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Are You Ready? College Readiness Experience Of Racially Minoritized Students From Title I High Schools

Lidia Quinones

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The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chairperson, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

_____
Ann Kruger, Ph.D.
Committee Chair

_____   _____
Daphne Greenberg, Ph.D.   E. Namisi Chilungu, Ph.D.
Committee Member   Committee Member

_____
Jennifer Esposito, Ph.D.
Committee Member

_____
Date

_____
Brendan Calandra, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Department of Learning Sciences

_____
Paul Alberto, Ph.D.
Dean College of Education &
Human Development

AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

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Lidia Quinones
Department of Learning Sciences
College of Education and Human Development Georgia State University

The director of this dissertation is:

Dr. Ann Kruger Department of Learning Sciences
College of Education and Human Development
Georgia State University
Atlanta, GA 30303

CURRICULUM VITAE

Lidia Quinones

ADDRESS: 30 Pryor Street SW Suite 700
Atlanta, GA 30303

EDUCATION:

Ph.D.	2024	Georgia State University Educational Psychology
Master's Degree	2007	Vanderbilt University Human Development and Community Counseling
Bachelor's Degree	2005	Spelman College Psychology

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

2014-present	Senior Program Coordinator Office of Youth Services DeKalb County Government
2017-present	Graduate Teaching Assistant Georgia State University

PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS:

Pae, Hye; Greenberg, Daphne; Taylor, Nicole; Laures-Gore, Jacqueline; **Quinones, Lidia**. (2014). The Use of Syntactic Features in Formulating Sentences in English as a Second Language by Native Speakers of Spanish. Language Awareness: In Review.

Irving, Miles, **Quinones, Lidia**, Blackmon, Eden. (2014). Identity and School Achievement. American Education Research Association.

Quinones, L. (2013). Child Health and Human Development: Social, Economic and Environmental Factors: Chapter 5: Impact and Risks of The Recession. Nova Publishers.

Quinones, L. and Irving, Miles (2012, February) Exploring the Impact and Rishs of the 2008 Recession for Marginalized Communities and High Poverty Schools Academic Achievement. PDS National Conference.

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Collins, R., Nembhard, N., Liu, Y., Davis, S.K., **Quinones, L**., & Powell, S. (2005). Fruit and Vegetable Intake Among Three Racial /Ethnic Groups by Body Mass Index, 1996-2002.

Lidia Quinones[1], Rakale Collins[2], Ph.D., Yong Liu[2], M.S., Sharon Davis[2], MEd, MPA, PhD. (2004). Trends in Hypertension and Fruit and Vegetable intake Among Adults, 1994-2002.

ARE YOU READY? COLLEGE READINESS EXPERIENCE OF RACIALLY
MINORITIZED STUDENTS FROM TITLE I HIGH SCHOOLS

by

Lidia Quinones

Under the Direction of Ann C. Kruger, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Students from racially minoritized groups attending Title I high schools need support preparing, applying, enrolling, financing, and transitioning into college. Previous research has demonstrated that (a) skills in time-management, (b) ability to apply oneself and focus on a goal, and (c) skills for advocating for oneself as a learner are essential for college readiness. The current study explored 35 Georgia high school students' experiences of locally created and delivered college readiness programming. Guided by a social capital theoretical framework and informed by grounded theory developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), investigators discovered hypotheses and concepts through constant comparative analysis. Students' preparation for college began well before they started their post-secondary education journey and was shaped by their environmental, familial, cultural, academic, and socio-economic context, which served as a framework that either supported or challenged their post-secondary education experience. When examining the intersections of social capital supports of and obstacles to college readiness, students' preexisting frameworks provided a unique variation to their experience. Findings showed that college readiness is comprised of social capital and obstacles that are multilayered and are further complicated by an interaction with each student's personal strengths and challenges before beginning college readiness programing.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. With God all things are possible.

"I would have lost heart, unless I had believed That I would see the goodness of the Lord In the

land of the living. Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart;

Wait, I say, on the Lord!" Psalms 27:14 NKJ

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Social bonding theory provides a framework for understanding both socialization and social learning by specifying that an individual's bonds to social institutions, including friends, family, schools, communities, and others influence an individual's behavior. It is critical to note that social bond theory has been used to explain learning in school, suggesting that the participation and engagement of an adolescent in school activities and interpersonal relationships with other students and teachers represent attachment, involvement, and emotional learning. The role of social bonding also has special implications for racially and ethnically minoritized, showing that social bonds to school vary based on a student's race and ethnicity. It is important to note that social bond theory informs the design of programs and approaches to address the various challenges that inner –city youth face. Approaches such as school-community partnerships present a mixture of academic, social, emotional, and long-term career opportunities for youth. School- community partnerships therefore become a means through which school bonding is strengthened especially for inner-city youth and their families

Introduction

Over the years, many theories about how individuals learn have been developed and examined in the field of education. Older theories have formed the basis on which contemporary theories have been built and continue to inform the factors that impact education. These different theories bring insight to how learning occurs, the different factors and aspects of learning, the different possible outcomes of learning, and, ultimately and most importantly, how this affects

how education should be done. This paper will present a review of one such theory, social bonding theory, paying particular attention to how it connects to school bonding for inner city youth. The second part of this paper will discuss the evidence linking bonding and academic achievement in this population and how this informs the design of school-community partnerships to support students' academic engagement and achievement.

Social Bonding Theory

Hirschi (1969) theorized about "elements of social bonding that include attachment to families, commitment to social norms and institutions (schools, employment), involvement in activities, and the belief that these things are important" (p. 16). Social bonding theory provides a framework for understanding both socialization and social learning by specifying that an individual's bonds to these social institutions, including friends, family, schools, communities, and others influence an individual's behavior. Hirschi's social bonding theory argues that due to the strength and enduring nature of an individual's attachment to conventional society, in the form of involvement, beliefs, or investments, he or she is less likely to deviate when compared to a person who has weak or shallow bonds (Chirss, 2007). This argument carries with it the idea that the more poorly integrated an individual is into ongoing group relations, the more likely he or she is to deviate, consequently depending only on him/herself and considering no other regulations of conduct beyond those which are developed based on his/her personal interest.

Development

Hirschi's social bonding theory was originally developed as a new approach to theory construction in the field of criminology. At the time of social bond theory, control theories and social disorganization theory drew from the notion of informal social control. However,

Hirschi's 1969 book provided a critique of existing criminology paradigms using theoretical grounds and data. Before Hirschi, much of criminological paradigms were debated by scholars because of logical inconsistency and lack of clarity of theoretical key propositions. It was Hirschi who added the relationship between empirical data and theory construction to the conversations. He also worked to organize the field of criminology into three perspectives, the cultural deviance theory by Sutherland in 1939, his social bond theory, and strain theory by Merton in 1938 (Hirschi, 1969). As part of his initial research Hirschi attempted to measure the disjunction between a person's goals of economic success and the structural barriers imposed by class inequalities. In his attempt to research this topic area Hirschi developed measures to indicate youths' educational aspirations and expectations. From these measures he developed a new variable known as the "aspiration-expectation gap," which exposes the difference between the adolescents' goals and what they thought realistically possible.

This became his proxy for what he called strain, which assumed that youth with larger gaps would experience more strain (Hirschi, 1969). From this research Hirschi found that there was no significant widespread gap between aspiration and expectation. Moreover, he found that youth who reported higher educational aspirations also tended to have lower rates of juvenile delinquency. Hirschi took these findings to suggest that a youth's educational aspirations are indicators of commitment to conventional behaviors, which lead to the development of his measure as a social bond measure as well. As a result of these findings Hirschi continued forward to test other measures of criminology with the understanding that social bonds matter as it relates to predicting delinquent behaviors in youth. Additionally, he advanced the argument that cultural deviance and strain theories were statistically insignificant once social bond measures were introduced. As a result of Hirschi's work, the field of criminological theory was forever changed

by his comparative test, making it no longer acceptable to develop measures that test a single proposition.

Unlike other theories in the field of criminology, social bond theory was not developed as a method to explain delinquency but rather a resource to help explain the reasons why adolescents do not commit acts of delinquency. According to Hirschi's theory the more excited youth are about spending time and energy in certain activities, the less likely they are to commit acts of delinquency. Hirschi suggested that beginning at birth, everyone possesses a hedonistic drive to act in ways that are selfish and aggressive and lead to criminal behavior. However, bonds to prosocial values, prosocial people, and prosocial institutions (Hirschi, 1969) control the temptation to engage in criminal or deviant acts. One of the most significant elements of Hirschi's theory is that the prosocial bonds that youth develop can control their behavior even when the social other is no longer directly present. Therefore, the influence of social bonds continues beyond their direct connections to provide indirect psychological control to keep behaviors in check even when the other with whom the bond is formed is no longer there. Relatedly, Hirschi suggests there is no need to be in constant direct interaction with the mechanisms of social control. Social bonds are primarily informal social controls, meaning that the bonds that control behaviors are usually social conventions rather than laws that have been formally adopted. Hirschi (1969) argues that adolescents that are delinquent are so because they lack these formal or informal bonds to conventional society and thus there is no control of behavior and drives for delinquent behaviors are not curtailed.

Basic Assumptions

For social bonding theory, basic assumptions are in the form of four constructs. According to the theory, people develop bonds to prosocial values, prosocial people, and

prosocial institutions in four interrelated ways, attachment, commitment, belief, and involvement (Pratt et al., 2011).The first construct of attachment speaks to the level of sensitivity a person has to other people's opinions. It is defined as the "amount of affection bond and respect an individual has for his or her significant others, including teachers and parents" (Agnew & Peterson, 1989, p. 333). Attachment is touted as one of the most important factors of social bonding, as it refers to the psychological affection that one has for both prosocial institutions and prosocial people. Furthermore, attachment allows for the internalization of formal and informal social bonds. Hirschi believed that parents and schools played a major role in this way. Adolescents who formed close attachments to their parents and their schools were argued to experience high levels of social control (Pratt et al., 2011). These strong early attachments to people and places, such as parents and schools are the most important factors in developing social bonds. Youth who learn to be sensitive to the feelings and social norms of their prosocial people and prosocial institutions are unlikely to participate in delinquent behaviors (Thornberry et al., 1991). Logically, the inverse is also likely, youth who lack the attachment to these prosocial people and prosocial institutions tend to freely express their aggressiveness and behave impulsively because they lack the attachments that provide moral and social restraints (Hirschi, 1969). Attachments to peers also reveal the same results. Whereas a strong attachment to delinquent peers can increase the engagement in delinquent behaviors (Wright & Cullen, 2000), conversely a strong attachment to conforming peers will decrease the likelihood of engagement in delinquent behaviors (Krohn & Massey, 1980).

The second construct is commitment, which suggests that the higher the level of value an individual places on the social relationship, the less likely he or she would want to put that relationship at risk due to criminal or deviant behaviors. For example, according to this form of

social bonding, adolescents will not participate in delinquent behaviors because they will not want to look bad to their friends, parents, or teachers. The possible experience of shame is a strong enough consequence to refrain from delinquent behaviors (Pratt et al., 2011). With a level of investment in conventional society and thus a personal stake in conformity, individuals will refrain from committing a delinquent act (Krohn & Massey, 1980). These commitments span the areas of education, employment, reputation, material goals, possessions, and achievements within society. In many cases, because the aforementioned things are not easily attained, people tend to put rational thought and careful evaluation into what may be at risk before engaging in delinquent behaviors that could put everything in jeopardy (Hirschi, 1969). However, considering the current social climate and the number of people that put much of their life at risk because of, for example, their interactions or comments on social media, it is important to consider how much an individual may underestimate their risks or the likelihood that they will get caught. Commitment takes rational thought; this means a person must calculate the value of his or her stake in society against the risk of losing it before committing the delinquent behavior (Hirschi, 1969). However, for some individuals, their estimation of risk may be incorrect, or he or she may be unaware of the surrounding factors that may increase the chances of getting caught. This suggests that engaging in delinquent behaviors may result either from a miscalculation of the risk or a lack of commitment (Hirschi, 1969).

The third construct is belief, which can be defined as the extent to which someone deems it necessary to adhere to values and behaviors that conform to the rules and laws of society (Thornberry et al., 1991). This element has generally been interpreted as the moral beliefs and standards an individual has concerning the rules and laws of society (Agnew & Peterson, 1989). This tends to be one of the most studied and supported aspects of social bond theory and argues

that an individual who does not have a strong level of belief in societal rules is more likely to engage in delinquent behaviors (Krohn & Massey, 1980). It is the level to which individuals feel that they should or should not obey the presumed common value system of society that determines his or her likelihood of participating in delinquency (Hirschi, 1969). Therefore, those who lack belief feel they do not have to follow the values of society. If an individual feels the delinquent behavior goes against his or her moral beliefs, he or she is less likely to commit the act. This does not mean individuals who lack belief have values that are in contradiction to the presumed common societal value system, or that they do not feel the need to minimize their delinquent behaviors. It just means the individual feels they do not have to adhere to the societal value system. Belief suggests there is a link between behaviors and attitudes, meaning that prosocial attitudes can serve as a restraint from committing delinquent behaviors that they might have otherwise committed if the social bond of belief was absent.

Lastly, the fourth construct of social bond is involvement. This aspect of social bond pertains to the amount of time an individual spends in conventional activities, which in turn keeps them occupied and away from participating in delinquent behaviors (Hirschi, 1969). According to social bond theory, the element of involvement provides socially acceptable activities, such as swimming or ping-pong, which are incompatible with delinquent behaviors (Hirschi, 1969). It is therefore believed that if an individual is preoccupied with conventional activities, such as school related activities or athletics, he or she does not have time to engage in delinquent acts because they have something else to keep them busy. Therefore, involvement's primary consideration is how people spend their time and if a person is spending their time engaged in prosocial activities or antisocial activities (Thornberry et al., 1991). For example, adolescents who are engaged in afterschool programs cannot spend that same time participating

in delinquent activities, like stealing or using drugs. While it can be argued that youth can still participate in delinquent behaviors before or after their involvement in prosocial behaviors, Hirschi defends that at minimum during the time they are being prosocially engaged they will not be committing delinquent acts (Hirschi, 1969).

When considered jointly the four constructs that form the basic assumptions of Hirschi's social bond theory, commitment, attachment, belief, and involvement, represent mechanisms of informal, indirect social controls of behavior, Hirschi (1969) contended that the elements of these constructs are interrelated and that working to strengthen one of the elements individually would also increase the strength of the other constructs. For example, participating in fun activities with parents might increase an adolescent's attachment to their parents, which then will decrease their participation in delinquency (Agnew & Peterson, 1989).

Role and influence in Education

A discussion about the impact of social bond theory in education is important for the purposes of this paper. It is critical to note that social bond theory has been used to explain learning in school, suggesting that the participation and engagement of an adolescent in school activities and interpersonal relationships with other students and teachers represent attachment, involvement, and emotional learning (Wehlage et al., 1989). This theory therefore suggests that if there are weak bonds at school there will be detrimental effects on educational progress, success, and attainment for students (Bryan, et al., 2012). Research has also demonstrated that weak bonds to school can serve as a contributing factor to adolescent participation in delinquent behavior and misconduct within both community and school environments (Kreager, 2007; Peguero et al., 2011; Stewart, 2003).

Conversely, adolescents' strong attachment to school has been associated with several

positive outcomes, including improved interpersonal behaviors with peers and teachers, increased academic performance and achievement, and minimized likelihood of dropping out (Bryan et al., 2012; Johnson et al., 2001; Peguero et al., 2011). School attachment is typically measured as the degree to which students are emotionally connected and perceive support from members of their school community, including teachers and peers (Johnson et al., 2001; Libbey, 2004; Ueno, 2009). The relationship between school social bonding involvement and educational progress for adolescents has also been supported (Libbey, 2004; Ueno, 2009).

Additionally, involvement in school activities, including sports, honor society and student government, have been shown to decrease problem behaviors, improve educational progress, and decrease the likelihood of dropping out (Feldman & Matjasko, 2005, 2007; Fredericks & Eccles, 2006). Research has found a negative relationship between schoolwork and delinquent activity, further suggesting that time spent doing homework was negatively related to delinquency for adolescents (Agnew, 1993; Wiatrowski et al., 1981). Hirschi (1969) found that time spent on schoolwork had a negative correlation to delinquency, while boredom was positively correlated to delinquency. According to court records, delinquency rates increased for youth who lacked engagement in any type of extracurricular activity (Landers & Landers, 1978). This suggests that if school programs work to relieve feelings of boredom and increase feelings of commitment and attachment to school, then students' involvement in school programs and extracurricular activities may help to decrease delinquent behaviors in students (Agnew, 1993; Wiatrowski et al.,1981).

Commitment to school has also shown positive relationships to improved behavioral and academic outcomes. School commitment includes students' personal investment in school related activities, including schoolwork, plans for future achievement, and striving for good

grades (Bryan et al., 2012; Maddox & Prinz, 2003). Students who showed greater commitment to school, also showed more improved academic performance and achievement, as well as decreased delinquent school behavior (Bryan et al., 2012; Maddox & Prinz, 2003). Due to the nature of schools as institutions of socialization where adolescents learn about social rules, responsibilities, and roles, adolescents' belief in fairness and justice practiced in school is particularly relevant (Kupchick, 2010; Rios, 2011). A decline in students' beliefs of fairness and justice in schools have been linked to several outcomes of delinquent school behaviors, school failure, and dropouts (Kupchick, 2010; Peguero, 2012; Rios, 2011)

In the last several decades much attention has been given to these factors of social bonding, school bonding, and academic performance. Research on middle school students revealed that high levels of school bonding, commitment, and attachment in the eighth grade were associated with greater academic achievement and decreased likelihood of dropping out of school before the tenth grade (Catalano et al., 2004). According to Hawkins et al. (2001), strong school bonding in middle school and high school, between the seventh and twelfth grade, positively correlated with increased grade point average and negatively correlated with school delinquency, dropout, discipline, suspension, and expulsions. Social bonding in school has implications for children as early as elementary school. Positive experiences of social bonding to school as early as the elementary level correlated to a decrease in the initiation of delinquent behaviors, including school misbehavior, grade repetition, dropout, drugs and alcohol, gang membership, and becoming criminal offenders. Social bonding in school was also associated with increases in academic achievement and social skills that were maintained through age 21 (Catalano et al., 2004). Empirical support for increasing social bonding in school suggests that by providing students with increased opportunities for involvement, commitment, and attachment, schools can

promote academic success. Furthermore, it is necessary to monitor both student social bonding to school and academic performance as key factors for understanding academic success. While research shows social bonding to school reduces delinquent behaviors and increases academic success, it is important to note that there are additional barriers to learning that must be considered. Independent factors such as poverty, school location, and community variables are vital to understanding social bonding and academic success. The focus of this discussion will now shift to one such independent factor and examine the impact of social bonds on inner-city youth.

Impact on Inner-City Youth

The role of social bonding also has special implications for racially and ethnically minoritized students, showing that social bonds to school vary based on student's race and ethnicity. However, little is known regarding whether social bonds could decrease deviant behaviors, like dropping out, for racially and ethnically minoritized adolescents (Peguero et al., 2011; Peguro & Jiang, 2014). Living in poor, urban, disorganized, and segregated areas without access to high-quality schools and services, may impede strong attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief in social institutions (Hirschi, 1969; Wehlage et al.,1989). Both racial and ethnic disparities have been linked to decreased levels of attachment, involvement, commitment, and belief that these adolescents have about their schools, negatively impacting their ability to form social bonds in schools (Peguero et al., 2016).

Research has found racially and ethnically minoritized status correlates with relatively lower levels of attachment to school. It is important to note that the school characteristics, such as the location of the school, tend to play an important role in the disparities with school attachment (Johnsonet al., 2001; Ueno, 2009). Numerous studies also report that racially and

ethnically minoritized student involvement in school-based activities improves academic success and educational retention, in addition to reducing engagement in delinquent behaviors (Feldman & Matjasko, 2007; Fredericks & Eccles, 2006; Peguero et al., 2011). It is necessary to enable schools as a resource to harness the knowledge and skills that exist in the community as tools to enhance student social capital and improve the quality of student engagement and of teaching and learning practices (Woods et al., 2021). Similarly, studies that examined the role of racially or ethnically minoritized differences as it relates to school commitment, found among African Americans in suburban communities, an increase level of commitment to school predicted reduced delinquent behaviors. Further studies found that African American students were more likely than similar White American students to espouse positive school attitudes, as well as a commitment to attend college (Mickelson, 1990). However, this tended to be weaker among African Americans students in urban and poorer communities (Abbey et al., 2006).

Much like school commitment, belief in school fairness and justice varies between racially and ethnically minoritized groups and White American students. Research shows that those racially and ethnically minoritized are less likely than similar White American students to believe that school officials and governance are fair and just (Gregory et al., 2010; Kupchick, 2010; Morris, 2006). Similarly, ethnically, and racially minoritized perceptions of the enforcement and transparency of school rules tend to differ among groups. Studies support this claim, suggesting that African American and Latino American students more frequently experience the application of school rules and school-based punishment, as well as harder punishments, including higher expulsion and suspension rates than both White Americans and Asian American students (Gregory, Russell, & Noguera, 2010; Kupchick, 2010; Morris, 2006). It is important to note that the much of racial and ethnic segregation of schools is powered by the

racial and ethnic segregation of communities, proving that the promise of Brown v. Board of Education was never fully realized. There are few schools even today that have multi-racial or multi-ethnic student bodies. Over half of the schools that were once under court ordered desegregation in 1990 have been released from judicial supervision, and this has resulted in many of these school steadily resegregating (Reardon et al., 2012). The implications of this resegregation include an increase in resource inequality, creating greater difficulty in helping to form social bonds to school, particularly in communities with low family SES. There is a tendency for African Americans and Latino Americans to be the primary residents in these urban areas. These communities have considerably greater structural socioeconomic barriers and disadvantages compared to the suburban communities of their White American counterparts (Massey & Denton, 1993; Massey & Sanchez, 2010; Peterson & Krivo, 2010; Roscigno et al., 2001; Wison, 1987, 1996, 2009).

According to Wilson (1987, 1996, 2009), school and community segregation leads to social isolation, thereby leaving many residents in poor inner-city communities with limited interaction with mainstream people and institutions, which can produce limitations to both knowledge and access to resources. Similarly, school segregation limits the distribution of vital educational resources, opportunities, and advantages that are necessary for the educational development and success of inner- city students. Compared to White American suburban schools, schools with predominantly racially or ethnically minoritized student bodies are more likely to suffer from overcrowding, outdated supplies and materials, fewer advanced placement or honors courses, and fewer qualified teachers working at the school (Kozol, 1991, 2005; Oakes, 2005; Tyson, 2011). For many students this results in less positive attention from teachers and administrators, greater chance of being placed on lower educational tracks leading to low-paying jobs, less

access to educational resources, and increased likelihood of being suspended and expelled from school (Lareau, 2011; Lewis, 2003; Oakes, 2005; Tyson, 2011).

In a study of 11,670 students in 580 different public schools, Peguro et al., (2016) examined how Hirschi's four constructs of social bonding (attachment, involvement, commitment, and belief) influenced the likelihood of dropout for racially and ethnically minoritized students in urban, suburban, and rural schools compared to their White American counterparts. This research suggests that in urban schools that experience higher levels of poverty and larger student populations, attachment, and involvement (both academic and recreational) are weaker when compared to suburban schools (Peguero et al., 2016). Gaps in teacher quality tend to be highest in urban schools' contexts, with minoritized and economically disadvantaged students being 5-15% less likely to be exposed to high-quality teachers (Rodriguez, et al., 2023). However, when urban schools were compared to suburban schools, the social bond element of commitment to school was stronger among urban schools (Peguero et al., 2016). Similarly, research shows that greater school attachment, involvement, and beliefs of fairness and justice diminish the likelihood of dropping out for racially and ethnically minoritized students at urban schools (Peguero et al., 2016). These results suggest that strong social bonds to school, as predicted by Hirschi's social bond theory, can alleviate some of the observable racial and ethnic gaps in dropout. However, it is important to also note that research suggests the school community (inner-city versus suburban), type of social bond (attachment, involvement, commitment, and belief), and student race and ethnicity all play a vital role in the opportunity to both form and strengthen social bonds (Peguero et al., 2016). One common and effective approach to enhancing social bonds to school is school-community partnerships.

School-community partnerships

To circumvent the disparities of poverty, limited resources, lower educational tracks, and lack of positive attention from teachers and administration, school-community partnerships are becoming more and more prominent among urban schools. School-community partnerships have long been viewed as a favorable method of alleviating the stressors associated with struggling schools and students. Dewey (1902) argued that the local school was once considered the community's central institution and served as a place where members of the community would gather to hear lectures, discuss civic issues, and participate in recreational activities. These school-community partnerships developed from the work of social reform groups and individuals from outside of the school system advocating for the government to play a larger role in helping poor families and increasing the availability of resources on school campuses, both during and outside of school hours (Tyack, 1992). Community based services ranged from vocational guidance and educational programming to lunches and recreational resources (Cohen, 2005; Sedlak & Schlossman, 1985; Tyack, 1992). Social capital can be accessed through such services; it includes the exchange of experience, knowledge, and insight provided as resources that are made available through networks amongst groups and individuals within a community (Keung et al., 2023). Dryroos (1994) argues that schools are not equipped to meet the needs of students on their own; therefore, they must seek to coordinate services with social systems to become what is known as a "full-service school".

Research shows that school-community partnerships provide an approach to school improvement that works together with educators, families, and communities to share information, guide students, solve problems, and celebrate success. These partnerships recognize that there is a shared responsibility from the school, community and home for the successful learning and development of students (Epstein, 2011). Community partnerships prove to be a valuable

resource to help foster school bonding for students. No matter the social characteristics, economic makeup, geographic diversity, history, or students' distance to or from school, communities are valuable resources to schools (Epstein, 2011). Examples of community involvement include service-learning activities, fieldtrips, recreational activities, student scholarships, donations, community mentorship opportunities, and cultural celebrations. Community involvement in schools is a tool for supplementing and enhancing the social, cognitive, and emotional development of students (Preston, 2013). Researchers agree that community-school partnerships are needed resources to address societal issues, including discrimination and poverty, increases in immigrant students, increased number of students with special needs, and other social disparities experienced by marginalized groups of people (Preston, 2013). Furthermore, research supports that community involvement improves student achievement, reduces delinquent behaviors, improves student attendance, and results in positive parental attitudes toward school (Epstein, 2011; Preston, 2013).

Due to their location, inner-city schools are ideal locations for establishing school-community partnerships. The connections amongst the home, the student, peers, and community factors work together to create networks of iterative relationships to influence students' academic achievement (Kelty et al., 2020). Because of the diverse pool of educational needs, inner-city schools need to seek school-community partnerships with business, community associations, and postsecondary institutions (Snipes et al., 2006). As compared to rural communities, inner city schools tend to have more diversity in their student body and amongst the faculty and staff, allowing for educators to ideally position school-community partnerships to help leverage social capital and thereby increase the heterogeneity of perspectives, interests, ethnicities, and educational backgrounds (Preston, 2013). However, the larger the inner-city school student

enrollment, the less personalized are the relationships between the teachers and students and their families. This may lead to school administrations relying on formal policies when scouting community involvement because they lack the personal attachment to their students' needs. In these cases, school-community partnerships may become more complicated and less personalized than that of rural schools (Preston, 2013).

The most impactful school-community partnerships are developed specific to the needs of the school and its students and based on the sources available in the community. However, there are general comprehensive approaches to school-community partnerships recommended by school districts to develop programs to address areas of parent education, communicating and creating a welcoming school climate, increasing volunteerism, supporting learning at home, increasing family decision making in school issues and advocacy, and coordinating access to community resources (Preston, 2013). Positive perceptions of school climate aid in sustaining high academic performance and can serve as an intervention for supporting school-based programming and reducing the achievement gap for students (Daily et al., 2020). Successful partnerships also share common characteristics of respect, inclusivity, flexibility, democratic structure, and a focus on student achievement (Cox, 2005; Epstein, 2011; Edwards, 2004; Henderson et al., 2007; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; Nettles, 1991).

Link between Partnership and School Bonding

It is important to establish a link between school-community partnerships and school bonding. School-community partnerships aid in creating a physical space that is welcoming for students, parents, and community members to collaborate. According to research, parents believed that school-community partnerships promoted high levels of trust by providing regular opportunities for involvement and that trust within school-community partnerships grows

through repeated interactions (Preston, 2013; Epstein, 2011). Both Putnam (2000) and Halpern (2005) echo these sentiments, suggesting that repeated opportunities for involvement reinforces and helps to develop stocks of social capital within a community. School serves as a vehicle for identifying the ways in which social capital can contribute to or hinder social inequality (Murray et al., 2020). Therefore, providing school-community partnerships as the vehicle for teachers, students, parents, and community members to interact builds trust among the vital members of the school community. A commitment to creating partnerships for social capital can aid in producing more equitable and inclusive school environments (Murray et al., 2020)

Similarly, supporting community involvement within the school structure creates social capital amongst school staff, parents, and community members. The strengthening of these school-community partnerships works to increase social bonding through commitment, which suggests that the higher the level of value an individual places on the social relationship, the less likely he or she would want to put that relationship at risk. When relationships are rooted in trust, people tend to interact more honestly and effectively, which in turn generates higher levels of collaboration and communication (Putnam, 2000). Community involvement in school has additional benefits. Research highlights that school–community partnerships increase overall behavior, attitudes, and health of students, as well as academic achievement, and exposure to opportunities after graduation (Preston, 2013). The opportunities that are created through school-community partnerships increase the likelihood that students will develop positive social bonds to school through their involvement in the conventional activities provided through the partnerships. The involvement in activities such as service learning, fieldtrips, and community mentorship are incompatible with delinquent behaviors, but rather promote achievement and success.

Additionally, school-community partnerships that focus on scholarships and work experiences are linked to increased career opportunities for high school students (Foley, 2001), which may increase social bonding through commitment. The element of commitment suggests that youth who have investment in conventional society and spend time and energy developing opportunities, such as scholarships or employment, are less likely to engage in delinquent behaviors and risk getting caught or losing their investment. In sum, as highlighted by the literature, the benefits of school-community partnerships present a mixture of academic, social, emotional, and long-term career opportunities for youth. School- community partnerships therefore become a means through which school bonding is strengthened especially for inner-city youth and their families. As discussed throughout the paper social bond theory explains how school-community partnerships reinforce school bonding. It is important when working with marginalized populations such as those found in inner-city youth that the importance of school bonding is realized and especially the role school-community partnerships play in establishing those bonds.

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2   ARE YOU READY? COLLEGE READINESS EXPERIENCE OF RACIALLY MINORITIZED STUDENTS FROM TITLE I HIGH SCHOOLS

In the past decade there has been an increase in the number of community- and school-based college readiness programs developed to increase the participation of students that are traditionally underrepresented in post-secondary education (Le et al., 2016). Being college ready is a time-consuming process that requires that students are engaged before their senior year of high school (Royster et al., 2015). For example, one study reported that students who do not report readiness as early as the 8th grade are less likely to obtain college readiness by high school graduation (ACT, 2008). This makes college-readiness an issue that spans all levels of K-12 education.

Educators are being challenged to discover new ways to prepare a greater number of students for college, due to the significant number of students failing to demonstrate college readiness (Royster et al., 2015). Additionally, a multitude of government, non-profit, and educational organizations have focused their efforts on developing college-readiness programming to prevent students from wishing they had more seriously prepared for college (Reid & Moore, 2008). Federally funded dollars have poured into organized extracurricular, college preparatory programs like GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) and TRIO programs (Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Educational Opportunity Centers) which maintain a history of identifying underrepresented youth and preparing them for college matriculation (Reid & Moore, 2008). However, little is known about the success of students who participate in locally developed and funded college readiness programming that is culturally relevant and inclusive.

According to a study conducted by Fursternberg and Neumark (2007), students who participated in extracurricular college preparation programs demonstrated higher aspirations and expectations for attending college when compared to their matched, non-participating peers. Researchers established that the association between higher expectations for attending college and participation in extracurricular programming was related to the actions taken by the extracurricular programs to directly support students' college-going aspirations and goals and was not a result of students' casual attendance in programs (Fursternberg & Neumark, 2007).

In a study conducted by Francis et al. (2018) the degree to which participants felt prepared for college after completing high school showed that only 25% felt very prepared and 26% felt prepared. For these students their high schools were actively involved in facilitating college-readiness activities, which included: helping students to develop writing skills, assigning college level work, offering rigorous courses, cultivating student organization, and developing note-taking skills in students. Similarly, themes of developing time management skills, resilience, prolonged working time frames, and withstanding tough situations also emerged. Several students also noted learning skills associated with social navigating, including how to meet new people as well as self-advocacy and self-determination skills.

However, according to this same study, 49% of participants felt neither prepared nor unprepared, unprepared, or very unprepared for college after completion of high school. These participants expressed that their educators required additional training to better understand and identify learning difficulties to help students become aware of accommodations and learning strategies that might help them in college. Participants also describe executive functioning skills (e.g., time management, organization, life-school balance), study skills (e.g., professor expectations, study organization techniques), and literacy skills (e.g., citations, research, college

level reading requirements) as areas needing more support from their high school institutions (Francis et al., 2018). Participants express needing college information that is inclusive of how to navigate the college environment, completing the college application process, social skills mentoring, information about out-of-state colleges, financial aid, and Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

The limited number of high school graduates that are college ready is concerning particularly when considering the ever-changing needs of the workforce that require education beyond high school (Royster et al., 2015). While in 1973, the national average was that only 72% of jobs required a high school diploma or less, as of 2018 only 38% of jobs will accept a high school diploma or less (Carnevale et al., 2010). Degrees of higher education are now not only associated with higher increased earnings, but also serve as a protector against unemployment. During the most recent recession and recovery, those with bachelor's degrees or higher capitalized on new job creations, while those with associate degrees returned to near their pre-recession number, and those with a high school diploma or less were left struggling to find work (Day & Newburger, 2002). Between 2010 and 2012, unemployment rates were higher for high school graduates (9.4%) compared to those who had at least a bachelor's degree (6.3%) (Carnevale et al., 2012). Studies have continuously found that college graduates earn significantly more over the duration of their life than high school graduates. Baum et al. (2013) found that those with a high school diploma earned approximately $21,000 less annually than those with a bachelor's degree in 2011. Furthermore, Carnevale et al. (2011) reported that on average a college graduate earns $2.3 million over their lifetime compared to $1.3 million for high school graduates with a diploma.

Obtaining a college degree not only holds economic benefits, but it is also associated with many social benefits. Those with a bachelor's degree have been found to also be linked to having better health, lower rates of obesity (Baum et al., 2013), lower inclination toward smoking (National Center for Health Statistics, 2012), and longer life expectancy (Olshansky et al., 2012). College graduates are also more likely to vote, volunteer in their community, engage in civic activities, and have higher levels of job and marital satisfaction (Mitra, 2011; Ryu, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2014; 2010; Perrin et al., 2019; Rosenbaum, 2021).

Due to the increased associations between obtaining a college degree and social and economic advantages, there has been a noticeable increase over the past two decades in federal, state, and local initiatives aimed at increasing the rates in which students go to college (Turner, 2004). However, there are numerous barriers to college readiness, especially for those who are low-income, racially minoritized, and first-generation college students.

Literature Review

Challenges Faced by First Generation, Inner City High School Students

The transition from high school to college is deeply embedded in multiple contexts of society. Its roots in socio-cultural, political, economic, and historical frameworks can become an obstacle course of educational, institutional, financial, social, and structural barriers. These hurdles are heightened for first generation, racially and/or ethnically minoritized, and low-income students and their families (Dyce et al., 2013). According to researchers the lack of access to higher education is also significantly rooted in familial, cultural, and institutional influences (Trent et al., 2006).

According to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2022) ninth graders from high income households were 50% more likely to enroll in college than their peers from low-income households, 78% compared to 28%. NCES (2022) also noted that students from low-income households were more likely to pursue an associate degree (42%) than a bachelor's degree (32%). However, their peers from high-income households were more likely to pursue a four-year degree (78%) than an associates degree (13%). College completion rates also varied, students from low-income households (53%) either never enrolled or delayed their enrollment more than a year, when compared to their high-income peers who enrolled in college within one year of completing high school (88%) (NCES, 2022).

Many studies have revealed that low-income racially minoritized youth as well as first generation students have lower rates of college going and completion than first generation high-income youth (Le et al., 2016). Similar trends were also observed specifically considering college readiness benchmarks, gifted and talented identification, and advanced placement enrollment rates for students of color (Aud & Hannes, 2011). Reports from the 2014 ACT College and Career Readiness show, 49% of white students met a minimum of three or more benchmarks as compared to only 11% of Black students and 23% of Hispanic/Latino students. In a similar vein, only 25% of the class of 2011 students who completed the ACT exam showed college readiness across all four subjects (ACT, 2011b).

Furthermore, Ishitani (2003) established that students of non-college graduated parents need to be prepared for college differently, as they are at a 71% higher risk for dropping out during their first year of college when compared to students with college educated parents. The challenges these students face spans beyond the academic rigor of college academia to also

include social assimilation. Studies posit that many first-generation college students did not understand how to access supports to secure academic readiness prior to applying for college or the decision to attend college came too late in the application process (Wiggins, 2011; Hambrick & Stage, 2004; Hossler et al., 1999; Perna, 2005; Roderick et al., 2009). With little to no firsthand knowledge concerning collegiate resources or collegiate expectations, many times parents will choose less-challenging pathways to high school graduation (Kuh et al., 2008; Lloyd et al., 2008). It is these types of uninformed decision-making practices that lead students and parents to wish they had taken advantage of the opportunities available to them in high school (Reid & Moore 2008).

Enrolling youth from low-income high schools into college requires a deeper understanding of not only the hurdles faced, but also the cultural and social ecologies that intersect the lives of these youth and influence their attitudes and behaviors toward college access, attainment, and completion (Ward et al., 2013). Lower parental educational experience and attainment (Ward et al., 2013) can harshly impede the educational course of low-income youth. Highlighting the role of cultural and social capital creates opportunities for the creation of equity (Lewis, 2006) across varied social, economic, and educational backgrounds.

According to Lewis (2006) changes for good schooling are created by the choices and options that are provided by capital. Perspectives of human, social, and economic capital play a significant role in subsequent college access, enrollment, and attainment. Human capital consists of resources that are both intangible and embedded within a student's ability to develop economic value and increase the quality of the labor force (Becker, 1962). Capital is multilayered and serves as a foundation that can shape the elements of influence for a student's preparedness for higher learning. Understanding the multi-layered nature of capital is helpful in

recognizing the diverse factors that contribute to a students' college readiness. The research has shown that economic, social, cultural, aspirational, and human capital work as influential factors on students' journey as they navigate applying to, enrolling in, and transitioning through post-secondary education.

Economic capital increases resources that include employment, property, inheritance, and investments (Bowman et al., 2018). Typically, those with greater access to high economic capital also have greater educational opportunities and financial aid (Bourdieu, 1986). As a concept, social capital is focused on social networks and the resources and relationships that occur as a part of a social structure. Coleman (1988) identifies two general types of social capital, within the family and outside the family. Outside the family, social capital includes the social relationships of parents and community adults and organizations that aid in the development of cultural norms and value systems (Coleman, 1988; Kao & Ruthford, 2007). Woolcock's (2001) view of social capital, and Coleman's (1988) definition of social capital included networks that facilitated (a) obligations, expectations, and trustworthiness of the structure; (b) information channels; and (c) norms and effective sanctions. Cooper (2008) underscored that research on educational aspirations often uses sociological frameworks such as cultural capital, social capital, and status attainment. The inclusion of cultural capital as a concept centers culture and cultural attitudes, values, and mores as central to the daily lives of members within a particular network. As such, cultural capital is shared, adopted, and transmitted internally and externally between participants within the network. Yosso (2005) expanded the conversation on capital to include aspirational capital, which is "the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (p. 77). Aspirational capital is an important element to consider because despite various barriers and lower educational attainment, youth from low-

income schools and community still aspire to go to college (Berzin, 2010). Cooper (2008) emphasized Coleman's theme of social and cultural capital and educational aspirations by stating "educational aspirations are critical to educational attainment because people cannot achieve what they do not dream" (p. 615).

By promoting multi-dimensional capital access through college preparation and enrollment programming, disadvantaged students and their parents can move from educational disadvantage to aspiration, access, and attainment (Berzin, 2010). As a method to address some of these obstacles to college transition and expand the benefits of higher education, programs at the federal, state, county, and local level have been developed to support students in their pursuit of college. A study conducted by Byrd and Macdonald (2005) found that connections to school-based social networks that provide information about postsecondary education and provide support for academic development successfully enhance low-income students' likelihood of attending college. However, further research is needed to better understand the function of non-economic forms of capital in college readiness programs as a tool to move students and families from aspirations to attainment.

Inadequacies in College Readiness for Students from Title I Schools

Researchers have identified several key barriers that are hindering to the college going process, some of which include inadequate academic preparation, lack of financial aid knowledge, limited access to college information, and limited social support (Le et al., 2016).

Financial aid knowledge. According to Ross et al. (2012) the lack of financial aid knowledge has been cited as a major barrier when pursuing higher education for students from schools and communities that experience social and economic adversity. While higher-income students tend

to overestimate college costs by only 5%, lower-income students tend to overestimate college costs by 200% (Grodsky & Jones, 2007). Similarly, students with no degreed parents were less likely to complete FAFSA, therefore causing them to be ineligible to receive financial aid that they would have otherwise been qualified to receive (Feeney & Heroff, 2013). Disadvantaged students also tend to be less informed about the process to acquire grant, scholarship, or loan funding as sources of financial aid (Horn et al., 2003), which only fuels their misconceptions about the affordability of college attendance (Rosa, 2006). In comparison to their higher-income peers, students from Title I schools and communities are less likely to understand that the net price of college tuition is often lower than the advertised tuition price (La Silla, 2011). For many students from Title I schools and communities it is the misperceptions concerning the costs of college going that discourages their college readiness and college going pursuits, especially at a 4-year post-secondary institution (Long & Riley, 2007).

College access knowledge. Studies have also shown that even students who are highly qualified and academically prepared for college but were from impoverished schools or communities were significantly less likely to apply for or enroll in a 4-year institution in part due to their lack of knowledge concerning college access (Bowen et al., 2009; Hoxby & Avery, 2013; Roderick et al., 2011). These students are less likely than their higher-income peers to enroll in test preparation courses, private tutoring, consult college websites or search guides, and receive college counseling (Buchmann et al., 2010; Ross et al., 2012; Belasco, 2013).

In a similar way, parents without a college degree are less likely to go on college visits, attend college information sessions, collect information about the college process, talk to their youth about college programs, and assist their kids with applying for college, than parents with a college degree (Conley, 2008). According to Engle (2007) less than 20% of students from

impoverished schools and communities whose parents had no college degree, took a college entrance exam or applied to a 4-year post-secondary institution, compared to only 4% of students whose parents had a bachelor's degree.

Limited social support. Social support can appear differently based on student needs, but the most critical factor of social support is the students' perception that the social support is present from their peers, family, and instructors (Gibbons & Borders, 2010; Le et al., 2016). Multiple studies have confirmed the link between college readiness, attendance, and completion and students' social support (Gibbons & Borders, 2010). For some first-generation college students, the lack of opportunities to engage with their peers and instructors heightens the perception of college as unsupportive. For example, in cases where lower-income students need to work off campus to finance their education, they will have fewer opportunities to interact with on-campus activities (Nunez, 2009; Pascarella et al., 2004). Mentoring experiences, college engagement, and faculty interactions are all important factors in developing the perception of a positively supportive post-secondary experience for students transitioning to college from impoverished schools and communities (Fischer, 2007; Lehmann, 2007).

Similar studies also assert that first-generation college students may also experience tension with peers and family as they transition to college, receiving less support and encouragement, partly due to parental expectations that working after high school is necessary to contribute financially to the family (Gibbons & Borders, 2010; Engle, 2007). While research supports the idea that peer groups do reinforce college aspirations, encouraging first generation students to enroll in and finish college, this is only the case when peers are making the same choices to enroll in college. However, for first-generation, lower income students, there are often few individuals within their peer group that attend college (De Giorgi, 2010; Saenz et al., 2007).

These students have reported challenges to their peer relationships with non-college-going friends, because they may not understand the college environment and studying requirements (Saenz et al., 2007).

School guidance counselors are key players in garnering social support for students, encouraging course enrollment, and brokering extracurricular services that support students toward a path of college readiness (College Board, 2010). With national counselor-to-student ratios at almost 1:450, it is vital for schools and districts policymakers to consider additional options for supporting students on their journey to becoming college ready. Counselors and instructors play a major role in brokering for extracurricular college preparatory support and referring students to programs that aim at college-readiness, where students can receive the additional support they require (American School Counselor Association, 2005). Levine and Nidiffer (1996) note that for students from impoverished schools and communities the decision to go to college and persist in college was often precipitated by their connections to people that supported them in this goal. According to the research, additional social support is a much-needed component for college-readiness for students attending schools in or living in impoverished communities.

Students Perspectives of College Preparedness

Students' perceptions of the degree to which they feel prepared for college is a critical factor in their college-going process. However, in one study 86% of high school students report that they did not feel that their graduation from high school equated to their readiness for college (Higbee, et al., 2005). Additionally, this study revealed that 41% of students were emphatic that high school does not provide adequate college readiness preparation, noting that high school is

fundamental in its approach and does not provide the same level of rigor that college presents (Higbee et al., 2005). Conversely, 24% of students reported that college preparedness was depending on the individual student and the choices the student made while in high school. These students also note that high schools offer college-like course, including AP and IB options that include college materials. However, these types of programs and courses may not always be readily available at impoverished schools. Another student explains that students who "cruise" through their high school years and only meet the graduation requirements are operating on "low standards" and will not be ready to attend college. Moreover, another 17% of students noted that time management and other skills and habits, such as reading, writing, math, study, and being strongly motivated are necessary for being college ready. Other students thought college readiness depended on the high school attended; 5% of students note that some high schools are not challenging enough to prepare individuals for university learning.

Higbee (2003) asked college freshmen to provide advice for high school freshmen and sophomores to help them prepare for college. In their response to being asked what advice they would give a high school freshman or sophomore, these first-year college students typically responded: (1) focus on grades, (2) take challenging courses, (3) develop good study habits, (4) research colleges and financial aid early, (5) get involved in extracurricular activities, (6) do homework, and (7) explore careers. In their advice to high school freshmen, 22% of students reported that college level work is difficult and requires self-discipline. Twenty-five percent encouraged high school freshmen to get serious about college and to begin prioritizing, making good decisions, and healthy choices.

This research supports the need for higher educational institutions and college preparatory programming to increase their focus on helping aspiring college students understand

what college-readiness means and how to adequately make decisions that will impact their future

success. While often the responsibility of college readiness is placed on K-12 institutions, it is

vital for community- and locally-based programs to also bear some of this responsibility. This is

particularly true for schools serving higher rates of impoverished students, as their needs for

college-readiness support is much greater than their peers who attend higher income K-12

educational institutions.

Current Study

Theoretical Framework

Social capital is a concept that traces back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

(Adam et al., 2003). It has been linked to several areas of study, including civil society, social

connectedness, economics, sociology, political science, and anthropology. However, many

believe that social capital gained its origins in the nineteenth century within the field of

sociology (Portes et al., 1996). While there may be a general agreement on the origins of the

concept, the literature debates the first use of the term social capital. Many authors argue that the

initial use of the term social capital was by Hanifan in 1916, but others have said that it was

Jacobs in 1961 and Loury in 1977 (Felkins, 2002; Lappe et al.,1997; Leeder and Dominello,

1999; Schuller et al., 2000). Heffron (2000) made links to early human societies that attempted to

gather productive assets, as a means for developing social capital within their societies. While

modern authors Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam, along with several others are noted for adding

multidisciplinary depth to the current study of social capital theory.

While all have used the term, they did so with different meanings. The term social capital

has been used to refer to fellowship, mutual sympathy, goodwill and social intercourse within a

group of individuals and families; the importance of the social structure both to people and to businesses from an economic perspective; the importance of community participation in improving school performance; and the value of cities as networks of opportunity to develop irreplaceable assets (MacGillivray et al., 2000; Smith et al., 2002; Winter, 2000; Woolcock et al., 2000, 1998). Adding to Hanifan's work, Woolcock and Narayan (2000), elaborated on social capital as an important aspect of community participation used to improve school performance through the tangible substances that count in the daily lives of people. Furthering this thought, they added, it is important to consider the additional gain that is made possible when individuals are able to connect with their community, developing greater social capital, and further assisting in meeting the individuals' social needs, while also potentially providing added improvement to the community itself (Woolcock et al., 2000).

Over the years social capital theory has continued to increase in its diversification of use and interest. In many ways, this expansion is due to an increase in application across varied disciplines and subject areas, including sociology, economics, civics, social cohesion, and civic involvement. The expansion of applications and disciplines has also expanded the types of social capital that have emerged over the years. Some of the varied types of social capital include structural social capital, relational social capital, cognitive social capital, bonding social capital, bridging social capital, and linking social capital. Structural social capital relates to the properties within the social system as well as the networks of relations, considering the linkages between people and units (Nahapiet et al., 1998). These linkages are inclusive of connections between individuals and includes roles, rules, precedents, and procedures (Nahapiet et al., 1998). The dimension of social capital known as relational social capital refers to the nature and quality of the relationships that have developed through interaction and shows itself through behavioral

attributes. These attributes include trust, respect, obligations, and friendship, mainly highlighting aspects of trust, trustworthiness, norms and sanctions, obligations and expectations, and identity and identification (Gooderham, 2007; Nahapiet et al., 1998). Cognitive social capital refers to the shared interpretations, representations, and meanings among individuals (Nahapiet et al., 1998). These are typically represented in shared language, codes, narratives, and vocabulary.

For the purposes of this study the theoretical framework will be guided by social capital. This study will utilize the definition provided by Hill, Bregman, and Andrade (2015), conceptualizing social capital as the resources that are embedded within the social networks that are accessible for use to achieve specified goals. Within the specific context of college readiness, social capital theory hypothesizes that the network of relationships that students have with counselors, peers, teachers, and parents can be leveraged to provide them with the necessary resources to make well-informed decisions related to applying, enrolling, and persisting through college (Le et al., 2016; Moschetti & Hudley, 2008).

Social capital theory can provide important information related to college readiness for students from Title I schools and communities. It can inform curriculum and programming methods for schools, teachers, universities, nonprofits, and community- and local county-based college readiness initiatives. Studies have shown that disadvantaged youth lack the social capital that would help them to successfully navigate the college-going process, particularly when compared to advantaged students with higher income, college-degreed parents, or those that are non-racially minoritized (Perna & Titus, 2005; Stanton-Salazar, 2010). Specifically, disadvantaged students are often deficient in their basic knowledge of college, the academic preparation process, completing college applications, expenses, and funding, and navigating the social environments on college campuses, which puts them at higher risk for not entering

college, poorer college adjustment if they do enter college, and dropping out (Stanton-Salazar, 2010; Pascarella et al., 2004). To provide disadvantaged students with the needed social capital to enroll in college, college readiness programming must take a multi-level approach to understanding students' perceptions of college-readiness and provide students with the missing supports that will assist in developing a college-going mindset (Le et al., 2016).

The purpose of this study was to investigate past participants' perceptions about a locally developed college readiness program, University Bridges (UB). This study was not a formal evaluation of the program, but an investigation of the thoughts and experiences of the participants. University Bridges was a community- and local county-based college readiness program that aimed to help traditionally underrepresented youth within Green County[1] prepare for study at a postsecondary institution, including 4-year institutions, 2-year community colleges, or technical programs. The study investigated participants' degree of participation in the program, their opinions about the program, educational choices after high school, challenges they encountered, current perceptions of college readiness, social capital opportunities during high school, and their current interpretation of the experiences that supported or failed to support their transition to college. It used an online survey to describe the sample, and individual interviews provided data for qualitative analysis. Utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods aided in providing a more robust picture of students' experiences.

Methodology

In examining college readiness programming deemed most valuable and effective for underrepresented racially minoritized students attending Title I high schools, we gain an

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[1] A pseudonym

understanding of the factors that may influence to their ability to thrive in post-secondary education. Considering college readiness from the student perspective provided insight into the various dimensions of capital and supports that could inform strategies and interventions to foster a more supportive college readiness experience for students as they prepare for the challenges and opportunities of post-secondary education. Within this study the group of interest are racially minoritized students who attended Title I high schools and participated in the UB program.

An explanatory-sequential mixed method methodology was used for this study. This approach combined both quantitative and qualitative research methods to aid in providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. This methodological framework involved a sequential process where the quantitative data were collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative data collection and analysis, with a purpose of explaining the quantitative findings. The qualitative phase of data collection aided in providing deeper insights and explanations that helped to enhance the data that were collected during the quantitative data collection phase. The integration of both the quantitative and qualitative data occurred during the storylining and interpretation phase and provided a comprehensive picture of the college readiness phenomenon.

Explanatory-sequential mixed methods integrated both quantitative and qualitative methods to avoid the limitations of relying solely on one method. By combining both quantitative and qualitative methods, a more complex and well-rounded understanding of the research questions was possible. The qualitative phase worked to enhance the quantitative findings, providing an enriched understanding of participants perceptions of college readiness. Utilizing mixed methods also aided in contextualizing the quantitative findings, through the stories shared during the qualitative phase explaining various experiences, patterns, and

relationships. The use of explanatory-sequential mixed methods allowed for both the "what", through the quantitative data, and the "why", through the qualitative data, to be explored.

During the initial quantitative phase data was collected to provide background descriptions, through a closed-ended online survey. These data describe the educational background of students' parents, students' post-high school decision-making, social capital opportunities engaged in, and number and degree of obstacles encountered. Survey data identified students to recruit to participate in interviews based on those who attended college after high school, those who did not attend college after high school and those who attended college after high school but dropped out. For ethical reasons, the data are de-identified.

After completing the quantitative phase, an interim analysis was completed to examine the initial results, identify early patterns and trends, and generate areas for further exploration during the qualitative phase. The qualitative phase built from the discoveries made from the quantitative phase. The qualitative data consisted of participant information shared through interviews and open-ended survey questions to gather in-depth information. The use of qualitative data broadened the understanding of students' perspectives by providing voice to the study and helping the research findings to be grounded in the experiences of the participants (Palinkas et al., 2015). This design conveyed students' experiences of social capital as related to college readiness in their lived settings in a broader and deeper way (Cresswell, 2003) and assisted in understanding the dynamics of social constructs like social capital and how it evolves and is engaged in (Bartunek, et al., 2002).

I implemented a qualitative research methodology to gain an in-depth understanding of college readiness from the perspective of students. Phenomenological research designs allowed

the students' experience, as noted by Crotty (1998), the possibility to present itself in a way that offers an authentic or elaborated meaning of the phenomena [college readiness]. Phenomenology allows for the study of experiences, or appearances of things, or way things are experienced, or things according to how they appear based on experiences, therefore the meaning things possess as a part of experiences.

Merleau-Ponty (1962) suggested that to understand the paradoxical nature of the phenomenon [of college readiness for racially minoritized youth] it is important to break away from a familiar acceptance of the phenomena [that there is a one size fits all response to increasing racially minoritized students' experiences of college readiness]. Allowing for a fresh view, removing previous thoughts concerning college readiness for racially minoritized students, as recommended by Hursserl (1931), deconstructs filters that have molded the thinking and understanding around the topic(Crotty, 1998). Wolff (1984) notes that setting aside previous filters is only the first step in the discovery of the true lived experiences [of minoritized students' experiences of social capital and college readiness]. The hope is that this framework provides a deeper exploration of racially minoritized students' perceptions of college readiness that result from their lived experiences.

Husserl (1962) identifies qualitative phenomenology as a method that seeks to understand the sense of the real world that people experience; that is accomplished by studying the structures of the various experiences people have, ranging from their thoughts, memory, perception, imagination, desire, and emotion to social activity and action. Doing so, it must be remembered that the most honest aspects of experience will lie within the subjectivity of the student and their perceptions of the phenomenon [college readiness]. Acknowledging this aspect

of phenomenology is of importance to this research, as it seeks to understand racially minoritized students' experience of college readiness based on their personal lived experiences.

Heidegger notes that individuals shared meaning and practices, because of gender, culture, history, and other related life experiences that do not allow for a strictly objective perspective (Spiegeberg & Schuhmann, 1982). Heidegger, a junior colleague of Husserl, explains that meanings are developed from a combination of lived experience, collective life experiences, background, and the influence of the world (Spiegeberg & Schuhmann, 1982). The use of qualitative phenomenology for the purposes of this research study will aid in identifying the commonality in a particular group of minoritized students' experiences of college readiness. The goal of this approach is to provide a description of the nature of this phenomenon (Crestwell, 2003). Authentic to the nature of this research design, the interviews conducted will attempt to investigate two questions: what have been these students' experiences in terms of college readiness? And what contexts or circumstances have aided in influencing their experiences of college readiness? (Crestwell, 2003).

Through the process of gathering, synthesizing, and analyzing data, the construction of a meaning of these minoritized students' experiences of college readiness provided a more profound comprehension of this phenomenon. This methodology allowed the research study to move from a quantitative exploration of college readiness to a qualitative explanation of students lived experiences on their journey learning about, apply to, enrolling in, and transitioning through post-secondary education. The implementation of explanatory-sequential mixed methods methodology allowed the combination of results from both quantitative and qualitative findings to contribute to theory building, practical implications, and recommendations for future research.

Research Questions

The purpose of this research study was to explore students' perceptions of college-readiness programming developed at the local county and community level. The study examined the following research questions:

1. How many social capital opportunities provided by the UB program did participants attend? How helpful were they? The data source to answer this question was Section 1 of the online survey.

2. What type of institution, if any, did they enter? Are they still enrolled? If not, what reason(s) do they cite? These data were collected through the online survey, Section 1.

3. What and how many challenges to post-secondary enrollment do participants cite? How problematic were they? These data were collected through the online survey, Section 3.

4. Did participants feel ready for college? What sources of social capital outside UB did participants receive to assist their readiness? These data were collected through the online survey section 1.

5. How did University Bridges students describe all the supports and challenges they experienced learning about, exploring, applying to, and transitioning into college, including those supplied by UB? Data sources were open-ended survey responses and individual interviews.

6. How did University Bridge participants perceive the usefulness (or lack thereof) of all their sources of social capital in helping to navigate their first year of college? Data sources were open-ended survey responses and individual interviews.

Method

Program

University Bridges (UB) launched with the goal of developing a platform for students within Green County[2] in the Southeastern U.S. to become "college ready in order to make a meaningful impact within their county" (Application, pg. 2, 2017). The program offers "seminars, workshops and hands-on experiences to encourage development and academic achievement" (Application, pg. 2, 2017). The program launched with the mission of selecting between 25 and 30 high school seniors or juniors who were undecided about enrollment in post-secondary education. University Bridges offered all participants the opportunity to attend year-long sessions to learn about the college application process, financial literacy, academic writing, scholarships, document completion and submissions, and college tours. UB students participated in an immersion experience, which included staying overnight in a college dormitory, meeting with faculty and campus leaders that helped "equip these students with essential fundamental elements of earning a college degree" (Application, pg. 2, 2017). The school-year long program sought to provide students with the opportunity to learn (1) the importance of education, (2) financial literacy, (3) community involvement, (4) protecting their brand, and (5) success in networking. Through a series of forums, workshops, and immersive experiences, the program aimed to promote and stimulate an appreciation for colleges and universities, to increase youth motivation to go to a post-secondary institution and increase enrollment for the partnering universities. Please see Appendix A for more details.

Participants

A total of 60 individuals were contacted to recruit their participation. Of these, 45 agreed to participate, but only 35 responded to the survey questions. Thirty completed all sections of the survey. Nineteen of the 30 completed the survey only, and the remaining 11 completed both the

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[2] A pseudonym

survey and a follow up interview. A more detailed description of the participants that completed both the survey and interview can be found in Appendix B.

Although 5 of the 35 surveys had some missing data, incomplete survey responses were retained and are reported below. Therefore, statistics on items are reported based on slightly different Ns. All participants were former participants in the University Bridges program. Other participant characteristics measured during data collection are reported in the quantitative results and qualitative findings below.

Recruitment Procedure

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was received for this study. The first step in recruitment was to obtain approval from the program office manager and program coordinator for UB. For this, an in-person meeting with both individuals was scheduled to explain the research plan. During the meeting permission to conduct the study was requested and approved.

The study began by an email invitation sent from the UB program manager to all UB graduates introducing the study. An invitation email was sent in 2020 to all previously enrolled UB participants, using the last known email address provided to UB. Those interested in participating in the study were asked to complete an initial survey and denote if the researcher may contact them directly by email or phone for an interview to discuss their experiences further. The researcher then emailed and/or called students to conduct follow up interviews and discuss their experiences exploring, applying to, and enrolling in post-secondary education.

Before gathering data, participants were asked to electronically read and accept or decline a participant consent form (See Appendix C). If they consented to participate, the survey system automatically moved them through the set of survey questions. If they declined to participate, the survey system thanked them for their time and consideration and did not proceed to the survey

questions. Responses to survey questions provided demographic information and a general overview of participants' experiences of social capital, obstacles, and their pursuit (or lack of pursuit) of post-secondary education. After participation was established and participants completed surveys, follow up telephone interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed.

Positionality

As the researcher I collected data and conducted the analysis for this study. I am a senior program coordinator at the office that houses the University Bridges program. This was my 8th year of programming as a member of this office in Green County. As a first-generation college student who attended a Title I high school, I have personally experienced many of the obstacles mentioned in the literature. Social capital opportunities from local community-based programs assisted my advancement to college by providing me with opportunities to engage in college tours, college application review, and assisting with letters of recommendation. I went on to earn my B.A in Psychology from a private HBCU in the southeastern United States and a M.Ed. in Human Development and Community Counseling from a private research university in the southeastern United States.

Several considerations impacted my views of the data and research. First, I am a racially minoritized first-generation college student familiar with the challenges of being under-aware, under-prepared, and under-funded entering the first year of post-secondary education. Second, I work for the office that houses the University Bridges program and helped to oversee many of the sessions, college tours, and immersion experiences provided to participants. Third, I believe that all students that are interested in post-secondary education should be provided the resources to learn, understand, and decide if they would like to pursue admission. I believe that access to educational social capital for underprivileged youth, schools, and communities is the

responsibility of greater society, and all who can, should seek to create networks for access. I believe that understanding the obstacles and social capital experienced by students from Title I High Schools who have participated in local level programming may provide valuable insight for future college readiness programming.

As a researcher, I was able to maintain a professional relationship with participants, but one in which they felt comfortable in sharing their experiences with me. Although I work in the office in which UB was housed, I did not directly develop, facilitate, or manage this program. These safeguards helped to control for any biases that I may have had as a researcher coming into the study. As I interacted with participants and the data, I examined the data and interpreted it according to the meaning I believe each participant was trying to communicate.

Data Collection Procedure

Purposeful sampling was implemented for this research study. Participants were purposively selected due to their participation in the University Bridges College preparatory program. Purposeful sampling provided the initial data that was analyzed and directed the concurrent collection of data. It was useful in intentionally selecting participants and data sources that could help answer the research questions.

I developed a quantitative instrument to provide a descriptive summary of the participants' experiences. This online survey allowed participants to respond to close-ended questions concerning their experiences with social capital opportunities, obstacles, post-secondary education, and demographic information. The survey also included open-ended questions, such as, "Considering your time as a college student, what do you think it means to be college ready?" See Appendix D.

A qualitative interview template, including open-ended questions and prompts, was developed to provide semi-structure to the interview (Neergaard et al., 2009). According to McCracken (1998) the use of a template can help the researcher to cover the same ground in the same order with each participant, allows for the researcher to pay additional attention to the participant's story, and develop routes for direction and scope of the conversation.

I reviewed the online survey results and followed up with a subsample of participants who agreed to an in-depth semi-structured interview to expand on significant or confusing responses in the survey, as well as additional semi-structured open-ended questions to explore their experiences further. This approach assisted in attempts to integrate the coded qualitative data with the data that was retrieved from the survey.

Survey Creation and Procedure

The online survey included both close-ended and open-ended questions. Participants were asked to complete an online survey that offered the opportunity to elect to participate in a follow-up interview about their experiences (see Appendix D). The online survey questions served to: (a) record reflections about their experiences in the University Bridges program; (b) inquire if they continued in their educational journey after graduation from high school and were still currently enrolled at a post-secondary institution; (c) understand what happened if they did not continue in their educational journey after graduation from high school; (d) uncover their perceptions of what they found supportive or unsupportive about their college-readiness journey retrospectively at the high-school level, both inclusive and exclusive of their University Bridges experience, (e) inquire about the resources they remember receiving to assist in their college-readiness journey and who provided those resources, and (f) understand which resources they considered directly valuable to their college-readiness journey.

The final question on the online survey asked if they would like to participate in a follow up interview to elaborate on their responses to the online survey and their college readiness experiences. Completing the online survey prior to the interview enabled students to be more reflective, making connections to specific instances that they experienced as a high school junior or senior enrolled in the University Bridges program and may have helped encourage their elaboration about specific situations that would further illustrate their experiences of social capital inclusive or exclusive of the UB program. Reflective techniques are often used as mechanisms that can encourage participants to consider beyond simple recall toward deeper reflections, analysis, synthesis, and critique (McGuinness & Simm, 2005, Travers, 2011). This process is also known as "critical reflectivity," and it was expected that because of this critical reflectivity additional experiences related to college-readiness would be included in students' responses, which could then be further explored in follow up questions during the interview process (Nairn et al., 2012).

Interview Procedure

Students who indicated interest in a follow up interview were contacted to arrange a follow-up interview, by telephone. The semi-structured interview questions consisted of individualized questions intended to explore survey responses of particular interest or confusion, where necessary, as well as a set of standard questions exploring general perspectives on college-readiness, social capital and UB experiences. These included the following:

1. Considering your time as a college student, what do you think it means to be college ready?

- How prepared did you feel for college after you graduated from high school? On a scale of 1 (very prepared) to 5 (very unprepared).

- If very prepared or prepared: tell me what you perceived to be the top three ways you were prepared for college

- If very unprepared, unprepared, or neither prepared nor unprepared: tell me what you perceived to be the top three things you needed to have to feel better prepared for college.

2. Thinking back to your time as a first-year college student (or as a current first-year college student), what experiences of college-readiness did/do you find most valuable to your first-year college experience?

- Of the experiences you recalled, which do you perceive to be the most valuable? Describe why this experience was most valuable.

- Of the experiences you recalled, which do you perceive to be the least valuable? Describe why this experience was least valuable.

3. Thinking back to your time as a high school junior or senior what were the types of support you remember receiving that helped you feel ready for college?

- How did the help you received increase your college readiness once you got to college?

- Of the types of help you received, which do you perceive to be the most effective? Describe why this capital was effective.

- Of the social capital you received, which do you perceive to be the least effective? Describe why this capital was not effective.

4. Thinking back to your time as a high school junior or senior what were your largest obstacles to feeling college ready?

- What was your school's response to these obstacles? What's your perspective on how helpful they were?

- What was your family's response to these obstacles? What's your perspective on how helpful they were?

- What were your peers' responses to these obstacles? What's your perspective on how helpful they were?

- What was UB's response to these obstacles? What's your perspective on how helpful they were?

As with previous research, no restrictions were placed on the formality of participants' responses to the survey or interview questions. They were instructed to freely answer all questions based on their personal reflection of their time as a high school junior and/or senior in the University Bridges program. Interviews lasted for approximately 30-45 minutes on average.

Analysis Plan

Quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews were used as data sources. For research questions 1-4 initial data analysis was descriptive, and the source was the quantitative survey data. Once the initial quantitative data were analyzed, the researcher answered questions 5 and 6 by analyzing the qualitative interview data and survey responses using the constant comparison analysis of grounded theory methodology, typically used as a tool for developing categories and discovering hypotheses (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Utilizing this methodology, data were coded, and categories were identified. These were often adapted in the process of identifying themes, highlighting consistencies and differences in participants' experiences, and working to continually refine concepts and categories.

With the goal of exploring participants' experiences with college readiness programming, this research used this method of qualitative theory data analysis in hopes of providing richer, more diverse data. This approach of grounded theory methodology was identified as the best suited method for exploring social phenomena, the behaviors of groups, and focused in areas with limited or no previous literature (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The use of Grounded Theory allowed for a shift from the current theory that was available within the area of college readiness programming to the new theory that emerged from the data collected from these specific participants' experiences.

Grounded Theory is the analytical process used to identify concepts, similarities, and frequencies in data. It provides an important link between the collection of data and the development of a theory that helps to explain the data. According to Schreiber (2001) grounded theory has three levels of coding.

1. Level one or Open Coding. This is the use of participants' words in the form of line-by-line analysis to generate *codes*.

2. Level 2 or Axial Coding. This is categorizing similar level one codes into concepts and a process of interconnecting the concepts into *higher order categories*.

3. Level three or Selective Coding. This is selecting theoretical labels to represent the links between categories, thus identifying the *core concept* of the study (new theory). The result is a storyline that describes the research project. (Birks & Mills, 2015).

As a tool of Grounded Theory, constant comparison analysis was used for continuous reorganization, clustering and straining of categories, relationships, and interpretation of the data and to help in developing an understanding of what was necessary for integration across different

coding levels. The goal was to highlight a key central category and integrate other categories together with it as conditions, interactions and/or ramifications of the core concept.

Level One or Open Coding

Where applicable, Glaser and Strauss (1967) guided the level one open coding process with the following questions: (1) What is going on here? (2) Why is this happening? (3) How has this/that changed? Why has this/that changed? (4) What would be the outcome(s) of any change? And (5) What categories does this incident indicate? With these questions in mind, level one-open coding began with the goal to review the data incident by incident, looking for similarities, differences, and patterns in the data.

My first procedure in level one open coding was to carefully read each online survey to develop a preliminary understanding of each participant's individual experience. During this step survey data were used to develop additional questions to ask during the individual interviews to help clear any confusion or provide additional data.

Birks and Mills identify theoretical sampling as a technique of the grounded theory process used to identify and follow up on clues that develop during the analysis process of a grounded theory study (2015). Utilizing my reading of the survey responses, I was able to follow up on leads in the survey data and develop questions for the subsequent interviews. Thus, theoretical sampling was used to help in the development of categories, not for population representation (Charmaz, 2014). I implemented theoretical sampling to develop additional questions and prepare to collect additional data from participants during their one-on-one interviews as a tool to help saturate different code categories.

Next, upon completion of individual one-on-one telephone interviews, each interview was transcribed verbatim and then open coded. During this process each interview transcript was

read line by line and word by word, to analyze the data. The focus was to identify descriptive keywords and phrases pertaining to college-readiness, obstacles, and social capital.

While reading through each transcription, related sections were highlighted, and important words and groups of words were identified, labeled, and coded. Codes then served as labels or identifiers that were attached to excerpts of text, words, or groups of words that presented as similar in some way. This process involved conceptualization of data by asking questions, using codes relevant to the data, and codes that were the actual words/phrases (in vivo codes) of the participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The use of level one open coding and its techniques of questioning and constant comparison minimized subjectivity and bias. One goal in the level one open coding process was to identify similarities and differences between responses; this was done by comparing different excerpts from the same person, similar excerpts from different people, and different experiences within similar excerpts. I also looked for word repetitions and key words in context. D'Andrade (1995) suggested that the most direct and simplest indication of a natural schematic organization is in the repetition of associative linkages between terms or ideas presented by participants. A method of word repetition analysis was implemented using NVIVO version 20.6.1 software, where all transcriptions were searched and noted for words or synonyms that were frequently used by participants.

The codes were identified and refined based on the words or cluster of words that were repeated often or appeared important based on the similarities that appeared when comparing excerpt to excerpt across different surveys and interviews. Upon completion of the initial level one open coding for both the transcriptions and surveys, there were a total of 35 codes. See Figure 1.

Figure 1.
Codes that emerged from level one open coding

Academic classes	Academic planning	Acadeimic success	Advice	Afford
College experience	College tours	Encouragement	Experiences	Exposure
FAFSA	Family experiences	Family support	Feeling comfortable	Finances
Get & manage money	Help with financial aid	Information	Leaving home	Manage anxiety
Mentally prepared	Navigate college	Obstacles	Organization	Peer support
Plan	Preparedness	Priorities	Scholarships	School support
Self care	Supportive resources	Time management	Study skills	Understanding costs

Level Two or Axial Coding

Once the initial codes emerged, I moved into level two axial coding. Level two axial coding was a process of reviewing the codes and joining any that could be grouped together. During level two axial coding the aim was to transform the initial codes from level one open coding into more abstract concepts with the goal of theory emergence. Constant reassessment was implemented as a technique for reviewing the level one open codes and reshaping them to account for connections that were identified between them (Tie et al., 2019). The process of constant reassessment helped to identify new categories and subcategories. The level two axial coding categories became clearer as the level one open coding codes began to shape around them and relationships between them were highlighted and refined. While the goal of level one open coding was to break the data apart and explore what would be revealed, level two axial coding

aimed to transform the fragmented data into more abstract concepts by grouping them into like experiences and creating a category that summarized the group of experiences.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) developed a coding paradigm to assist with exploring the connections between the level one open codes. The coding paradigm suggests using the following six subcategories or filters through which to explore the codes that emerged during level one open coding: (1) phenomenon, (2) causal condition, (3) strategies, (4) consequences, (5) context, and (6) intervening condition. See Figure 2.

Figure 2.
Coding paradigm: subcategories

Subcategory: Phenomemon	Subcategory: Casual Condition	Subcategory: Stragegy	Subcategory: Consequences	Subcategory: Context	Subcategory: Intervening Condition
• Suppporting codes	• Suppporting codes	• Suppporting codes	• Suppporting codes	• Suppporting codes	• Suppporting codes

The first filter in the coding paradigm is phenomenon, which seeks to identify what was being explored. To identify the phenomena, I reassessed level one open coding data and created labels for all the phenomena that emerged. I read through the level one codes and the data that supported each of the codes and highlighted the experiences that were similar. Reviewing the codes that were developed during the level one open coding stage (Figure 1) a pattern was identified that supported each phenomenon.

For example, reviewing Figure 3 we see the following level one open code categories: Help with Financial Aid, Scholarships, FAFSA, Get & Manage Money, and Finances. After reassessing the data that supported these codes it was apparent that the research participants were describing a type of Financial Experience, a phenomenon they had at some point in their college readiness journey. According to the coding paradigm, "Phenomenon: Financial Experiences"

could be developed by grouping codes from level one coding that aligned under this category.

See Figure 3 for the final organization for the phenomenon of Financial Experiences.

Figure 3.
Coding paradigm phenomenon

Phenomenon: Financial Experiences						
Help with Financial Aid	Scholarships	FAFSA	Get and Manage Money	Undeerstanding Costs	Afford	Finances

Using the second filter, casual conditions, I sought to identify codes that addressed why the phenomenon happened. Considering the same phenomenon stated above, the goal was to identify data that might describe why people were having these financial experiences pertaining to college readiness. In the list of codes developed from the previous stage there were data that stated: "I didn't know what the FAFSA was until the end of high school," "My school didn't really help me," "I don't remember going through much financial experience when it comes to college," and "I needed financial advice, I needed a plan a financial plan." Reviewing the data, research participants were often connecting their financial experiences to the financial information they did or did not receive. A new subcategory named "Causal Condition: Financial Information Access" was created, and the codes were grouped under this subcategory.

The next subcategory/filter was strategies. For this subcategory the goal was to identify what the participant did, what actions or potential actions did the participant take because of their experience with the phenomenon. In this case, participants expressed potential strategies they used to address their "Financial Information Access." Codes included: "Talk to their families," "Go to classes," "Join the program," "Get help outside of school," and "My sister going to school before me." These were added to the subcategory named "Strategies: Expanding the Network."

Subcategory four, consequences, addressed the outcome of what happened because of the participants' strategies. These outcomes included both actual outcomes and desired outcomes. The goal was to understand what happened because of the strategies that participants implemented. Codes for this subcategory included: "I felt prepared when I got to college," "More help with scholarships," "financial support," "Needed more money," "and "Knowledge on how to receive grants and scholarships." This created a new subcategory named: "Consequences: Additional Support Received & Needed."

Context was the next step and addressed the details that help to describe the phenomenon. These details included circumstances and locations. Codes in this subcategory included: "We didn't have any prep courses," "Most of my friends were in the same boat as me," "Counselors like you know they invited us to participate in umm University Bridges," and "They would throw in pointers." This subcategory was named: "Context: Financial Capital Frequency, Type and Intensity."

Subcategory six was intervening conditions, which referred to the attributes that influenced the participants' strategies. These attributes were typically about the participant and included things like background information or former experiences. Oftentimes this included demographic information that helped to describe the participants' experiences before the phenomenon. This subcategory included codes like: "Families didn't go to college and didn't have college tuition set up," "A first generation college student," "Mom and dad helped pay off some stuff," "Hesitant because of financial reasons," and "My sister went to college." These were added to subcategory named: "Intervening Conditions: Prior Financial Awareness" and "Intervening Conditions: No Prior Financial Awareness."

Once the six subcategories were developed according to the outline provided by Strauss and Corbin (1998) it was time to conceptually summarize how the subcategories formed the overarching category. Considering the six subcategories conceptually, the causal condition "financial information" was what led to the phenomenon "financial experiences" for participants. Also to be considered was that participants had a reaction to the phenomenon "financial experiences" that they developed or implemented strategies for in hopes of "expanding their network" and those strategies had consequences that either provided with "additional support received" or left them with "additional support needed." Next, these experiences were then considered within the background context of the "financial capital frequency, type and intensity" that each participant experienced. And lastly, any intervening conditions such as "prior financial awareness" or "no prior financial awareness" that may have had an influence on their experience was considered (Strauss & Corbin, 1999). Considering all the subcategories above, the overarching or higher order category name that developed from the data analysis was "Financial Access and Responsibility" with the subcategories identifying its dimensions (Figure 4). This process was repeated for each phenomenon identified during axial coding. (See qualitative findings section).

Figure 4.

Coding paradigm: Financial access and responsibility
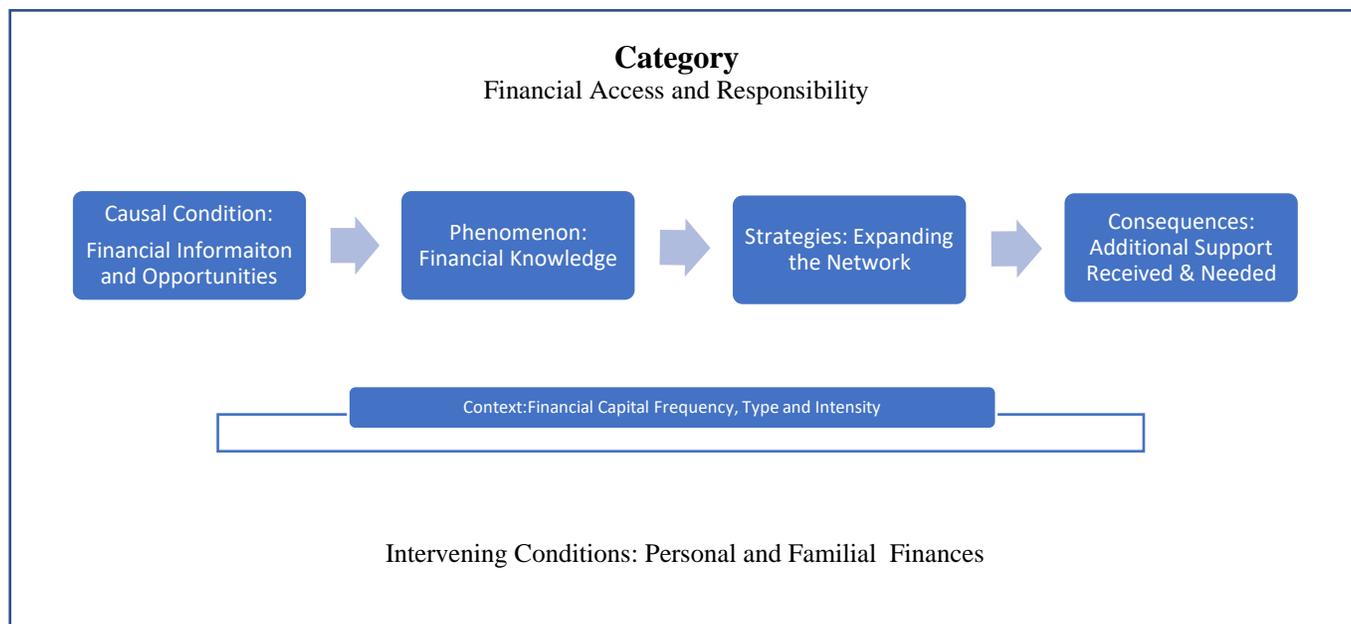
Level Three or Selective Coding

Level three selective coding was used to connect overarching categories that developed from the data during level two axial coding cycle. The core category developed by either using the previous overarching categories that emerged in level two axial coding or developing a new category that emerged from combining existing findings. It then became the central premise of the research that aided in telling the story of the theory and became the foundation for the new grounded theory.

During level three selective coding I created or modified concepts that emerged from and that were relevant to the current data, rather than assigning preestablished groupings based on prior theory and categories (Shkedi, 2004). The concepts reflected the stories of the participants but refined into conceptual terms. And the findings were delivered as interrelated concepts and explanatory statements that explored the relationships between the categories and core categories

and provided a lens for the explanation of the theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). To help facilitate

the integration, development, and delivery of the research findings, storylining was used. The

goal was to fully weave through the previous stages, from breaking apart the data to integrating

and synthesizing the categories and codes in a way that put the story back together as a newly

organized theory (Tie, et al., 2019).

Refining the categories to identify the meaning of each category (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

allowed for exploration of the connections between categories and subcategories. The aim was to

tie together the overarching categories that developed and identify the core category that

encapsulated the essence of the research. This was accomplished by identifying the connections

between the categories that generated in the level two axial coding phase. Identifying the

relationship between these categories and the rest of the data was what helped to determine the

final narrative. In this process each of the categories from the axial coding phase were considered

to determine if they fit the meanings within the data set overall. To be thorough, categories and

codes were reviewed again and those that did not have sufficient robust supporting data were

removed. Transcripts were also reviewed again with the overarching category in mind. Any

additional data excerpts that were relevant were included and any errors or inadequacies,

necessary changes, new codes, or deletions were made (King, 2004).

Also key to this phase of coding was memos. These functioned as a record of ideas that

were generated from engaging with the data. They were an essential part of the reflective and

interpretive process and provided a record of my feelings, thoughts, and intuitions (Birks &

Mills, 2015). The process of memoing started at the onset of data analysis and continued

throughout the entire research study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Memoing described the process

for coding, questions that arose, observations, ideas and thoughts about the emerging data, and

components that characterized the different categories and concepts. As described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) the process of theoretical memoing was helpful in navigating from codes to categories, the development of components that appropriately characterize each category, and making the connection between categories to generate theory. Memos can contain codes, procedural notes that can aid in the theoretical sampling process, and notions about the emerging theory. Additionally, memoing functioned as an additional reflective and tracking tool to follow the coding process and think critically while adjusting as needed.

Taken together, the reevaluation of the data, memos, and transcripts along with the core concept that emerged during the selective coding phase provided explanation for the newly developed theory. To help integrate, construct, and present the research findings and new theory, storylining techniques were used to build a story that connected the data and provided a comprehensive presentation of the new theory. The goal was to tell the story of the data with a narrative that captured the essence of the core category, was central to the overarching categories, and provided an analytical explanation.

Findings

Quantitative Results

Participant Characteristics

Of the 35 participants, 11 participants attended R High School, 4 attended T High School, 1 attended C High School, 1 attended CC High School, 1 attended H High School, 3 attended A High School, 1 attended L High School, 8 attended M High School, 2 attended CO High School, 1 attended S, and 2 did not share their High School.

Of the 35 participants, 2 graduated high school in 2017, 9 graduated high school in 2018, 16 graduated high school in 2019, 2 graduated high school in 2020, 2 graduated high school in

2021, 2 graduated high school in 2022, and 2 participants did not identify a high school graduation year. Thirty-one participants reported completing the FAFSA, 4 reported not completing the FAFSA.

When asked about the highest level of education completed by parents, of the 35 participants, 1 participant reported being from a family where at least one parent's highest level of education was elementary school, 10 reported being from a family where at least one parent's highest level of education was high school, 7 reported being from a family where at least one parents' highest level of education was two-year college, 12 reported being from a family where at least one parent's highest level of education was a four-year college, and 5 reported being from a family where at least one parent's highest level of education was a master's degree.

Table 1.

The highest level of education for participant parent(s)

	%	n
Four-Year College	34.29%	12
High School	28.57%	10
2 Year College	20.00%	7
Master's Degree	14.29%	5
Elementary School	2.86%	1
Middle School	0.00%	0
Vocational School	0.00%	0
Military School	0.00%	0
Doctoral Degree	0.00%	0
Did not go to school	0.00%	0
Total	100%	35

Note. The survey item read as follows: "The highest level of education my parent(s) has"

After high school all 35 participants submitted applications to post-secondary institutions ranging in type, including vocational/technical schools, two-year colleges, and four-year

colleges. Note that many participants submitted more than one application and to more than one type of institution. When asked where they applied after high school, 34 participants reported submitting one or more applications to four-year institutions, 6 participants reported submitting one or more applications to two-year institutions, 3 participants reported submitting one or more applications to vocational/technical schools, and no participants reported submitting to military schools.

A total of 177 applications were submitted by the 35 participants, and Table 2 shows a breakdown of applications by institution type.

Table 2.

Applications submitted to post-secondary institutions

	%	n
Four-Year College	79.07%	165
Two-Year College	13.95%	9
Vocational/Technical School	6.98%	3
Military School	0.00%	0
Total	100%	177

Note. The survey item read as follows: "After high school, I applied to: (Also, include the number of different applications submitted in the text box below each option selected)."

Of the total applications submitted, 130 acceptances were received by the participants. Of these, 119 acceptance letters were received from a four-year college, 7 acceptance letters were received from a two-year college, 4 acceptance letters were received from a vocational/technical school. See Table 3. Only 1 participant reported not receiving any acceptances letters.

Table 3.

Number of applications accepted to post-secondary institutions

	%	n
Four-Year College:	70.45%	119
Two-Year College:	18.18%0%	7
Vocational/Technical School:	9.09%	4
Military School	0.00%	0
Total	100%	130

Note. The survey item read as follows: "How many of your applications were accepted? (Include the number of different applications submitted in the text box below each option selected)."

Research Question 1

Research question one investigated, *"How many social capital opportunities provided by the UB program did participants attend? How helpful were they?"* The survey asked participants to signify if they participated in programs or services offered to them and to identify if the program or service was helpful. Program or service offerings by UB ranged from college tours and college instant decision to fee waivers and college class visitations. The most attended program or service was college tours (90% of the participants), and the least used program or service was college instant decision (30%). The program or service most reported as a "major help" was college tours (88.46%) and the program or service most reported as "not a help" was college instant decision (62.5%). See Tables 4 and 5 for details.

Table 4.

Programs and services participants participated in during high school

	Yes	Count	No	Count	Total
College Tours	90.00%	27	10.00%	3	30
College Information Sessions	86.67%	26	13.33%	4	30
Fee Waiver	83.87%	26	16.13%	5	31
College/Career Workshops	83.33%	25	16.67%	5	30
College Application Workshop	83.33%	25	16.67%	5	30

College Financial Aid Awareness Seminars	80.00%	24	20.00%	6	30
College Class Visitations	75.86%	22	24.14%	7	29
Scholarship Workshop	74.19%	23	25.81%	8	31
Group College Awareness Sessions	70.00%	21	30.00%	9	30
College Financial Costs Awareness Seminars	66.67%	20	33.33%	10	30
College Navigation Sessions	66.67%	20	33.33%	10	30
College Networking Sessions	63.33%	19	36.67%	11	30
Counselor College Meeting	60.00%	18	40.00%	12	30
College Program Meeting	56.67%	17	43.33%	13	30
Writing Workshops	53.33%	16	46.67%	14	30
College Instant Decision	30.00%	9	70.00%	21	30

Note. The survey item read as follows: "Offered Programs or Services - Did You Participate?"

Table 5.

Helpfulness of offered programs or services.

	Major Help		Moderate Help		Minor Help		Not a Help		Total
	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	n
College Tours	88.46%	23	11.54%	3	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	26
Fee Waiver	81.48%	22	14.81%	4	0.00%	0	3.70%	1	27
College Class Visitations	72.00%	18	20.00%	5	0.00%	0	8.00%	2	25
College Information Sessions	69.23%	18	26.92%	7	3.85%	1	0.00%	0	26
College/Career Workshops	65.38%	17	30.77%	8	0.00%	0	3.85%	1	26
College Application Workshop	59.26%	16	29.63%	8	3.70%	1	7.41%	2	27
College Navigation Sessions	58.33%	14	20.83%	5	8.33%	2	12.50%	3	24
Group College Awareness Sessions	56.00%	14	24.00%	6	8.00%	2	12.00%	3	25
Scholarship Workshop	55.56%	15	22.22%	6	7.41%	2	14.81%	4	27
College Financial Aid Awareness Seminars	53.85%	14	38.46%	10	3.85%	1	3.85%	1	26
Counselor College Meeting	53.85%	14	15.38%	4	7.69%	2	23.08%	6	26
College Networking Sessions	45.83%	11	20.83%	5	12.50%	3	20.83%	5	24
College Financial Costs Awareness Seminars	42.31%	11	34.62%	9	3.85%	1	19.23%	5	26
College Program Meeting	42.31%	11	19.23%	5	7.69%	2	30.77%	8	26
College Instant Decision	33.33%	8	4.17%	1	0.00%	0	62.50%	15	24
Writing Workshops	30.77%	8	30.77%	8	3.85%	1	34.62%	9	26

Note. The survey item read as follows: "Offered Programs or Services - Was it Helpful?". Survey completers responded to all denominators whether they participated in the particular capital.

Research Question 2

Research question two asked, *"What type of institution, if any, did they enter? Are they still enrolled? If not, what reason(s) do they cite?"* Of the 35 participants, 28 enrolled in a 4-year college, 4 enrolled in a 2-year college, 2 reported not enrolling in post-secondary education after graduating from high school, and 1 enrolled in a vocational/technical school. Six participants reported not completing their first year of post-secondary education (this includes the 2 who never enrolled), while 29 completed their first year. The 4 participants who enrolled but did not complete their first year of post-secondary education cited other personal problems (2), financial issues (1), and loss of interest (1) as contributing factors. Twenty-six participants of the 29 who completed the first year of post-secondary education reenrolled for a second year. Two did not reenroll due to "other personal problems." One did not respond to the question "have you enrolled for a second year?" None of the participants reporting "other personal problems" provided an additional explanation, nor did they agree to a follow up interview to discuss the details of their survey data. See Tables 6 and Table 7.

Table 6.

Enrollment in post-secondary institution.

	%	Count
Four-Year College	80%	28
Two-Year College	11.43%	4
Did not enroll in any Post-Secondary Institution	5.71%	2
Vocational/Technical School	2.86%	1
Military School	0.00%	0
Total	100%	35

Note. The survey item read as follows: "After high school, where did you enroll? (Chose one)?

Table 7.

Completion of first year in post-secondary education and reason for dropping out.

If you enrolled, did you complete your first year in
post-secondary education?

	%	Count
Yes	82.86%	29
No	17.14%	6
Total	100%	35

If yes, have you enrolled for a second year?

	%	Count
Yes	89.65%	26
No	6.90%	2
No Answer	3.45%	1
Total	100%	29

If no, please can you select the reason?

	%	Count
Financial Issues	16.67%	1
Pregnancy/Parenting	0.00%	0
Lost Interest	16.67%	1
Academic Problems	0.00%	0
Other Personal Problems, Please Specify:	33.33%	2
Never Enrolled	33.33%	2
Total	100%	4

Note. The survey item read as follows: "If you enrolled, did you complete your first year in post-secondary education?

Research Question 3

Research question three of this study was, *"What and how many challenges to post-secondary enrollment do participants cite? How problematic were they?"* To answer this question participants were asked to select from a list of obstacles they might have encountered during their college readiness journey. The list included a total of 17 obstacles. Participants also

reported the extent to which these factors were challenging on a scale of "major challenge" to "not a challenge."

Thirty participants contributed to this portion of the survey and reported experiencing at least one of these obstacles during their college readiness journey. At least one participant reported experiencing each of these factors as challenges to their college application process. Lack of college financial knowledge (80% of participants), lack of experience on a college campus (62.07%), working (51.72%), and lack of time management (50%) were the four most cited factors. Regarding a lack of college financial knowledge, 35.71% reported it to be a "major challenge," and 39.29% reported it to be a "moderate challenge." Regarding lack of experience on a college campus, 21.43% reported that it was a "major challenge" and 28.57% reported that it was a "moderate challenge." Regarding a lack of time management, 11.54% reported it as a "major challenge," and 26.92% reported it as a "moderate challenge."

The least cited challenges were attendance problems, low level value of a college degree, enrollment in remedial courses, and low-level family encouragement. Attendance problems was reported as "not a challenge" for 92% of the participants. Low level value of a college degree was reported as "not a challenge" for 88% of participants. Enrollment in remedial courses was reported as "not a challenge" by 87.50% of participants. Low level family encouragement was reported as "not a challenge" by 88% of participants. See Tables 8 and 9 for details.

Table 8.

Factors that may have affected students' application to college.

	Yes	Count	No	Count	Total
Lack of College Financial Knowledge	80.00%	24	20.00%	6	30
Lack of Experience on a College Campus	62.07%	18	37.93%	11	29
Working	51.72%	15	48.28%	14	29

	%	n	%	n	n
Lack of Time Management	50.00%	15	50.00%	15	30
Lack of Knowledge of the College Application Process	44.83%	13	55.17%	16	29
Lack of Study Skills	31.03%	9	68.97%	20	29
Lack of Prior Familial Completion of College	27.59%	8	72.41%	21	29
Academic Grades	26.67%	8	73.33%	22	30
Transportation Challenges	17.24%	5	82.76%	24	29
Failing Grades	17.24%	5	82.76%	24	29
Lack of Peers Applying to College	16.67%	5	83.33%	25	30
Negative Peer Influence	13.33%	4	86.67%	26	30
Lack of Parental Support	13.33%	4	86.67%	26	30
Low Level of Family Encouragement	6.90%	2	93.10%	27	29
Enrollment in Remedial Courses	6.90%	2	93.10%	27	29
Low Level Value of a College Degree	6.90%	2	93.10%	27	29
Attendance Problems	3.45%	1	96.55%	28	29

Note. The survey item read as follows: "Factors that may affect students' application to college -

Did this affect you?"

Table 9.

Level of challenge for factors that may have affected students' application to college.

	Major Challenge		Moderate Challenge		Minor Challenge		Not a Challenge		Total
	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	n
Lack of College Financial Knowledge	35.71%	10	39.29%	11	10.71%	3	14.29%	4	28
Lack of Experience on a College Campus	21.43%	6	28.57%	8	17.86%	5	32.14%	9	28
Lack of Knowledge of the College Application Process	14.81%	4	18.52%	5	22.22%	6	44.44%	12	27
Failing Grades	12.00%	3	4.00%	1	4.00%	1	80.00%	20	25
Lack of Time Management	11.54%	3	26.92%	7	19.23%	5	42.31%	11	26
Enrollment in Remedial Courses	8.33%	2	0.00%	0	4.17%	1	87.50%	21	24
Low Level Value of a College Degree	8.00%	2	0.00%	0	4.00%	1	88.00%	22	25
Academic Grades	7.69%	2	15.38%	4	3.85%	1	73.08%	19	26

Lack of Prior Familial Completion of College	7.69%	2	11.54%	3	15.38%	4	65.38%	17	26
Working	7.41%	2	25.93%	7	18.52%	5	48.15%	13	27
Lack of Parental Support	4.00%	1	8.00%	2	4.00%	1	84.00%	21	25
Low Level of Family Encouragement	4.00%	1	4.00%	1	4.00%	1	88.00%	22	25
Attendance Problems	4.00%	1	0.00%	0	4.00%	1	92.00%	23	25
Transportation Challenges	3.85%	1	11.54%	3	3.85%	1	80.77%	21	26
Lack of Study Skills	3.85%	1	11.54%	3	19.23%	5	65.38%	17	26
Negative Peer Influence	0.00%	0	4.17%	1	16.67%	4	79.17%	19	24
Lack of Peers Applying to College	0.00%	0	12.50%	3	8.33%	2	79.17%	19	24

Note. The survey item read as follows: "Factors that may affect students' application to college - Did this affect you?" Survey completers responded to all denominators and not just students who cited a particular challenge.

Research Question 4

Research question 4 of this study asked, *"Did participants feel ready for college? What sources of social capitol outside UB did participants receive to assist their readiness?"* Thirty-two participants answered this question. When asked if they felt ready for college upon graduation from high school 78.13% of participants reported yes, they did feel ready for college, and 21.88% reported no, they did not. In every case, including those in which participants reported feeling "neither prepared nor unprepared for college" or "unprepared for college," participants recall some level of social capital experience either as a result of their participation in UB or as a result of other encounters.

Experiences of social capital take into consideration the intangible and tangible resources that a person accumulates over the course of their life. These resources can include information, social norms, networks, empathy, relationships, associations, and belonging (Ho, 2002; Plagens,

2011). The following sources of social capital are those received outside of participation in UB. Of the 32 participants that responded to this portion of the survey, 23 participated in college fairs. Twenty-seven participated in FAFSA application review/support. Twenty-five participated in SAT/ACT preparatory programs. Twenty-four participated in school college/career workshops. Twenty-three participated in career fairs. Sixteen participated in after school/Saturday school tutoring. Thirteen participated in AP/honor level courses. Nine participated in student learning/intervention plan and 9 in peer tutoring. Six participated in college dual enrollment.

The sources of social capital frequently reported as a "major help" were school college/career workshops (65.38% of participants), college fairs (51.72%), and SAT/ACT preparatory programs (50%). Frequently considered "not a help" were dual enrollment (67.86%), student learning/intervention plan (66.67%), peer tutoring (55.56%), and AP/Honor level courses (55.17%). See Tables 10, 11, and 12 for details.

Table 10.

Ready for college after high school.

	%	Count
Yes	78.13%	25
No	21.88%	7
Total	100%	32

Note. The survey item read as follows" Did you feel ready for college upon graduation from high school?"

Table 11.

Programs and services participants participated in during high school

	Yes	Count	No	Count	Total
College Fairs	76.67%	23	23.33%	7	30
FAFSA Application Review/Support	87.10%	27	12.90%	4	31
SAT/ACT Preparatory Program	80.65%	25	19.35%	6	31
School College/Career Workshops	80.00%	24	20.00%	6	30
Career Fairs	76.67%	23	23.33%	7	30
After School/Saturday School Tutoring	51.61%	16	48.39%	15	31
AP/Honor Level Courses	43.33%	13	56.67%	17	30
Peer Tutoring	30.00%	9	70.00%	21	30
Student Learning/Intervention Plan	29.03%	9	70.97%	22	31
College Dual Enrollment	19.35%	6	80.65%	25	31

Note. The survey item read as follows: "Offered Programs or Services - Did You Participate?"

Table 12.

Level of help of the social capital.

	Major Help		Moderate Help		Minor Help		Not a Help		Total
	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	n
School College/Career Workshops	65.38%	17	26.92%	7	0.00%	0	7.69%	2	26
College Fairs	51.72%	15	31.03%	9	13.79%	4	3.45%	1	29
SAT/ACT Preparatory Program	50.00%	14	35.71%	10	7.14%	2	7.14%	2	28
Career Fairs	44.00%	11	28.00%	7	20.00%	5	8.00%	2	25
AP/Honor Level Courses	37.93%	11	6.90%	2	0.00%	0	55.17%	16	29
FAFSA Application Review/Support	41.38%	12	48.28%	14	3.45%	1	6.90%	2	29
After School/Saturday School Tutoring	26.92%	7	38.46%	10	3.85%	1	30.77%	8	26
Student Learning/Intervention Plan	29.17%	7	4.17%	1	0.00%	0	66.67%	16	24
College Dual Enrollment	17.86%	5	7.14%	2	7.14%	2	67.86%	19	28
Peer Tutoring	11.11%	3	11.11%	3	22.22%	6	55.56%	15	27

Summary of Quantitative Results

Research results for questions one through four revealed that more than half of the 32 participants who participated in this survey question felt ready for college (78.13%) after completion of high school, while less than a quarter of participants did not (21.88%). All 35 participants regardless of feeling ready or not reported that they applied to a post-secondary institution after high school and all but two enrolled. More than half (82.86%) of participants completed their first year of post-secondary education. The 17.14% who did not complete their first year of post-secondary education cited loss of interest, financial issues, or other personal reasons. Of the 29 that completed their first year of post-secondary education, 2 did not enroll for a second year of post-secondary education, 1 did not state if they did or did not reenroll for a second year, and 26 enrolled for a second year.

When asked to reflect on the number and types of challenges to post-secondary enrollment experienced, all 30 participants who participated in this portion of the survey reported experiencing at least 1 of the 17 obstacles listed. The most challenging obstacle experienced by participants was the lack of financial knowledge, while challenges with attendance was the obstacle least reported. All students reported participating in some type of social capital opportunity as a member of UB. However, the types of social capital experienced and their perceived helpfulness varied by participant. Participants also reported experiencing social capital outside of their participation in UB. These sources of social capital varied in type and helpfulness. School college/career workshops was reported as the most helpful, followed by college fairs, SAT/ACT preparatory programs, career fairs, AP/Honor courses, FAFSA application review/support, after school/Saturday school tutoring, student learning/intervention plans, college dual enrollment and peer tutoring.

Qualitative Findings

Research Questions 5 and 6

Research question five sought to understand, *"How did UB participants describe the supports and challenges they experienced learning about, exploring, applying to, and transitioning into college, across family, peers, school, and UB?"* Research question six asked, *"How did University Bridges participants perceive the usefulness (or lack thereof) of social capital activities in helping to navigate their first year of college?"*

To answer questions 5 and 6, grounded theory methodology was utilized to analyze the written responses of the participant surveys and interviews. These findings are detailed below.

Level One. In level one the codes were first identified and refined through a process of re-reading interviews and survey results and grouping words or cluster of words that were repeated often or appeared important based on the similarities that appeared when comparing excerpt to excerpt across the different surveys and interviews. Upon completion of the initial level one open code grouping for both the transcriptions and surveys, the codes groups were then given a label that best seemed to capture the essence of what was being described. In total 35 code labels were developed. See Figure 5.

Figure 5.

Codes that emerged from level one open coding

Academic classes	Academic planning	Acadeimic success	Advice	Afford
College experience	College tours	Encouragement	Experiences	Exposure
FAFSA	Family experiences	Family support	Feeling comfortable	Finances
Get & manage money	Help with financial aid	Information	Leaving home	Manage anxiety
Mentally prepared	Navigate college	Obstacles	Organization	Peer support
Plan	Preparedness	Priorities	Scholarships	School support
Self care	Supportive resources	Time management	Study skills	Understanding costs

The data clusters that developed during level one coding aided in answering the specific aspects of research question five that sought to understand participants descriptions of the supports and challenges they experienced across five contexts, family, peers, schools, UB, and their first year of college. Participants described their experiences across each of these category areas during their participation in the survey and interview. The following is a summary characterizing their experiences in each context.

Family. Many of the participants recalled being influenced in some ways by their parents or family members related to college readiness. The type of influence, the family members to provide the influence, and the amount of influence experienced varied across participants. Participants shared mixed experiences of parental and familial support and influence. Some had positives experiences, sharing, "everyone was telling me to go like ahh stop my life because I'm

you know I guess around them still go," "They still encouraging me," "I think like my mom she really just wanted me to like go to college umm because like I I technically like would have been well I technically was like a first generation college student so like you know she was just trying to encourage me to like do good," family "encouraged me to like alright whatever you decide like you are going to be here to support you at the end of the day whether it's like college or like taking a year off or like working or whatever the case," "Oh they was very helpful actually my mom and my dad helped umm pay off some of the stuff that I owe for Savannah umm while staying there so it was very helpful," "family's response was great ahh because they went through with my sister we know with me it was like ok well I know what to expect," "they took initiative you know emphasize what I should be doing what I shouldn't of been doing," and "they offer both umm advice and support and umm they would call in check and make sure I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing."

Other participants shared, "they were more so worried about where's the money going to come from. They were supportive in a way that fits their needs so if I went with the school who gave me money," "they were more more so just trying to hurry up and make me figure out what school I want to go to but they weren't helping me weight out the pros and cons of schools or like you know living situations and then they never helped me financially," "they were just telling me that I should have told them that um that I was struggling in the class," "they didn't really know because yeah I just didn't tell my family anything about college unless like they asked me personally, I feel like they asked me like hey is there any issues going on but I never really called them," and "I didn't have really much any support there because no one really knew the process."

Peers. While for most participants, peers were not reported to pose a challenge or offer major support to their college readiness, participants shared interesting perspectives on their peer engagements. One participant shared, "most of my friends were kind of the same boat as me most of their family didn't go to college they didn't have like a college tuition set up for them and have it all ready to go so we're kind of like lost together and learning together umm other friends had huge support systems and college funds so they didn't have to worry about the same same things I did, and had that kind of a security blanket for them."

Another participant shared,

"I went to a predominantly like blacks umm high school so you know with that it was just a lot of umm a lot of my peers like we had a lot of things in common as far as like growing up in like a single parent household or like you know maybe some of our parents didn't graduate we were like first generation umm college students or you know just that type of thing and so like I think umm everybody knew they were gonna graduate high school and of course like everyone thinks college is the next step but I think when it came to my peers umm like me really didn't take that next step part is serious as we should have until like the end of the year and so umm you know you pretty much do everything like with your friends and so like when the opportunity came for like us to get more information about like required like getting the skills needed it for like post-secondary school like all of us decided to just join the program together and I think like us being in it together kind of pushed all of us to like alright what are we all gonna do after this type of thing so like it got it kinda got better like at like towards the end of high school."

Others shared, "they'll just tell me fill out ahh scholarships just give me some advice and just you know give me motivate me to keep going, just not give up yet," "they will call me to see

if I finished something and make sure I was on time," "they were helpful because we would have we would have like study session is things like that" and "they were supportive in helping me navigate through." A few note that they did not discuss college with their peers, saying, "it's actually crazy because when I had these financial issues going on I was like drowning but my friends and I didn't really discuss financial aid, somehow everybody was going through the same thing but everybody just got through school we did discuss some and we would discuss oh I heard about this loan and that loan," and "I didn't really tell them about it."

School level programming. School based programming was another area of social capital and obstacles that participants experienced. Some participants shared how their high schools were helpful in their college readiness even providing encouragement, as shared by this participant, "they told me to go for it and they'll be ok stuff like that they was encouraging me." Another participant shared,

> "Umm I think like my school was really I guess supportive in a way umm because they provided us with umm our counselors like you know they invited us to participate in the umm university bridge program and so like that kind of helped with like learning about certain things as far as college readiness and everything like that and then of course like just being able to provide us with counseling sessions with like our 1 on 1 counselor in order for them to like give us information on like what to do like after we graduate high school like to prepare us for what the next steps were."

And another expressed that,

> "They were very supportive they connected me with one of the academic counselors who walked me through what umm college looked like from umm financial aid perspective to the schools that I could potentially get in because I had umm a fairly high GPA and so

umm we talked about what scholarships could look like and just a variety of different things from moving forward with that but also connecting me with students who were in my same umm grade level who are potentially going to college as well and so they were pretty supportive and they also provided a lot of umm waiver of fees for applications as well but also umm not just the initial stuff but they did a lot of following up until I decided what college I wanted to go to."

Other participants noted that their schools provided little to no help, sharing, "I don't feel like my school is very helpful with the entire process we didn't have any prep courses or anything like that, advisors didn't really inform me about scholarships and FAFSA until senior year and by that time was kind of too late 'cause like they were mostly all taken," "Umm they didn't really help me that much unless I like went to a specific teacher," "I know that they had you know college fairs and you could talk about college and you know go there and yeah they'll mention the word financial aid and you know they'll mention the word FAFSA," "Umm I would say my high school didn't really helped me much in that aspect I had to get help like outside of school like friends or family members you know help guide me umm with that 'cause my school did kinda screw me over so they ain't really helped me out I only have I would say my old assistant principal who became the principal now she did try to help me out another person to help me out give me some information 'cause overall my advisor he could only do so much but I had a little bit help," and "my school was very limited on information about college."

University Bridges. Participants shared a common local-county programmatic contextual experience, University Bridges. UB offered high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to attend year-long sessions to learn about the college application process, financial

literacy, academic writing, scholarships, document completion and submissions, and college tours.

Participants described the social support they received from UB in their interviews. One participant shared,

"I think they were very helpful because I umm was able to go to classes on a regular basis and they took the time out to help me with the financial aid process and figuring out scholarships and also filling out the applications and also they had umm resources with umm waiving fees, and they are very responsive to any questions and seemed available for anything that I needed help with."

Others recalled, "I do remember like us going to certain classes, and I was waking up at the crack of dawn to go do these certain things. Umm it was an interesting experience, cause it didn't like, I guess it mirror as such, it mirrored a little bit of what college is like so that was a little helpful," "helped me prepare for college really more than my family did," "I felt very supported they gave me a lot of experience and tools especially with taking the college tours and just being able to hear and talk to college students about their experience was a good help," "it was helpful like when we went on the college campus and and we applied to the classes that was motivational for me," and "UB it helped with my financial aid and scholarships. And also, the the courses that they gave me umm and just being able to go on college tours with them and being able to talk to the advisors and other students about what life is like on campus." One participant shared their feelings by saying,

"I think it helped a lot I think that the I think the trip itself that we went on with UB helped the most because being there on the trip like I was saying like we got to go to classes like we got to attend sessions like we pretty much were umm college students on

campus like they even had some college students that were there like come and mentor us while we were on campus so we got to go to like class with them and you know sitting with professors and you know pretty much just be college students and they like actually gave us their insight as well about like what to expect for college so I think that was the highlight and it gave us like I think it helped prepare me for like actually being in college 'cause I ended up going to one of the schools and went to which was Savannah State University 'cause they accepted me on the spot and then they gave us umm a small scholarship and so I actually ended up going there as a first generation college student and so umm be- having went through that umm process of you know being there on campus with them to begin with and then come you know coming back as an actual student I think the insight that I got from the students from the trip and then also just being in a class helped me you know be more prepared like from financial aid to like what to expect from like a roommate just every single thing."

While most participants found University Bridges to be a "very helpful" program for providing social capital, one participant expressed, "So I would say helpful-ish, I feel like help-ish um, but I could have used more." Other students also noted that while they did receive social capital from University Bridges, they still required additional support to increase their perception of college readiness. Participants shared they needed, "more um effort into like you know into like you know seminars or little programs that people can learn to manage their time," 'how to manage my anxiety from leaving home and not being around family or being in a new space umm that is what I needed to prepare more on," and "although I had scholarships from participating in the UB program, more money would've been nice."

First Year. When asked about their first year of college participants shared that some experiences were helpful, but there was a need for additional support beyond what they received from family, peers, school, and local-county and community-based programs. Participants shared that financial resources and knowledge around financial management should remain an ongoing part of the conversation with students before entering college and once enrolled in college. One participant expressed,

> "Yes umm a financial um goal or even like the financial set up and plan or like a strategic plan on how you're going to navigate that and not just relying on in house scholarship but really having a plan to having that resources available to you umm also resources in general that were steady given to me out college as well or how to get those without having to work all the time and so having finances not just to pay for tuition but for like normal things of like you know toothpaste, you know soap, you know snacks that I wanted to actually eat just a variety of different things like that and also if I wanted to you know get some makeup or something just those things that you know future for your regular life and that perspective like how to to still live outside of your parents' house because typically these things are just there for you."

Others shared "once I got into college umm going to those people who were able to give umm finances within the school whether it was in house scholarships or definitely umm supporting me to being able to be outside and give different outside umm scholarship options or just outside help as well was a very big thing for me," and "I feel like I would of needed what more money [giggles] so I wouldn't be as stressed on how I will pay for school or just have that extra like burden on my shoulders so like either college tuition or something like that in place so I would transition easily on that aspect of tuition and scholarships and that such."

One participant shared that the most valuable experiences of college readiness experienced was,

"Preparing me for financial aid was like a really big step umm and then even like scholarships like to go with the whole financial piece I think help prepare me so like when I got to school my first year umm I kind of was prepared like as far as of course you know I have I have student loans umm but I think like learning about the FAFSA and then learning about other opportunities like the work study program umm and learning about like you know other scholarships and applying for those like really helps so like umm being able to like get hope for like the next year and then you know doing work study umm after my first semester like really help with like that financial peace"

When asked to think back to their first year at their post-secondary institution and recall which of their social capital experiences they found most helpful to their first-year participants responses varied. One participant shared, "having been there already like knowing how to get around…the campus and not getting lost in a yeah knowing knowing where everything was that helped," "parents support that's the most valuable…because I've value what they say and like what they say is encouraging to me…and then like seeing where they're at now it's seeing like they're just always there for me," "what I found the most valuable would still will be the advice that I had gotten in high school from my teachers because truly well with the dual enrollment program," "how do deal with certain individuals and like roommates and whatnot," "I found that as a freshman in college the tours again with the most valuable," and "Ahh it would still be that because yeah it would still be that people in my ear helping me…because I was like I ain't never been to college so like they had the experience so they know like what it was like what it was like going there."

Other things participants considered when asked what advice they would offer to a high school student beginning their college readiness journey included, "apply apply apply to as many schools or as many scholarships as possible grants as possible get in as early as you can so you can have a better opportunity of getting more scholarships and grants," "apply to schools that you really want so attend to just not anything so apply to schools in like neighborhoods that you like or cities or states countries even that you like and feel comfortable in and also don't forget to have fun but also show up every day," "make sure you have your paperwork ready like your shot records," "apply for FASFA on time and if you have anything hindering your school work make sure you know you speak to your advisor ahead of time before you you know become a senior if you're junior," "always have a positive mindset because last year I had a really negative mindset and I procas- procrastinated lot and I was really negative so this year I tried to have a positive mindset and get rid of all the negatives things and energy out of my life and I can definitely tell a difference in like my focus and how I'm and it's affecting my work like I'm doing a lot better so having a positive mindset is big for me," "really look in to where they're going to school at and to know umm what career field they're gonna go into because I do notice there's a lot of confusion usually between my peers or umm some people just they lose, they lose interest in schools so can be a waste of time and money," and "if there was easy everybody would do it but don't give up."
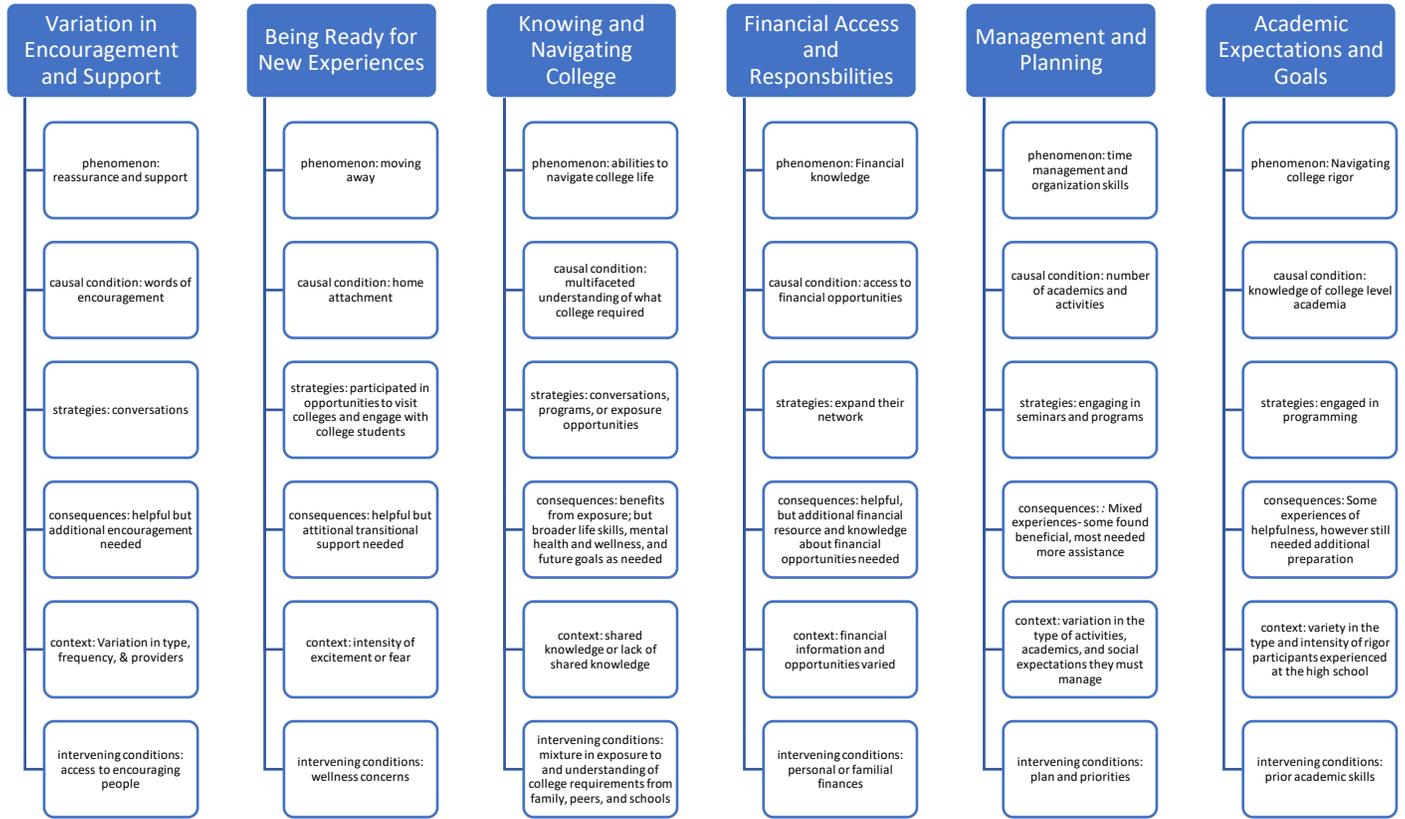
The data revealed that participants experience of social capital varied across the different sources of social capital they discussed. They highlighted their sources of social capital and their experiences of obstacles reflecting on their time as a high school student as well as during their first year enrolled in post-secondary education. To further understand their experiences of

college readiness level 2 of Strauss and Corbin (1998) coding paradigm was used to filter the data further.

     Level Two. Using the Strauss and Corbin (1998) coding paradigm, the level one codes that emerged were filtered through the second level and grouped based on their similarities. They were filtered through six subcategories to further explore their relationship to one another and toward the development of categories. The coding paradigm used these six subcategories: (1) phenomenon, (2) causal condition, (3) strategies, (4) consequences, (5) context, and (6) intervening condition. Phenomenon highlighted the central idea of what was being studied. Causal conditions explored why the phenomenon happen. Strategies explored what the participants did because of the phenomenon. Consequences highlighted what happened because of the participants' implemented strategy. Context was used to describe where the phenomenon happened or the intensity or frequency with which it occurred. Intervening conditions described the attributes of the participant, such as demographic information, former experiences, or characteristics that may have influenced their strategies.

     Through the process of filtering, level one codes were summarized into descriptive categories. Each of these categories are descriptors in the data about how college readiness was influenced. The following 6 categories were developed: (1) Variation in encouragement and support, (2) Being ready for new experiences, (3) Knowing and navigating college, (4) Financial access and responsibility, (5) Management and planning, and (6) Academic expectations and goals. See Figure 6 for the substructures of the categories. See Table 13 for the level two categories, their supportive level one codes, definitions, and illustrations.

Figure 6.

Axial Coding: development of categories.

Variation in Encouragement and Support	Being Ready for New Experiences	Knowing and Navigating College	Financial Access and Responsbilities	Management and Planning	Academic Expectations and Goals
phenomenon: reassurance and support	phenomenon: moving away	phenomenon: abilities to navigate college life	phenomenon: Financial knowledge	phenomenon: time management and organization skills	phenomenon: Navigating college rigor
causal condition: words of encouragement	causal condition: home attachment	causal condition: multifaceted understanding of what college required	causal condition: access to financial opportunities	causal condition: number of academics and activities	causal condition: knowledge of college level academia
strategies: conversations	strategies: participated in opportunities to visit colleges and engage with college students	strategies: conversations, programs, or exposure opportunities	strategies: expand their network	strategies: engaging in seminars and programs	strategies: engaged in programming
consequences: helpful but additional encouragement needed	consequences: helpful but attitional transitional support needed	consequences: benefits from exposure; but broader life skills, mental health and wellness, and future goals as needed	consequences: helpful, but additional financial resource and knowledge about financial opportunities needed	consequences: : Mixed experiences- some found beneficial, most needed more assistance	consequences: Some experiences of helpfulness, however still needed additional preparation
context: Variation in type, frequency, & providers	context: intensity of excitement or fear	context: shared knowledge or lack of shared knowledge	context: financial information and opportunities varied	context: variation in the type of activities, academics, and social expectations they must manage	context: variety in the type and intensity of rigor participants experienced at the high school
intervening conditions: access to encouraging people	intervening conditions: wellness concerns	intervening conditions: mixture in exposure to and understanding of college requirements from family, peers, and schools	intervening conditions: personal or familial finances	intervening conditions: plan and priorities	intervening conditions: prior academic skills

Table 13.

Findings from Levels 1 and 2 Analysis

Level 2 Categories	Supportive Level One Codes	Category Definition	Illustrative Quotes
Variation in Encouragement and Support	Advice, encouragement, family support, school support, peer support, supportive resources	Encouragement and support received from family, peers, and programs were identified as social capital toward feelings of college readiness at both the high school and post-secondary level.	"Helped me having my family because they were able to like really try to push me to umm you know have a plan after I graduated" "What I was missing to feel college ready was a strong support system" "Helping us, pushing us, telling us we can go and stuff we can do it" "Encourage me to do good and like do well so that I can you know like go to college and be the first in our family."
Being Ready for a New Experience	College tours, manage anxiety, leaving home, feeling comfortable, experiences	Participants feelings about leaving the familiarity of their family, friends, or environment to their post-secondary education journey	"I was more scared to leave my family, that was going to be a big big" "I was super excited to go to college" "I was very scared when I left…I ain't never been away from my [family] like that" "How to manage my anxiety from leaving home and not being around family or being in a new space" "Umm going on a college tour and seeing the spaces was the most effective just because I'm a homebody so that helped me out a lot"
Knowing and Navigating College	Navigate college, college experiences, exposure, mentally ready, self-care, family experiences, information	Participants understanding of the multifaceted demands of college life were needed to help them feel ready for college and navigate college life healthier.	"to have an idea of what college would be like" "to have a well-rounded perspective and preparation of college and life and living beyond academia" "the college tours and the conversations with my sister were the most helpful because I was able to navigate the campus better" "balance because if I wasn't good in my head then I wouldn't want to do any type of work and so making sure that I took care of myself and didn't allow outside influences of personal life things to take my distract-well give me, make me distracted from

			being able to navigate through my academics"
Financial Access and Responsibilities	Help with financial aid, scholarships, FAFSA, afford, understanding costs, get and manage money and finances	Participants felt a need for additional preparation for the diversity of the financial responsibility of post-secondary education. They recall utilizing their networks, but still required additional financial resources.	• "You know as a student financial, you know financial things are, they can be, they can be pretty heavy… especially if you're paying on your own pocket" • "to have knowledge on how to receive grants and scholarships" • "I didn't have the help other kids had" and what was missing was "knowledge of what goes into applying and receiving grants/scholarships" • "umm going to those people who were able to give umm finances within the school whether it was in house scholarships or definitely umm supporting me to being able to be outside and give different outside umm scholarship options"
Management and Planning	Time management, preparedness, obstacles, organization, plan	Participants knowledge of how to manage and having a plan for their academic, social, and personal lives was necessary for college success.	• "I would honestly say like all in all the most essential thing that you need for school is time management and like you know yeah really just time management and studying… if I had those things and had mastered them before I went to school everything would have been a lot easier for me" • "knowing how to manage schoolwork, working, and social life" • "Having a plan contributed to my feelings of being college ready" • "for those who had their priorities set straight you know time management wasn't really a issue"
Academic Expectations and Goals	Study skills, academic classes, academic success, priorities, academic planning	Participants note their concerns of being able to fully rise to the challenge of college life, studying, preparing for classes, and making the best academic decisions for their majors, classes, and career goals	• "Understanding how to pick and choose classes that worked for the field of study" • "Have the mindset to be dedicated to a particular area of study that you may be doing your whole life" • "Once you know classes started and stuff they weren't that bad until you know the academics got more intense and then I just felt like I didn't come into school with the right mindset"

Category 1. Variation in Encouragement and Support. Many participants reported encouraging words, supportive resources, and receiving advice as an influence toward their feelings of college readiness. The level one open codes that were identified in the development of this category included: Advice, encouragement, family support, school support, peer support, supportive resources. The grounded research analysis highlighted that the words of encouragement (causal condition) participants received influenced their feelings about being able to attend and do well in college because it provided reassurance and support (phenomenon). When asked about contributing factors to feeling college ready participants stated, "parents and support they gave me," "parents support," "program support," and "helping us, pushing us, telling us we can go and stuff we can do it." While findings show a variety in the type, frequency, and providers of encouragement (context), participants who had access to anyone who encouraged them (intervening condition) noted feeling reassured about attending college. Participants reported that it, "helped me having my family because they were able to like really try to push me to umm you know have a plan after I graduated" and, "encouragement of my community and practical resources and tools" helped feelings of college readiness. Participants recall engaging in conversations about their college readiness journey with family, peers, school personnel, and program staff (strategies). One participant recalled program staff, "talking to us juniors and stuff helping us telling us to go and stuff." Another shared, "my mom was the only one that was like really trying to push me to like go to college 'cause she wanted me to have the opportunities that she didn't." Some participants noted needing additional support and encouragement (consequence) to help them feel college ready, stating, "what I was missing to feel college ready was a strong support system," and "personal advice and not just general." Most participants recall encouragement as a contributing factor for college readiness at both the

high school and post-secondary level, sharing that, "they still encouraging me," "people in my ear helping me," and "encourage me to do good and like do well so that I can you know like go to college and be the first in our family."

  Category 2. Being Ready for a New Experience. Feelings about moving away from family, friends, or familiarity of their environment revealed as influential in participants' surveys and interviews. The level one codes in this category included: college tours, manage anxiety, leaving home, feeling comfortable, experiences. For some participants the feelings of moving away from home, leaving their family, and living in a new environment was an internal consideration they had to face when considering if they were ready for college. When asked what it meant to be college ready participants responded, "open to the new experience," "ready to leave home," and "ready to start a new journey, meet new people, and new environment." For some participants, it was the strategies they implemented that helped them to transition to a new environment. Grounded theory discovered that participants' home attachment (causal condition) influenced their feelings about moving away (phenomenon) for college. Participants stated, "I was more scared to leave my family, that was going to be a big big" and "I was very scared when I left…I ain't never been away from my [family] like that." The intensity of excitement or fear (context) participants had concerning entering a new environment varied. Some participants reported, "I was super excited to go to college" and "I was very comfortable. I I didn't even cry when my parents left as soon as they closed the [car] door I was excited." Others reported they were, "scared to leave my family" and "leaving home was a big deal." Some participants reported wellness concerns (intervening conditions) about leaving home, sharing that they wanted to know, "how to manage my anxiety from leaving home and not being around family or being in a new space." To aid their transition to new spaces, participants recalled participating in

opportunities to visit colleges and engage with college students prior to making a commitment (strategy). One participant reported, "Umm going on a college tour and seeing the spaces was the most effective just because I'm a homebody so that helped me out a lot." Another participant reported, "I was in a group chat with you know my future fellow classmates." Overall participants reported good outcomes from their exposure strategies, while some reported still needing additional transitional support (consequence). Participants shared, "being able to see what it was like," "honestly doing the University Bridges program helped me realize what all comes with college and how different it was from my home life," and "the college tour" as helpful in their transition to a new environment.

 Category 3. Knowing and Navigating College. Participants reported that understanding college life was helpful for attaining college success. They described the importance of exposure to and understanding of the academic, social, and personal demands of college life as tools to being successful. Participants shared experiences of exposure, "the college tour as well like it was so fun umm and then it it it really gave us the insight of like being at a college like being an actual college student so we kind of got like a taste of what that was going to be like." Level one open codes that contributed to this category included: navigate college, college experiences, exposure, mentally ready, self-care, family experiences, information. Grounded theory discovered that participants' multifaceted understanding of what college required (causal condition) influenced their abilities to navigate college life (phenomenon). Participants shared it was necessary, "to have a well-rounded perspective and preparation of college and life and living beyond academia." Participants noted that shared knowledge or lack of shared knowledge (context) from family, peers, programs, or their school contributed to their degree of understanding of what college would require of them. They shared, "I did have a sister she went

to college, and she was helpful," "like my family, my mom she she didn't go to college so as far as like getting that umm like the advice that I would have wanted from like a close family member like I wasn't able to get it at home so I kinda had to get it from school," "our counselors like you know they invited us to participate in the umm university bridge program and so like that kind of helped with like learning about certain things as far as college" and UB "taking the college tours and just being able to hear and talk to college students about their experience was a good help." They reported a mixture in exposure to and understanding of college requirements from family, peers, and schools (intervening conditions). Participants expressed, "my stepmom helped me because she's been in school before, but my dad like he he barely I don't I don't think he got his degree and my biological mother never went to college so," "the college tours and the conversations with my sister were the most helpful because I was able to navigate the campus better," and my peers were "kind of like stressing and then I was just helping them out with information that I was given to me based off the programs that I was involved in." Participants shared strategies for gaining knowledge of college requirements, including conversations, programs, or exposure opportunities (strategies). They recalled different opportunities, sharing, "she kind of helped navigate, that made it a little smoother," "they like actually gave us their insight as well about like what to expect for college so I think that was the highlight and it gave us like I think it helped prepare me for like actually being in college," and, "the kids that did have that support system I was able to talk to their families and us that didn't like we were able to like put our information together so we can figure out what was going on." While some participants shared benefits of exposure, others noted that life skills and mental health and wellness as areas in which they needed more understanding (consequence). Several participants echoed the importance of learning a balance between academia and mental health as a needed

aspect of navigating college life, sharing, it's important to "keep a balanced lifestyle and make sure it's you taking care of yourself so just in general social and wellness perspective along with the academics," "dealing with umm certain mental issues cause no one really no one really talked about that now that I'm thinking about it and I was like that was definitely that was a new experience" and "balance because if I wasn't good in my head then I wouldn't want to do any type of work and so making sure that I took care of myself and didn't allow outside influences of personal life things to take my distract- well give me, make me distracted from being able to navigate through my academics."

Category 4. Financial Access and Responsibility. A significant category for all participants centered around financial access and responsibility. Most participants noted the diversity of financial responsibility and lack of financial access as an added obstacle when considering post-secondary education. One participant stated, "You know as a student financial; you know financial things are, they can be, they can be pretty heavy… especially if you're paying on your own pocket." Participants also identified financial concerns beyond paying for tuition, and room and board. Highlighting daily essential items that they would have previously not had to consider when living at home with their parents. One participant shared, "having finances not just to pay for tuition but for like normal things of like you know toothpaste, you know soap, you know snacks." The level one codes that contributed to this category included: Help with Financial Aid, Scholarships, FAFSA, Afford, understanding costs, Get and Manage Money and Finances. Analysis revealed that participants' access to financial opportunities (causal condition) influenced their financial knowledge (phenomenon) when preparing for college. They shared needing, "more help with scholarships before it was too late," "to have knowledge on how to receive grants and scholarships," and "knowledge of what goes into

applying and receiving grants/scholarships." The intensity, type, and frequency of participants'

access to financial information and opportunities varied (context). One participant shared, "I

didn't have the help other kids had," while another shared that, "although I had scholarships

from participating in the UB program, more money would've been nice." Participants' personal

or familial finances (intervening circumstance) also influenced their experience. They shared that

they had, "no money," "no financial support," needed "proper financial management skills" and

were "not good at managing my own money." To address their need for additional financial

experiences participants sought to expand their network to include additional resources

(strategies). Participants shared, "being able to be around someone that helped with financial aid

and just finances in general" and "umm going to those people who were able to give umm

finances within the school whether it was in house scholarships or definitely umm supporting me

to being able to be outside and give different outside umm scholarship options." Participants

continued sharing concern for their new financial responsibilities, stating that they, "lacked

secured finances outside of financial aid," needed "more scholarships," were concerned about

"having the money," "not being able to afford the umm the tuition and everything," and that "to

be college ready to me meant being ready to pay for school." Some participants recalled positive

experiences from expanding their network, but most noted still needing additional financial

resource and knowledge about financial opportunities (consequences). Participants shared about

the opportunities they did experience, that "It didn't really, it didn't really help me," needing "a

financial um goal or even like the financial set up and plan or like a strategic plan on how you're

going to navigate that and not just relying on in house scholarship but really having a plan to

having that resources available," and "I wouldn't be as stressed on how I will pay for school or

just have that extra like burden on my shoulders so like either college tuition or something like that in place so I would transition easily on that aspect of tuition and scholarships and that such."

Category 5. Management and Planning. When asked about different factors that might affect a student's application to college, 50% or more of participants surveyed responded that a lack of time management influenced their college readiness. For participants that agreed to a follow up interview, when asked what it meant for them to be college ready, they responded with, "to be college ready means to know how to manage your time," "watch your time, be good with your time management," and "I had to be prepared to be responsible on my own without my parents." The following level one codes contributed to this category: time management, preparedness, obstacle, organization, plan. The grounded research analysis found that the number of academics or activities that participants enrolled in (causal condition) influenced their need for time management and organization skills (phenomenon) at the college level. Participants shared, "I would honestly say like all in all the most essential thing that you need for school is time management and like you know yeah really just time management and studying… if I had those things and had mastered them before I went to school everything would have been a lot easier for me," and also being, "able to handle going to class and manage my time," and "to be prepared and have an understanding and responsibility in getting myself up and to class on time." Participants went on to share a variation in the type of activities, academics, and social expectations that they managed (context). Reporting, "knowing how to manage schoolwork, working, and social life," "to able to control and balance life, school and play," and "knowing how to like manage your time like like if you have a job or you have something else, I think that's that's pretty important like you did not just sitting around wasting time." Participants also shared that having a plan and setting priorities (intervening condition) helped to balance college

demands. Participants shared, "having a plan contributed to my feelings of being college ready," "have an idea of what you want to do with your life, how college can help you achieve it," "for those who had their priorities set straight you know time management wasn't really an issue." To help with time management participants noted engaging in seminars and programs (strategies). Participant recounted, "They helped because I got a firsthand experience as to you know how it's supposed to do it," and "I do remember like us going to certain classes, and I was waking up at the crack of dawn to go do these certain things." While some students reported the programming helpful, most students reported that they did not experience enough preparation related to time management (consequence). Participants suggested, "in order to truly prepare somebody for that [time management] you would have to like put more um effort into like you know into like you know seminars or little programs that people can learn to manage their time and I understand that umm things can pass you before you could think about it," "taking me on campus and having a mentor just showed me the importance of umm of basically managing time," and "more help around time management because college like I said before like it isn't as structured like it's more free time so it's not as structured as high school so you just having more time management in preparation with that and being able to do that on my own."

Category 6. Managing Academic Expectations. Participants noted the importance of academic success and their concerns of being able to fully rise to the challenge of college life, studying, preparing for classes, and making the best academic decisions for their majors, classes, and career goals. The following level one open codes contributed to this category: study skills, academic classes, academic success, priorities, academic planning. Participants shared, to be college ready means, "good grades," "ready for classes," "how to do well in classes," "to understand and comprehend," and "understanding how to pick and choose classes that worked

for the field of study." Grounded research found that the knowledge participants had of college level academia (causal condition) influenced how they navigated the multifaceted rigor of college (phenomenon). Participants shared that college includes, "learning how to pick through these different classes," "balancing and integrating courses that related," "have the mindset to be dedicated to a particular area of study that you may be doing your whole life," "knowing when to study and when to prioritize school," and remaining "disciplined and making sure priorities straight." Participants expressed variety in the type and intensity of rigor they experienced at the high school level (context) and that their prior academic skills (intervening condition) influenced their ability to be successful at the college level. They shared, "I honestly do not know how to study at all, like I don't, I wouldn't even have the slightest clue. I just you know, just like look at stuff or be like oh I learned this in class, I'll be fine for the test," and "in high school I never studied because you know everything was just, it was so easy." To enhance their academic rigor participants recalled engaging in various programming (strategies), such as, dual enrollment programs, college exposure programs, AP classes, study sessions and afterschool programs with a college prep focus. One student shared, "we would have like study session and things like that," and "I was exposed to like you know the type of text and vocabulary that I would be seeing once I went to school." These strategies provided some level of needed exposure, however students still reported needing additional preparation for the academic rigor of college (consequences). One participant reported, "once you know classes started and stuff, they weren't that bad until you know the academics got more intense and then I just felt like I didn't come into school with the right mindset."

Level Three. The level three selective coding process was used to make the connection between the categories that were developed in level 2, in order that the central idea of the theory

might be identified. Selective coding was the process of finding the connection between the categories and connecting them with a core category. The core category was discovered by comparing category to category and creating one core category that connected them all. The core category then became the central idea for the new grounded theory that emerged.

During the process of selective coding all categories were reviewed and any categories that were not robust enough on their own were removed or merged with other categories. The "academic goals and expectations" category was combined as an aspect of the "knowing and navigating college" category. After rereading participants' experiences that the knowledge they had of college level academia influenced how they navigated the multifaceted rigor of college it was identified that this aligned more strongly as an aspect of "knowing and navigating college" than as a separate category. Therefore, "academic goals and expectations" was removed. The final core category served as the identifying central idea that captured the essence of what was being described in the data and aided in determining the final narrative. See Figure 7.

Figure 7.
Selective Coding- Core Category

Core Category. Figure 7 provides a visual model of the theory that emerged from the research, titled "College readiness impacted by the experiences of multilayered obstacles and the opportunities for and engagement in social capital." The obstacles and capital that students experienced, did not experience, received, and/or did not receive, was at the center of this study and interacted with all aspects of the data. They served as the foundation for the development of the theory and therefore became the core category. Participants highlighted obstacles and capital throughout both the survey and interview process. It was present throughout the entire study as participants discussed their experiences in the preparation, exploration, application, transition, and engagement stages of their post-secondary education process. Participants discussed their perception of college readiness through the lens of the obstacles and capital that they

experienced, how they responded to the presence and/or absence of obstacles and capital, and the outcomes of their experiences when faced with varying obstacles and capital.

All participants shared that their college readiness was impacted by their multilayered experiences of financial access and responsibility, variation in encouragement and support, knowing and navigating college, being ready for new experiences, and management and planning. The intensity and frequency to which they each experienced these categories and their identification of their individual experiences within these categories as either liabilities or assets had a varying influence on their perception of college readiness. However, across all categories the outcomes revealed that the intensity, frequency, and types of obstacles they experienced almost always required more social capital than they had access to or opportunity to engage with. However, regardless of their experience of social capital, a majority of the participants still enrolled and reenrolled in post-secondary education.

Considering the findings conceptually, it is understood that participants entered their journey toward college readiness with preexisting individual experiences (e.g., presence or absence of support) that served as either liabilities or assets during their college readiness journey. While they expressed a diverse set of obstacles that were often specific to their individual circumstances, they all experienced common factors of challenges or need. Similarly, while participant recollections of their access to and participation in social capital varied based on individual circumstances, they shared a commonality in that across all categories additional social capital was required. Participants all had preexisting frameworks (that is, personal histories) that outlined their approach to college readiness and influenced identification of experiences as beneficial or obstructive on their journey to post-secondary education application, enrollment, and attendance.

Seeking education, encountering obstacles and social capital

On their journey of college readiness, these high school students began their process through the constraints of their personal and family history, i.,e., their upbringing and current situation that set foundations to which they had no input, expectations to which they were or were not exposed, and experiences that excited or alarmed. The desire to pursue post-secondary education was often a dream for participants, who in many cases lacked the resources and support to fully understand what this dream entailed. Nevertheless, the desire for post-secondary education and a quest for personal achievement kept the dream alive. So, when the opportunity to apply to post-secondary education presented, with support from family, peers, schools, and/or local-county and community-based programming, it was taken.

In beginning the steps of preparing, exploring, applying, transitioning, and engaging in the post-secondary education process, participants found themselves exposed to a world they had not fully anticipated. Expectations of preexisting knowledge and necessary access to resources resulted in an exposure to the obstacles and the need for capital that stood before them on this new adventure. They were seeking advanced degrees yet encountered a personal framework of assets and liabilities that contextualized their future goals. Each participant entered the world of college readiness with a framework preestablished by their old environment, a framework in which they either found assistance or difficulty for this journey. The context of their environment demonstrated the circumstances that preexisted their decision to begin their journey to post-secondary education. For some this may have been access to social capital in the form of family with previous post-secondary knowledge, while for others this was the realization that no capital existed to help shape their experience.

The exposure to the range of knowledge needed to be prepared to successfully enter and remain at a post-secondary institution (beyond what was originally understood) was accompanied by a need for new levels of capital. This process of discovery left participants evaluating how their families, peers, schools, and local programs served as an asset or a liability to their feelings of college readiness. In some cases, this process of exploration was gradual, identifying varying aspects of assets and liabilities as new knowledge of post-secondary education requirements became more available. Undertaking this process left some participants with feelings of instability, identified lack of opportunity, and questioning of personal levels of ability. For others this process prompted feelings of excitement, assurance in ability to manage the unknown of post-secondary education, and a desire for the transition to a new environment and new experiences.

For all students, the consideration of post-secondary education, the exposure to a world beyond that to which they were accustomed, and the sense of accomplishment in personal development had implications beyond those of college readiness. The opportunity of college attendance was a step toward upward mobility, attaining a desirable job, and accomplishing a dream. Participants quickly learned that undertaking the journey to post-secondary education was not a journey they could take alone. Studies at this level required support at the familial, peer, school, and local-county and community level. The ability to consider aspects of a world to which entry was limited, knowledge was lacking, and preexisting frameworks did not prepare to accommodate required an expansion to the network to which participants had access.

Gone was the idea that high school academia alone was enough preparation for post-secondary education. These participants recognized the difference in the types, intensity, and frequency of preparation it would require, making their experiences of college readiness

opportunities more impactful to their preparation, enrollment, and attendance at the post-secondary level. The meaning of preparedness extended to include a responsibility to mental health and wellness, financial management, environmental adjustment, and personal development. Through their personal desires of seeking education, these participants discovered new layers to the current programming, resources, and opportunities available to students who shared similar variations in their framework and required expansive responses of social capital.

The need to understand college readiness as a multifaceted experience was discovered, an experience of preexisting frameworks that provided assets and labilities entwined with intervening opportunities that provided targeted capital. Obstacles and social capital, therefore, both contributed to and were a consequence of the multifaceted nature of post-secondary education and the opportunities for and engagement in college readiness preparation. A more comprehensive approach to college readiness that provides holistic consideration of the students' individual framework should therefore be a tool for social capital development and implementation that more significantly influences students' perception of college readiness.

Discussion

The goal of this mixed method study was to explore the college readiness journey of racially minoritized students attending Title I high schools. The use of mixed methodology was implemented to understand how participants navigated the obstacles they experienced, and the social capital opportunities made available to them. A summary of the findings begins below. Next, a presentation and explanation of the theoretical model developed through this study is presented and followed by a discussion of the findings in the context of the theoretical framework for this study and further research.

Summary of the Findings

Thirty-five students who enrolled in the University Bridges program from 10 different Title I high schools in the Southeastern United States participated in this study to investigate their college readiness journey. Implementing both quantitative and qualitative approaches, their engagement with and their perception of various social capital opportunities and obstacles on their journey to post-secondary education was explored. Participants shared their experiences with the obstacles encountered during their journey, the social capital resources they used, and their perceived preparedness for college during the exploration, application, and enrollment phases of post-secondary education.

The study focused on several key research questions to better understand participants' experiences of college readiness. Included in this study was an examination of participants' engagement with social capital opportunities offered by University Bridges specifically, identification of other social capital opportunities or supports that were available, and the perceived helpfulness of the opportunities to which they had access. Participants counted parents, schools, peers, college readiness programs, and University Bridges as sources of social capital, but varied in the level of perceived helpfulness they experienced with the resources. The findings revealed that 16 opportunities were provided to participants, and 11 of those opportunities were considered a "major help" by more than half of the participants.

Students noted that although participation in the social capital opportunities assisted in their journey to college readiness, they still encountered challenges along the way. While most participants reported enrolling in post-secondary education despite the challenges they faced, with four-year institutions being the most common choice, they still expressed that this transition was not void of obstacles. Participants shared challenges with financial security and

management, personal problems, and loss of interest. Unfortunately for 6 of the 35 participants, the obstacles they experienced hindered their completion of their first year of post-secondary education, while 2 others completed their first year but did not reenroll for a second year.

Additional challenges faced by participants included lack of college financial knowledge, academic grades, lack of time management, lack of experience on college campuses, and working. While these and other obstacles were commonly reported, there was considerable variability; in fact, some described them as either a "minor challenge" or "no challenge at all." Even though obstacles were a part of their journey, they reported that they were not challenging enough to prevent them from pursuing post-secondary education.

More than 75% of participants expressed readiness for college after high school, although once enrolled they shared how various aspects of college life were experienced differently than expected. Participants highlighted the multilayered and multifaceted nature of their experiences applying to and enrolling in post-secondary education. The core category of this study revealed that college readiness was impacted by both multilayered obstacles and multilayered opportunities for and engagement in social capital. Further, the individual variation in participants' experiences reflected the variation of their preexisting frameworks or personal histories that in turn influenced their navigation of the obstacles they faced and their engagement of social capital. Participants emphasized that their perception of supportiveness and obstacles was influenced by the aspects of their preexisting framework which included their relationships with family, peer groups, and schools. These variations in their preexisting frameworks influenced how they navigated obstacles and how they utilized the social capital that was made accessible.

Overall, the study found that participants faced a diverse set of experiences on their post-secondary education journey. They experienced varying levels of support and varying perceptions of obstacles, leading to a nuanced picture how social capital and obstacles interacted to affect their perceived college readiness.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Theoretical Framework

Social capital theory guided the framework for this study. Hill, Bregman, and Andrade (2015) define Social Capital as the resources that are embedded within the social networks that are accessible for use to achieve specified goals. With consideration to college readiness, social capital theory asserts that the network of relationships that students share with counselors, peers, teachers, and their family are points of leverage. Through these relationships student gain access to the resources needed to make well-informed decisions on their journey to applying, enrolling, and transitioning through college (Le et al., 2016; Moschetti & Hudley, 2008). Participants in this study illustrated this. They noted their engagements with school staff, peers, and family as sources of social capital for them while on their journey to college readiness. More than 80% of participants noted parental support as an influence on their college readiness journey with almost all sharing that family encouragement was not an area of challenge. However, when considering peers and school staff, participants noted those networks varied in the type, intensity, and frequency in the social capital made available and accessed. While most participants noted no negative peer influences on their journey to post-secondary education, they also noted a lack of knowledge across their peer groups regarding the process of applying, enrolling in, and transitioning through post-secondary education. Also shared was the variation in type, intensity, and frequency of social capital provided by their school network. Many participants shared the greatest resources their schools provided were referrals to other college readiness programs or

services and words of encouragement from school counselors. These referrals included information provided for enrollment in UB and other local- or community- based programs or services. That their schools could only provide referrals is one of the disadvantages that students in Title I schools face when attempting to successfully navigate the college-going process, particularly when compared to advantaged students (Perna & Titus, 2005; Stanton-Salazar, 2010).

While all participants in this study had experiences across all these relational networks, they formed their own unique assessments of their experiences with these potential sources of social capital. For example, some participants categorized them as challenges to their post-secondary education journey rather than capital. This mixed assessment across individuals rose from their preexisting frameworks with which they entered the college readiness journey.

The preexisting framework refers to the experiences and contextual factors that the students' brought with them into their college readiness journey, including their upbringing, socio-economic background, familial educational experiences, academic environment, and peer relationships. Students' experiences of these factors prior to their college readiness journey influenced how they perceived and categorized their experiences with the intended sources of social capital. For example, one student reported that the college tours were very helpful because they made her more comfortable being away from home. However, she already had prior knowledge of what to expect from college because her sister went to college and shared her experiences. Another student shared that the college tours were very helpful and one of the first experiences she had learning what to expect in college because she did not have access to a network that had post-secondary educational experiences to share.

For these networks to function as social capital they must provide important information related to college readiness. The reported (Dyce et al., 2013; Trent et al., 2006) deficit that racially minoritized students from Title I schools face in their basic knowledge of college, the academic expectations, expenses, and opportunities for funding, as well as navigating the multilayered environment of college campuses, puts them at higher risk for poorer college adjustment or not reenrolling if they do enter a post-secondary institution. For participants in this study that did not reenroll, they noted experiences of financial issues, loss of interest, and personal problems as factors that influenced their decision.

Participants held in common the need for additional support due to the multilayered obstacles they encountered on their journey to post-secondary education. Most participants also held in common that their experiences of obstacles were not grave enough that they did not persist. However, the need for a more expansive network of social capital to provide support in areas of financial assets and responsibility, planning and management, encouragement, being fully prepared for their new experience, and navigating college life was made clear. All recounted a need for additional social support to reduce the number of obstacles they encountered as they applied to, enrolled in, and transitioned through post-secondary education.

Findings in Relation to Previous Literature

This research highlighted a segment of college-readiness programming that was not previously addressed in the literature (Gándara & Bial, 2001; Swail & Perna, 2002). While many community- and school-based programs do attempt to evaluate program effectiveness by comparing participants' achievement to non-participants at the state, district, or school level, little is known concerning the participants' perceptions of their experience and the benefit from participating in said programs, which makes it difficult to attribute success (Domina, 2009). The

lack of rigorous assessment at the community- or school-based level limits the extent that these programs can maximize their opportunity for specialized college-readiness programming for racially minoritized student attending Title I high schools and provide benchmarking criteria about the experienced effects of college readiness programming at this level (Perna & Swail, 2001).

Previous studies posit that many prospective college students do not understand how to access supports to secure readiness prior to applying for college or that the decision to attend college came too late in the application process (Wiggins, 2011; Hambrick & Stage, 2004; Hossler et al., 1999; Perna, 2005; Roderick et al., 2009). Participants in this study also highlighted a lack of understanding or receiving information too late regarding what it takes to be a college student, resources to aid with financial support, and knowing how to plan and manage the rigor of college academia and social expectations. Researchers have identified several key barriers that hinder the college going process, including inadequate academic preparation, lack of financial aid knowledge, limited access to college information, limited social support, and lack of knowledge concerning the college application process (Le et al., 2016). For schools and communities that experience social and economic need, lack of financial aid knowledge has been cited as a major barrier when pursuing higher education (Ross et al., 2012). Similarly, researchers have found that students from impoverished schools or communities are significantly less likely to apply for or enroll in a four-year post-secondary institution in part because of their lack of knowledge concerning college access (Bowen et al., 2009; Hoxby & Avery, 2013; Roderick et al., 2011). Participants in the current study also identified these same conditions/challenges as obstacles in their learning about, exploring, applying to, and enrolling in post-secondary institutions. Their experiences highlighted that there is a preexisting framework

that students enter their college readiness journey with that also influences their college-going process. Preexisting frameworks play a major role in influencing students' readiness for college as either impediment or support. These frameworks can influence students' knowledge and awareness of post-secondary options and requirements, access to resources, peer knowledge and supportive influence, academic preparedness, and prior knowledge and familial guidance. Students' college readiness begins well before they begin their college journey and is influenced by the environmental, familial, cultural, academic, and socio-economic framework that functions as an asset or a liability to their post-secondary goals.

One of the most critical factors of social capital is support from peers, family, and instructors (Gibbons & Borders, 2010; Le et al., 2016). While social support can vary based on the needs of the student, studies have confirmed the link between college readiness, college attendance, and the completion of college and students' experiences of social support (Gibbons & Borders, 2010). Previous studies also assert that college students may experience tension with peers and family as they transition to college, resulting in less support and encouragement, partly due to parental expectations that working after high school is necessary to contribute financially to the family (Gibbons & Borders, 2010; Engle, 2007). One participant reported similar experiences with her family, sharing that when her family considered the cost of attending a college that did not offer a scholarship, she was encouraged to go get a job or a trade because of the financial impact it would have on the overall family. However, most participants reported family support and encouragement as one of the highest contributing factors to feeling college ready.

Studies have shown that when compared to advantaged students with higher income, college-degreed parents, or those that are non-racially minoritized, disadvantaged students are at

a higher risk of lacking the social capital needed to successfully navigate the college-going

process (Perna & Titus, 2005; Stanton-Salazar, 2010). Often disadvantaged students experience a

deficit in their basic knowledge of college, the academic preparation process, completing college

applications, expenses, and funding, and navigating the social environments on college

campuses, putting them at higher risk for not entering college, adjusting poorly to college if they

enter, and dropping out (Stanton-Salazar, 2010; Pascarella et al., 2004). These challenges

provide a unique opportunity for college readiness programming to take a multi-level approach

to understanding students' perceptions of what it means to be college ready and provide the

social capital opportunities needed to support them as they learn about, explore, apply to, and

enroll in post-secondary institutions (Le et al., 2016). In a study conducted by Francis, Duke,

Bridham and Demetro (2018) participants also described executive functioning skills (e.g., time

management, organization, life-school balance training), study skills (e.g., professor

expectations, study organization techniques), and literacy skills (e.g., citations, research, college

level reading requirements) as areas of needed additional support from their high school

institutions (Francis et al., 2018). Almost 30% of participants in this study had parents who

attended college, however, like students who did not have parents who attended college, they

also expressed needing college information concerning knowing and navigating college, being

ready for new experiences, management and planning, financial access and responsibilities, and

a variation in encouragement and support.

Implications

Inherent in the findings of this research are implications for family, peer, school, and

local-county and community-based college readiness social capital. The literature revealed that

obstacles and social capital that students experienced were a part of their preexisting framework

and were a component of their consideration of post-secondary education. There are several ways that findings from this study may be used in local-county and community-level college readiness program development. The significant influence of multi-layered social capital and obstacles that are prevalent in the literature and in the current research highlight the importance of programmatic development that embodies a holistic approach to students as they learn about, explore, apply to, and enroll in post-secondary education.

This study makes key contributions to the current literature on students' perceptions of college-readiness programming developed at the local-county and community level. Data from this study show that the areas of social capital and obstacles that students experience are not one dimensional but multilayered. Despite the intense amount of planning, effort, and resources devoted to implementing college readiness interventions, prior to the present study relatively little was known about students' perceptions of these programs. Findings from this study should help fill the gaps in research to understand college readiness from students' perceptions of their experience along their journey. Studies have indicated (Byrd & Macdonald, 2005, Francis et al., 2018; Le et al., 2016) that college-readiness programs should offer a series of comprehensive services, such as tutoring, financial literacy classes, coaching, college awareness and exposure, and cultural enrichment. Program developers may benefit from the perceptions provided in this study to incorporate its findings in college readiness development opportunities and support for students as they prepare to apply, attend, and remain in post-secondary institutions. They should particularly consider the areas of college readiness where students reported additional support was required, including financial access and responsibility, variation in encouragement and support, knowing and navigating college, being ready for new experiences, and management and planning.

An unexpected finding from this study was that participants mentioned during interviews the issue of being ready or not for new experiences. Students shared challenges with anxiety, fear, and mental health as they considered and transitioned into new post-secondary environments. They highlighted intrapersonal difficulties either as they prepared themselves to transition leaving home to attend college or as currently enrolled college students discussing their obstacles moving away from the only experience they have ever known, meeting new people, and navigating unfamiliar spaces. Additional support that would benefit students as they ready themselves for college include information about managing new experiences, intrapersonal skill building, encouragement and support, and mental health and wellness development. Students acknowledged that college tours, exposure to other college students, and opportunities to participate in immersion programs were buffers against their feelings of anxiety and unease in their consideration of and transition to post-secondary education.

Students' concerns for mental health support also spanned to their discussions of knowing and navigating college and management and planning. In the category of knowing and navigating college, students discussed the importance of knowing how to develop and maintain an academic and mental health balance, learning how to take care of one's wellbeing, and dealing with different mental issues. The need for opportunities to receive encouragement from professors, peers, and family, as well as knowledge of how to communicate with professors, and balance academic pressures were identified in this study as needed expansions to social capital. College-readiness programming that emphasized the importance of mental health and wellness for students as they prepared, applied, transitioned, and attended college would be a valuable social capital resource. Programs should develop materials that promote an understanding about the factors that can influence students' experiences of mental health and wellness at the college

level. An awareness of these factors may lead students to healthy communication, increased understanding, and the development of healthier and more supportive networks. Programs should also provide opportunities for students to meet with counselors to discuss their mental health concerns as a part of the early stages of preparation, application, and exploration of post-secondary education. Within college settings, peer mentoring and transition programming should be available to first year students as a tool to help them learn how to navigate campus life and academic expectations and to receive advice from other students who share similar experiences.

Another way to strengthen college readiness programming for students is to enhance support in the areas of management and planning and knowing and navigating college. When discussing their experiencing of obstacles and social capital during their interviews, participants frequently highlighted their need for greater knowledge concerning time management, future planning, knowing what to expect at the college level, and navigating a post-secondary environment. Like the study by Francis, Duke, Bridham and Demetro (2018), several participants enrolled in post-secondary institutions reported needing additional support with time management while preparing, applying, and exploring colleges as well as once they enrolled in a post-secondary institution. Participants reported concerns around preparing for classes, making the best academic decisions for their career goals, and meeting the challenge of college life. These findings support those of Higbee (2003), where college freshmen offered high school freshmen and sophomores the advice to begin prioritizing college, making good decisions and healthy choices, and that college level work is difficult and requires self-discipline. Although other studies (Higbee et al., 2005; Ishitani, 2003) have highlighted the adjustment to rigor at the college level, opportunities for students to develop the skills needed to manage college demands is still lacking. One solution is to offer programming that requires students to learn to manage

their time, balance schoolwork and personal lives, develop plans for maintaining structure in

unstructured environments, and offer increased opportunities for high school students to

participate in college environments. Another way to promote time management, planning, and

the skills needed to successfully navigate college life is to provide increased opportunities for

students to learn about college life, gain understanding about the skills they will need to sharpen

to be successful, and develop strategies for improving personal responsibility, accountability, and

self-management.

Limitations

The sample for this study was students who participated in the University Bridges

program, because there was a gap in the literature related to students' perspectives of their

experience of college readiness programming. Studies have been conducted to evaluate pre-

collegiate intervention by federally sponsored programs such as Upward Bound, GEAR UP and

other university sponsored programs (Gándara & Bial, 2001; Swail & Perna, 2002; Seftor et al.

2009; Standing et al. 2008; Carrell & Sacerdote 2017; Cabrera et al. 2014) and have taken the

perspective of the program administrators, but their findings did not speak to the perspectives of

the participating students. Studies relating to the phenomenon of students' perspectives of

community and local county-based college readiness programs are relatively sparse (Le et al.,

2016) and leave a gap in the literature. I addressed this limitation and aided in expanding the

body of knowledge of this phenomenon at the local, community, and county level through a

more manageable and controlled study using surveys, interviews, transcriptions, and analysis.

As a result, however, this study was limited in its scope. A greater cross-section of

students and a larger number of participants would have aided in expanding the knowledge

gained from this study. For example, expanding the participants to include currently enrolled

University Bridges students would likely have resulted in more participants and more shared perspectives about current experiences of the college readiness programming at the local-county and community level. The study was also limited to participants of one local-county and community level college readiness program. A similar study conducted with multiple programs or in different areas of the state may inform this phenomenon further regarding the combined contributions of varied programs, geographic locations, and resources.

Other limitations include the voluntary nature of the study. While participants varied in their participation in social capital opportunities, family experiences of college enrollment, and socioeconomic backgrounds, a variation of cultural backgrounds was not represented. All participants surveyed identified with Black/African American heritage. No other minoritized ethnicities participated. Participants in this study all came from Title I high schools. Researchers have already identified several barriers that are hindering the college-going process for students at Title I schools, including inadequate academic preparation, lack of financial aid knowledge, limited access to college information, limited social support, and lack of knowledge concerning the college application process (Le et al., 2016). Initial sampling strategies for this study included contacting participants through emails sent from University Bridges staff. The goal was to engage all students that had participated in the UB program to gain a full understanding of their experiences and involvement. However, because of the volunteer nature of sampling and the social climate of COVID-19, responses were primarily from very involved students, students involved in more than one program offered by the office, or students who maintained communication with UB program staff since their completion of the program.

The nature of this study is retrospective which poses another limitation pertaining to the human experience. Some participants may have experienced selective recall in the retelling of

their prior experiences. While participants were given time to reflect on their past experiences, the study was not a longitudinal study that examined their experiences across several time intervals. A longitudinal study to examine students' perspectives at several points during UB participation and once enrolled in post-secondary education may provide a greater contribution of knowledge to the area of study. It is also important to note that numerous factors can impact participants' experiences, feelings, and recall. Data collection for this study occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, while participants were experiencing quarantine restrictions, changes to traditional post-secondary education, and may have experienced personal or familial challenges because of COVID-19. It is impossible for this study to take account of all these factors that may interact to influence participants' perceptions.

This research utilized researcher-generated surveys which is an additional limitation pertaining to the validity, reliability, and generalizability. Surveys that are researcher-generated lack the validity in accurately measuring what is intended to be measured. Additionally, the reliability of the survey did not undergo rigorous testing to ensure consistency in the results captured over time. This survey is also limited in its generalizability beyond the specific context and population of the group of participants that joined in this research project. For the purposes of educational research pilot testing ,expert review, comparative analysis, and transparent reporting are vital to aiding in the mitigation of these limitations. Additionally, remaining mindful of bias, utilizing multiple methods of data collection, and considering the contextual factors that influence the research should be accounted for in the careful design, testing, and reporting of findings.

Conclusion

This study investigated the college readiness experience of racially minoritized students from their perspective through surveys and interviews. Utilizing a grounded theory framework for discovery, this study has drawn from social capital theory. The findings and conclusions of this study has varying meaning for families, peers, schools, and local county- or community-based program developers. For families and peers, this data provides an opportunity to understand the experiences of students on their post-secondary journey and encouragement to offer greater opportunities of support, specifically in the areas of sharing experiences, providing encouragement, and identifying resources in advance.

For schools, understanding how college readiness is impacted by the experiences of multilayered obstacles and the social capital opportunities made available to and engaged in by students offers a new lens for understanding the experiences and needs of students. Specifically, school programming that aims to aid in post-secondary readiness for minoritized students at Title I schools should include a holistic consideration of the preexisting framework students carry with them to their post-secondary journey, as well as the access to additional social capital and experiences of new obstacles as particularly important to the experience of college readiness for students.

Finally, for local-county and community-based college readiness programs who develop programming and services specifically with the intention of aiding in students' application to, enrollment in, and persistence through college, this investigation represents students' perspectives of the multilayered obstacles and social capital and suggests a design for program development and facilitation needed for college readiness. Specifically, students discussed financial access and responsibility, variation in encouragement and support, knowing and

navigating college, being ready for new experiences, and management and planning. Additionally, they engaged in an examination of their experiences of social capital as the resources that were rooted within their social networks and were available as capital to achieve their goals (Hill, et al., 2015). These experiences indicate enhancements needed for future college readiness programming and targeted areas for program expansion within methods of development based on social capital theory.

Taken together, the data of this study revealed that this group of Title I UB participants entered their post-secondary journey with unique preexisting frameworks that influenced how they navigated their need of and engagement in social capital. Moreover, participants' experience of multilayered obstacles and their opportunities for and engagement in social capital, while not enough to stop their advancement to and persistence through post-secondary education, did impact their experience of college readiness. Participation in college-readiness social capital allowed them to learn about and navigate new experiences at the college level, expand and explore their social networks to include new relationships with counselors, peers, and local-county and community-based program staff, and engage in new college experiences to develop a more expansive understanding of applying to, engaging in, and persisting through post-secondary education. Moreover, though more research is needed, this study concluded that the journey of college readiness was best aided when students were exposed to and engaged in social capital opportunities that were multifaceted, comprehensive, and responsive to their preexisting background.

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Appendix A

UB Program Objectives Included (Application, pg. 3, 2017)**:**

1. Increased enrollment for college and universities and provided exposure to post-secondary institutions.

2. Provided opportunities for youth to interact on various cultural and social settings and established a network of positive youth by providing mentoring.

3. Developed a cohort of college ready youth.

4. Giving youth the opportunity to gain more knowledge of college readiness will increase percentages of youth that go to post-secondary institutions.

UB Program Workshop Outline

All program sessions for facilitated by Green County Office of Youth Services Program Liaison Kristen or high school contracted program facilitator. Sessions were held on a monthly or bi-monthly basis for the duration of the fall and spring school term, for a total of nine months. Sessions were taught by Kristen, her colleague, or a hired program facilitator. Kristen was the only coordinator responsible for the full operation of the program. However, she recruited and/or hired facilitators to administer the program sessions, recruit students, supervise fieldtrips and manage school logistics. Sessions were organized as followed (Application, pg. 4, 2017):

Session One: Picking the College or University for You. Students learned the important factors to consider when selecting a college or university. Topics such as: in-state vs. out-of-state tuition, predominantly white institution versus historically black colleges and universities, private versus public, and how to select a major were discussed.

At the completion of the session students should leave with a better idea for choosing a post-secondary institution. Students will also develop a list of one desirable, one attainable, and one fallback college/university.

Session Two: Applying to Schools. Students begin reviewing the common application and identified the documentation needed for their specific college list.

Session Three: Writing is Key! Students learned the importance of writing a strong personal statement and letters of recommendation. Students also discussed the importance of building good relationships.

Session 4: Financial Literacy Students reviewed the FASFA and learned how to apply for financial aid.

Session 5: Scholarships Students learned how to search and apply for scholarships. They also learned about the Pell Grant and the HOPE Scholarship (for GA residents in state only).

Session 6: Edit and Send! Students wrapped up any incomplete documents. Assistance was given to students who needed it in order to timely submit all documentation for colleges and scholarships.

Field Trip: College Trip (Fall semester) Students got exposure of colleges/ universities during a one-day field trip to Spelman College, Morehouse College, Clark- Atlanta University, Georgia State and Georgia Technical College. During the field trip, students were able to do college tours, eat on campus, sit in different class settings, and see on-campus life!

Field Trip: College Trip (Spring semester) An overnight college prep experience during the Spring semester. Throughout their stay, faculty and campus leaders equipped students with essential fundamental elements of earning a college degree. They learned certain aspects such as the importance of education, financial literacy, community involvement, protecting their brand, success in networking for the future, and more.

Appendix B

Participant Profiles

Participant characteristics and findings from the survey data are provided for each of the eleven

participants that agreed to a follow up interview. Participants are mentioned in no order.

 Participant One (IP1)

IP1 graduated high school in 2019 and attended a two-year college upon graduation. The

highest level of education completed by the participants' parent(s) was high school. The

participant did not complete the FAFSA and applied to one, two-year college and one, four-year

college and received acceptance to the two-year college. The participant completed the first year

in post-secondary education but had not reenroll for a second year at the time of the interview.

The participant responded "yes" to the question "did you feel ready for college upon graduation

from high school?" Explaining, [I was] "ready to start a new journey, meet new people, and new

environment" (survey response). The participant attributes afterschool programs that focused on

college preparation to feelings of being college ready and notes that "nothing" was missing to

help with feeling college ready.

IP1 recalls participating in after school/Saturday school tutoring, college/career

workshops, college fairs, college tours, career fairs, college class visitations, college information

sessions, writing workshops, college financial costs awareness seminars, college financial aid

awareness seminars, college application workshops, fee waivers, scholarship workshops, group

college awareness sessions, counselor college meetings, college program meetings, college

networking sessions, and college navigation sessions. Of the offered programs and services

participated in, all were listed as a major help. IP1 also notes a lack of college financial

knowledge, lack of time management, working, enrollment in remedial courses and failing grades as factors that affected applying to college.

Survey Participant Two (IP2)

IP2 graduated high school in 2018 and attended a four-year college upon graduation. The highest level of education completed by the participants' parent(s) was a two-year college. The participant did complete the FAFSA and applied to one, two-year college and three, four-year college and received acceptance to one, two-year college and 2 four-year colleges. The participant completed the first year in post-secondary education and reenroll for a second year at the time of the interview. The participant responded "yes" to the question "did you feel ready for college upon graduation from high school?" Explaining, "I knew how to do well in class, and I knew what to expect when I got to campus" (survey response). The participant attributes college preparation classes that were taken and being able to attend college tours to feelings of being college ready and notes that "more help with scholarships and figuring out financial stuff when I got campus" was missing to help with feeling college ready.

IP2 recalls participating in after school/Saturday school tutoring, peer tutoring, SAT/ACT preparatory programs, college/career workshops, school college/career workshops, college fairs, college tours, career fairs, FAFSA application review/support, college class visitations, college information sessions, writing workshops, college financial costs awareness seminars, college financial aid awareness seminars, college application workshops, fee waivers, scholarship workshops, group college awareness sessions, counselor college meetings, college program meetings, college networking sessions, and college navigation sessions. Of the offered programs and services participated in after school/Saturday school tutoring, peer tutoring, college fairs, career fairs, counselor college meetings, college program meetings, and college networking

sessions were a minor help. FAFSA application review/support, college information sessions, writing workshops, college financial costs awareness seminars, college financial aid awareness seminars, scholarship workshops, group college awareness sessions, and college navigation sessions were a moderate help. SAT/ACT preparatory programs, college/career workshops, school college/career workshops, college tours, college class visitations, college application workshops, and fee waivers were a major help. IP2 also notes a lack of college financial knowledge, lack of peer applying to college and lack of experience on a college campus as factors that affected applying to college.

Survey Participant Three (IP3)

IP3 graduated high school in 2019 and attended a four-year college upon graduation. The highest level of education completed by the participants' parent(s) was a two-year college. The participant did complete the FAFSA and applied to four, four-year college and received acceptance to one, four-year college. The participant completed the first year in post-secondary education and reenroll for a second year at the time of the interview. The participant responded "no" to the question "did you feel ready for college upon graduation from high school?" Explaining that to be college ready meant, "to understand and comprehend" (survey response). The participant attributes "mental state" to what contributed to feelings of being college ready and notes that "everything" was missing to help with feeling college ready.

IP3 recalls participating in SAT/ACT preparatory programs, AP/Honor level courses, college/career workshops, school college/career workshops, college instant decision, college fairs, college tours, career fairs, FAFSA application review/support, college class visitations, college information sessions, writing workshops, college financial costs awareness seminars, college financial aid awareness seminars, college application workshops, fee waivers,

scholarship workshops, group college awareness sessions, counselor college meetings, college program meetings, college networking sessions, and college navigation sessions. Of the offered programs and services participated in SAT/ACT preparatory programs and AP/Honor level courses were a minor help. College/career workshops, career fairs, FAFSA application review/support, college class visitations, college information sessions, writing workshops, college financial costs awareness seminars, college financial aid awareness seminars, college application workshops, fee waivers, scholarship workshops, group college awareness sessions, counselor college meetings, college program meetings, college networking sessions, and college navigation sessions were a moderate help. School college/career workshops and college instant decision were a major help. IP3 also notes a lack of college financial knowledge, academic grades, lack of time management, negative peer influence, lack of parental support, lack of peer applying to college, low level family encouragement, working, transportation, enrollment in remedial courses, failing grades, lack of knowledge of the college application process, lack of experience on a college campus, lack of study skills, attendance, low level value of a college degree, and lack of prior familial completion of college as factors that affected applying to college.

Survey Participant Four (IP4)

IP4 graduated high school in 2018 and attended a four-year college upon graduation. The highest level of education completed by the participants' parent(s) was high school. The participant did complete the FAFSA and applied to one two-year college and one four-year college and received acceptance to one four-year college. The participant completed the first year in post-secondary education and reenroll for a second year at the time of the interview. The participant responded "yes" to the question "did you feel ready for college upon graduation from

high school?" Explaining that to be college ready meant, "being prepared" (survey response). The participant stated, "I was going to be a first-generation college student, so I was excited to tackle the world" to what contributed to feelings of being college ready and notes that "although I had a scholarship from participating in the UB program, more money would've been nice" and is what was missing to help with feeling college ready.

IP4 recalls participating in Student learning/intervention plana, after school/Saturday school tutoring, SAT/ACT preparatory programs, college/career workshops, school college/career workshops, college instant decision, college fairs, college tours, career fairs, FAFSA application review/support, college class visitations, college information sessions, writing workshops, college financial costs awareness seminars, college financial aid awareness seminars, college application workshops, fee waivers, scholarship workshops, group college awareness sessions, counselor college meetings, college networking sessions, and college navigation sessions. Of the offered programs and services participated in all were a major help. IP3 also notes a lack of college financial knowledge, academic grades, lack of peer applying to college, working, transportation, failing grades, lack of knowledge of the college application process, lack of experience on a college campus, and lack of study skills as factors that affected applying to college.

Survey Participant Five (IP5)

IP5 graduated high school in 2018 and attended a four-year college upon graduation. The highest level of education completed by the participants' parent(s) was high school. The participant did complete the FAFSA and applied to one four-year college and received acceptance to one four-year college. The participant completed the first year in post-secondary education and had not reenroll for a second year at the time of the interview. The participant

responded "no" to the question "did you feel ready for college upon graduation from high school?" Explaining that to be college ready meant, "having the money" (survey response). The participant attributes "no money" to what contributed to feelings of being college ready and notes "financial support" was missing to help with feeling college ready.

IP5 recalls participating in SAT/ACT preparatory programs, college/career workshops, school college/career workshops, college fairs, college tours, career fairs, FAFSA application review/support, college class visitations, college information sessions, writing workshops, college financial costs awareness seminars, college financial aid awareness seminars, college application workshops, group college awareness sessions, counselor college meetings, and college program meetings. Of the offered programs and services participated in all were a moderate help. School college/career workshops and college instant decision were a major help. IP5 also notes a lack of college financial knowledge, lack of time management, lack of knowledge of the college application process, lack of experience on a college campus and lack of study skills as factors that affected applying to college.

Survey Participant Six (IP6)

IP6 graduated high school in 2017 and attended a four-year college upon graduation. The highest level of education completed by the participants' parent(s) was a four-year college. The participant did complete the FAFSA and applied to one four-year college and received acceptance to three four-year college. The participant completed the first year in post-secondary education and did reenroll for a second year at the time of the interview. The participant responded "yes" to the question "did you feel ready for college upon graduation from high school?" Explaining that to be college ready meant, "being ready to pay for school and know EXACTLY what you want to do with your life" (survey response). The participant attributes that

"I knew I was responsible, hardworking and determined to be college ready and independent in determining my career" to what contributed to feelings of being college ready and notes that was missing to help with feeling college ready was that "I didn't feel like I knew exactly what I wanted or knew exactly who I wanted to be."

IP6 recalls participating in student learning/intervention plan, peer tutoring, SAT/ACT preparatory programs, AP/Honor level courses, college/career workshops, school college/career workshops, college tours, college information sessions, writing workshops, college application workshops, fee waivers, and scholarship workshops. Of the offered programs and services participated in FAFSA application review/support, college counselor meetings, college program meeting, college networking sessions, and college navigation sessions were a minor help. Student learning/intervention plan, SAT/ACT preparatory programs, college/career workshops, school college/career workshops, writing workshops and scholarship workshops were a moderate help. Peer tutoring, AP/honor level courses, college tours, college class visitations, college information sessions, college application workshop and fee waivers were a major help. IP6 also notes a lack of college financial knowledge, academic grades, lack of time management, working, transportation, lack of knowledge of the college application process and lack of experience on a college campus as factors that affected applying to college.

Survey Participant Seven (IP7)

IP7 graduated high school in 2019 and attended a four-year college upon graduation. The highest level of education completed by the participants' parent(s) was a four-year college. The participant did complete the FAFSA and applied to five four-year college and received acceptance to five four-year colleges. The participant completed the first year in post-secondary education and did reenroll for a second year at the time of the interview. The participant

responded "yes" to the question "did you feel ready for college upon graduation from high school?" Explaining that to be college ready meant, "disciplined and making sure priorities straight" (survey response). The participant attributes "parents and support they gave" to what contributed to feelings of being college ready and included no notes as to was missing to help with feeling college ready.

IP7 recalls participating in after school/Saturday school tutoring, SAT/ACT preparatory programs, college/career workshops, school college/career workshops, college instant decision, college fairs, college tours, career fairs, FAFSA application review/support, college information sessions, college financial costs awareness seminars, college financial aid awareness seminars, college application workshops, fee waivers, scholarship workshops, group college awareness sessions, counselor college meetings, college program meetings, college networking sessions, and college navigation sessions. Of the offered programs and services participated in SAT/ACT preparatory programs was a moderate help, and all others were a major help. IP7 also notes a lack of college financial knowledge as a factor that affected applying to college.

Survey Participant Eight (IP8)

IP8 graduated high school in 2018 and attended a four-year college upon graduation. The highest level of education completed by the participants' parent(s) was a four-year college. The participant did complete the FAFSA and applied to one four-year college and received acceptance to one four-year college. The participant completed the first year in post-secondary education and did reenroll for a second year at the time of the interview. The participant responded "yes" to the question "did you feel ready for college upon graduation from high school?" Explaining that to be college ready meant, "I felt like I knew what it was going to be like a little" (survey response). The participant attributes "then college tour" to what contributed

to feelings of being college ready and notes that "knowing more details about being in college" was missing to help with feeling college ready.

IP8 recalls participating in after school/Saturday school tutoring, SAT/ACT preparatory programs, college/career workshops, school college/career workshops, college instant decision, college fairs, college tours, career fairs, FAFSA application review/support, college class visitations, college information sessions, college financial costs awareness seminars, college financial aid awareness seminars, college application workshops, fee waivers, scholarship workshops, group college awareness sessions, counselor college meetings, college program meetings, college networking sessions, and college navigation sessions. Of the offered programs and services participated in after school/Saturday school tutoring, SAT/ACT preparatory programs, college/career workshops, school college/career workshops, college instant decision, college fairs, college tours, career fairs, FAFSA application review/support, college class visitations, college information sessions, college financial costs awareness seminars, college financial aid awareness seminars and college application workshops were a moderate help. Fee waivers, scholarship workshops, group college awareness sessions, counselor college meetings, college program meetings, college networking sessions, and college navigation sessions were a major help. IP8 also notes a lack of college financial knowledge, lack of time management, lack of knowledge of the college application process, lack of experience on a college campus, and lack of study skills as factors that affected applying to college.

Survey Participant Nine (IP9)

IP9 graduated high school in 2019 and attended a four-year college upon graduation. The highest level of education completed by the participants' parent(s) was a two-year college. The participant did complete the FAFSA and applied to twenty four-year college and received

acceptance to twenty four-year college. The participant completed the first year in post-secondary education and reenroll for a second year at the time of the interview. The participant responded "yes" to the question "did you feel ready for college upon graduation from high school?" Explaining that to be college ready meant, "that I had to be prepared to be responsible on my own without my parents in ways such as getting to my classes on time, making sure I study and do my work, not staying out too late, and proper financial management " (survey response). The participant attributes "University Bridges program" to what contributed to feelings of being college ready and notes that there weren't "enough people around me who actually could tell me about the college experience until I started joining clubs and organizations" as missing to help with feeling college ready.

IP9 recalls participating in SAT/ACT preparatory programs, AP/Honor level courses, college/career workshops, school college/career workshops, college fairs, college tours, career fairs, FAFSA application review/support, college class visitations, college information sessions, writing workshops, college financial costs awareness seminars, college financial aid awareness seminars, college application workshops, fee waivers, scholarship workshops, group college awareness sessions, counselor college meetings, college program meetings, college networking sessions, and college navigation sessions. Of the offered programs and services participated in all were a major help. IP9 also notes a lack of college financial knowledge, lack of time management, negative peer influence, lack of parental support, lack of study skills, and lack of prior familial completion of college as factors that affected applying to college.

Survey Participant Ten (IP10)

IP10 graduated high school in 2018 and attended a four-year college upon graduation. The highest level of education completed by the participants' parent(s) was high school. The

participant did complete the FAFSA and applied to between 10-40 four-year colleges using the

Black Common Application and received acceptance to sixteen four-year colleges. The

participant completed the first year in post-secondary education and reenroll for a second year at

the time of the interview. The participant responded "yes" to the question "did you feel ready for

college upon graduation from high school?" Explaining that to be college ready meant, "to have

a well-rounded perspective and preparation of college and life and living beyond academia"

(survey response). The participant attributes "encouragement of my community and practical

resources and tools" to what contributed to feelings of being college ready and notes that the

"lack [of] secured finances outside of financial aid" was missing to help with feeling college

ready.

IP10 recalls participating in peer tutoring, SAT/ACT preparatory programs, AP/Honor

level courses, college/career workshops, school college/career workshops,, college fairs, college

tours, career fairs, FAFSA application review/support, college class visitations, college

information sessions, writing workshops, college financial costs awareness seminars, college

financial aid awareness seminars, college application workshops, fee waivers, counselor college

meetings, college program meetings, and college networking sessions,. Of the offered programs

and services participated in SAT/ACT, FAFSA application review/support, writing workshops,

college financial costs awareness seminars, college financial aid awareness seminars, college

application workshops college program meetings, and college networking sessions were a

moderate help. AP/honor level courses, career/college workshops, school college/career

workshops, college fairs, college tours, college class visitations, college information sessions, fee

waivers, and counselor college meeting were a major help. IP10 also notes a lack of college lack

of time management, financial knowledge, lack of time management, lack of parental support,

lack of peer applying to college, low level family encouragement, working, transportation, lack of knowledge of the college application process, lack of experience on a college campus and lack of prior familial completion of college as factors that affected applying to college.

Survey Participant Eleven (IP11)

IP11 graduated high school in 2018 and attended a four-year college upon graduation. The highest level of education completed by the participants' parent(s) was a master's graduate level. The participant did complete the FAFSA and received acceptance to five four-year college. The participant completed the first year in post-secondary education and reenroll for a second year at the time of the interview. The participant responded "yes" to the question "did you feel ready for college upon graduation from high school?" Explaining that to be college ready meant, "to be prepared for the obstacles that come with college" (survey response). The participant attributes the "anticipation for new things" to what contributed to feelings of being college ready and notes that "experience" was missing to help with feeling college ready.

IP11 recalls participating in student learning/intervention plan, college/career workshops, school college/career workshops, college instant decision, college fairs, college tours, career fairs, FAFSA application review/support, college class visitations, college information sessions, college application workshops, fee waivers, scholarship workshops, college program meetings, college networking sessions, and college navigation sessions. Of the offered programs and services participated in, all were a major help. IP11 also notes lack of college financial knowledge, academic grades, working and low-level value of a college degree as factors that affected applying to college.

Appendix C

Georgia State University
Informed Consent

Title: Are you ready? College Readiness Experience of Racial Minority Students from Title I High Schools
Principal Investigator: Dr. Ann Kruger
Student Principal Investigator: Lidia Quinones

Introduction and Key Information

You are invited to take part in a research study. It is up to you to decide if you would like to take part in the study. The purpose of this study is to explore Georgia high school students' experiences of a locally created and delivered college readiness programs. Learning your perspective will provide insight into the types of supports needed to increase college readiness and enrollment. Results from this study will provide valuable information to community-based college-readiness programs. Results will also support students from low income or racial minority groups transitioning into college.

If you choose to participate, your role in the study will last no more than 1 hour and 20 minutes. This will be spent across a total of two activities. You will be asked to complete an online survey. The survey should take no more than 20 minutes to complete. The survey will include questions about any obstacles and supports you experienced with college readiness. The survey will also include a few demographic questions. You will also be asked to participate in an interview by telephone. The telephone interview should take between 45 minutes and one hour. The interview will be to learn more about your view of college readiness. We will talk more about any obstacles and/or supports you experienced during your college readiness journey. If you find any questions difficult or sensitive, you do not have to answer. Just say skip and we will go on to the next question.

Participating in this study will not expose you to any more risks than you would experience in a typical day. While this study may not benefit you personally. We hope that our results will add to the knowledge about college readiness and social capital.

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to investigate past participants' perceptions about a locally developed college readiness program, University Bridges. This study is not an evaluation of the program, but an investigation of the thoughts and experiences of the participants.

You are invited to take part in this research study because you are a former participant in the University Bridges College Readiness Program. A total 60 people will be invited to take part in this study.

Procedures

If you decide to take part, you will be asked to participate in one interview and one survey. The survey will be online. The interview will be by telephone. You will be asked to complete both the survey and interview in a quiet place where others cannot overhear you. The researcher will conduct the interviews

in private. The survey should take no more than 20 minutes for you to complete. The telephone interview should take no more than one hour for you to complete.

- Here is a detailed description:
    - Complete an online survey.
        - This is to learn about your perspectives of college readiness.
    - Participate in a one on one telephone interview.
        - This is to talk more about the answers to your survey. We will also explore your college readiness perspectives a little further.
    - You will receive an initial email from the University Bridges program staff inviting you to participate in the study. Next, the student PI will be the only other person that will contact you.
    - The survey will be done online.
    - The interview will be done by phone.
    - Your participation in both the survey and interview will only occur once.
    - In total you should spend no more than 20 minutes completing the survey.
    - In total you should spend no more than 1 hour completing the interview.
    - There are no circumstances on the part of the research where you could be removed. However, you are encouraged to take short breaks as needed if you feel fatigued during the survey or interview process.
    - You can refuse to answer any question. If you find any questions difficult or sensitive in nature, you do not have to answer. Just say skip and we will go on to the next question.
    - You can ask to stop the interview at any time.

Future Research
Researchers will not use or share your data for future research studies even if identifiers are removed.

Risks
In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life. No injury is expected from this study. If you believe you have been harmed, contact the research team as soon as possible. Georgia State University and the research team have not set aside funds to compensate for any injury.

Benefits
This study may not benefit you personally. We hope that our results will add to the knowledge about college readiness and social capital.

Alternatives
The alternative to taking part in this study is to not take part in the study.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You can skip questions or stop participating at any time. You can refuse to take part in the study or stop at any time.

Confidentiality

We will keep your information private to the extent allowed by law. The following people and entities will have access to the information you provide:

- Dr. Ann Kruger, PI
- Lidia Quinones, Student PI
- GSU Institutional Review Board
- Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)

The information you provide will be stored on a password- and firewall-protected computers. The student PI will collect and store all the data on a personal computer secured in her home office. Only the PI and Student PI will have access to the data. Data files will be kept until 7 years after the last publication appears. No personal identifiers will be collected. The Qualtrics survey will not save your IP address or any other identifying information. All data will be kept on a password- and firewall-protected computer. No data will be collected from any participants who decide to opt-out at any point in the research process. Their data will be destroyed immediately. When we present or publish the results of this study, we will not use your name or other information that may identify you. The telephone interviews will be audio recorded. The recordings will be stored on a password- and firewall protected computer. This data will be secured in the home of the student PI. The recordings will be destroyed once they are transcribed. Be aware, the survey section of this study is completed over the Internet. Information that is sent over the Internet may not be secure. We will not collect IP addresses.

Contact Information

Contact Ann Kruger, PhD at akruger@gsu.edu

- If you have questions about the study or your part in it
- If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study

The IRB at Georgia State University reviews all research that involves human participants. You can contact the IRB if you would like to speak to someone who is not involved directly with the study. You can contact the IRB for questions, concerns, problems, information, input, or questions about your rights as a research participant. Contact the IRB at 404-413-3500 or irb@gsu.edu.

Consent

You can print out this page to keep.

Appendix D

Section I: Background Information

1. Name_____

2. High School name_____

3. High School graduation year _____.

4. The highest level of education my parent(s) has:

O Elementary School

O Middle School

O High School

O Vocational School

O Military School

O 2 Year College

O Four-Year College

O Master Degree

O Doctoral Degree

O Did not go to school

5. After high school, I applied to:

O Vocational/Technical School   number of different applications_____

O Two-Year College   number of different applications_____

O Four-Year College   number of different applications_____

O Military School   number of different applications_____

6.Did you complete the FAFSA (financial aid) application? O Yes O No

7.How many of your applications were accepted?

       O Vocational/Technical School   number of different acceptances_____

       O Two-Year College   number of different applications_____

       O Four-Year College   number of different applications_____

       O Military School   number of different applications_____

8.After high school, where did you enroll? (chose one)

       O Did not enroll in any Post-Secondary Institution

       O Vocational/Technical School

       O Two-Year College

       O Four-Year College

       O Military School

9. If you enrolled, did you complete your first year in post-secondary education; O Yes O No.

       If yes, have you enrolled for a second year? O Yes O No

       If No, please can you select the reason?

              O Financial Issues

              O Pregnancy/Parenting

              O Lost Interest

              O Academic Problems

              O Other Personal Problems, Please Specify: _____

10. Did you feel ready for college upon graduation from high school? O Yes O No

A. What did it mean for you to be college ready?

B. What contributed to your feelings of being college ready?

C. What were you missing to help you feel college ready?

Section II: Helping Readiness for College

Please indicate if you participated in the following when you were in high school. Also indicate

how helpful this was to your readiness for college.

Offered Programs or Services	Did You Participate	Was it Helpful? 1: Major Help 2: Moderate Help 3: Minor Help 4: Not a Help
Student Learning/Intervention Plan	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
College Dual Enrollment	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
After School/Saturday School Tutoring	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
Peer Tutoring	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
SAT/ACT Preparatory Program	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
AP/Honor Level Courses	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
College/Career Workshops	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
School College/Career Workshops	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
College Instant Decision	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
College Fairs	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
College Tours	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
Career Fairs	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
FAFSA Application Review/Support	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
College Class Visitations	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
College Information Sessions	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4

Writing Workshops	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
College Financial Costs Awareness Seminars	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
College Financial Aid Awareness Seminars	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
College Application Workshop	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
Fee Waiver	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
Scholarship Workshop	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
Group College Awareness Sessions	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
Counselor College Meeting	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
College Program Meeting	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
College Networking Sessions	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
College Navigation Sessions	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4

Section III: Challenges to College Readiness

This section contains a list of factors that may affect students' feelings of college-readiness.

Please indicate to what degree did each factor affect or did not affect you feeling college-ready?

Factors that may affect students' application to college	Did this affect you?	How Challenging? 1: Major Challenge 2: Moderate Challenge 3: Minor Challenge 4: Not a Challenge
Lack of College Financial Knowledge	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
Academic Grades	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
Lack of Time Management	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
Negative Peer Influence	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
Lack of Parental Support	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4

Lack of Peers Applying to College	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
Low Level of Family Encouragement	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
Working	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
Transportation Challenges	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
Enrollment in Remedial Courses	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
Failing Grades	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
Lack of Knowledge of the College Application Process	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
Lack of Experience on a College Campus	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
Lack of Study Skills	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
Attendance Problems	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
Low Level Value of a College Degree	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4
Lack of Prior Familial Completion of College	O Yes O No	1 2 3 4

Section IV: Follow Up Interview

Would you be willing to participate in a follow up interview to discuss your experiences

further? O Yes O No

If yes, would you prefer a phone or in person follow up interview to discuss your

experiences further? O Phone O In person