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Breaking the Mold: Accounts of Racial Minority First-Generation Students in SIUC's Exploratory Students Program

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BREAKING THE MOLD: ACCOUNTS OF RACIAL MINORITY
FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS IN SIUC'S
EXPLORATORY STUDENTS PROGRAM

By

Darlyshia A. Menzie

B.S., Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2012

A Research Report
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts

Department of Speech Communication
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
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Research Report APPROVAL

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Introduction

First-generation students are trailblazers and conquerors. They work against the grain to achieve what has not been done in their families before. They prove statistics wrong by pushing to discount what has already been said about them and those who identify with them. On top of that, for first-generation students who also identify as racial minority, it is even tougher to be seen as more than just a statistic. Students who fall in these two categories sometimes need help getting started and that is where this research enters the scene.

This research is important to the discipline because students in these categories have specific needs that must be addressed if they are to be given an equal chance at furthering their education. Different life situations have caused them potential setbacks in certain areas and have the possibility of stunting their educational development. Theoretically, research addressing this population is beneficial because the proper measures can be revealed, discussed, and attended to. Practically, research addressing this population is necessary because students need proper assistance now.

The purpose of this research is to examine the influence of the Exploratory Students Program[1] at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, on its students who are first-generation and minority. The following report will incorporate issues/ideals of home-based and school-based, personal and public identity markers that speak back to how students in this program benefit from its services. In short, this paper seeks to showcase the personal thoughts, experiences, and evolution of the participants of this study to examine how the Exploratory Students program aids in helping them overcome the negative and build on the positive.

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[1] During the process of project, the name of the Exploratory Students Department was changed to First-Year Advisement. For this project, I chose to keep the original name because it is what was current at the time.

Literature Review

To be the first in one's family to pursue higher education is indeed pressure and difficult to handle, both internally and externally. Internally, first-generation students must deal with perceptions of identity, how they fit in and what they believe they are capable of producing. Externally, first-generation students must deal with systemic structures and pressures found in academia in relation to students, faculty, and staff, while also figuring out how to negotiate identity with family members and friends who may not have pursued such a track. In this literature review, I aim to address research concerning the experiences of first-generation college students and statistics that address this population.

Defining First-Generation

Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, and Leonard (2007) define first-generation students as those whose parents have a high school education or less and did not attend college. According to a Pell Institute report (Engle & Tinto, 2008), there are approximately 4.5 million first-generation students enrolled into college, with enrollment increasing steadily. First-generation students are more likely to be Black and Hispanic, according to the National Center for Education Statistics report (Housel & Harvey, 2009; US Department of Education, 2012). First-generation, especially low income, students have a greater risk of failure (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Low income is defined as less than $25,000 coming into the household. Inkelas et al. (2007) report that studies show that first-generation students also are more than likely to come from low-income homes and racial minority backgrounds (p. 405). Students in this population often struggle because of the lack of resources and finances, as well as the inability to discuss and relate to academic and social experiences with parents who did not attend college. Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, and Terenzini (2004) write that "first-generation college students tend to be at a distinct disadvantage

with respect to basic knowledge about postsecondary education (e.g., costs and application process), level of family income and support, educational degree expectations and plans, and academic preparation in high school" (p. 250). Higher income students, who generally come from generations of college attendees and graduates, are more likely to earn degrees, leaving the gap between themselves and first-generation students to grow exponentially over time (Orbe, 2004).

Trends amongst First-Generation Students

Billson and Terry (1986) stated that "first-generation students typically do not participate in student organizations, interact with other students or faculty, or study hard" (as cited in Orbe, 2004); these are stereotypes that keep first-generation students in the shadow of other students. They are more apt to leave a four-year institution after their first year and even when retained past that time, they struggle to stay in school and on track (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Even the type of subjects that first-generation college students take and are exposed to speak to the trends of this population and how they are affected, as stated by Pascarella et al. (2004):

> Terenzini and his colleagues found out that, compared to their peers, first-generation students complete fewer first-year credit hours, took fewer humanities and fine arts courses, studied fewer hours and worked more hours per week, were less likely to participate in an honors program, were less likely to perceive that faculty were concerned about students and teaching, and made smaller first-year gains on a standardized measure of reading comprehension. (p. 251)

Pascarella et al. further claim that students' experiences are impacted by the characteristics of the university that they attend. First-generation students are generally limited by the types of institutions that they can attend, which dictates what they could potentially be exposed to and

learn. Because of the obligation to work, first-generation students tend to study less, not get as involved on campus, participate in athletics, and pass over opportunities to volunteer (p. 265). Pascarella et al. wrote, "First –generation students perhaps benefit more from their academic experiences than other students because these experiences act in a compensatory manner and thus contribute comparatively greater incremental increases in first-generation students' stock of cultural capital" (p. 280). According to Inkelas et al. (2007), students who adapt to college are described as breaking family traditions and this breaking is what leads to some of the awkward spaces that students must negotiate when they return home to their families. First-generation students are more likely to leave without earning a degree, and the new relationship with family may have something to do with this trend.

Cultural Capital

First-generation students generally come to college with less "cultural capital" than their counterparts. Cultural capital is information and knowledge gained through family about things that help students to cope while in college (Bourdieu, 1986; Orbe, 2004). Pascarella et al. (2004) state, "Social capital is a form of capital that resides in relationships among individuals that facilitate transaction and the transmission of different resources" (p. 252). In his book chapter, "Performing School in the Shadow of Imperialism" (2005), Gallegos describes cultural capital and how that helps students in their adjustment and confidence (p. 118). I mention this because cultural capital helps students, especially first-generation students, to navigate and seek out what they need to succeed and feel accepted. Dennis, Phinney, and Chuateco (2005) report that first-generation students lack both personal skills and social support and are worried about academic success. First-generation students have to deal with adjusting on multiple levels: emotional, academic, and social. Again, this points back to this idea of cultural capital; students have a need

to be connected to effectively socialize and adapt to their new surroundings, therefore, gaining cultural capital is crucial in this process. Dennis et al. believe that students in this population attend college because of their cultural values (p. 224). Compared to those with college-educated parents, first-generation students find it difficult to gauge an understanding of information learned and shared and are more likely to possess attitudes of indifference in making beneficial decisions as they relate to their college careers and goals. Pascarella et al. report that cultural capital plays a significant role in the choices that students make concerning the institutions that they attend and the kinds of experiences they have. The lack thereof could prohibit students in this population from maximizing their time at their chosen institution.

Pascarella et al. (2004) allude to the truth that this population of students must face the routine uncertainties and maneuvering into and through college as any other student, but to their plate is the added awkwardness of figuring out a new culture and a higher degree of academic monitoring and criteria to be met. This population of students is trying to live in two vastly different worlds – a sort of "alien culture." In his article, "Negotiating Multiple Identities within Multiple Frames: An Analysis of First-Generation College Students" (2004), Orbe looks at first-generation students within 4 frames: within self, within relationships, within groups, and within relational partners/groups. For my research, I want to mainly focus on how students view themselves, themselves in relationships, and themselves within groups. Orbe focuses on the "centrality of identity" which questions the thoughts that students have about themselves being the first in their family to go to college or even go away to college. Research (Dennis et al., 2005) has proven that some students find this to be motivation to continue on and break that trend in their families, while others find it pressure and a bit much to carry on their shoulders. In

other cases, some report that it's something that they never really thought about; so, in this regard, it is situational.

The difference between those first-generation students who stay in college and those who leave is that those who stay typically are the ones who get involved, reach out to teachers, make friends with those of similar situations and interest, work less hours on a job, and take part in campus life in general. Research suggests first-generation students require more validation that they deserve to be in college and that they are capable, no matter the circumstance(s) in which they find themselves (Dennis et al., 2005). Housel and Harvey (2009) write that students in this population are being asked to meet invisible expectations. Although the current study in particular does not deal with class, it influences and affects the same audience that I write about and adds to these expectations and experiences. First-generation students tend to earn lower grades; positive ways in which students see themselves can reverse that trend (p. 47). This population is one with "unique needs and challenges" (p. 48). They are less likely to form important relationships with students and faculty, and they lack that crucial involvement on campus. Personal narrative can help faculty and administrators see just how this transition to college and their placement affects this population of students (p. 61). Some students may be too scared to ask for clarification on things at the risk of sounding "unsmart" and judged according to that. Sometimes, first-generation students don't have the vocabulary and language skills to express their ideas and thoughts in the "educationally sound" way. So, here, they experience the imposter syndrome, walking on egg shells, afraid to mess up. At this point, they are faced with this idea of competition in the classroom (p. 92).

Competence, Confidence, and Competition

The attendance and completion patterns of first-generation students suffer due to lack of academic preparation before college. Studies show that they lack the skills and confidence, and they experience difficulty in navigating college culture; they tend to lack involvement because of socialization, money for needs/wants, and financial aid issues (Engle & Tinto, 2008). These students are being referred to as "un-prepared" and "disadvantaged" and are more likely to leave after their first year in college (Engle & Tinto, 2008).

Gallegos (2005) writes, "In essence, the marginalization of the subaltern in schools through sorting practices which reproduce both privilege and marginality, function to engender scripts of resistance" (p. 115). This article discusses school sorting rituals (ways in which children are separated based on comparisons from one student to another) and how these sorts of practices work to perpetuate the marginalization of people, namely students in this case. This speaks to how students are labeled and sorted, constantly in this rotation of competition and hierarchy, to determine who are "best" and "qualified" and "smart." Does it have to be true that the success of one student means the failure of another (referred to as zero-sum game)? Gallegos talks about this, referencing how students are made out to be winners and losers, suffering consequences for not being on the level of the so-called winners (p. 117). This is certainly unfair. When students are marginalized, they lack agency and again, battle with having to compete to be noticed and given the help that they need. This, in turn, brings about a sort of resistance in students of this population because they might feel that they are not getting the respect that they are working hard to earn. They then become actors, students trying to function in a world that is much different than what they are used to and having to put on a guise to barely survive. Indeed, Gallegos notes that "situations are in large part related to larger structures of power" (p. 121). Certain stories are privileged over others, in relation to selection processes.

When thinking about identity on a college campus as a first-generation student, self-respect and dignity are characteristics that they constantly have to fight to protect, whether it be from family and friends, faculty/staff/administrators, or even other students. Gallegos (2005) brings up a discussion of the private versus the public; how much of their thoughts and feelings do students in this population share? This idea of private versus public informs how students deal with home and educational issues, but still perform the role of student in class and amongst their teachers and peers. Sometimes, students in this population feel dominated because they feel they have to conform to and compete with their counterparts; research would suggest that their feelings and notions of competition are true. Take for example standardized testing. The standard by which all students are measured is on a scale that includes students with more or better access to educational enhancement. This is a bit unfair in that first-generation students may not have had the best educational training, but when applying and being admitted to college, they are expected to perform on the same level as all students, with penalty of probation and removal from that school (Gallegos, 2005).

Weight of the World

Students in this population experience special attention from family because of their first-generation status. In this way, the student serves as the liaison to family about college life; meaning, students might feel drilled and interrogated to report all that is going on in college for him or her and the overall feel of college life (Orbe, 2004). This is seen as a pressure because students do not have the knowledge and/or "in" to give an accurate and full report on such a topic; he or she runs the risk of being put under a microscope with every word or idea spoken. Along with that, some students with the first-generation status, are left with the burden of "representing" their communities. Some friends and family back home find this an opportunity to

live vicariously through the student, therefore, leaving the student to feel the pressure of "getting it right" and not messing up. If a student came back home from college without a degree, s/he would experience a great deal of shame and embarrassment because s/he did not meet the expectations put on her/him when s/he left. In this situation, it would seem that the value of education was diminished due to the high level of pressure experienced from family and friends.

With all of this in mind, the current research project seeks to respond to the following questions: *RQ1*: How do experiences pre-college affect students now? Even further, what were those pre-college experiences? *RQ2*: In what ways can the program help students successfully further their education in spite of pre-college experiences? Even further, in what ways can the Exploratory Students program improve? Next, the methods of data collection and analysis are described in order to respond to the questions stated above.

Method

Site and Scene

This research derives from a provisional program located on the campus of Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC). The department has two units, provisional and undecided, and functions as a place where first-year and second-year students are offered guidance and support in deciding a major for their college careers. The provisional program specifically services those students who did not meet regular university admissions requirements. The program is meant to offer select students a chance at college, while providing the necessary help needed to acclimate to college life and advanced education. Students who are selected for this program are offered services such as one-on-one assistance from academic advisors (who serve as University College 101 instructors as well), mentors, tutors, and the like. As stated on the

department's website (http://exploratory.siu.edu/), the program's mission is to prepare these students for their future.

Although the program is not a racial minority-targeted program, the majority of the students who are accepted are identified as racial minority. Most of these students come from urban areas, having experienced a degree of difficulty in their high schools and home lives and have failed to accomplish what was necessary for regular admission. As well, many of the students in this program are first-generation college students or are the first-traveled college students in their families (meaning, their parents stayed at a local or community college). The environment of the program is professional and non-threatening, yet familial, in that the advisors and students spend much time together, therefore building close and necessary relationships. Some of the advisors are products of the program themselves, which allows students to more easily relate with them, build trust, and feel comfortable. It is because of programs like this, and the people who work in the program, that I am able and privileged to do this research.

Positionality

I am a Black female graduate student, who is neither first-generation nor the first in my family to go away to school. In doing this research, I have been faced with the necessary and difficult task of looking myself in the mirror and reflecting on the privileges that place me in this exact position – as researcher. I am not an insider; I do not belong. But, it is in this outsider position that I am led to analyze the ways in which my positionality affects my research. I entered college with a parent who had already obtained a Master's degree, financial assistance, and positive support. My home life was a pretty good one, complete with two working parents who hold decent jobs. My story is quite different from most the participants of this research. I chose to work with this group of students because it is my desire to learn of their struggles and

find my place in hopes of making these sorts of transitions easier for them. I want them to have equal access and opportunity as I did, because I could have very easily been where they are, but there were folks there to listen and assist me in my journey. The purpose of this research is to focus on the experiences of my participants, pre-college, and how those experiences affect them now, in college. I will look at ways in which the provisional student program assists participants in dealing with the shifts that come along with leaving one environment and entering another. My goal is to hopefully blend the voices of the students and the faculty that work with them to assess how beneficial this program truly is to the students.

I am limited in what I know, see, and hear. I am not a member of this program, let alone the department, and because of that, I may be ignorant of the full effect and advantages it produces. However, I have taught two speech classes specific to students in this program, so I believe my time in class with these students allowed me a bit more access into their thinking and experiences. I have not experienced the life situations that some students in this program bring with them; therefore, I am less equipped to carry the emotional burden that comes along with helping students to work through these experiences. How does this affect my research? As an outsider researching the way in which a provisional program effectively assists students (academically, socially, mentally), my inability to fully participate and understand hinders, rather, dilutes the everyday interactions and labor it takes to service such a work. Although students and faculty were comfortable sharing with me, I am sure that there are things they decided to keep and not share. That keeping is what presents a possible, yet likely, barrier.

My entering the scene alters the familial comfort the students and faculty share. Because I have not fully earned my way into this "family," I must do and use what I can to accurately and appropriately write about and relay the contents of this research. Why do I even care about this

topic and this group of people? I care because, although it was in my early years, I was "this group of people." I was working toward being a statistic – the minority person that came from a troubled community who perpetuates and demonstrates inability, resistance, and a continued life of struggle. But, this does not characterize the participants of my study. They are here, breaking the statistics stacked against them, working toward a greater future. Both my parents served in local community centers, and kept my brothers, sister, and I involved. I look back at that time and see how that outlet gave me hope, provided me with people to go to for help and guidance and encouragement, to develop me as a person and citizen of the community. I took that assistance and continued it in my developing years. This program, I believe, is that outlet for these participants and many other students. It provides just what they need to realize that they are able, empowered, and entitled to equal opportunity. This research is a means to an end – a beginning work to give a platform to the voice of the students.

Participants

For this research, I have two distinct participant groups. For group one, I chose to study the experiences of minority males and females who receive educational assistance through the provisional student program. Specifically, the students I sought out and worked with were first-generation. All of the participants in this group were going through their first semester of college, right out of high school. Interviews were conducted in the Fall semester of 2013, late August and Early September, which included five males and five females. Due to technical difficulties, only nine interviews, excluding one of the male participants, were used in the discussion of this paper. Nine of the student participants self-identified as African American and one (male) student self-identified as Middle Eastern and Asian. All participants' names are changed to protect their identities.

For group two, I chose to study the experiences of minority male and female faculty members who serve in the provisional student program as advisors and instructors to the students of this research. I interviewed four faculty members, two males and two females, who identified as African American. Each faculty member has served in this program or programs of the like for a number of years, one even coming through this program as a student in his undergraduate career at SIUC, so they bring multiple perspectives, stories, and experience to the intricacies of this research.

I chose to work with these two groups of participants because I am interested in knowing the link between home-life and school-life for this population of students. I wanted to assess how programs such as the provisional student program assist students, analyzing it from both faculty and student point-of-view. I wanted to know what students and faculty thought was happening and was not happening in the program. In addition, I wanted to know what collaborative efforts and suggestions students and faculty could create to satisfy program requirements and students' needs.

Procedure

I gained access to this department through one of the advisors, whom I know on a personal basis. After having conversations with her concerning my research interests and working with the department, she connected me with the Director of Exploratory Students Advisement, whom I consider my "key informant" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2007, p. 177), and whom I later met with on several occasions discussing the possibility of using the department, its students, and faculty members as the subject of my research. After getting approval from the Director, I remained in communication with her, checking in, letting her know my next steps. She allowed me to visit one of her staff meetings to pitch my idea to the faculty to gain access to

their students by way of classroom visits and to see which of them would also be interested in participating. From there, I visited the classrooms of those faculty who allowed me and gained immediate access to students to gauge interest in topic and participation in my research. I passed out interest sheets and cover letters to the students whose classrooms I visited and had them email me if they wanted to participate. Once I received an email from a willing participant, I scheduled a time to meet with him or her to conduct an in-person interview.

All participants of this study were interviewed; each interview lasted 20 minutes to an hour, depending on how much they wanted to share. The interviews were semi-structured, with open-ended questions and room for narrative, with the help of an interview guide (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Interviews were completely voluntary and, at any time, the participants were free to remove themselves from the process. Through the signed, written consent of each participant, the interviews were recorded on a microphone application on my cell phone, and transcribed at a later date. Once transcribed, the recordings were emailed to my account, saved in a folder, and deleted from my cell phone. Any paper documents tracing the identity of participants were kept safely in the privacy of my home office. Across all interviews, I collected nearly 7 hours of recorded interview data, and nearly 90 pages of interview transcriptions. I chose to do interviews because it best allows for personal narratives to be shared and uninterrupted, allowing it to "unfold as a social process" (Lindlof & Taylor, p. 171). I felt interviews were the best fit for my purposes and most sufficient and appropriate for those who chose to participate.

For student participant interviews, I reserved rooms in the campus library. I asked them questions about their background, future plans, and thoughts of college life. After hearing those responses, I asked them questions about the intent of the program, their own goals in the program, and their perceived expectations of the program. For faculty participant interviews, I

scheduled a time to meet with them in their offices. I asked them questions about their history with the program, its impact (and potential impact), and trends they see with students in the program.

Analysis

I began my analysis process by transcribing the fourteen interviews in a Microsoft Word document. Through the interview process, I took notes on things that I saw in common amongst the interview responses and kept them in a notebook. I discussed the emerging patterns and similarities with my advisor to make sure I was on the right track in my research. Interview to interview, I would ask more or slightly different questions based on the responses given, which opened up new options for me to consider as categories. Categories, as defined by Lindlof and Taylor (2011), are covering "terms for an array of general phenomena: concepts, constructs, themes, and other types of 'bins' in which to put items that are similar" (p. 246). From these categories, I created codes, which are defined as "the linkages between data and the categories the researcher creates" (p. 248). For example, a few codes that I had were family structure, home life, and high school. These initial codes, open codes (p. 250), were color-coded and put into a codebook, using Microsoft Word, charting the codes names, my definition for them, and examples from several transcribed interviews. The open codes were then reassessed, minimizing them to a few workable, encompassing themes. Themes were then used to further group and analyze data to be discussed in the findings section of this report. This concluded the data preparation process and led to the more specific utilization of the data gathered.

<div align="center">

Discussion

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The following section of this report describes the findings from the data analysis process detailed above. First I will discuss in detail the themes that emerged in the data, then I will offer

a general discussion, summarizing what was laid out in themes, making sure to specifically address each research question.

In analyzing the data, three themes emerged - *familial/interpersonal influences*, *environmental/systemic influences*, and *individual/self-identification*. Each theme houses several codes, which go into detail about what participants have shared in their interviews (see Appendix A for Codebook). Each code uses specific thoughts and quotes from participant interviews that embody the topic being discussed in this paper. Themes used work to answer the following research questions: *RQ1*: How do experiences pre-college affect students now? Even further, what were those pre-college experiences? *RQ2*: In what ways can the program help students successfully further their education in spite of pre-college experiences? Even further, in what ways can the program improve?

Familial and Interpersonal Influences

Family structure and educational track. Interviews revealed that participants have come from a variety of different backgrounds, living situations, and experiences. Examining the family structure first, participants confess to living under one of three family structures. Four out of nine student participants grew up with both parents in the home; three grew up in a household led by their mother; and two grew up in a household led by their grandmother. It is important to note that most of these students did not grow up with a (positive) father-figure, which is something that future research could look at more specifically. This family makeup, as participants describe, caused feelings of abandonment and resentment. Lahkim, a participant who was raised by his grandmother, shared, "my mom wasn't there. She was a drug abuser and my dad, I've met him but he's pretty much never been in the picture." Six of the student participants were from the Chicago-land area, one was from Carbondale, one from Belleville, and the last one

from Texas. All of the participants had siblings, both older and younger, in and out of the household; sometimes, they even had to help care for and rear their younger siblings.

Life at home. Home life for these participants had been hectic; for some moreso than for others. Three of the participants (two males and one female) grew up in middle class families, with some education, in a safe and comfortable neighborhood, with resources and access to what they needed. One participant started off in a stable household, but once his parents divorced, the finances and stability changed as well, leaving him in a single-parent household. The other five participants really struggled to be where they are today. "Shootings, drug busts, the fact that over 30 of my friends have babies, single moms – no fathers, and then seeing my mama have to get up every day. I don't be wanting to have to do that, every day, go to work 9-5, and only make minimum wage" Samantha described. In Tisha's account of her home life, "I grew up in a dysfunctional home where people always arguing and stuff. So, in order for me to tune out, I would start writing and then I'd just zone out and I wouldn't hear anything." These examples mirror those of the other three participants who grew up in single-parent households. Further research could be done to specifically look at the effect of family orientation on this specific population of students.

Familial expectations. Already having to overcome difficulties at home, participants have had to either succumb to or ignore the expectations that others had of them, mostly those expectations of family members. Referring to his mother, Kevin shared, "She said if you do something [career choice] that just helps people, you're not going to make any money, you're going to have a crappy job. If you do computers, you're going to have a lot of money." Comments like these didn't stop with Kevin; all but one participant mentioned similar expectations from family members. Yvette's mother and Tisha's family wanted them to come to

school to "learn" and not be distracted. Along with that, Tisha's family expected her to gain a "solid foundation," be the top of her class, and overcome her family's generational patterns like having children at a young age and not going to school. Tori's mother and Mario's family wanted them to raise their expectations for themselves higher than what they were. Tori's mother and Phillip's parents wanted them to go to medical school. Phillip's parents and Kevin's mother expected them to study majors that would lead them to high paying jobs. In short, these participants have come with many expectations on their shoulders, in addition to the beginning nerves of being a first-time college student.

Influences and Support. Unfortunately, all of the participants shared a plethora of negative influences and lack of support which seem to factor into their struggles in high school with initiative and grades. For the purposes of length, only a few examples will be mentioned. When asked about negative influences and lack of support, Lahkim stated:

To be honest, I never really seen any negative influences. Like, well, there have been negative influences that everybody has. How I do I explain this? I don't want to say influences because I don't feel like they influence me to do anything negative.

In spite of this response, the greatest impact on his life was the struggle that he and his family had with his mom's addiction and long periods of absence. He talked about how she gave out the house number to different men and he would be afraid for him and his younger siblings. On the day of his graduation, he had expected his mother to attend; instead, she did not show up. To make matters worse, his grandmother, who had raised him, was not able to come because she was home watching his siblings so that his mother could attend. Throughout his entire interview, Lahkim referred to the pain he endured, the confusion he felt, and the lack of self-ability because of his experiences with his mother and the absence of his father. As discussed in Orbe's (2004)

work, Lahkim's identity within himself (frame 1) has become complicated, even more so, as it collides with his identity within relationships (frame 2). He now struggles within himself as he is faced with challenges he shares with his mother.

Kevin mentioned that he wanted to come to SIU to be with his (paternal) cousins, but his mom did not want that for him. He explained that his mother said that he was trying to be like his cousins by choosing the same school and major, of which she did not approve; she did not want him to go away to school at all. The uneasiness between him and his mother caused tension in his transitioning time from high school to college. Tisha talked about her feelings in regards to her father being in and out of her life. She later said, "At first it made me feel like it was my fault and that I should quit school and stuff like that…." Belle revealed that her negative influence was herself when she shared, "The negative impact was me, myself. I usually let myself down first like if I get in trouble or if I get a bad grade or something. I'd be more disappointed than my parents would because that falls on me."

Unfortunate events and life situations are not all that these participants had faced upon entering college; there were some positives that helped them and motivated them to get to this point. Although Phillip's parents didn't go to college, his aunts and uncle who graduated from universities helped him out tremendously. Samantha told me, "I only had reasons to go, I didn't have any reasons not to go. The fact that nobody went to college made me want to go more." Tori talked about the support of her mother, who called often to check on her, as well as her grandmother, who shared encouraging words, reassuring her that she could achieve. Yvette described the support of her family in general, telling her that they are proud of her. All of the participants described much positive support to combat the negative that they received, which I believe is evident by their presence at SIU today.

Environmental and Systemic Influences

  Life in high school. In transitioning the discussion from home life and the expectations of others, a few of the participants recollected specific experiences in high school. Some mentioned programs and activities they joined to stay connected. They went on to share their thoughts on what high school was like for them. One participant, Tori, talked about her days cheerleading, while another student, Mario, talked about his seasonal team sports like basketball, football, and track. Participants Lahkim and Tisha talked about afterschool programs that allowed them to discover and develop their interests and talents and allowed a space to ask questions about college and their desired career paths. For only a few participants, high school was an enjoyable time, but for others, high school was a blur; it wasn't really something that they gave much effort to. Yvette told me, "In high school I took tests, took quizzes, did projects, really didn't do homework and not study and went to sleep." Samantha told me "they [high school officials] prepare you to graduate. They prepare you to get a job." This mentality about high school's role implies that students need more to motivate and inspire them to invest in their education. These participants considered their time in high school just something they had to do, and not necessarily something that they enjoyed or saw benefit from. The cultural capital for most of these students was low, so they had to find ways to efficiently adjust to this new life as an independent college student.

  Financial matters. As if home life, others' expectations, and the lack of educational drive and cultural capital were not enough (for some), participants had to weigh where financial resources would come from if they were even to consider going to college. Overall, participants revealed that they rely on financial aid to help support them while in school. I asked Yvette if she received any grants, she replied, "Grants? Um, I don't think so. No. I'm just trying to make it;

that's pretty much it. If I got to work to pay off stuff, then I'll do that." Kevin unpacked the reality of financial struggles when trying to go to college without loans when he shared:

> It costs over $20,000 to go to school here for me and I live with my single mother, my brother, and my sister. I cannot afford to go here. Without those loans (subsidized and unsubsidized), there's no way I'd be here right now.

One participant, Belle, told me about having to pass up beneficial opportunities because of financial reasons when she said:

> I even had the opportunity to do an internship and I didn't take it because I know that the support I have…they give me support and right now the money tight because I'm first year. Going to a university, I know I need to save up and then venture out, because my family support me and I try to support them and we try to work together on that so….

These accounts help paint the picture of what it truly is to be a struggling college student, especially so for these students. Students of this program enter with many obstacles, all in hopes of jumping hurdles over them with a little guidance and advice. Two of the participants came to SIU prepared financially, as they shared with me, having access to funds for necessities from their parents or other family members. Tisha noted that had it not been for her aunt paying for her laptop, room reservation, and materials, she would not be here in school today. Although finances play a major role in the furtherance of education post-high school, positive support and the lack thereof are the other major contributors.

Transitional balance. When asked how their transition was from home and high school to college, I received a wide variety of answers, ranging from "I was so ready to go. I was actually crying because it couldn't come fast enough, I was so ready to go," (Tisha), and "My transition, it wasn't easy. I'm more of a family person. I love my family to death. I'm always

around them; I'm always calling them" (Mario). In regards to adjusting to college classes and

curriculum, participants mentioned struggling with the bigger class sizes and longer class

sessions. As well, they discussed the level of responsibility that comes along with coming away

to college and being on their own. Kevin said, "I felt a really good sense of independence, me

doing my own thing. I established really fast and got a lot of friends." Other things that

participants covered were things like learning new people and cultural differences. A large

percentage of the university's student body is represented by students from the Chicagoland area,

with other students coming from local cities, the St. Louis metropolitan area, and a smaller

population from other various places. According to SIUC's Institutional Research and Studies

website (Southern Illinois University Carbondale Fact Book, 2012), 3,271 (students) of the

campus' population is from Cook County, with; the next highest county being Jackson County

with 1,670 students. A few more adjustments were discussed, but those mentioned here were the

most prevalent and spanned across several responses.

Student expectations. Having realized that the switch from high school to college

required much time, attention, and detail, participants were asked what they expected to receive

from the program. All participants stated that they expected guidance and mentorship from the

Exploratory Students Program. They wanted help in figuring out what do with their lives, what

career paths to choose, and how to make it happen; they wanted someone to show them how to

get there. Belle stated in her interview, "I just need them to give me a plan, tell me what I need to

do, how to get there, when to get there, what time. All that good stuff." A few participants talked

about needing financial help, in even knowing how to communicate with the financial aid office.

Openness and having someone to talk to and listen to them was another big response. In addition,

time management, organizational and study skills, and increasing confidence were mimicked

responses among participants. Answers from participants point to the awareness that students, for the most part, know how they need and want to develop as learners and members of the academic community. I have not found evidence to support this idea, so I identify it as a potential gap in research. The things that they mentioned are all things that the program offers to its students.

Identifying and finding identity in the program. While students were sharing their thoughts on the program, I made note of how they referenced the program, to see if it was something that they identified with and was proud to be a part of. A few of the participants mentioned feeling dumb because they did not get accepted under regular admissions. Tisha said, "I felt like the program was for dumb people. But, now like, it's for everybody who got side-tracked in high school because of personal problems who messed up and who still want to be able to come to college." Other participants shared their sentiments on the program. Samantha said, "I know that the people in it are people on chances and I know that with all of us accepted, we were accepted to do for the people that accepted us." "I didn't even think I would be here, but here I am. Thanks to the Provisional program," Phillip said. Kevin added, "It makes you appreciate your acceptance of going to the school more." Mario even raved about how the program has been beneficial by saying, "Resources-wise, there were a lot of places I could not find and they were there. That was the first and that was the only number I knew when I got here, so I was constantly on the phone. They know my name." From the responses given, students feel blessed and grateful to be in the program. Once they got past the initial feeling of not having done enough, they realized that this program was exactly what they needed to take the next step in their education. To speak back to the responses given by participants about students of the

program and the program itself, interviews were conducted with faculty members to provide a fuller picture.

Faculty weighs in. Interviews with four of the program's faculty members (two males and two females) revealed the challenges they face with students in the program, areas in which students are lacking, how the program helps students in those areas, and thoughts on the racial status of the program. With regards to the challenges they face with students in the program, faculty members stated that students were unprepared for the workload that college brings; students did not know how to fathom and portion their new-found freedom with being away from home for the first time; students came with somewhat low self-esteem, expectations, and motivation; faculty had to deal with "helicopter parents," which are those parents who try to step in the role of advisors and those assigned at the school to help their children; and the effects of many and varied backgrounds and life situations with which these students have to deal.

Faculty participants shared that students were lacking in certain content areas which have led them to need more assistance to improve in those areas. Subjects like math and science were mentioned as areas in which students were deficient. Faculty mentioned time management, organizational skills, and writing skills as developmental issues students needed help in to improve their performance in the classroom. In addition to that, faculty recognized that there was an intimidation factor for students that came along with getting acquainted with professors and learning their teaching and socializations styles. Overall, faculty knew that these were things that they could work hand-in-hand on with the students.

Finally, the faculty addressed the issue of the racial minority status of the program. Since its inception, the program has gone through many changes. Historically, the program serviced a relatively balanced number of minorities and students of the majority, alike. It seems now,

however, that that balance has shifted dramatically. Faculty shared that the minority count for the program is well above 80%, with the majority of that percentage being African Americans, followed by Latino students. Caucasian students represented the smallest percent in the program. One faculty member, Cory, shared that there were more African American females in the program than there were males. With regards to the Latino students, there were more males than females; and for the Caucasian students, there were a balanced number of males and females. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2012), from 1976-2010, the number of African American and Hispanic students increased ten percent or more in public universities nationwide, whereas the number of Caucasian students decreased a dramatic 22% in that same time. As well, NCES (2012) reported that since 1988, females have enrolled in college more than their male counterparts. Specifically, between 2000 and 2010, female student enrollment increased 62%, while the male student enrollment showed only a 38% increase. As these reports suggest, the racial and gender make-up of this program over the years are indicative of these percentages.

When asked how she felt about this percentage of minority students, Michelle's response summed up the sentiments of the other faculty when she said:

I don't get caught up in, oh you have x amount of minorities in your program, because I'm student-centered and will help everybody who walk through my door, whether they Black, White, Latino, male, female…anything. Just the fact that they are here, I am excited about. Just the fact that they made it and they got denied regular admissions and I got the opportunity to accept them into the program. So, I'm fine.

Faculty spoke on the negative stereotypes they hear about the students of the program. Comments like, "They're retarded; the students are retarded. This is a program for dumb kids. This program, they'll just let anybody who has a heartbeat in. The students will come but they're

not going to stay so don't worry about it," which Sherry shared, are what both the students and faculty have to deal with on a regular basis. It is issues like these that keep alive the negative stigma surrounding all the positive work that this program does. As well, it was mentioned that the department has gone through four name changes since its creation. The name began as Center of Basic Skills, then on to Center for Academic Success, then Exploratory Students. As this research was being conducted, the name has now been changed to First-Year Advisement. Faculty expressed that with each name change, there were changes in the provisional program and curriculum. These reoccurring name changes may also add to the negative stereotypes that the program receive; further research would better address that assumption. Each day, faculty work hard to show students that they care, are available, and want to see them succeed. Those are the sentiments that faculty shared when asked how they felt they personally impact the students of the program. Now that the faculty have spoken on their observations of students in the program, participants were given the chance to speak for themselves, using their own judgments and rationale, to identify their experiences and what they think about those experiences and themselves.

Individual and Self-Identification

College preparedness. When asked if they felt prepared for college, participants shared honest opinions on their level of preparedness. Interestingly, four of the five female student participants believed that they were not prepared for college. Some reasons listed include things like: not knowing what to expect, not having anyone to help with the process of applying to college (because of first-generation status), bad learning practices, and the difference in high school and college culture. Yvette was the only female participant who believed she was prepared for college. To explain, she stated: "I'm not prepared financially, but as far as mentally

and emotionally, yes I am prepared, because I been looking forward to coming here. Not even just coming to SIU, but to just coming away to college and away from home."

It would seem to be that her preparedness for college was dependent on her strong desire and excitement to leave home. The female participants who did not believe that they were prepared for college felt that way because of the uncertainties that come along with stepping into a new territory; these included things like not knowing where to go, not knowing whom to talk to, not having the necessary materials, etc. Although they referenced first-generation students specifically, research done by Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, and Terenzini (2004) relate to what the female participants mentioned as reasons for feeling unprepared. Pascarella et al. talked about students feeling **"**at a distinct disadvantage with respect to basic knowledge about postsecondary education (e.g., costs and application process), level of family income and support, educational degree expectations and plans, and academic preparation in high school" (p. 250). Although it doesn't specifically separate this information by gender, it seems to align with the sentiments that female participants shared. The four male participants all believed that they were prepared for college, for reasons like: college pace and expectation, the mental challenges college brings, good learning practices, and having goals set. Responses from all of the male participants seemed to be tangible and full-circle, in that they are practiced and learned. Research was not found concerning differences between genders about perceptions of college preparedness and efficacy. Based on their responses, male students either felt more independent at home than females, or the fact that male students specifically mentioned having mentors and teachers who encouraged them and helped them develop, whereas, the females did not make much mention of that. All in all, the majority of students felt prepared for college, and if not, they recognized why they were not prepared.

Students who did not feel prepared for college elaborated on reasons why they felt unprepared, and these reasons were coded as *areas for improvement*. Only four of the nine participants had specific areas of improvement that they shared in their interviews. Yvette said that she wanted to "just learn how to study more… taking things serious as far as my writing. I want to improve in that." Samantha shared that she needed to improve on better understanding the material. Lahkim stated that he could only focus on one thing at a time; he recognized that college has so many important things going on at one time, in and outside of the classroom. Tori mirrored the need to improve on study skills, also adding that self-teaching and online work have been complicating tasks as well. Amongst these areas of improvement, students were still confident and comfortable with themselves to talk about how they viewed themselves in lieu of areas in which they needed to improve.

Self-esteem and identification. Each participant had a very particular way in which he or she addressed him or herself in self-identifying ways. When asked two questions involving their minority status, all of the participants echoed that they didn't identify themselves as minorities, nor did they think any less of themselves because of this status. Yvette told me that she was confident in herself, that she's a hard worker, and that she goes after what she wants. Phillip referred to himself as responsible and mature. Mario spoke of his love of singing, dancing, playing musical instruments, and creative writing, just to offer a few examples. Although described very briefly, we can see that these participants have high self-esteem and have great plans to succeed and be involved on campus and in the community. The way that participants talked about themselves and eluded to future plans and goals speaks back to what research has said about students in this population. Research (e.g., Gallegos, 2005; Pascarella, 2004) shows that students that fall in this population tend to carry a type of defeated attitude

about the position (racial, economic, etc.) that they are in and the uphill battle to persist in spite

of those positions. Participants of this study have spoken well of themselves and hold high hopes

for themselves; they exude confidence. Often, these students have been told what and who they

are not; family members, teachers, and media echo this perception, but it's important to note that

self-esteem is more powerful than those perceptions and is what has helped students progress in

this program and in their education.

      Student fears. Although faculty can do all that is in their power to help the students they

service, students have to rise above their own fears, pressures, and excitements to reach their

goals. One reoccurring fear across all interviews, but one, was the fear of failing. Because failure

is such a broad term, participants were asked to describe what failure meant to them. Similar

responses amongst two or more participants involved things like not messing up and getting

involved in things that they knew they shouldn't get involved in; dropping out or giving up;

school work being too difficult to manage; actually finishing school and breaking those family

generational patterns; not having money to get the things that they need for class and to survive

while at school; and self-pressure, to adjust and do what is necessary to not fail. Mario was the

only participant who did not mention failure as a fear. His response, though, coupled with the

responses of Phillip and Kevin, expressed concern for their reputations and social lives; they did

not want to get mixed up with the wrong crowds. None of the females responded with social

concerns; rather, they all responded with academic and college adjustment concerns. As well,

most participant responses resonated with what Samantha had to say when she said, "I think

about what I got to go home to if I fail, drop out, or give up." Although participants revealed

earlier that they did not see themselves as minorities, five of the nine participants reflected on

their minority status and how that contributed to their fears. Tori said, "Um, I think people won't

give me a chance sometimes. I think that's what I'm scared of, or they just won't help me."

Along those same lines, Yvette shared:

I'd say, not clicking with certain types of people. People having stereotypes because of

who I am and the color of my skin, I guess you would say. Just letting people know I am

Yvette, an individual. I just want people to get to know me and not just group me in with

everybody else.

Looking ahead. Regardless of the labels and stigmas attached to the students and the

program, participants showed that they can and will achieve. Taking a look at each participant

individually might allow for connection and to see how their journey has and will evolve.

Lahkim shared that his biggest excitement was to break the generational pattern in his family of

men not being there for their families. He was excited to meet new people, enjoying full on the

cultural experiences and diversity that college offers. The goals that he shared were to become an

audio engineer and return to his high school to mentor students just like him. Tori said that she

was excited to mature, learning new levels of responsibility. She was excited about joining Black

organizations, in addition to studying radiology, interning, and doing volunteer work.

Belle was excited to have fun and meet new people. She came to college from a

predominantly white high school, and so she is excited to be around other Black students. She

plans to study fashion while at SIU. Tisha was excited to learn new things, including diversity

and cultural experiences. Her plans are to study journalism while at SIU, start her own hair salon

business, and make enough money to be able to send her little brother to school, something that

no one was able to do for her. Samantha was just excited to be in college. She felt that her

background and upbringing would prevent her from going to college, so she was excited to make

it out of that. She plans to work with children through becoming a social worker. Mario plainly

stated that he was excited about the plethora of resources that SIU offers. He intends to use those resources to help him discover what career path he should choose. Phillip was excited about the college experience in general. He mentioned things like being on campus, studying something he loved, and starting a career. While at SIU, he plans to study in the communications field, possibly as a journalism major. Along with a few of the other participants, Kevin was excited about diversity and cultural experience. He specifically went into detail about his excitement to see his progression over his time. He plans to study Psychology. Finally, Yvette was just excited to further her education, which also transcended into her desire to obtain multiple degrees. Her goals are to study mechanical engineering, while minoring in psychology. She stated that she didn't want to be bound to just one area of study or job; she wanted to have options.

General Discussion

To recap, this project addressed the following research questions - *RQ1: How do experiences pre-college affect students now? Even further, what were those pre-college experiences? RQ2: In what ways can the program help students successfully further their education in spite of pre-college experiences? Even further, in what ways can the program improve?*

To address the first research question, experiences pre-college affected student participants in several ways. Students came to college feeling unprepared socially, academically, and mentally. They felt that their experiences in high school were without much merit, therefore, leading them to question their capabilities as a college student. Familial education history also led students to believe that their time in college would be difficult, because they had not had the privilege of having parents who attended college in the same capacity as them. They believed that because of this, they would need extra attention, guidance, and advice to help them to

achieve what they came to school study. The experiences that students had pre-college is what keeps them motivated to succeed while at SIU. Students were fully aware that this would take much work, but was possible, as long as they stayed focused on their school work and kept their visions in sight. In addition, students were and are constantly faced with expectations from family, friends, and school personnel alike, along with the stereotypes and statistical data that display the typical success rate of first-generation and racial minority students.

To further explain, some of the pre-college experiences that student participants mentioned were things like living in neighborhoods that were not safe, attending schools that were not necessarily conducive for learning, living in homes with dysfunctional families, living at and below the poverty line, having to help rear younger siblings, and having the pressure of breaking unproductive family patterns (such as not attending college). Each participant had a story to tell, and with that story, several instances in which to explain. All of these mentioned and the ones left out all speak to how and why students came to college with so much weight to bear. Not one participant felt as if he or she was fully ready for college. Maybe it's fair to say to that no college first-year is "fully ready" for college, but with the multiple identities, first-generation and the status of minority, these students especially felt the pressure.

To address the second research question, the program has already helped student participants become successful in the furtherance of their education, in spite of their pre-college experiences; the language that student participants used in reference to the program confirms it. Students spoke well of the program, specifically the advisors and teachers that are there to assist them. Students felt that they were getting the amount of attention that they needed, that most lacked in high school. Students receive attention socially, academically, and mentally. In fact, the most prominent thing that students mentioned concerning this was that the faculty in the program

are a listening ear. Student participants talked about needing someone to just be there to talk, an expectation that they had of the program upon being admitted, and they have not been left disappointed. Faculty participants discussed all of the resources and services that the program offers, things like tutoring, workshops, advisement, and mentoring. Students did not mention all of those things specifically in their interviews, but rather spoke well of the program overall.

As far as improvements that the program can make to better their services, neither students nor faculty specifically said anything that could be done. One thing that may inadvertently be an area for improvement is the overwhelming number of minority students. The issue does not solely lie in the fact that the program serves a majority of minority students, but the stigmas that also come along with that fact. The program needs to find a way to quiet the noise around campus that negatively reflects on the program and its students. Another suggestion, perhaps, might be an evaluation system. By that, I mean asking students to formally evaluate and comment on the services that they receive; this way, the program could better serve the students' needs, according to the student. Other than that, the program is well-rounded and does what it sets out to accomplish.

Future Research and Limitations

This project has great potential to be further studied in many ways. The biggest gap I saw in research in doing this project was the lack of gender-specific breakdowns amongst minority first-generation students. Specifically, in my research, I noticed that the male students felt more prepared for college, had more assistance in high school, and were overall more confident than the females. The male student participants were more independent and were ready for the challenge of being on their own, whereas, the female student participants were more attached to the safety and comfort of the familiar. Female participants were more concerned about their self-

efficacy in regards to their performance in college and financial issues, whereas, the male participants were more concerned about social life and their reputation while in college. Female participants seemed to have been under more pressure from home and self as opposed to the male participants, who were also under pressure, but did not think about it as much as the female participants. Further research in this area may analyze gender roles in the preparation for college, how male/female frames of reference affect how students prepare for and adjust to college, or how pre-college access (involved teachers, mentors, coaches) help or hinder the two genders differently in understanding what to expect in college. All in all, there is room for more research to be done on the gender differences and what that implies.

A major limitation in this project was the small sample of research participants, both students and faculty. With only nine students and four faculty members, these data cannot necessarily be generalized to include all minority students and faculty in the program. The short amount of time spent interviewing participants could have been longer. Had interviews been longer, I could have gained more and better insight, which may have led to even more data or discoveries. As well, more time with interviewees would have allowed me to build more of a relationship, which might have led to more insider privileged information. I believe that the span of time in which I did the different portions of this research was too spaced out, and may have impacted my commitment to the interpretations of data collected. As well, this project was the first project of this caliber that I have written on my own, so naturally, I may not have used data to their greatest potential. That being said, more data would have caused more burnout to myself as researcher, with trying to balance, transcribe, and report all data.

Conclusion

All-in-all, the Exploratory Students program is in the process of doing just what it sets out to do; helping their students prepare for their future. Although students deal with outside influences, both positive and negative, their self-esteem trumps it all, reassuring them that success is a possibility. Although failure was the biggest fear mentioned amongst student participants, it is not something that will stop them. The program, as students and faculty members shared, steps in the place of those insecurities and uncertainties to boost confidence; it works to strengthen and develop students into capable individuals who can believe in themselves. Students are grateful for such an opportunity. The minority factor does not too much affect students; rather, it's motivation to contest the statistics stacked against them. My time spent with these participants was rewarding because I left knowing that they are in good hands. More work is still to be done, but the Exploratory Students program (provisional) is and will continue to be the chance that minority first-generation students need.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Codebook

Code Name	Description of Code	Example of Code
Family Structure (FS)	Includes college history attendance of immediate family members, as well as, family count (mom, dad, sisters, brothers, etc).	After she got her certificate, she just stopped going to school. My dad, I think, dropped out. So, yea, I'm the first to go away.
Home Life (HL)	Includes home situations that may have affected student's performance in high school or struggle from high school to now.	With them divorcing and me and my brother moving in with her, it was like, this is nice. The house in Lake Station, when he was gone I was like ahhhhhh (peace), I could relax.
High School (HS)	Includes high school culture, influences, and overall comments.	I went to the University of Chicago charter school. It's located on the south-side of Chicago; it's a relatively new school. I'm on of their benchmark or landmark classes.
College Preparedness (CP)	Includes reasons why participant feels he or she is (not) prepared for college.	Guidance counselors need to do a better job of sending out pamphlets and stuff to parents and telling students when to meet with them for advisement and stuff. They need to really stress show expensive college is because this is not cheap
Self-View/Identity (SV/I)	Includes how the participant views, talks about, or categorize him or herself.	I've always hung out with girls and I've always hung out with older people, so I didn't act the same way or the same age that people my age acted. So, it's like 'he's weird, he's different' and I've always called myself kind of like an outcast.

Positive Influences & Support (PIS0	Includes those people or things that participant feels have positively contributed to his or her growth, development, or furtherance in education.	The positive is my family and friends and my faith
Negative Influences & Support (NIS)	Includes those people or things that participant feels have negatively contributed to his or her growth, development, or furtherance in education.	my mom was a drug abuser and she was on drugs for the first 10 years of my life and came back home when I was 10 and she had been home since, for like 7-8 years. This year, we found out that she relapsed Christmas Eve last year
Transitional Balance (TB)	Includes things that participant may not have known and have struggled through in making it to college.	we have less classes, but there is so much more to it. There is more homework, there are more papers. In high school, I thought I was busy because I was doing sports, I was working, I was going to school, trying to spend time with my friends and family. Here, it's like there's so much to do. Now, I'm using a planner.
Financial Support (FS)	Includes ways in which finances have helped or hindered participant's attendance here.	I even had the opportunity to do an internship and I didn't take it because I know that the support I have…they give me support and right now the money tight
Areas of Improvement (AI)	Includes areas in which participant feels or knows that he or she needs assistance in.	My only thing is that I can only focus on one thing at one time, so trying to split my mind like 50 different ways is hard to do and I feel like that's something that you have to do here. One of the things that I know that's gonna be perfect for me is time management.

Program Expectations (PE)	Includes ideas that participants have about the ways in which the program should help them; what they want out of the program.	To teach. Guidance or mentorship
Program Identity & Language (PIL)	Includes how participants speak about and refer to the program; also words used to describe how being in the program makes them feel; and also things that others have said about the program.	I think it's a very awesome program. It gives people a chance to come to school. People who were probably in my position, who messed up freshman and sophomore year or realized that they needed to have a turn-around and get their stuff together and if they want to go to school. Also, it makes you appreciate your acceptance of going to the school more
Others' Expectations (OE)	Includes the things that others have said that they expect participants to achieve while in college or in this program.	Once I transferred schools and realized what I liked – which was being around people- I decided that I wanted a major to reflect that. She didn't agree with that (having switched from engineering). She said if you do something that just helps people, you're not going to make any money, you're going to have a crappy job. If you do computers, you're going to have a lot of money.
Goals (G)	Includes aspirations that participants have, short-term & long-term.	I want to do is mentor. I want to go back to my school and mentor the students
Fears/Pressures (F/P)	Includes things that causes participants to doubt, work harder, or be super conscious/aware of so as not to "mess up" in college.	Not make a waste of money going here
Excitements (E)	Includes things that keep participants striving and motivated; ways in which	I get to meet people from different cultural backgrounds. People who

	participants want to grow and things that participants want to see and experience.	grew up from different areas and really learn their ways of living. Learning is exciting, too. I get to learn the way that I want to learn instead of learning the way that people mapped out for me to learn. If there is anything that I find interesting or I want to study, I get to study it

Appendix B: Student Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about yourself. (your background, family life, history)

2. Tell me about positive and negative influences you've had growing up and how those affected you.

3. Talk about your transition from high school and home to college.

4. As a first generational college student or as the first in your immediate family to go away to college, what sort of support do you get? (whether it be from family, friends, government, past teachers, etc…)
5. How does that support help or hinder you?

6. What kind of pressure do you experience? (being first gen.)

    a. How do the expectations that others have of you compare to the expectations you have of yourself?
7. Do you believe that you are prepared for college? Why or why not?

8. How did you hear about the provisional student program (or Exploratory Students department)?

9. What are your expectations of this program?

10. As a new college student, what are you most afraid of?

11. As a minority student, what are you most afraid of?

12. As a new college student, what are you most excited about?

13. As a minority student, what are you most excited about?

14. As a student in the provisional student program, what do you feel your needs are?

15. How do you feel faculty in the program could meet your needs?
16. Is there anything else that you'd like to talk about, relevant to this topic, which I did not cover?

Appendix C: Faculty Interview Protocol

1. How long have you been with the program?

2. What are some challenges that you face working with students in the program?

3. In what areas do you feel students are lacking in, before coming to college?

4. How might this program help develop students in those areas?

5. What advice would you give to first generation students and students who are the first in their families to go away to school?

6. What percentage of students that come through this program would you say are minority? (a member of the non-dominant group)

7. How do you feel about this percentage?

8. How do you feel you personally impact the students that you work with in the program?

9. What about this population of students that led you to work in this program?

10. Is there anything else that you would like to add, relevant to this topic, which I did not cover?

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Exploratory Students Program

Major Professor: Miriam S. Sobre-Denton