What are the participants' histories with the success coaching role? What re the institutions' histories with the success coaching role?
    - What are the participants' perspectives (positive and negative) about their roles?
    - What qualities do the participants think make an especially effective success coach?

- How do community college success coaches articulate and analyze the process of development towards student success?
    - What do community college success coaches think it means for a student to be successful?
    - What role do community college success coaches think they fulfill in this process?
    - What goals do community college success coaches have for their students? How do they help their students to reach their goals? How do these goals compare or contrast to the institutional goals?

- What formal or informal theories of student success do community college success coaches use to guide their coaching practices? In what ways do their approaches compare to and differ from the dominant philosophies and/or theories about community college student success?
    - What theories do community college success coaches use to guide their work with their students?

- Where are they getting these theories from?
- What books, authors, writings, or other frameworks are they using to guide their practice?

Introduction to the Interview and Opening Points to Review

- Review study purpose, including:
    - This is a study about CC success coaches' perspectives about what it means to be a success coach in the community college setting
    - Goal of my study: To gather CC success coaches' perspectives what CC student success is and means as well as understanding what their role is in the process of development toward CC student success

- Review study and interview process, including:
    - Compare several different CC success coaches' perspectives (15-20 additional participants at other CC's around the nation) to trace larger themes and patterns about the phenomenon of CC student success.
    - Compare these participants' responses (individual perspective) to their job descriptions (institutional perspectives) to get at a holistic understanding of what it means to be a CC success coach.
    - Interview will last between 45-90 minutes, and the interview will cover your experiences with promoting student success, background and training for this role, uniqueness of your role, types of students you see, perspectives on student success, and theories you use in your work.

- Review interview purpose, including:
    - Interested in your descriptions and your lived experiences with your role as a success coach.
    - Interested in your reflections on the process of development toward CC student success and your role in that process.
    - While there is a myriad of research available about CC student success, the propensity of the research has focused on the student. The voice of the CC student affairs professional has remained notoriously under-research in empirical research studies.
    - Therefore, this study aims to understand and present a description, from the CC success coaches' perspectives, what it means to develop CC students' success based on what CC success coaches say their role contributes to this process.

- Review informed consent document, including:
    - Study has been approved by Baylor University's Institutional Review Board.
    - Your name and any other identifying details will be changed to keep participant details anonymous.

- If you are uncomfortable at any time, you can drop out of the interview and nothing you have said will be used in the dissertation write-up.
- You will receive a copy of your transcript after your interview via email.

- Ask if there are any final questions before we begin the interview.

Part One: Introductory Questions and Focused Success Coaching History

- How long have you worked as a CC success coach?
- What did you do before prior to your work as a CC success coach?
- In brief, what initially attracted you to this position?
- What do you most enjoy about your role as a CC success coach?
- What is most difficult about your role as a CC success coach? What do you think you struggle with the most about your role as a CC success coach?
- What do you think makes your role particularly unique?
- So, if someone were to say, "this sounds a lot like academic advising," what would you say?
- So, on the flip side, if someone were to say, "this sounds a lot like mental health counseling," what would you say to that?
- Why did the institution originally create this position?
- What are the major activities that you spend your time doing in your role as a CC success coach?
- You work at a community college, not at a four-year institution. Is there anything about this context that you think makes your role or the type of support you offer particularly unique?
- Are you responsible to coach a specific type of student?
- Which of your responsibilities do you think are most important for you to fulfill in order to be an effective success coach?

Preparation for Success Coaching Role:

- What specific terms would you use to describe your role as a CC success coach?
- What qualities do you think make an especially effective success coach?
- I assume you work with a more population that is at higher risk of attrition. Do you think these qualities that you just mentioned are especially helpful for working with this type of population? Why?
- What type of experiences in your formal education were helpful in preparing you to be a CC success coach?
- Are there any additional "life" experiences that you have found especially helpful in your role as a CC success coach?

Part Two: The Lifeworld of the CC Success Coach and the Details of the Experience
(Theories Used/Details of the Success Coaching Experience)

Theories Used in Coaching Practice:

- Are there any books, authors, or writings (such as: Holy Bible, *Seven Habits of a Highly Successful Person*, etc.) that you use to guide your work as a CC success coach?
- What is something (a piece of wisdom, advice, or a phrase) that you didn't learn from your formal, educational preparation that you have found especially helpful in your coaching practice?
- Is there any other personal wisdom that you have received, or deeply-held beliefs that you have that guides your coaching practices?
- Are there any academic theories that you learned from your graduate preparation for this role that you use to guide your coaching practice?
- Can you describe a time for me that you integrated these theories, frameworks, principles, or pieces of wisdom into your coaching practice and found it particularly helpful?
- Do you see any potential limitations to the role of theory in your coaching practice?
- Do you see any potential limitations to the role of personal wisdom in your coaching practice?

Details of the Success Coaching Experience:

- What percentage of students, if any, are required to meet with you?
- If not required, why do students come in to see success coaches?
- What topics do you typically talk about in your meetings with students?
- Do you ever talk about what it means for students to be successful in their roles outside of their academics?
- If you had to put this into a percentage of your time (time spent discussing personal, outside of class issues, and time spent discussing inside of class issues) how would the breakdown go?
- Addressing student barriers typically is brought up in success coaching interviews. Do you find that part of your role is addressing students' barriers?

Part Three: Apprehending a Deeper Understanding of the Process of Development Toward CC Student Success and the Reflection on the Meaning of Community College

Student Success (Student Outcomes/Success Coaches' Interpretations of Student Success) Outcomes for Students:

- What do you want your students to gain, in general, from meeting with you?
- What do you think the institution (i.e., administration and/or faculty) wants your students to gain, generally, from meeting with you?
- What do you think students want to gain from meeting with you?
- How long does the official, institutional coaching relationship typically last with the students you coach?

CC Success Coaches' Interpretations of What CC Student Success Looks Like:

- Can you tell me a story about support you provided for one of your students that you would consider particularly "successful"?
- I'm going to show you some pictures about what student success could look like. Will you please tell me which picture best represents student success?
- What picture do you think a person on your administrative team best represents student success?
- What picture do you think a student would say best represents student success?

Part Four: Conclusion to the Interview

- There's a quote that says, "I'd rather know some of the questions than all of the answers." What questions would you like to teach your students to ask?
- If you could tell your students anything about what it means to be successful, what would it be?
- Is there anything else you think I should know about what you think it means to be a success coach?
- Do you have any final questions for me?

APPENDIX G

Expanded Interview Protocol

This appendix includes my interview protocol, broken into sections based on a modified version of Seidman's (2013) book on phenomenological interviewing[1] as well as Bevan's (2014) article, "A Method of Phenomenological Interviewing."[2]

MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- What does it mean to participants to be a success coach in the community college setting?
- How do community college success coaches articulate and analyze the process of development towards student success?
- What formal or informal theories of student success do community college success coaches use to guide their coaching practices?
- In what ways do their approaches compare to and differ from the dominant philosophies and/or theories about community college student success?

SUB-QUESTIONS:

- What does it mean to participants to be a success coach in the community college setting?
    - What are the participants' histories with the success coaching role? What re the institutions' histories with the success coaching role?
    - What are the participants' perspectives (positive and negative) about their roles?
    - What qualities do the participants think make an especially effective success coach?

- How do community college success coaches articulate and analyze the process of development towards student success?
    - What do community college success coaches think it means for a student to be successful?
    - What role do community college success coaches think they fulfill in this process?

---

[1] Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. Columbia University: Teachers College Press.

[2] Bevan, M. T. (2014). A method of phenomenological interviewing. *Qualitative Health Research, 24*(1), 136–44.

- What goals do community college success coaches have for their students? How do they help their students to reach their goals? How do these goals compare or contrast to the institutional goals?

- What formal or informal theories of student success do community college success coaches use to guide their coaching practices? In what ways do their approaches compare to and differ from the dominant philosophies and/or theories about community college student success?
  - What theories do community college success coaches use to guide their work with their students?
  - Where are they getting these theories from?
  - What books, authors, writings, or other frameworks are they using to guide their practice?

Introduction to the Interview and Opening Points to Review

- Review study purpose, including:
  - This is a study about CC success coaches' perspectives about what it means to be a success coach in the community college setting
  - Goal of my study: To gather CC success coaches' perspectives what CC student success is and means as well as understanding what their role is in the process of development toward CC student success

- Review study and interview process, including:
  - Compare several different CC success coaches' perspectives (15-20 additional participants at other CC's around the nation) to trace larger themes and patterns about the phenomenon of CC student success.
  - Compare these participants' responses (individual perspective) to their job descriptions (institutional perspectives) to get at a holistic understanding of what it means to be a CC success coach.
  - Interview will last between 45-90 minutes, and the interview will cover your experiences with promoting student success, background and training for this role, uniqueness of your role, types of students you see, perspectives on student success, and theories you use in your work.

- Review interview purpose, including:
  - Interested in your descriptions and your lived experiences with your role as a success coach.
  - Interested in your reflections on the process of development toward CC student success and your role in that process.
  - While there is a myriad of research available about CC student success, the propensity of the research has focused on the student. The voice of the CC student affairs professional has remained notoriously under-research in empirical research studies.

- Therefore, this study aims to understand and present a description, from the CC success coaches' perspectives, what it means to develop CC students' success based on what CC success coaches say their role contributes to this process.

- Review informed consent document, including:
  - Study has been approved by Baylor University's Institutional Review Board.
  - Your name and any other identifying details will be changed to keep participant details anonymous.
  - If you are uncomfortable at any time, you can drop out of the interview and nothing you have said will be used in the dissertation write-up.
  - You will receive a copy of your transcript after your interview via email.

- Ask if there are any final questions before we begin the interview.[3]

Part One: Introductory Questions and Focused Success Coaching History[4]

- How long have you worked as a CC success coach?
  - Possible Follow-Up: What did you do prior to this role?[5]
- In brief, what initially attracted you to this position?
  - Possible Follow-Up: Why was this quality of the position particularly attractive to you?
- What do you most enjoy about your role as a CC success coach?
  - Possible Follow-Up: What do you think makes your job especially exciting or rewarding?
- What do you think you struggle with the most about your role as a CC success coach?
  - Possible Follow-Up: What do you think makes your job especially challenging or difficult? How do you address these challenges?
- What do you think makes your role particularly unique?
  - Possible Follow-Up: So, if someone were to say, "this sounds a lot like academic advising," what would you say? So, on the flip side, if someone were to say, "this sounds a lot like mental health counseling," what would you say to that?
- Why did the institution originally create this position?
  - Possible Follow-Up: Is this any different than what attracted you to the position?

---

[3] This first part is simply a reminder of the points I need to cover at the start of the interview.

[4] Please note that these terms are borrowed from Seidman's (2013), *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*.

[5] These follow-up questions are simply reminders of good probes for me to use if the participant is particularly succinct in his or her responses.

- What are the major activities that you spend your time doing in your role as a CC success coach?
    - Possible Follow-Up: Please put this into percentages if you find this to be helpful.
- You work at a community college, not at a four-year institution. Is there anything about this context that you think makes your role or the type of support you offer particularly unique?
- Which of your responsibilities do you think are most important for you to fulfill in order to be an effective success coach?
    - Possible Follow-Up: Which of these responsibilities are in your job description (i.e., recognized by your institution)? Which of these responsibilities fall outside of your job description (i.e., not as directly recognized by your institution)?
- Are you responsible to coach a specific type of student?
    - Possible Follow-Up: If so, what type of student? If not, would you consider yourself a generalist? If you are considered a generalist, what do you think it means to be a generalist success coach?

Preparation for Success Coaching Role:

- What specific terms would you use to describe your role as a CC success coach?
    - Possible Follow-Up: If they ask for specific terms: encourager, advocate, friend, role model, resource provider, etc.
    - Possible Further Follow-Up: Why did you choose to use these terms?
- What qualities do you think make an especially effective success coach?
    - Possible Follow-Up: What is it about these qualities that are most important for success coaches? Why did you choose these qualities to name?
- I assume you work with a population that is at higher risk of attrition. Do you think these qualities that you just mentioned are especially helpful for working with this type of population? Why?
- What type of experiences in your formal education were helpful in preparing you to be a CC success coach?
    - Possible Follow-Up: What about these experiences was particularly helpful? Why were these experiences particularly helpful?
- Are there any additional "life" experiences that you have found especially helpful in your role as a CC success coach?
    - Possible Follow-Up: If so, which experiences were they? Why these experiences?
- May I ask you your religious identity?
    - Possible Follow-Up: Does this religious identity inform your coaching practices at all? If so, why and how does it? If not, why not?

Part Two: The Lifeworld of the CC Success Coach and the Details of the Experience (Theories Used/Details of the Success Coaching Experience)

298

Theories Used in Coaching Practice:

- Are there any books, authors, or writings (such as: Holy Bible, *Seven Habits of a Highly Successful Person*, etc.) that you use to guide your work as a CC success coach?
  - Possible Follow-Up: If so, what are they? Where did you learn them? Why do you use these theories to guide your work?
- Is there any other personal wisdom that you have received, or deeply-held beliefs that you have that guides your coaching practices?
  - Possible Follow-Up: If so, what is it and where did learn this wisdom from?
- Are there any academic theories that you learned from your graduate preparation for this role that you use to guide your coaching practice?
  - Possible Follow-Up: If so, what are they? Why do you use these theories to guide your work?
- Can you describe a time for me that you integrated these theories, frameworks, principles, or pieces of wisdom into your coaching practice and found it particularly helpful?
  - Possible Follow-Ups: What happened? What was helpful about your integration of these academic theories, frameworks, principles, or pieces of wisdom? What were you thinking about as you integrated these theories? Did your thinking about these academic theories, frameworks, or pieces of wisdom change as you incorporated them?
  - Possible Further Follow-Ups: Has this moment influenced your coaching practice since then? If so, how? If not, why not?
- Do you see any potential limitations to the role of theory in your coaching practice?
  - Possible Follow-Up: If so, what are they and why do you consider them limitations?
- Do you see any potential limitations to the role of personal wisdom in your coaching practice?
  - Possible Follow-Up: If so, what are they and why do you consider them limitations?

Details of the Success Coaching Experience:

- What percentage of students, if any, are required to meet with you?
  - Possible Follow-Up: If there is more than one success coach employed at your institution, what percentage do you meet with?
- If not required, why do students come in to see success coaches?
  - Possible Follow-Up: Do you recognize any patterns in reasons why your students come in? If so, what are they? If not, why not?
- What topics do you typically talk about in your meetings with students?
  - Possible Follow-Up: Do you recognize any patterns in your conversations with students? If so, what are they? If not, why not?

- Do you ever talk about what it means for students to be successful in their roles outside of their academics?
    - Possible Follow-Up: If so, what are they? Why do you think these topics come up? If your conversation stays largely focused on academics, why do you think this is?
- If you had to put this into a percentage of your time (time spent discussing personal, outside of class issues, and time spent discussing inside of class issues) how would the breakdown go?
    - Possible Follow-Up: Why do you think this breakdown exists this way?
- Addressing student barriers typically is brought up in success coaching interviews. Do you find that part of your role is addressing students' barriers?
    - Possible Follow-Up: What barriers do you typically help students address? How do you help them address these barriers? What do you think your role is in helping them address these barriers?

Part Three: Apprehending a Deeper Understanding of the Process of Development Toward CC Student Success and the Reflection on the Meaning of Community College

Student Success (Student Outcomes/Success Coaches' Interpretations of Student Success) Outcomes for Students:

- What do you want your students to gain, in general, from meeting with you?
    - Possible Follow-Up: Anything general in terms of students' holistic development?
- What do you think the institution (i.e., administration and/or faculty) wants your students to gain, generally, from meeting with you?
    - Possible Follow-Up: Is this different from what you want students to gain from meeting with you? If so, why and how is it different? If not, why not?
- What do you think the institution (i.e., administration and/or faculty) wants your students to gain, specifically, from meeting with you?
    - Possible Follow-Up: Is this different from what you want students to gain from meeting with you? If so, why and how is it different? If not, why not?
- What do you think students want to gain from meeting with you?
    - Possible Follow-Up: Is this different from what you want or what your institutions wants students to gain from meeting with you? If so, why and how is it different? If not, why not?
- How long does the official, institutional coaching relationship typically last with the students you coach?
    - Possible Follow-Up: How do you decide how to end these relationships? Make sure the participant understands that this question focuses on how these relationships end.

CC Success Coaches' Interpretations of What CC Student Success Looks Like:

- Can you tell me a story about support you provided for one of your students that you would consider particularly "successful"?
  - Possible Follow-Up: Please describe not only the type of support the participant provided, but explain why this is what they consider a "success story."
- I'm going to show you some pictures about what student success could look like. Will you please tell me which picture best represents student success?
  - Possible Follow-Up: Why do you think it is this picture that best represents student success? Are there any pictures you think are missing from this list?
- What picture do you think a person on your administrative team best represents student success?
  - Possible Follow-Up: Why do you think it is this picture is what your administrative team would say best represents student success?
- What picture do you think a student would say best represents student success?
  - Possible Follow-Up: Why do you think it is this picture is what your student would say best represents student success?

Part Four: Conclusion to the Interview

- There's a quote that says, "I'd rather know some of the questions than all of the answers." What questions would you like to teach your students to ask?
  - Possible Follow-Up: Why is this the question you would choose?
- If you could tell your students anything about what it means to be successful, what would it be?
  - Possible Follow-Up: Why is this what you would tell them?
- Is there anything else you think I should know about what you think it means to be a success coach?
  - Possible Follow-Up: Is there anything else you think I should know about your perspective on the process of developing community college students' success?
- Do you have any final questions for me?
  - If yes: Answer their questions.
  - If no: Thank them for the interview and walk them through the remaining steps.

APPENDIX H

Compiled Pictures for Modified Photo Elicitation Process

This appendix contains the pictures that I used to guide my modified photo elicitation process. As was noted in my methods chapter, all of these images were either public domain images, or stock photos which I purchased. I included eleven images in total, and they were drawn from the categories mentioned by Harris (1998) in his master list of student success outcomes for community college students.

Picture #1: Being Academically Engaged in Class

Picture #2: Landing a Job

Picture #3: Getting Accepted into a University

Picture #4: Participating in Campus Social Life

Picture #5: Being "Involved" On Campus

Picture #6: Being "Involved" On Campus

Picture #7: College Graduation

Picture #8: Being Supported by a Campus Administrator

Picture #9: Making Money

Picture #10: Engaging in Academic Study

Picture #11: Having a Planned-Out Schedule

APPENDIX I

Steps per Participant

This appendix functions as a master "steps per participant" list. I marked each step with the appropriate date as I complete it. I used an Excel spreadsheet to track my progress within each step.

These steps include:

1. Read through all data
2. Read through demographic survey responses
3. Go through the initial epoche process
4. *Per participant:*
   a. Read through participant data
   b. Horiztontalization process
   c. Look for units of meaning
   d. Clustering
   e. Write individual textural description
   f. Write individual structural description
5. Produce composite structural description
6. Produce composite textural description
7. Arrive at the essence of the phenomenon

APPENDIX J

List of Necessary Documents per Participant

This appendix lists the necessary documents I needed for each participant. Each of these documents was stored in a password-protected file on my personal computer. Only I had access to the password to each of these files.

- The informed consent agreement.
- The participants' demographic information.
- The participants' job descriptions.
- Any notes on the epoche process I went go through prior to the start of each interview.
- The observational notes I recorded in the interview.
- The initial memo I made after each interview.
- The actual interview recording.
- The draft of the transcription.
- The confirmation or comments by the participant about the transcript of the interview.
- Any additional communication between myself and the participants.
- Any additional memo-ing or analysis documents created

APPENDIX K

IRB Letter of Approval

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION FROM IRB REVIEW

Principal Investigator: Jessica Robinson
Study Title: Community College Success Coaching: A Phenomenological Investigation into Community College Success Coaches' Lived Experiences with Promoting Community College Student Success
IRB Reference #: 1259807
Date of Determination: 07/31/2018
Exemption Category: 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2)

The above referenced human subjects research project has been determined to be EXEMPT from review by the Baylor University Institutional Review Board (IRB) according to federal regulation 45 CFR 46.101(b):

(3) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

The following documents were reviewed:
- IRB Application, submitted on 07/18/2018
- Protocol, Version 1, dated 07/17/2018
- Consent Form, dated 07/31/2018
- Recruitment email, sub. On 07/22/2018
- Questionnaires, sub. On 07/18/2018

This exemption is limited to the activities described in the submitted materials. If the research is modified, you must contact this office to determine whether your research is still eligible for exemption prior to implementing the modifications. If you have any questions, please contact Deborah Holland at (254) 710-1438 or Deborah_L_Holland@baylor.edu.

If you have any questions, please contact Deborah Holland at (254) 710-1438 or Deborah_L_Holland@baylor.edu. Sincerely,

Sincerely,

Deborah L. Holland
Deborah L. Holland, JD, MPH, Assistant Vice Provost of Research, Director of Compliance

APPENDIX L

Summary of Demographic Responses

This appendix contains the summary of my participants' demographic responses. The following sections were included in this summary.

Individual Demographic Responses:[1]

This section includes a one-paragraph description of each participant, including a short synopsis of each of their background's and their history with the success coaching role at their individual community college (largely a summary of the first part of each interview). This section also includes an individual demographics table, citing the pseudonym, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, educational degree and name, job title, state of employment, and number of years of employment per participant.

Compiled Demographic Responses:[2]

This section will include the following, completed table that lists a composite number of responses within each category to the demographic survey.

Table L.1

Participants' Individual Demographics Table:

Name	M or F	Eth.	Sex.	Rel.	Ed. Degree	Degree Name	State of CC	# of Yrs.
Alice	Female	White	Heterosexual	Christian	Bachelor's	Criminal Justice	Michigan	1
Allison	Female	White	Heterosexual	Christian	Master's	College Student Development	Texas	5

(continued)

---

[1] This is borrowed from Gill's (2016b), Ohio dissertation titled, "A Phenomenological Study Examining the Perceived Value of Co-Curricular Education within the Community College Completion Agenda."

[2] This is borrowed from Hochhalter's (2017), University of New Mexico dissertation titled, "Spiritual Leadership: A Phenomenological Study of Community College Presidents in the Southwest."

Name	M or F	Eth.	Sex.	Rel.	Ed. Degree	Degree Name	State of CC	# of Yrs.
Amber	Female	White	No answer	No answer	Bachelor's	Public Administration and Political Science	Florida	6
Antonio	Male	Black	Heterosexual	Christian	Master's	Corporate and Professional Communication	North Carolina	4
Aspen	Male	Hispanic	No response	"Culturally Catholic"	Bachelor's	Psychology	Texas	2
Casey	Female	White	Heterosexual	Christian				
Cassie	Female	White	Heterosexual	Agnostic	Master's	Counselor Education	Texas	1
Charlotte	Female	White	Heterosexual	Christian	Master's	Master's of Education: Leadership and Policy Analysis	Tennessee	2
Chelsea	Female	White	Heterosexual	Christian	Master's	Counseling/Human Development, Concentration in Student Affairs	Virginia	6
Chloe	Female	Black	Heterosexual	Christian	Master's	Executive Master of Business Administration	Tennessee	2
Clara	Female	American Indian	Heterosexual	Chumash	Bachelor's	Sociocultural Anthropology	Washington	1
Cora	Female	Multiracial	Heterosexual	Spiritual	Bachelor's	International Studies	Oregon	1
Crystal	Female	White	Heterosexual	Christian	Bachelor's	Communication	Alabama	6
Curtis	Male	White	Heterosexual	Agnostic	Master's	Curriculum and Instruction	Texas	2
David	Male	White	Heterosexual	Christian	Bachelor's	Criminal Justice	Florida	1
Delia	Female	White	Heterosexual	Christian	Bachelor's	Health/Exercise Science	Alabama	5
Diana	Female	Latina	Heterosexual	Christian				
Ella	Female	Black	Heterosexual	Raised catholic but I consider myself spiritual	Master's	Social Work	Connecticut	2

(contnName	M or F	Eth.	Sex.	Rel.	Ed. Degree	Degree Name	State of CC	# of Yrs.
Emma	Female	White	Heterosexual	Christian	Master's	Master's of Divinity	Texas	4
Georgina	Female	White	Heterosexual	Christian	Master's	Journalism	Maine	4
Giovanna	Female	Hispanic	Heterosexual	Catholic	Master's	Higher Education Administration	Texas	1
Gregory	Male	Black	Heterosexual	Christian	Bachelor's	Bachelors in Science – Business Administration – Major Management	Texas	4
Helen	Female	White	Heterosexual	Christian	Master's	Educational Leadership	Texas	4
Iris	Female	American Indian	Heterosexual	Cultural	Bachelor's	Business Entrepreneurship	Montana	1
Jade	Female	Black	Heterosexual	Christian	Master's	Counseling	Texas	1
Jane	Female	White	Heterosexual	Christian	Bachelor's	General Studies	Alabama	6
Jennifer	Female	Black	Heterosexual	Christian	Master's	Urban Education	Texas	6
Joseph	Male	White	Heterosexual	Atheist	Master's	Counseling	Michigan	8
Joy	Female	White	Heterosexual	Christian	Master's	Social Work	Maryland	2
Lauren	Female	Black	Queer	Creator, Mother Earth, Universe	Master's	Counseling	North Carolina	2
Luke	Male	White	Heterosexual	Christian	Master's	Higher Education	Texas	3
Madeline	Female	White	Heterosexual	Christian	Bachelor's	Social Work and Business	Texas	1
Matthias	Male	Black	Heterosexual	Christian	Master's	Master's of Divinity	Texas	2
Melissa	Female	Asian	Heterosexual	Christian	Master's	Social Work	Texas	2
Mia	Female	White	Bisexual	Non-practicing Catholic	Master's	Applied Mathematic	Tennessee	1
Oliver	Male	White	Heterosexual	Christian—Lutheran	Bachelor's	Psychology/ Sociology	Nebraska	3
Orion	Male	Black	Heterosexual	Christian	Master's	Adult Education	North Carolina	1

Name	M or F	Eth.	Sex.	Rel.	Ed. Degree	Degree Name	State of CC	# of Yrs.
Rachel	Female	White	Heterosexual	Not Religious	Master's	Academic Advising	Nebraska	4
Renee	Female	Black	Heterosexual	Christian	Master's	Student Personnel Administration in Higher Education	South Carolina	1
Romeo	Male	White	Heterosexual	Christian	Master's	Master's of Divinity	Oregon	1
Roxanne	Female	White	Heterosexual	Catholic	Master's	Physical Education/Academic Administration	North Carolina	1
Ruby	Female	White	Heterosexual	Christian, but no org. rel. pref.	Master's	Educational Psychology	Tennessee	3
Ruth	Female	No response	No response	No response	No response	No response	Tennessee	No response
Samantha	Female	Asian	Heterosexual	Ominist	Bachelor's	Social Welfare	Washington	2
Samuel	Male	Black	Heterosexual	Christian	Master's	Instructional Leadership	Pennsylvania	2
Sienna	Female	White	Heterosexual	I am not religious, nor do I observe any faith.	Master's	Educational Leadership & Policy Studies	California	3
Stella	Female	White	Heterosexual	Christian	Master's	LCMSW	Texas	3
Summer	Female	White	Heterosexual	Christian	Master's	Business Administration	Virginia	1
Susan	Female	White	Heterosexual	Mormon	Master's	Master's of Vocational/Technical Education	Oregon	2
Victor	Male							
Yvonne	Female							

Table L.2

Participants' Composite Demographics Table:

This table presents a list of the composite demographics of my sample, which include: gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religious preference, state of employment, education level, degree name, job title, size of community college, and number of years in role.

Gender	Ethnicity	Sexuality	Religion	Ed. Level	Degree Name	CC State	CC Size	Yrs of Emply.
13 males	2 American Indian	1 Bisexual	2 Culturally Catholic	14 Bachelors	6 Higher Ed.	3 Alabama	2 from 500-1000	15 at one year
34 females	2 Asian	1 Queer	2 Agnostic	31 Masters	1 Adult Ed.	1 California	9 from 1000-5000	11 at two years
	11 Black	4 No Response	1 Atheist	2 No Response	1 Math. App.	1 Connecticut	21 5000-10000	5 at three years
	2 Hispanic	41 Heterosexual	2 Catholic Florida		4 Business	2	6 from 10000-15000	6 at four years
	1 Multi-Racial		29 Christian Maine		4 Comm.	1	1 from 15000-30000	2 at five years
	27 White		1 Mormon		4 MHC.	1 Maryland	3 from 30000-50000	5 at six years
	2 No Response		2 American Native Religion		2 Crim. Justice	1 Michigan	5 above 50000	1 at eight years
			3 Non-Religious		1 CNI	1 Montana		2 No answer
			2 Spiritual		2 Educ. Lead.	2 Nebraska		
			3 No Response		1 Ed. Psych.	4 North Carolina		
					1 Gen. Studies	3 Oregon		

(continued)

Gender	Ethnicity	Sexuality	Religion Degree	Ed. Level	Name	CC State	CC Size	Yrs of Emply.
				2 Phys. Ed.		1 Pennsylvania		
				1 Int't. Studies		1 South Carolina		
				5 Soc. Work		5 Tennessee		
				3 MDiv.		15 Texas		
				2 Psych.		2 Virginia		
				1 Soc.		2 Washington		
				1 Poly. Science				

APPENDIX M

Literature Review Diagram

This appendix represents a description of the major findings of the literature review. The key of citing authors is below. The dotted lines signify what is currently known about this role and/or potentially relevant theories used within the community college setting, while the straight lines signify our knowledge about success coaches' work within the four-year sector.

Type of Coach	Major Theoretical Frameworks Used *	Type of Student Seen (*, +, !, #)	Success Coaching Focuses (!)	Outcomes of Service?
Academic Coaches *, +, !	1. Appreciative Advising/Inquiry 2. Intrusive/ Proactive Advising 3. Student	All? Higher Risk of Attrition? Academic Probation? First Year? No Specific Type of Student?	1. Addressing Barriers to Success 2. Relationship Building 3. Action Planning 4. Student Development 5. Reflection and Follow-Up	*Individual Student Success?* (Persistence, Learning, Thriving)
Academic-Success Hybrid Coaches **	Development Theory 4. Motivational Interviewing 5. GROW Coaching Model 6. Self-Regulated Learning 7. Bloom's Taxonomy 8. Life Coaching			*Institutional Success?* (Retention, Graduation/Completion, Transfer)
Success Coaches **, #				*Interaction with the Institution?* (Involvement, Integration, Validation, Engagement)
Life Coaches **				

Authors' Key:
*: Robinson (2015)   **!:** Sepulveda (2016)
#: Strange (2015)   **+:** Barnhart and LeMaster (2013)

Figure M.1. Visual Depiction of Literature Review Findings

318

REFERENCES

Achieving the Dream. (2018). *Measuring what matters: Examining the success of Achieving the Dream network college graduates in work and life.* Accessed March 23, 2018, from: file:///Users/Robinson/Downloads/measuring_what_matters%20(4).pdf/.

ACPA (2013). Guidelines for demographic surveys. Accessed on May 19, 2018. Retrieved from: https://www.myacpa.org/sites/default/files/Proposal-Demographic-Questions-and-Responses-2.pdf

ACPA/NASPA Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Practitioners. (2010, July). Retrieved from http://www2.myacpa.org/img/ACPA-NASPA Professional Competency Areas Preliminary Version.pdf

ACT, the. (2010). *National collegiate retention and persistence to degree rates.* Accessed February 11, 2018 from http://www.act.org/policymakers/pdf/retain_2010.pdf.

Ashcraft, M., Brodner, T., Ramsey, J., & Zhu, H. (2017). On-time and debt-free: A data-driven holistic coaching model for low-income student success at Purdue. *Conference Proceeding, Annual National Symposium on Student Retention.* The University of Oklahoma: The Center for Institutional Data Exchange and Analysis, pp. 257–71.

Astin, A. W. (1975). *Preventing students from dropping out.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Astin, A. W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, *25*(4), 297–308.

Astin, A. W. (1993). *What matters in college?: Four critical years revisited* (Vol. 1). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Astin, A. W. (1999). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development, 40*(5), 518–29.

Astin, A. W., Berger, J. B., Bibo, E. W., Burkum, K. R., Cabrera, A. F., Crisp, G., & Mina, L. (2012). *College student retention: Formula for student success.* Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Ayers, D. F. (2017). Three functions of the community college mission statement. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, *2017*(180), 9–17.

Babb, M. E. (2012). *Considering practitioner influence on student success: Exploring community college faculty funds of knowledge*. (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, ProQuest No.: 3632849). Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois.

Bailey, T. (2009). Challenge and opportunity: Rethinking the role and function of developmental education in community college. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, *2009*(145), 11–30.

Bailey, T., Jenkins, D., & Leinbach, T. (2006). *What we know about community college low-income and minority student outcomes: Descriptive statistics from national surveys*. New York City: Community College Research Center.

Bailey, T. R., Jaggars, S. S., & Jenkins, D. (2015). *Redesigning America's community colleges*. Boston: Harvard University Press.

Baker, R., Bettinger, E., Jacob, B., & Marinescu, I. (2017). *The effect of labor market information on community college students' major choice* (No. w23333). National Bureau of Economic Research.

Baldwin, C. A. (2017). The evolving transfer mission and student mobility. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, *2017*(180), 37–45.

Baharom, N., & Idris, M. S. (2017). The roles of co-curricular in promoting students human capital development. *Educational Technology*, 464–76.

Barnett, E. A. (2011). Validation experiences and persistence among community college students. *The Review of Higher Education*, *34*(2), 193–230.

Barnhart, J. & LeMaster, J. (2013). *Developing a success coaching center*. Custom Research Brief, Student Affairs Forum. Washington, D.C.: Education Advisory Board.

Barr, R. B., & Tagg, J. (1995). From teaching to learning—A new paradigm for undergraduate education. *Change: The magazine of higher learning*, *27*(6), 12–26.

Barringer, S. N., & Jaquette, O. (2018). The moving missions of community colleges: An examination of degree-granting profiles over time. *Community College Review, 46*(4), 417-43.

Baston, M. A. (2018). Elevating student affairs practice in community college redesign. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, *42*(11), 812-817.

Baxter-Magolda, M. B. (2004). *Making their own way: Narratives for transforming higher education to promote self-development*. Sterling: Stylus Publishing.

Bean, J. (1983). The application of a model of turnover in work organizations to the student attrition process. *Review of Higher Education, 6*, 129–48.

Bean, J., & Eaton, S. B. (2001). The psychology underlying successful retention practices. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, & Practice*, *3*(1), 73–89.

Bean, J. P., & Metzner, B. S. (1985). A conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition. *Review of Educational Research*, *55*(4), 485–540.

Bensimon, E. M. (2007). The underestimated significance of practitioner knowledge in the scholarship on student success. *The Review of Higher Education, 30*(4), 441–69.

Bergen-Cico, D., & Viscomi, J. (2012). Exploring the association between campus co-curricular involvement and academic achievement. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, & Practice*, *14*(3), 329–43.

Berkner, L., He, S., & Cataldi, E. F. (2002). *Descriptive summary of 1995-96 beginning postsecondary students: Six years later*. Statistical Analysis Report. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics:

Bettinger, E. P., & Baker, R. B. (2014). The effects of student coaching: An evaluation of a randomized experiment in student advising. *Educational Evaluation & Policy Analysis*, *36*(1), 3–19.

Bevan, M. T. (2014). A method of phenomenological interviewing. *Qualitative Health Research, 24*(1), 136–44.

Bickerstaff, S., Barragan, M., & Rucks-Ahidiana, Z. (2017). Experiences of Earned Success: Community College Students' Shifts in College Confidence. *International Journal of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education, 29*(3) 501-510.

Bloom, B. S. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives. Vol. 1: Cognitive domain*. New York City: McKay, 20–24.

Bloom, J., & Archer-Martin, N. (2002). Incorporating appreciative inquiry into academic advising [Electronic Version], November 5, 2006. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from http://www.psu.edu/dus/mentor/020829jb.htm.

Bloom, J. L., Hutson, B.L., & He, Y. (2008). *The appreciative advising revolution*. Champaign: Stipes Publishing.

Bloom, J. L., Hutson, B. L., He, Y., & Konkle, E. (2013). Appreciative education. *New Directions for Student Services*, *2013*(143), 5–18.

Bogdan, R. C., Biklen, S. K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and models (4th ed.).* New York City: Pearson Education.

Boggs, G. R. (2011). The American community college: From access to success. *About Campus*, *16*(2), 2–10.

Boroch, D. J., Hope, L., Smith, B. M., Gabriner, R. S., Mery, P. M., Johnstone, R. M., & Asera, R. (2010). *Student success in community colleges: A practical guide to developmental education.* San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons Publishers.

Bowman, N. A. (2010). The development of psychological well-being among first-year college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, *51*(2), 180–200.

Bragg, D. D. (2013). Pathways to college for underserved and nontraditional students: Lessons from research, policy, and practice. In *The state of college access and completion* (pp. 46-68). Routledge.

Braxton, J. M. (2009). Understanding the development of the whole person. *Journal of College Student Development*, *50*(6), 573-575.

Braxton, J. M., Shaw Sullivan, A. V., & Johnson, R. M. (1997). *Appraising Tinto's theory of college student departure*. New York City: Agathan Press Incorporated.

Braxton, J. M., Doyle, W. R., Hartley III, H. V., Hirschy, A. S., Jones, W. A., & McLendon, M. K. (2013). *Rethinking college student retention*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.

Briggs, T. M. (2016). *The influence of student coaching on student success in developmental math courses*. (Unpublished Dissertation, ProQuest No.: 10249756). Walden University.

Bronk, K. C. (2013). *Purpose in life: A critical component of optimal youth development*. Springer Science & Business Media.

Bronk, K. C., Hill, P. L., Lapsley, D. K., Talib, T. L., & Finch, H. (2009). Purpose, hope, and life satisfaction in three age groups. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, *4*(6), 500-10.

Brown, S. D., Tramayne, S., Hoxha, D., Telander, K., Fan, X., & Lent, R. W. (2008). Social cognitive predictors of college students' academic performance and persistence: A meta-analytic path analysis. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 72(3), 298–308.

Brumbaugh, K. (1950). Better student personnel services in junior colleges. *Junior College Journal, 1950,* 38–45.

Burns, K. (2010). At issue: Community college student success variables: A review of the literature. *The Community College Enterprise*, *16*(2), 33–61.

Burrow, A. L., & Hill, P. L. (2011). Purpose as a form of identity capital for positive youth adjustment. *Developmental Psychology*, *47*(4), 1196-1206.

Calcagno, J. C., Crosta, P., Bailey, T., & Jenkins, D. (2007). Stepping stones to a degree: The impact of enrollment pathways and milestones on community college student outcomes. *Research in Higher Education*, *48*(7), 775–801.

Callan, P. M. (2017). Stewards of opportunity: America's public community colleges. In Stephen Steinberg's *The American Academic Profession* (pp. 95–112). New York City: Routledge Publishers.

Capstick, M. K., Harrell-Williams, L. M., Cockrum, C. D., & West, S. L. (2019). Exploring the effectiveness of academic coaching for academically at-risk college students. *Innovative Higher Education*, 1-13.

Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. (2017). *Basic classification description*. Accessed on May 19, 2018, from: http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/ classification_descriptions/basic.php

Carr, N. T. (2017). Seasonality and student success: Integrating "just in time" outreach into operations on your campus. *Conference Proceeding, Annual National Symposium on Student Retention.* The University of Oklahoma: The Center for Institutional Data Exchange & Analysis, pp. 357–66.

Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2005). *Engaging students, challenging the odds: 2005 findings.* Austin: The University of Texas at Austin. Accessed on September 15, 2017, from: https://www.ccsse.org/center/ resources/docs/ publications/ 2005_National_Report.pdf.

Center for Community College Student Engagement, the. (2017). *Benchmarks of effective practice*. Austin: The University of Texas at Austin. Retrieved on March 3, 3018, from: http://www.ccsse.org/tools/docs/working_with_results/ CCSSEBenchmarks.pdf?ts=2017042823485.

Cejda, B. D., & Kaylor, A. J. (2001). Early transfer: A case study of traditional-aged community college students. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, *25*(8), 621–38.

Chaves, C. (2006). Involvement, development, and retention: Theoretical foundations and potential extensions for adult community college students. *Community College Review*, *34*(2), 139–52.

Chickering, A. W. (2006). Every student can learn—If…. *About Campus*, *11*(2), 9–15.

Chickering, A. W., & Reisser, L. (1993). *Education and identity.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Cho, S. W., & Karp, M. M. (2013). Student success courses in the community college: Early enrollment and educational outcomes. *Community College Review*, *41*(1), 86–103.

Clagett, C. A. (1995). Community college strategies: An outcomes typology for community colleges. *Assessment Update*, *7*(4), 10–11.

Clark, B. R. (1960). The "cooling-out" function in higher education. *American Journal of Sociology*, *65*(6), 569–76.

Clough, H. S., & Barnes, J. (2016). *The power of life coaching: A model for academic recruitment and retention*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers.

Clydesdale, T. (2015). *The purposeful graduate: Why colleges must talk to students about vocation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data: Complementary research strategies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Cohen, A. M., Brawer, F. B., & Kisker, C. B. (2014). *The American community college (6th ed.).* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Collins, C. C. (1967). *Junior college student personnel programs: What they are and what they should be.* Washington, D.C.: American Association of Junior Colleges.

Cowley, W. H. (1936). The nature of personnel work. *Educational Record, 42,* 218–34.

Cox, E., Bachkirova, T., & Clutterbuck, D. (2010). *The complete handbook of coaching.* London: Sage Publications.

Cox, S., McKinley, J., & Hanson, G. (2017). Retention and recruitment: Using a predictive analytic model to build and implement a strategic graduation and retention action plan. *Conference Proceeding, Annual National Symposium on Student Retention.* The University of Oklahoma: The Center for Institutional Data Exchange & Analysis, pp. 325–35.

Creamer, D. (1994). Synthesis of literature related to historical and current functions of student services. In G. Baker, *Handbook of the community college in America: It's history, mission, and management* (pp. 437–53). Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Crisp, G., & Taggart, A. (2013). Community college student success programs: A synthesis, critique, and research agenda. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, *37*(2), 114–30.

Crisp, G., Taggart, A., & Nora, A. (2015). Undergraduate Latina/o students: A systematic review of research identifying factors contributing to academic success outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, *85*(2), 249–74.

Crosta, P. M. (2014). Intensity and attachment: How the chaotic enrollment patterns of community college students relate to educational outcomes. *Community College Review*, *42*(2), 118–42.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. London: Sage Publications.

Culp, M. M., & Helfgot, S. R. (1998). *Life at the edge of the wave: Lessons from the community college*. Washington, D.C.: NASPA Publications.

D'Amico, M. M., Dika, S. L., Elling, T. W., Algozzine, B., & Ginn, D. J. (2014). Early integration and other outcomes for community college transfer students. *Research in Higher Education*, *55*(4), 370–99.

Dalton, J. C., & Crosby, P. C. (2014). The power of personal coaching: Helping first-year students to connect and commit in college. *Journal of College & Character*, *15*(2), 59–66.

Damon, W., Menon, J., & Bronk, K. C. (2003). The development of purpose during adolescence. *Applied Developmental Science*, *7*(3), 119-28.

Dassance, C. R. (1984). Community college student personnel work: Is the model still emerging?. *Community College Review*, *12*(3), 25–29.

Dean, K. L. (2015). Understanding student success by measuring co-curricular learning. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, *2014*(164), 27–38.

Decker, A. (2013). Student-centered practice in the twenty-first century community college. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice, 37*(7), 561–65.

Deil-Amen, R. (2011). Beyond remedial dichotomies: Are 'underprepared' college students a marginalized majority?. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, *2011*(155), 59–71.

Derby, D. C., & Smith, T. (2004). An orientation course and community college retention. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, *28*(9), 763–73.

De Vogler, K. L., & Ebersole, P. (1981). Adults'meaning in life. *Psychological Reports, 49*, 87–90.

DeWitz, S. J., Woolsey, M. L., & Walsh, W. B. (2009). College student retention: An exploration of the relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and purpose in life among college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, *50*(1), 19-34.

Donaldson, P., McKinney, L., Lee, M., & Pino, D. (2016). First-year community college students' perceptions of and attitudes toward intrusive academic advising. *NACADA Journal*, *36*(1), 30–42.

Dougherty, K. J. (1994). *The contradictory college: The conflicting origins, impacts, and futures of the community college*. New York City: SUNY Press.

Dougherty, K. J., Lahr, H., & Morest, V. S. (2017). Reforming the American community college: Promising changes and their challenges. CCRC Working Paper No. 98. *Community College Research Center,* Teachers College, Columbia University.

Douzenis, C. (1994). The community college student experiences questionnaire: Introduction and application. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, *18*(3), 261–68.

Dowd, A. (2007). Community colleges as gateways and gatekeepers: Moving beyond the "access saga" toward outcome equity. *Harvard Educational Review*, *77*(4), 407–19.

Durkheim, E. (1951). *Suicide: A study in sociology [1897].* Translated by J.A. Spaulding and G. Simpson. Glencoe: The Free Press.

Dy, H. (2015). Agents of support: *Faculty, family and peer advocates who contribute to thriving in community college students.* (Unpublished Dissertation, ProQuest No.: 10624202). Azusa: Azusa Pacific University.

Eddy, P. L. (2012). Managing today's community colleges: A new era?. In J. Levin & S. Kater's *Understanding community colleges* (pp. 141–54). New York: Routledge.

Elsner, P. A., & James, W. C. (1983). Redirecting student services. In G. B. Vaughn et al., *Issues for community college leaders in a new era.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ender, K. L., Chand, S., & Thornton, J. S. (1996). Student affairs in the community college: Promoting student success and learning. *New Directions for Student Services*, *1996*(75), 45–53.

Englander, M. (2012). The interview: Data collection in descriptive phenomenological human scientific research. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, *43*(1), 13–35.

Engle, J., & Tinto, V. (2008). Moving beyond access: College for low income, first-generation students. Washington, D.C.: The Pell Institute. Retrieved May 1, 2018, from http://www.pellinstitute.org/files/COEMovingBeyondReportFinal.pdf.

Erikson, E. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York: Norton.

Evans, N. J., & Guido, F. M. (2012). Response to Patrick Love's "informal theory": A rejoinder. *Journal of College Student Development*, *53*(2), 192–200.

Fabio, G. R. (2016). *Experiences of Latino pre-health students in the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) in a community college setting*. (Unpublished Dissertation, ProQuest No.: 10194477). Los Angeles: University of California, Los Angeles.

Fike, D. S., & Fike, R. (2008). Predictors of first-year student retention in the community college. *Community College Review*, *36*(2), 68–88.

Fisher, D. R., Bagiati, A., & Sarma, S. (2017). Developing professional skills in undergraduate engineering students through co-curricular involvement. *Journal of Student Affairs Research & Practice*, *54*(3), 286–302.

Flowers, P. (2008). Temporal tales: The use of multiple interviews with the same participant. *Qualitative Methods in Psychology Newsletter, 5*, 24–27.

Floyd, D. L. (2018). Community College Student Affairs and Student Success.

Fong, C. J., Davis, C. W., Kim, Y., Kim, Y. W., Marriott, L., & Kim, S. (2017). Psychosocial factors and community college student success: A meta-analytic investigation. *Review of Educational Research*, *87*(2), 388–24.

Foote, S. M., Kranzow, J., & Hinkle, S. E. (2015). Focusing on the forgotten: An examination of the influences and innovative practices that affect community college transfer student success. In *Examining the Impact of Community Colleges on the Global Workforce* (pp. 94–124). Hershey: IGI Global.

Friedlander, J., & Macdougall, P. (1992). Achieving student success through student involvement. *Community College Review*, *20*(1), 20–28.

Froelich, K. S., & Puig, E. A. (2007). The Magic of Coaching: Art Meets Science. *Journal of Language & Literacy Education*, *3*(1), 18–31.

Froese, P. (2016). *On purpose: How we create the meaning of life*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gallagher, R. P. (2015). *National survey of college counseling centers 2014, (Project Report).* Pittsburgh: The International Association of Counseling Services (IACS).

Gardner, J. N. (2009). *Fostering student success in the campus community* (Vol. 138). San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.

Garing, M. T. (1993). Intrusive academic advising. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, *1993*(82), 97–104.

Gershenfeld, S., Ward Hood, D., & Zhan, M. (2016). The role of first-semester GPA in predicting graduation rates of underrepresented students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, & Practice*, *17*(4), 469–88.

Gill, S. J. (2016a). Future of community colleges: Tomorrow's academy. *Planning for Higher Education, 45*(1), 1–2.

Gill, M. J. (2016b). *A phenomenological study examining the perceived value of co-curricular education within the community college completion agenda.* (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, ProQuest No.: 10392775). Athens: Ohio University.

Gillett-Karam, R. (2016). Moving from student development to student success. *New Directions for Community Colleges, 2016*(174), 9–21.

Giorgi, A. (2009). *The descriptive phenomenological method in psychology: A modified Husserlian approach*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Glanzer, P. L., Hill, J. P., & Johnson, B. R. (2017). *The quest for purpose: The collegiate search for a meaningful life*. New York: SUNY Press.

Glanzer, P., & Ream, T. (2009). *Christianity and moral identity in higher education*. New York: Springer.

Golann, J. W. (2015). The paradox of success at a no-excuses school. *Sociology of Education*, *88*(2), 103–19.

Goldrick-Rab, S. (2010). Challenges and opportunities for improving community college student success. *Review of Educational Research*, *80*(3), 437–69.

Gleazer Jr, E. J. (1968). *This is the community college.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Grant, A. M. (2011). Is it time to REGROW the GROW model? Issues related to teaching coaching session structures. *The Coaching Psychologist*, *7*(2), 118–26.

Gregory, M. (2000). Care as a goal of democratic education. *Journal of Moral Education*, *29*(4), 445–61.

Groenewald, T. (2004). A phenomenological research design illustrated. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *3*(1), 42–55.

Guba, E. G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Communication & Technology Journal*, *29*(2), 75–91.

Gulley, N. Y., & Mullendore, R. H. (2014). Student affairs and academic affairs collaborations in the community college setting. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, *38*(7), 661–73.

Guthrie, J. W. (Ed.). (2002). *Encyclopedia of education (Vol. 1).* San Diego: Macmillan Reference Library.

Guzman, S. G. (2014). *Community college students' perceptions of educational counseling, its value, and its relationship with students' academic and social integration into the community college.* (Unpublished Dissertation, ProQuest No.: 3581493). Fullerton: California State Fullerton.

Habley, W. R., Bloom, J. L., & Robbins, S. (2012). *Increasing persistence: Research-based strategies for college student success*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.

Hagedorn, L. S. (2005). How to define retention. *College Student Retention: Formula for Student Success*, 90–105.

Hagedorn, L. S., & Li, R. (2017). English instruction at community colleges: The language bridge to the USA. In *Internationalization in Vocational Education & Training* (pp. 229–41). New York City: Springer.

Hagedorn, L. S., Chi, W., Cepeda, R. M., & McLain, M. (2007). An investigation of critical mass: The role of Latino representation in the success of urban community college students. *Research in Higher Education, 48*(1), 73–91.

Hanson, C. (2017). *The community college and the good society: How the liberal arts were undermined and what we can do to bring them back*. New York City: Routledge Publishers.

Harbour, C. P. (2015). *John Dewey and the future of community college education*. New York City: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Harrell, K., & Holcroft, C. (2012, December). Peer commentary on "Searching for an authentic definition of student success. Sacramento: Academic Senate for California Community Colleges. Retrieved November 18, 2017, from http://www.asccc.org/content/ searching-authentic-definition-student-success.

Harris, B. W. (1998). Looking inward: Building a culture for student success. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, *22*(4), 401–18.

Hasbrouck, J., & Denton, C. A. (2007). Student-focused coaching: A model for reading coaches. *The Reading Teacher*, *60*(7), 690–93.

Hatch, D. K. (2012). Unpacking the black box of student engagement: The need for programmatic investigation of high impact practices. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, *36*(11), 903–15.

Hatch, D. K. (2016). A brief history and a framework for understanding commonalities and differences of community college student success programs. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, *2016*(175), 19–31.

Hatch, D. K. (2017). The structure of student engagement in community college student success programs: A quantitative activity systems analysis. *AERA Open*, *3*(4), 1–14.

Hatch, D. K., & Bohlig, E. M. (2016). An empirical typology of the latent programmatic structure of community college student success programs. *Research in Higher Education*, *57*(1), 72–98.

Hatch, D. K., & Garcia, C. E. (2017). Academic advising and the persistence intentions of community college students in their first weeks in college. *The Review of Higher Education*, *40*(3), 353–90.

Hatch, D. K., Mardock-Uman, N., & Nelson, M. J. (2017). Content validation of the community college student success program inventory. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, *2017*(62), 1–6.

Healy, M. A., Lancaster, J. M., Liddell, D. L., & Stewart, D. L. (2012). The role of the campus professional as a moral mentor. *New Directions for Student Services*, *2012*(139), 83-92.

Helfgot, S. R, & Culp, M. G. (Eds.). (1995). Promoting student success in the community college. *New Directions for Student Services, (no. 69).* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Hesse-Biber, S. N. & Leavy, P. L. (2011). *The practice of qualitative research*. London: Sage Publications.

Hill, P. L., Burrow, A. L., & Bronk, K. C. (2016). Persevering with positivity and purpose: An examination of purpose commitment and positive affect as predictors of grit. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *17*(1), 257-269.

Hill, P. L., Burrow, A. L., Brandenberger, J. W., Lapsley, D. K., & Quaranto, J. C. (2010). Collegiate purpose orientations and well-being in early and middle adulthood. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, *31*(2), 173-79.

Hirschy, A. S., Bremer, C. D., & Castellano, M. (2011). Career and technical education (CTE) student success in community colleges: A conceptual model. *Community College Review*, *39*(3), 296–318.

Hoachlander, G., Sikora, A. C., Horn, L., & Carroll, C. D. (2003). Community college students. *Education Statistics Quarterly*, *5*(2), 121–28.

Hochhater, G. (2017). *Spiritual leadership: A phenomenological study of community college presidents in the southwest.* (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, ProQuest No.: 10633404). Las Cruces: University of New Mexico.

Holzer, H. J., & Baum, S. (2017). *Making college work: Pathways to success for disadvantaged students*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*(9), 1277–88.

Hsieh, P., Sullivan, J. R., & Guerra, N. S. (2007). A closer look at college students: Self-efficacy and goal orientation. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, *18*(3), 454-476.

Hughes, M. (2006). Affect, meaning and quality of life. *Social Forces*, *85*(2), 611-629.

Huitt, W. (2001). Motivation to learn: An overview. *Educational psychology interactive*, *12*.

Humphreys, J. A. (1937). Personnel service in the junior college. *Junior College Journal, 8*(1),16–30.

Husserl, E. (1973). *Cartesian meditations*. Translated by D. Cairns, trans. Netherlands: The Hague Publishers.

Hycner, R. H. (1999). Some guidelines for the phenomenological analysis of interview data. In A. Bryman & R. G. Burgess (Eds.), *Qualitative research* (Vol. 3, pp. 143–64). London: Sage Publications.

Jenkins, D. (2007). Institutional effectiveness and student success: A study of high-and low-impact community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, *31*(12), 945–62.

331

Jenkins, D. (2011). *Redesigning community colleges for completion: Lessons from research on high-performance organizations. CCRC Working Paper No. 24.* Assessment of Evidence Series. Community College Research Center, Columbia University.

Jenkins, D., & Cho, S. W. (2013). Get with the program… and finish it: Building guided pathways to accelerate student completion. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, *2013*(164), 27–35.

Jenkins, D., & Fink, J. (2016). *Tracking transfer: New measures of institutional and state effectiveness in helping community college students attain bachelor's degrees*. Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Jepsen, C., Troske, K., & Coomes, P. (2014). The labor-market returns to community college degrees, diplomas, and certificates. *Journal of Labor Economics*, *32*(1), 95–121.

Jinkins, R. C. (2009). Nontraditional students: Who are they?. *College Student Journal, 43,* 979–87.

Juszkiewicz, J. (2014). *Recent national community college enrollment and award completion data.* Washington, D.C.: American Association of Community Colleges.

Juszkiewicz, J. (2015). *Trends in community college enrollment and completion data.* Washington, D.C.: American Association of Community Colleges.

Kaikkonen, D. A., & Quarles, C. L. (2018). The effect on earnings of the applied baccalaureate degree. *Community College Review*, *46*(4), 347-367.

Karp, M. M. (2011). *Toward a new understanding of non-academic student support: Four mechanisms encouraging positive student outcomes in the community college.* (CCRC Working Paper No. 28). Assessment of Evidence Series. New York City: Community College Research Center.

Karp, M. M. (2016). A holistic conception of nonacademic support: How four mechanisms combine to encourage positive student outcomes in the community college. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, *2016*(175), 33–44.

Karp, M. M., & Bork, R. H. (2012). *"They never told me what to expect, so I didn't know what to do": Defining and clarifying the role of a community college student*. (CCRC Working Paper No. 47). New York City: Community College Research Center.

Karp, M. M., Hughes, K. L., & O'Gara, L. (2010). An exploration of Tinto's integration framework for community college students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *12*(1), 69–86.

Karp, M. M., O'Gara, L., & Hughes, K. L. (2008). *Do support services at community colleges encourage success or reproduce disadvantage?: An exploratory study of students in two community colleges.* (CCRC Working Paper No. 10). New York City: Community College Research Center.

Katz, D. S., & Davison, K. (2014). Community college student mental health: A comparative analysis. *Community College Review*, *42*(4), 307–26.

Kaufman, B. (2006). The role of executive coaching in performance management. *Handbook of business strategy*, *7*(1), 287-291.

Kegan, R. (2009). What "form" transforms? A constructive-developmental approach to transformative learning. In *Contemporary theories of learning* (pp. 43-60). Routledge.

Keen, J. P. (2014). Considering student coaching. *Journal of College & Character*, *15*(2), 67–74.

Kelle, U. (1995). Introduction: An overview of computer-aided methods in qualitative research. In U. Kelle (Ed.). *Computer-aided qualitative data analysis: Theory, methods, and practices*. London: Sage Publications.

Kesebir, S., Graham, J., & Oishi, S. (2010). A theory of human needs should be human-centered, not animal-centered: Commentary on Kenrick et al.(2010). *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *5*(3), 315-319.

Keyes, C. L. M., & Haidt, J. (Eds.). (2003). *Flourishing: Positive psychology and the life Well-lived*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Kilburg, R. R. (1996). Toward a conceptual understanding and definition of executive coaching. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice & Research*, *48*(2), 134–44.

Kim, Y. K., & Sax, L. J. (2009). Student–faculty interaction in research universities: Differences by student gender, race, social class, and first-generation status. *Research in Higher Education*, *50*(5), 437–59.

Kinzie, J. (2012). Introduction: A new view of student success. In L. A. Schreiner, M. C. Louis, & D. D. Nelson (Eds.) *Thriving in transitions: A research-based approach to college student success* (pp. xi–xxx). Columbia: National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience.

Knight, A. (2014). Excellence in community college student affairs. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, *2014*(166), 5–12.

Komarraju, M., Musulkin, S., & Bhattacharya, G. (2010). Role of student–faculty interactions in developing college students' academic self-concept, motivation, and achievement. *Journal of College Student Development, 51*(3), 332–42.

Kuh, G. D. (2007). What student engagement data tell us about college readiness. *Peer Review*, *9*(1), 4–8.

Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J. H., & Whitt, E. J. (2005). *Assessing conditions to enhance educational effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J. L., Buckley, J. A., Bridges, B. K., & Hayek, J. C. (2006). *What matters to student success: A review of the literature (Vol. 8).* Washington, D.C.: National Postsecondary Education Cooperative.

Lanaan, F. S. (2000). Two-year college students' degree aspirations. Paper presented at the Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research (40th, Cincinnati, OH, May 21–24, 2000).

Larson, J., Johnson, A., Aiken-Wisniewski, S. A., & Barkemeyer, J. (2018). What is academic advising?: An application of analytic induction. *NACADA Journal*, *38*(2), 81-93.

Lax, J. (2012). CUNY community college graduation rates do not effectively measure student success. *Thought & Action*, *28*, 119–25.

Leigh, D. E., & Gill, A. M. (2004). The effect of community colleges on changing students' educational aspirations. *Economics of Education Review*, *23*(1), 95–102.

Lenning, O. (1980). *Retention and attrition: Evidence for action and research*. Boulder: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

Levin, J. S., & Kater, S. T. (Eds.). (2012). *Understanding community colleges*. New York City: Routledge Publishers.

Levin, J. S. (2015). *Nontraditional students and community colleges: The conflicts of justice and neoliberalism.* New York City: Palgrave Macmillan.

Levin, J. S., López-Damián, A. I., Martin, M. C., & Hoggatt, M. J. (2017). The U.S. community college after globalization. In *Internationalization in Vocational Education & Training* (pp. 19–40). Cham: Springer.

Levinson, D., Darrow, C., Klein, E., Levinson, M., & McKee, B. (1978). *The seasons of a man's life.* New York: Knopf, Publishers.

Lichtmann, M. R. (2010). Community college as liminal space. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, *2010*(151), 17–28.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry* (Vol. 75). London: Sage Publications.

Lounsbury, J. L. (1946). Committee on student personnel problems. *Junior College Journal, 16*(9), 30–31.

Love, P. (2012). Informal theory: The ignored link in theory-to-practice. *Journal of College Student Development*, *53*(2), 177–91.

Lumina Foundation. (2017). *Our Goal*. Retrieved on November 11, 2017. Retrieved from: https://www.luminafoundation.org/lumina-goal.

Lundberg, C. A. (2014). Peers and faculty as predictors of learning for community college students. *Community College Review*, *42*(2), 79–98.

Lyons, C. A., & Pinnell, G. S. (2001). *Systems for change in literacy education: A guide to professional development.* Portsmouth: Heinemann

Marks, L. I. (2015). Life coaching for students. In J. C. Wade, L. I. Marks, & R. D. Hetzel. (Eds.) *Positive psychology on the college campus* (pp. 319–42). New York City: Oxford University Press.

Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist, 41*(9), 954-69.

Martin, G. L., & Seifert, T. A. (2011). The relationship between students' interactions with student affairs professionals and cognitive outcomes in the first year of college. *Journal of Student Affairs Research & Practice*, *48*(4), 389–410.

Martin, K., Galentino, R., & Townsend, L. (2014). Community college student success: The role of motivation and self-empowerment. *Community College Review*, *42*(3), 221–41.

Martin, J. D., & Martin, E. M. (1977). The relationship of the Purpose in Life (PIL) Test to the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI), the Otis-Lennon Mental Ability Test scores and grade point averages of high school students. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 37,* 1103-1105.

Masten, A. S., & Reed, M. G. J. (2002). Resilience in development. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 74–88). New York: Oxford University Press.

Matson, J. E., & Deegan, W. L. (1985). Revitalizing student services. In W. L. Deegan, et al., *Renewing the American community college: Priorities & strategies for effective leadership.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

McAlmon, V. (1931). Vocational guidance for commercial work. *Junior College Journal, 2*(2), 74–77.

McCarthy, C. (2017). Demonstrate value of student affairs via co-curricular development model. *Student Affairs Today*, *20*(6), 1–5.

McClenney, K. (2013). Community colleges: Choosing change. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, *45*(4), 26–35.

McClenney, K. M., & Marti, C. N. (2006). *Exploring relationships between student engagement and student outcomes in community colleges: Report on validation research*. Austin: Community College Survey of Student Engagement. Accessed on April 14, 2018: Retrieved from: http://www.ccsse.org/aboutsurvey/docs/ CCSSE%20Working%20Paper%20on%20Validation%20Research%20December %202006.pdf

McFarland, J., Hussar, B., de Brey, C., & Snyder, T. (2017). *Table 303.70: Total undergraduate fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by attendance status, sex of student, and control and level of institution: Selected years, 1970 through 2026. Condition of education.* Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Education. Retrieved on November 11, 2017. Retrieved from: https://nces.ed.gov/ pubs2017/2017144.pdf.

McFarland, J., Hussar, B., de Brey, C., & Snyder, T. (2017). *Table 314.30: Total and full-time-equivalent (FTE) staff and FTE student/FTE staff ratios in postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV programs, by degree-granting status, control of institution, and primary occupation: Fall 1995, fall 2005, and fall 2015. Condition of education.* Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Education. Retrieved on November 11, 2017. Retrieved from: https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017144.pdf.

McGill, J., Huang, L., Davis, E., Humphrey, D., Pak, J., Thacker, A., & Tom, J. (2018). Addressing the neglect of students of color: The strategy of life coaching. *Journal of Sociology and Christianity, 8*(1).

McGuire, K. (2018). The Impact of Goal Persistence and Willing to Compete on Community College Student Success in Developmental Math Coursework.

McGregor, K. E. (2018). *Exploring the Nature of Student Swirl in an Adult Learner Population* (Doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University).

McWilliams, A. E., & Beam, L. R. (2013). Advising, counseling, coaching, mentoring: Models of developmental relationships in higher education. *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*, 1–4. Retrieved on September 29, 2017. Retrieved from: https://dus.psu.edu/ mentor/2013/06/advising-counseling-coaching-mentoring/.

Meents-DeCaigny, E., & Sanders, L. (2015). Framing research and assessment of co-curricular learning. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, *2014*(164), 15–25.

Mellow, G. O., & Heelan, C. M. (2014). *Minding the dream: The process and practice of the American community college*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Merisotis, J. P., & Phipps, R. A. (2000). Remedial education in colleges and universities: What's really going on?. *The Review of Higher Education*, *24*(1), 67-85.

Merriam S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation (3rd ed.)*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Metzner, B. S., & Bean, J. P. (1987). The estimation of a conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition. *Research in Higher Education*, *27*(1), 15–38.

Milem, J. F., & Berger, J. B. (1997). A modified model of college student persistence: Exploring the relationship between Astin's theory of involvement and Tinto's theory of student departure. *Journal of College Student Development*, *38*(4), 387–400.

Miller, M. T., Pope, M. L., & Steinmann, T. D. (2005). A profile of contemporary community college student involvement, technology use, and reliance on selected college life skills. *College Student Journal*, *39*(3), 596–603.

Miller, W. R., & Rollnick, S. (2009). Ten things that motivational interviewing is not. *Behavioural & Cognitive Psychotherapy*, *37*(2), 129–140.

Mitchell, R. J., Richardson, E. A., Shortt, N. K., & Pearce, J. R. (2015). Neighborhood environments and socioeconomic inequalities in mental well-being. *American journal of preventive medicine*, *49*(1), 80-84.

Molnar, K. A., & Moore, M. K. (2017). Designing successful interventions to support transformative learning. *Journal of Transformative Learning.* Retrieved on September 16, 2017. Retrieved from: https://jotl.uco.edu/index.php/jotl/article/ view/90.

Monaghan, D. B., & Attewell, P. (2015). The community college route to the bachelor's degree. *Educational Evaluation & Policy Analysis*, *37*(1), 70–91.

Monroe, C. R. (1972). *Profile of the community college: A handbook*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Moore, C., & Shulock, N. (2010). *Divided we fail: Improving completion and closing racial gaps in California's community colleges.* Sacramento: Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy.

Morest, V. S. (2013). From access to opportunity: The evolving social roles of community colleges. *The American Sociologist*, *44*(4), 319–28.

Moschetti, R. V., & Hudley, C. (2015). Social capital and academic motivation among first-generation community college students. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, *39*(3), 235–51.

Moulton, K. D., Brown, S. D., & Lent, R. W. (1991). Relation of self-efficacy beliefs to academic outcomes: A meta-analytic investigation. *Journal of Counseling Psychology,   38*(1), 30-38.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. London: Sage Publications.

Mullin, C. M. (2010). *Rebalancing the mission: The community college completion challenge. AACC Policy Brief 2010-02PBL.* Washington, D.C.: American Association of Community Colleges.

Mullin, C. M. (2011). *The road ahead: A look at trends in the educational attainment of community college students. AACC Policy Brief 2011-04PBL.* Washington, D.C.: American Association of Community Colleges.

Mullin, C. M. (2012). *Why access matters: The community college student body, policy brief.* Washington, D.C.: American Association of Community Colleges.

Nakajima, M. A., Dembo, M. H., & Mossler, R. (2012). Student persistence in community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, *36*(8), 591–613.

NCES (2018). 2011-12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:12) [American Association of Community Colleges analysis].

Neuhauser, C., & Weber, K. (2011). The student success coach. *New Directions for Higher Education*, *2011*(153), 43–52.

O'Banion, T. (1989). Student development philosophy: A perspective on the past and future. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, *1989*(67), 5–17.

O'Banion, T. (1994). An academic advising model. *NACADA Journal*, *14*(2), 10–16.

O'Banion, T. (1997). *A learning college for the 21ˢᵗ century.* Phoenix: The Oryx Press.

O'Banion, T. (2011). Pathways to completion. *Community College Journal*, *82*(1), 28–29.

O'Banion, T., Thurston, A. & Gulden, J. (1972). Junior college student personnel work: An emerging model. In T. O'Banion and A. Thurston (Eds.), *Student Development Programs in the Community Junior College*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

O'Gara, L., Karp, M. M., & Hughes, K. L. (2009). Student success courses in the community college: An exploratory study of student perspectives. *Community College Review*, *36*(3), 195–218.

Obama, B. (2009, July 14). Remarks by the president on the American Graduation Initiative. Washington, D.C.: The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. Retrieved on January 2, 2018, from http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_off ice/Remarks-by-the-President-on-theAmerican-Graduation-Initiative-inWarren-MI/.

Oreopoulos, P., & Petronijevic, U. (2018). Student coaching: How far can technology go?. *Journal of Human Resources*, *53*(2), 299-329.

Ortiz, A. M. (1995). Enhancing student development in community colleges. *Community College Review*, *22*(4), 63–70.

Ozaki, C. C. (2016). College impact theories past and present. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, *2016*(174), 23–33.

Ozaki, C. C., & Hornak, A. M. (2014). Excellence within student affairs: Understanding the practice of integrating academic and student affairs. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, *2014*(166), 79–84.

Pace, C. R. (1980). *Measuring the quality of student effort*. Los Angeles: Laboratory for Research in Higher Education.

Pace, C. R. (1984). *Measuring the quality of college student experiences: An account of the development and use of the college student experiences questionnaire.* Chicago: Spencer Foundation.

Pace, C. R., Friedlander, J., & Lehman, P. W. (1999). *Community college student experiences questionnaire*. Memphis: University of Memphis Center for the Study of Higher Education.

Parker, C. A. (1977). On modeling reality. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 18*(5), 419–25.

Pascarella, E. T. (1980). Student-faculty informal contact and college outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, *50*(4), 545–95.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1991). *How college affects students* (Vol. 1991). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.

Pascarella, E. T., Smart, J. C., & Ethington, C. A. (1986). Long-term persistence of two-year college students. *Research in Higher Education*, *24*(1), 47–71.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two decades of developments in qualitative inquiry: A personal, experiential perspective. *Qualitative Social Work*, *1*(3), 261–83.

Perna, L. W. (2010). *Understanding the working college student: New research and its implications for policy and practice*. Sterling: Stylus.

Perna, L. W., & Thomas, S. L. (2008). Theoretical perspectives on student success: Understanding the contributions of the disciplines. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, *34*(1), 1–87.

Perna, L. W., & Titus, M. A. (2005). The relationship between parental involvement as social capital and college enrollment: An examination of racial/ethnic group differences. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *76*(5), 485–18.

Phillips, W. M. (1980). Purpose in life, depression, and locus of control. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 33,* 688-693.

Pietkiewicz, I., & Smith, J. A. (2012). A practical guide to using interpretative phenomenological analysis in qualitative research psychology. *The Journal of Psychology,* 18(2), 361–69.

Pike, G. R., & Kuh, G. D. (2005). First-and second-generation college students: A comparison of their engagement and intellectual development. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *76*(3), 276–300.

Pizzolato, J. E., Olson, A. B., & Monje-Paulson, L. N. (2017). Finding motivation to learn: Exploring achievement goals in California community college CalWORKs students. *Journal of Adult Development*, *24*(4), 295–307.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (2005). Language and meaning: Data collection in qualitative research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *52*(2), 137–45.

Price, D. V., & Tovar, E. (2014). Student engagement and institutional graduation rates: Identifying high-impact educational practices for community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, *38*(9), 766–82.

Pruett, P. S., & Absher, B. (2015). Factors influencing retention of developmental education students in community colleges. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, *81*(4), 32–40.

Radford, A. W., Berkner, L., Wheeless, S. C., & Shepherd, B. (2010). *Persistence and attainment of 2003-04 beginning postsecondary students: After six years, a first look. NCES 2011-151*. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics.

Ralston, N. C., & Hoffshire, M. (2017). An individualized approach to student transition: Developing a success coaching model. In *Accelerated Opportunity Education Models and Practices* (pp. 34-50). Hershey: IGI Global.

Rayle, A. D., & Myers, J. E. (2004). Counseling adolescents toward wellness: The roles of ethnic identity, acculturation, and mattering. *Professional School Counseling*, 81-90.

Reason, R. D., & Kimball, E. W. (2012). A new theory-to-practice model for student affairs: Integrating scholarship, context, and reflection. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, *49*(4), 359–76.

Reetz, D. R., Krylowicz, B., & Mistler, B. (2014). *The association for university college counseling center directors annual survey.* Retrieved on October 29, 2017. Retrieved from http://www.aucccd.org/assets/documents/ 2014%20aucccd%20monograph%20- %20public%20pdf.pdf.

Reid K., Flowers P., & Larkin M. (2005) Exploring lived experience. *The Psychologist, 18*(1), 20–23.

Rendón, L. I. (1994). Validating culturally diverse students: Toward a new model of learning and student development. *Innovative Higher Education*, *19*(1), 33–51.

Rendón, L. I. (2006). *Reconceptualizing success for underserved students in higher education.* Washington, D.C.: Meeting of the 2006 National Symposium on Postsecondary Student Success.

Rendón, L. I., García, M., & Person, D. (2004). A call for transformation. In L.I. Rendón, M. García, & D. Person (Eds*.), Transforming the first-year experience for students of color* (Monograph No. 38) (pp. 3–22). Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.

Rendón, L. I.., & Muñoz, S. M. (2011). Revisiting validation theory: Theoretical foundations, applications, and extensions. *Enrollment Management Journal*, *2*(1), 12–33.

Rhoads, R. A., & Valadez, J. R. (2016). *Democracy, multiculturalism, and the community college: A critical perspective* (Vol. 1081). New York City: Routledge Publishers.

Roark, I. (2013). *The impact of mandatory student success courses on community college student persistence.* (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation: ProQuest No.: 3607615). San Antonio: University of Texas at San Antonio.

Robinson, C. E. (2015). *Academic/Success coaching: A description of an emerging field in higher education* (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, ProQuest No.: 3704390). Columbia: University of South Carolina.

Robinson, J. A. (2014). *The role of mentorship in shaping college students' sense-making processes: a qualitative analysis of co-curricular experiences* (Doctoral dissertation).

Robinson, J. A., & Glanzer, P. L. (2016). How students' expectations shape their quest for purpose during college. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, *53*(1), 1-12.

Robinson, C., & Gahagan, J. (2010). In practice: Coaching students to academic success and engagement on campus. *About Campus*, *15*(4), 26–29.

Rollnick, S., & Miller, W. R. (1995). What is motivational interviewing?. *Behavioural & Cognitive Psychotherapy*, *23*(4), 325–34.

Romdenh-Romluc, K. (2011). Time for consciousness: Intention and introspection. *Phenomenology & The Cognitive Sciences, 10*(3), 369–76.

Romero, E. (2016). Thriving in community college students of low socioeconomic status. (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, ProQuest No.: 10148500). Azusa: Azusa Pacific University.

Roth, A., Ogrin, S., & Schmitz, B. (2016). Assessing self-regulated learning in higher education: A systematic literature review of self-report instruments. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation, & Accountability*, *28*(3), 225–50.

Rutschow, Z. E., Richburg-Hayes, L., Brock, T., Orr, G. E., Cerna, O., & Cullinan, D. (2011). *Turning the tide: Five years of Achieving the Dream in community colleges.* New York City: Community College Research Center.

Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. Journal of personality and social psychology, 57(6), 1069.

Ryff, C. D., & Keyes, C. L. M. (1995). The structure of psychological well-being revisited. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *69*(4), 719.

342

Saenz, V. B., Hatch, D., Bukoski, B. E., Kim, S., Lee, K. H., & Valdez, P. (2011). Community college student engagement patterns: A typology revealed through exploratory cluster analysis. *Community College Review*, *39*(3), 235–67.

Saldaña, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. London: Sage Publications.

Saldaña, J. (2015). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. London: Sage Publications.

Sanchez, J. R., & Laanan, F. S. (1997). The economic returns of a community college education. *Community College Review, 25*(3), 73–87.

Sanders, P. (1982). Phenomenology: A new way of viewing organizational research. *Academy of Management Review*, *7*(3), 353–60.

Sandoval-Lucero, E., Antony, K., & Hepworth, W. (2017). Co-curricular learning and assessment in new student orientation at a community college. *Creative Education, 8*(10), 1638–55.

Sappington, A. A., & Kelly, P. J. (1995). Purpose in life and self-perceived anger problems among college students. *The International Forum For Logotherapy, 18,* 74-82.

Scheier, M. F., Wrosch, C., Baum, A., Cohen, S., Martire, L. M., Matthews, K. A., & Zdaniuk, B. (2006). The life engagement test: Assessing purpose in life. *Journal of behavioral medicine*, *29*(3), 291.

Schreiner, L. A., Noel, P., & Cantwell, L. (2011). The impact of faculty and staff on high-risk college student persistence. *Journal of College Student Development, 52*(3), 321–38.

Schreiner, L. A., Louis, M. C., & D. D. Nelson (Eds.). *Thriving in transitions: A research-based approach to college student success*. Columbia: National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience.

Schreiner, L. A. (2015). Positive psychology and higher education. In *Positive psychology on the college campus*, (pp. 1–26). New York City: Oxford University Publishing.

Scott-Clayton, J. (2011). *The shapeless river: Does a lack of structure inhibit students' progress at community colleges?*. (CCRC Working Paper No. 25). Assessment of Evidence Series. New York City: Community College Research Center.

Schlossberg, N. K. (1995). *Counseling adults in transition: Linking practice with theory*. New York City: Springer Publishing Company.

Schmitt, R. (1968). Husserl's transcendental- phenomenological reduction. In J. Kockelmans (Ed.), *Phenomenology* Garden City: Doubleday Publishers.

Schreiner, L. A., & "Chip" Anderson, E. (2005). Strengths-based advising: A new lens for higher education. *NACADA Journal*, *25*(2), 20–29.

Schreiner, L. A., Noel, P., & Cantwell, L. (2011). The impact of faculty and staff on high-risk college student persistence. *Journal of College Student Development*, *52*(3), 321–38.

Schreiner, L. A., Louis, M. C., & Nelson, D. D. (Eds.). (2012). *Thriving in transitions: A research-based approach to college student success.* Columbia: National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience.

Schuetz, P., & Schuetz, P. (2005). UCLA community college review: Campus environment: A missing link in studies of community college attrition. *Community College Review*, *32*(4), 60–80.

Scrivener, S., & Weiss, M. J. (2009). *More guidance, better results.* New York City: MDRC.

Seidman, A. (Ed.). (2005). *College student retention: Formula for student success.* Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences (3rd ed.).* New York City: Teachers College Press.

Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences (4th ed.).* New York City: Teachers College Press.

Seligman, M. P. (1990). *Learned optimism: How to change your mind and your life*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Sepulveda, A. (2016). Exploring the roles and responsibilities of academic coaches in higher education. *Journal of Student Affairs*, *2016-2017*(26), 69–79.

Shapiro, D., Dundar, A., Wakhungu, P. K., Yuan, X., Nathan, A., & Hwang, Y. (2016). *Completing college: A national view of student attainment rates—Fall 2010 cohort (Signature Report No. 12).* Washington, D.C.: National Student Clearinghouse.

Shapiro, S. L., Brown, K. W., & Astin, J. (2011). Toward the integration of meditation into higher education: A review of research evidence. *Teachers College Record*, *113*(3), 493-528.

Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method, and research*. London: Sage Publications.

Smith, J.A., Jarman, M. & Osborn, M. (1999). Doing interpretative phenomenological analysis. In M. Murray & K. Chamberlain (Eds.), *Qualitative health psychology: Theories and methods* (p.218–41). London: Sage Publications.

Sokolowski, R. (2000). *Introduction to phenomenology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Spaulding, D. T., & Smith, G. M. (2012). *Instructional coaches and the instructional leadership team: A guide for school-building improvement*. London: Sage Publications.

Sriram, R. (2017). *Student affairs by the numbers: Quantitative research and statistics for professionals*. Sterling: Stylus.

Stanton-Salazar, R. D. (2011). A social capital framework for the study of institutional agents and their role in the empowerment of low-status students and youth. *Youth & Society*, *43*(3), 1066–1109.

Steger, M. F., Shim, Y., Rush, B. R., Brueske, L. A., Shin, J. Y., & Merriman, L. A. (2013). The mind's eye: A photographic method for understanding meaning in people's lives. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, *8*(6), 530–42.

Stober, D. R., Wildflower, L., & Drake, D. (2006). Evidence-based practice: A potential approach for effective coaching. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, *4*(1), 1-8.

Strange, M. C. (2015). *Chancellor's College success coach initiative: A formative program evaluation of the Virginia Community College system's initiative from the success coaches' perspectives*. (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, ProQuest No.: 3662984). Williamsburg: William & Mary University.

Strange, C. C., & Banning, J. H. (2001). *Educating by design: Creating campus learning environments that work*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Strayhorn, T. L. (2015). *Student development theory in higher education: A social psychological approach*. New York City: Routledge Publishers.

Sutter, N., & Paulson, S. (2017). Predicting college students' intention to graduate: A test of the theory of planned behavior. *College Student Journal*, *50*(3), 409–21.

Taylor, E. W. (2017). Transformative learning theory. In A. Laros, T. Fuhr, and E. W. Taylor, *Transformative Learning Meets Bildung* (pp. 17–29). SensePublishers: Rotterdam.

Terriquez, V. (2015). Dreams delayed: Barriers to degree completion among undocumented community college students. *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies*, *41*(8), 1302–23.

Tierney, W. G. (2000). Power, identity, and the dilemma of college student departure. In J. M. Braxton (Ed.), *Reworking the student departure puzzle* (pp. 213–34). Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (1988). Stages of student departure: Reflections on the longitudinal character of student leaving. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *59*(4), 438–55.

Tinto, V. (1993). Building community. *Liberal Education*, *79*(4), 16–21.

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, *45*(1), 89–125.

Tinto, V. (2000). Linking learning and leaving. In J. M. Braxton (Ed.), *Reworking the student departure puzzle* (pp. 81–94). Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

Tinto, V. (2012). *Completing college: Rethinking institutional action*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (2017). Through the eyes of students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, & Practice*, *19*(3), 254–69.

Tinto, V., & Pusser, B. (2006). Moving from theory to action: Building a model of institutional action for student success. In *Commissioned report for the national symposium on postsecondary success: Spearheading a dialogue on student succes*s. Washington D.C.: The National Postsecondary Education Cooperative.

Tinto, V., & Russo, P. (1994). Coordinated studies programs: Their effect on student involvement at a community college. *Community College Review*, *22*(2), 16–25.

Tippets, J., & Kirby, E. (2017). Shifting the campus culture: Moving from transactional academic advising to transformational holistic student success coaching. *Conference Proceeding, Annual National Symposium on Student Retention.* The University of Oklahoma: The Center for Institutional Data Exchange and Analysis. pp. 379–87.

Torres, V., Jones, S. R., & Renn, K. A. (2009). Identity development theories in student affairs: Origins, current status, and new approaches. *Journal of College Student Development*, *50*(6), 577-596.

346

Tovar, E. (2015). The role of faculty, counselors, and support programs on Latino/a community college students' success and intent to persist. *Community College Review*, *43*(1), 46–71.

Townsend, B. K., & Wilson, K. (2006). "A hand hold for a little bit": Factors facilitating the success of community college transfer students to a large research university. *Journal of College Student Development*, *47*(4), 439–56.

Tudor, T. R. (2018). Fully integrating academic advising with career coaching to increase student retention, graduation rates and future job satisfaction: An industry approach. *Industry and Higher Education*, *32*(2), 73-79.

Tull, A., Kuk, L., & Daples, P. (Eds.). (2015). *Handbook for student affairs in community colleges*. Sterling: Stylus Publishing.

Van Gennep, A. (2013). *The rites of passage*. New York City: Routledge Publishers.

Van Manen, M. (1990). Beyond assumptions: Shifting the limits of action research. *Theory into Practice*, *29*(3), 152–57.

Van Manen, M. (2001). Professional practice and "doing phenomenology". In *Handbook of phenomenology and medicine* (pp. 457–74). Dordrecht: Springer Publishers.

Van Manen, M. (2014). *Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing (Developing qualitative inquiry)*. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, Inc.

Van Nieuwerburgh, C. (2018). *Coaching in education: Getting better results for students, educators, and parents*. New York City: Routledge Publishers.

Valora, J. (2017). *The Relationship between Non-Cognitive Coaching Interventions and College Student Persistence at a Rural Community College* (Doctoral dissertation, Northcentral University).

Varney, J. (2007). Intrusive advising. *Academic Advising Today*, *30*(3), 11–14.

Venezia, A., Bracco, K. R., & Nodine, T. (2010). *One-shot deal?: Students' perceptions of assessment and course placement in California's community colleges*. San Francisco: WestEd.

Waiwaiole, E. N., Bohlig, E. M., & Massey, K. J. (2016). Student success: Identifying high-impact practices. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, *2016*(175), 45–55.

Walters, L. H., & Klein, A. E. (1980). A cross-validated investigation of the Crumbaugh Purpose-in-Life Test. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 40*, 1065-1071.

Webb, A. L., Dantzler, J. A., & Hardy, D. E. (2015). The influence theory: Factors that influence the transfer advising process. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, *39*(7), 619–32.

Weis, L. (2018). *Between two worlds: Black students in an urban community college* (Vol. 4). New York City: Routledge Publishers.

Welman, J. C., & Kruger, S. J. (1999). *Research methodology for the business and administrative sciences*. Johannesburg: International Thompson Publishers.

Williams, T. E. (2002). Challenges in supporting student learning and success through student services. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, *2002*(117), 67–76.

Wimpenny, P., & Gass, J. (2000). Interviewing in phenomenology and grounded theory: is there a difference?. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *31*(6), 1485–92.

Windham, M. H., Rehfuss, M. C., Williams, C. R., Pugh, J. V., & Tincher-Ladner, L. (2014). Retention of first-year community college students. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, *38*(5), 466–77.

Winne, P. H. (2017). Cognition and metacognition within self-regulated learning. In *Handbook of self-regulation of learning and performance* (pp. 52–64). New York City: Routledge Publishers.

Winkler, C., & Sriram, R. (2015). Development of a scale to measure academic capital in high-risk college students. *The Review of Higher Education*, *38*(4), 565-587.

Wisker, G., Exley, K., Antoniou, M., & Ridley, P. (2008). *Working one-on-one with students: Supervising, coaching, mentoring, and personal tutoring*. New York City: Routledge Publishers.

Wolf-Wendel, L., Ward, K., & Kinzie, J. (2009). A tangled web of terms: The overlap and unique contribution of involvement, engagement, and integration to understanding college student success. *Journal of College Student Development*, *50*(4), 407–28.

Wood, J. L., Hilton, A. A., & Johnson, R. M. (2014). Chapter one: The effect of self-efficacy on academic and social integration: An investigation of students of color in the community college. *College Student Self-Efficacy Research Studies*, 3.

Wood, J. L., & Ireland, S. M. Y. (2014). Supporting black male community college success: Determinants of faculty–student engagement. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, *38*(2–3), 154–65.

Wood, J. L., & Palmer, R. T. (2014). Academic achievement and the community college. *College Student Affairs Journal*, *32*(1), 141–53.

Wyner, J. (2014). *What excellent community colleges do*. Cambridge: Harvard Education Publishers.

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race ethnicity and education, 8*(1), 69-91.

Xu, D., & Ran, X. (2015). *Noncredit education in community college: Students, course enrollments, and academic outcomes.* CCRC Working Paper No. 84. Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Zell, M. C. (2009). Achieving a college education: The psychological experiences of Latina/o community college students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 9*(2), 167–86.

Zimmerman, B. J. (1990). Self-regulated learning and academic achievement: An overview. *Educational Psychologist*, *25*(1), 3–17.

Zimmerman, B. J. (2002). Becoming a self-regulated learner: An overview. *Theory into Practice*, *41*(2), 64–70.

Zimmerman, B. J., & Martinez-Pons, M. (1990). Student differences in self-regulated learning: Relating grade, sex, and giftedness to self-efficacy and strategy use. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *82*(1), 51–59.

Zimmerman, B. J., Schunk, D. H., & DiBenedetto, M. K. (2015). A personal agency view of self-regulated learning: The role of goal setting. In F. Guay, H. Marsh, D. M. McInerney, & R. G. Craven (Eds.), *International advances in self research, self-concept, motivation and identity: Underpinning success with research and practice* (pp. 83-114). Charlotte: IAP Information Age Publishing.