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Barriers and Facilitators to Completion of an Undergraduate Nursing Program: Exploration of Mindfulness, Mindlessness, and Retention Among Ethnic Minorities

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BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS TO COMPLETION OF AN UNDERGRADUATE

NURSING PROGRAM: EXPLORATION OF MINDFULNESS, MINDLESSNESS, AND

RETENTION AMONG ETHNIC MINORITIES.

by

Amber Young-Brice

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ABSTRACT

BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS TO COMPLETION OF AN UNDERGRADUATE
NURSING PROGRAM: EXPLORATION OF MINDFULNESS, MINDLESSNESS, AND
RETENTION AMONG ETHNIC MINORITIES

by

Amber Young-Brice

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2016
Under the Supervision of Professor Aaron Buseh, PhD, MPH, MSN

As the United States population continues to grow and diversify, so too must the nursing

workforce in order to meet the challenging healthcare needs of a diversifying population.

Currently the nursing profession is overwhelmingly White, with only 25% of registered nurses

identifying as ethnic minority (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), 2016). Research

suggests that a diverse nursing workforce benefits many segments of the population, where better

care is provided because the nurse reflects the ethnic or racial background of their patient

(Glazer, Clark, & Bankston, 2015; RWJF, 2016). In order to continue to diversify the nursing

profession, a pipeline of qualified ethnic minority students must be recruited and trained by

colleges and universities. The challenge however, is to ensure ethnic minority students that are

recruited in these programs are provided adequate resources to assist them in completing their

program of study.

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of barriers and facilitators to

successful completion of an undergraduate nursing program among a sample of ethnic minority

undergraduate nursing students. Suggestions of strategies to enhance retention and completion of an undergraduate nursing program were also gathered from participants. Because many of these young adults are faced with a myriad of challenges in completing their nursing program, some of which may be developmentally and psychologically related, a secondary aim of this study was to explore the concepts of mindfulness and mindlessness within the context of ethnic minority nursing students' struggles and successes while enrolled in a nursing program.

Cross-sectional qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with undergraduate nursing students (N=20) who self-identified as ethnic minority. Participants were recruited from a large Midwestern urban university's college of nursing and were interviewed. The transcripts of interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Findings emerging from data analysis were grouped into three broad themes: 1) Barriers to successful completion of an undergraduate nursing program; 2) Facilitators to successful completion of an undergraduate nursing program; and 3) Strategies to assist in program completion. While experiences in their nursing programs were positive, the study findings captures a process of traveling to a foreign country unprepared and not knowing all of the rules that govern the country. Participants shared stories of feeling lost and isolated and having some difficulties in navigating the 'country' of college and a larger university with only a faulty compass to guide them. Having a map to ease their navigation would help alleviate the barriers they encountered moving through their nursing program.

With the current implementation of the Affordable Care Act in which many individuals including ethnic minorities are now beginning to have access to health care, there is a need for diversifying the nursing workforce (American Nurses Association, 2014). Recruiting and training more ethnic minority nurses will also be critical in caring for an aging diverse

population. Amidst the budget cuts at many state universities, one finding from this study

suggest the need to maintain and expand existing support services for ethnic minority students in

order to increase the number of ethnic minority students graduating and entering the nursing

workforce. Finding ways however, to ensure that these programs are cost-effective is an

important factor to consider. Gathering information from the students themselves is an important

way for university administrators to develop culturally appropriate programs that would provide

rich learning experiences to support and retain ethnic minority students.

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lap was always warm when working at the computer due to the love of my dog, Gustav. Thanks

little buddy.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction and Background of the Study

By the year 2025, it is projected that there will be a nursing shortage of between 300,000 to one million nurses (Aiken, Cheung, & Olds, 2009). Literature supports the nursing shortage is compounded by enrollment challenges in nursing programs, decreasing retention within the nursing workforce, and the increasing demand for health care (Duffield, Roche, O'Brien-Pallas, Catling-Paull, & King, 2009). Additionally, the implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) has transformed care delivery leading to increased demand for registered nurses (Buerhaus et al., 2012). These issues are a cause for concern regarding meeting the future health care needs of a diverse population. Compounding the projected nursing shortage is the fact that the current nursing workforce does not mirror the diversity of the United States population, which reinforces the gap in health disparities (Wong, Seago, Keane, & Grumbach, 2008). Addressing these concerns begins with understanding the college life of undergraduate students in a nursing program, as these students are the future nursing workforce.

The concepts of mindfulness and mindlessness within the context of undergraduate students' struggles and successes while attending nursing programs are additional factors influencing retention in nursing programs. Mindfulness is an emerging concept in nursing and nursing education as generally nurses struggle with stress, anxiety, and burnout (White, 2013). Mindfulness is the process of being present in the moment, seeing clearly, and being open to all experiences. Mindfulness practices impact the brain, can influence the experience of emotions, and have the potential to alter behaviors in a positive way (Lahikainen & Soysa, 2014). Mindfulness is also a type of meditation that can be applied across the spectrum of situations or

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disciplines to better ones life or performance, deal with stress, or can be useful as a therapeutic intervention. Mindfulness has the potential to impact nursing education in many ways, but yet remains fairly misunderstood as it relates to nursing education. Mindfulness shows promise in helping to reduce reactivity to stress-related or anxiety-provoking events that nursing students face (Lahikainen & Soysa). Conversely, mindlessness is a rigid state of mind, characterized by routine, rules, and acting on automatic pilot (Langer, 1989). There is a dearth of research exploring mindfulness and mindlessness relative to undergraduate nursing student retention.

Thus, exploring the concepts of mindfulness, mindlessness, and nursing student retention may provide insight into challenges ethnic minority undergraduate nursing students experience surviving college. Furthermore, strategies that would aid in increasing nursing program student retention can be discerned. Recruitment and retention of ethnic minority nursing students is important for expanding and diversifying the nursing workforce.

Statement of the Problem

Although there is acknowledgment that nursing programs are making strides in recruiting and graduating minority nurses, there is still a large gap and more must be done in order to have a nursing workforce that mirrors the population they serve (American Association of College of Nursing (AACN), 2014). It is evident in the literature that there are various perspectives and approaches to the complex area of student retention. Retention has been studied extensively yet still remains an issue, especially in nursing programs and in particular with ethnic minority students (Tinto, 2006; Jeffreys, 2007; Condon et al., 2013).

The challenges encountered retaining ethnic minority students in nursing programs are compounded by the current generation of undergraduate students. The Millennial generation, born after 1980, exhibits different characteristics as compared to previous generations.

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Millennials are the most diverse and global centric generation, preferring teamwork, group projects, service learning, and community service (Jonas-Dwyer & Pospisil, 2004). Additionally, Millennials are confident, happy, and optimistic (Jonas-Dwyer & Pospisil). Despite the positive qualities associated with this subpopulation, there are some inherent characteristics that make it difficult for them to succeed in advancing their education. Millennials tend to be achievement oriented, where quantity of work outweighs quality, are multitaskers who bore easily, and favor instant gratification (Jonas-Dwyer & Pospisil; Bracy, Brevill, & Roach, 2010). Such drive for instant gratification, lack of attention, and unrealistic expectations are all considered mindless behaviors. Mindlessness is a state of mind where one is not present in the moment, rigid, and stuck in habits (Langer, 1989; Hofling, Moosbrugger, Schermelleh-Engel, & Heidenreich, 2011).

In this study, speculation was made that among current ethnic minority undergraduate students, some students are faced with a myriad of challenges all of which may impact their ability to be focused on their studies and thus such mindless behaviors may adversely affect their ability to complete their programs in a timely manner. Thus, it is essential to explore which factors serve as facilitators and barriers to undergraduate nursing students progressing in their studies and completing their nursing programs.

Purpose of the Study

Student retention is a major goal of many universities; however, student retention within nursing programs is particularly important in light of the nursing shortage and increasing complexity and demands within the healthcare system. Traditionally, students have been treated as passive beings and there has been little focus on nurturing the positive qualities students possess that may affect retention in a program. Much of the available literature focuses on the

barriers as presented in Chapter II. The field of positive psychology has started a dialogue that no longer focuses on the worst things in life, but on how people adapt in the midst of challenges (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of barriers and facilitators to successful completion of an undergraduate nursing program among a sample of ethnic minority undergraduate nursing students. While there are many factors related to undergraduate nursing student retention, a secondary aim of this study was to explore mindfulness and mindlessness within the context of ethnic minority nursing students' struggles and successes while enrolled in a nursing programs. Learning more about how mindfulness and mindlessness manifest in the stories of ethnic minority undergraduate nursing students has lead to new insight regarding how to capitalize on positive mindfulness behaviors to better retain students in nursing programs. An important aspect was to explore and describe how mindfulness can contribute to retention of ethnic minority students in an undergraduate nursing program in order to grow the diversity in the nursing workforce. Additionally, it was important to value the participants' subjective experiences and find those positive qualities ethnic minority students possess contributing to their success. To date, there are very few qualitative studies conducted on mindfulness (Baer, 2003), and none conducted exploring mindfulness, mindlessness, and student retention in an undergraduate nursing program concurrently.

Research Questions

The following research questions were examined:

1) What are the barriers and challenges of ethnic minority undergraduate nursing students enrolled in an undergraduate nursing program?

2) What are the facilitators or successes described by ethnic minority undergraduate nursing students enrolled in an undergraduate nursing program?

3) How do the concepts of mindfulness and mindlessness manifest in the participant's stories as they work towards completing their nursing program?

4) What strategies would the participants propose that would assist them in staying in college and completing their nursing program?

Significance of Study

Student retention has been extensively studied in higher education since the early 1970's. Unfortunately, student retention issues continue to affect departments of universities. First year students in college are diverse and the transition into college is unique for each student (Dluzewska & Kirby, 2012). Current research is expanding regarding programs that have been implemented to recruit and retain ethnic minority nursing students; however, researchers have found there are still issues plaguing ethnic minority students, such as family responsibilities, work, and generational differences, with financial issues constituting the largest issue (Shelton, 2012; Condon et al., 2013; Jeffreys, 2007; Deary, Watson, & Hogston, 2003). A gap lies in the fact that much of the current literature explores internal and external barriers with little attention devoted to developing positive attributes contributing to academic persistence and retention in higher education. Not only has this study looked at the challenges or negatives, but also has contributed to the understanding of ethnic minority students by discerning the positives regarding retaining ethnic minority students in a nursing program.

Notwithstanding a surge of research directed towards recruitment and retention of ethnic minority nursing students, a gap in representation of ethnic minorities in nursing programs and the nursing workforce continues to persist (Jeffreys, 2007; Condon et al., 2013; AACN, 2014).

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the American Hospital Association target ethnic minority student recruitment and retention as a necessary step in addressing the nursing shortage (AACN, 2014; RWJF, 2016). The AACN (2014; 2015) recognizes that in order to provide quality, culturally competent patient care, nursing programs must attract students from minority groups to bridge the gap currently found between the ethnic diversity of the current nursing workforce and the United States population.

Furthering retention goals involve addressing generational characteristics that pose additional challenges. College students today are primarily members of the Millennial generation. The Millennial generation possesses positive and negative characteristics outlined previously. In addition to these characteristics, whether the student is a traditional versus nontraditional student is a factor affecting retention. Jeffreys (2012) defines a non-traditional undergraduate nursing student as someone who is "enrolled in an entry-level undergraduate nursing program, and who meets one or more of the following criteria: 1) 25 years or older, 2) commuter, 3) enrolled part-time, 4) male, 5) member of an ethnic and/or racial minority group, 6) speaks English as a second or other language, 7) has dependent children, 8) has a general equivalency diploma, and 9) required remedial classes (pg. 9). Attention to minority students' success in nursing programs is a particular concern that leads to increasing diversity of the nursing workforce in order to meet the needs of a growing and diversifying population (AACN 2014; AACN, 2015, Dapremont, 2013; Jeffreys, 2012).

Understanding the Millennial generation's perspective is significant given this generation's prevalence on college campuses today. Additionally, Millennials who are entering the nursing workforce have the highest attrition rates among new nursing graduates (Price, McGillis, Angus, & Peter, 2013; Hutchinson, Brown, & Longworth, 2012). Price et al., (2013)

explored Millennial nursing students' reasons for choosing nursing as a career and the high

attrition amongst new Millennial nurses. They found through narrative analysis that the issue

stems from an emphasis solely on the virtues of being a nurse; not the knowledge, skill, and

expertise required of nurses. Hutchison et al., (2012) support the need for further research into

the preparation, recruitment, and retention of Millennials due to the overall lack of research

available regarding this generation entering nursing practice.

Known facilitators of student retention and academic performance are emotion regulation

and social adjustment (Dluzewska & Kirby, 2012). These concepts relate to the positive

behavioral aspects cultivated by mindfulness. Mindfulness is considered a contemplative

practice, and these practices have the potential to indirectly impact retention due to the effects on

the affective domain (Oberski, Goldblatt, Murray, & de Placido, 2013). Additionally,

mindfulness may also support at-risk students. Students who are classified as at-risk may still

persist in their program if they have the internal resources supporting a drive to overcome

challenges and remain in school (Shelton, 2012). Self-concept and self-appraisal have been

found to be non-cognitive predictors of academic success for minority students who are at-risk

(Adebayo, 2008). Furthermore, self-efficacy, a dispositional characteristic, has implications in

student retention. Self-efficacy is a belief in individual effort and has significant influence over

academic and personal success (Bandura, 1997). The concepts of self-concept, self-appraisal,

and self-efficacy have all been positively related to mindfulness (Caldwell, Harrison, Adams,

Quin, & Gresson, 2010; Ireland, 2012; Proulx, 2003). These concepts also relate to persistence

and retention in higher education (Dluzewska & Kirby). This study has elicited these and other

positive concepts within the stories of the ethnic minority nursing students therefore providing

support for faculty to nurture mindfulness with these and other students ensuring future success and retention in a nursing program.

Although this study is not a quantitative study, mindlessness may also be related to student retention. Mindlessness is described as being on automatic pilot, where one operates on programmed routines that determine thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Haigh, Moore, Kashdan, & Fresco, 2011). Mindlessness has implications for minority students on many levels, including the campus climate, integration, and overall academics. Campus climate is a mediator between institutional fit and a students' academic and social experiences (Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003). Stresses are normally incurred as part of the acclimation to college period, but this is amplified for minority students who may encounter interracial stresses, racism, and discrimination on campus (Swail et al.). Mindless thought processing could manifest in the minority student cultivating negative self-concept, decreasing self-awareness and self-efficacy, and heighten sense of racism and discrimination if their mindset is rigid and focused only on previously constructed categories (Carson & Langer, 2006). If a student is able to cultivate mindfulness, they increase their capacity to see any situation or environment from several perspectives, while being open and flexible (Langer, 1993). Lillis and Hayes (2007) incorporated mindful awareness practice to a course discussing prejudice. Students who utilized mindfulness demonstrated a small reduction on prejudice, which is promising.

Overall, the majority of research exploring mindfulness techniques is supportive of positive outcomes. Mindfulness has been extensively researched and is known to foster positive behaviors (Oberski et al., 2013). This study has uncovered those positives present in the stories of ethnic minority nursing students and remaining in a nursing program therefore providing insight as to how to nurture these students to success in a nursing program. This study has

implications that go beyond nursing programs as the findings will inform colleges and universities as all struggle to increase ethnic minority presence and success (Rigali-Oiler & Kurpius, 2013).

Assumptions

There are several assumptions that undergird this study. Utilizing a qualitative methodology assumes that the participants will be agreeable to meet face to face and share personal stories truthfully and accurately. Furthermore, it is assumed that trust can be established between ethnic minority nursing students and a White researcher as to encourage stories that illuminate their struggles and successes staying in a nursing program. It can also be assumed that there are unique barriers, facilitators, and experiences of mindfulness and mindlessness within the ethnic minority student participant sample.

Definitions of Key Terminology

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the subjective experiences of ethnic minority undergraduate nursing students relative to barriers, facilitators, and strategies for success in a nursing program. The concepts of mindfulness and mindlessness were also explored as they relate to the successes and struggles ethnic minority nursing students experienced while in a nursing program. Key terms for this study are:

- *Attrition:* Refers to when a student drops out of school either voluntarily or involuntarily (Jeffreys, 2012).

- *Barriers and/or Facilitators*: The interaction of a person's physical and social environment can interact to either be barriers or facilitators to the overall intentions or goals of the person (Wong, Seago, Keane, Grumbach, 2006).
    - o Barrier: Something that impedes or blocks.

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- o Facilitator: Something that facilitates positive movement or makes things easier.

- *Millennial Student:* The Millennial generation are those born between 1980 and 2000 (Price et al., 2013).

- *Mindfulness:* "Mindfulness is a process of regulating attention in order to bring a quality of non-elaborative awareness to current experience and a quality of relating to one's experience within an orientation of curiosity, experiential openness, and acceptance" (Bishop et al., 2004, p 234).

- *Mindlessness:* Mindlessness is a rigid state governed by previously constructed categories, rules, and routines (Carson & Langer, 2006; Langer, 1989).

- *Minority:* According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2014), racial and ethnic minority populations include males, Asian American, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino (a), Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, and Alaskan Native. For this study, the target population is ethnic minority nursing students.

- *Student Retention:* Jeffreys (2012) defines program retention as "the continuous enrollment in a nursing program (part or full-time) by taking the required courses sequentially until meeting the program's graduation requirements, possibly including courses repeated for previous withdrawal and/or failure" (p. 9).

Summary

While there are many factors influencing undergraduate nursing student retention, this study seeks to determine what common barriers ethnic minority nursing students perceive as challenging their success or completion of a nursing program and facilitators perceived to aid in success or completion of a nursing program. This study also seeks to extrapolate elements of mindfulness and mindlessness within the stories of the participants. The significance of this

study is paramount to establishing a nursing body that is representative of the diversity in the United States as currently that is not the case. Increasing the diversity of the nursing workforce begins with uncovering ethnic minority nursing student's perceptions of barriers and facilitators to completion on a nursing program and how to best support these students to program completion. The findings of this study may contribute to the use of positive mindfulness psychological approaches that have not been used before to aid in retention of ethnic minority nursing students.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter reviews literature pertaining to the concepts of mindfulness, mindlessness, positive psychology, emerging adults, student retention, and minority student retention. The literature accompanying this dissertation was selected to provide a general understanding of the concepts and provide a foundation supporting the research methodology and aims.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness has been well documented in the literature within various disciplines. Mindfulness, in any sense or discipline, stems from 2500 year-old Buddhist psychology (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Siegel, Germer, & Olendzki, 2008). Kabat-Zinn (2003) defines mindfulness as "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment" (p. 145). Mindfulness originates from the Pali word, *sati*. *Sati* indicates awareness, attention, and remembrance or lucid awareness (Chiesa, 2012; Siegel et al., 2008). Mindfulness is part of a growing influence of Eastern philosophy on Western thinking (Collard, Avny, & Boniwell, 2008; Rodgers & Yen, 2002). Rodgers and Yen (2002) acknowledge that Buddhism is not a philosophy, but aligns with interpretive philosophies and methods such as hermeneutics and phenomenology. The researchers see potential in Buddhist thought enriching and opening up Western views of nursing by addressing interpersonal aspects of knowledge critical to understanding (Rogers & Yen).

The definition is expanding as mindfulness has migrated into Western ontology. The increasing list of core attributes of mindfulness appears repeatedly in the literature. These core attributes are being present, nonjudgmental, paying attention, acceptance, compassion, consciousness, and awareness (Baer, 2003; Beddoe & Murphy, 2004; Brown & Ryan, 2003;

Bishop et al, 2004; Chambers, Gullone, & Allen, 2009; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Schoormans & Nyklicek, 2011; Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, & Freedman, 2006; Siegel et al., 2008). Bishop et al's (2004) operational definition summarizes much of the various aspects of mindfulness; "Mindfulness is a process of regulating attention in order to bring a quality of nonelaborative awareness to current experience and a quality of relating to one's experience within an orientation of curiosity, experiential openness, and acceptance" (Bishop et al., 2004, p 234). Mindfulness practice aids in regulating one's attention, which relates to perceptions, insight, and appraisal of situations (Proulx, 2008). The awareness cultivated through mindfulness is best achieved through meditation practice, but at the most fundamental level, developing the ability to focus on ones breath aids in cultivating mindfulness (White, 2013).

Another aspect of mindfulness incorporates mindfulness training to aid in stress reduction or aid in decreasing the adverse effects of chronic illnesses, specifically pain and mental illnesses (Baer, 2003; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Schoormans & Nyklicek, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; and Chambers et al., 2009). Through the use of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) techniques or mindfulness meditation practices, these interventions provide a method of facing, exploring, and relieving suffering at the level of the mind-body connection (Kabat- Zinn, 2003). A majority of literature found connecting mindfulness to nursing involves utilization of the MBSR programs. Multiple articles obtained have determined that nurses and nursing students endure high levels of stress, which affects internal processes (Beddoe & Murphy, 2004; Kemper, Bulla, Krueger, Ott, McCool, Gardiner, 2011; Shirey, 2006). Findings suggest that participants who meditated more often experienced less stress, greater empathy, and felt more patient (Beddoe & Murphy; Shirey).

Mindfulness is not only associated with meditation practices, it has also been extensively researched by Ellen Langer in the realm of Western psychology. Mindfulness according to Langer (1989; and Moldoveanu, 2000) implies one has an openness, curiosity, and awareness of more than one perspective in order to draw novel distinctions (Siegel et al., 2008). Mindfulness, according to Langer, leads us to greater awareness of context and perspective, and allows us to rephrase what *is* something to what *could* something be. Langer has researched mindfulness in terms of a cognitive information-processing framework where having an open mindset that is flexible and actively engaged in the process of drawing novel distinctions is more beneficial than a mindset that is judgmental and rigid (Carson & Langer, 2006). Consequences of Langer's cognitive theory of mindfulness include "a greater sensitivity to one's environment, more openness to new information, the creation of new categories for structuring perception, and enhanced awareness of multiple perspectives in problem solving (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000, p 2). It is important to note that Langer's conceptualization of mindfulness emphasizes cognitive processes, and should not be bound to meditation practices (Langer, 1989). Brown and Ryan (2003) and Langer (1989) note that meditation practices can enhance mindfulness; however, Langer's work clearly differs in that it is a cognitive process of finding novel distinctions externally, whereas traditional mindfulness meditation practices emphasize internal processes (Haigh et al., 2011).

One of Langer's most startling studies, the "counterclockwise study", took men between 70 and 80 years old on retreats. The groups were brought to a site that was filled with nostalgic paraphernalia and they were encouraged to be active and not talk about the past. The control group was taken to the same site, except this group was allowed to talk about the past. At the end of the study, the men who were not allowed to talk about the past looked younger, had

increased joint movement, and scored higher on intelligence tests post-study (Ruark, 2010). This study reinforces the implications of being in a mindful state and present in the moment.

Mindfulness from both perspectives aligns with the Millennial generation of undergraduate students who seek to develop an awareness of themselves and others around them (Rosenberger, 2011). Awareness is a key tenant in both perspectives of mindfulness. Moreover, Millennials want novel and constructive approaches in the learning process, with use of technology. According to Langer, Djikic, Pirson, Madenci, and Donahue (2010), mindfulness creates novelty, where stimulus or new content continuously has different and emerging meanings. Faculty utilizing a mindfulness approach would act more as a guide in the classroom than a "sage on the stage" which promotes mindlessness (Espinoza, 2012).

Mindlessness

Langer's work on mindfulness stemmed from mindlessness. Mindlessness is a rigid state governed by previously constructed categories, rules, and routines (Carson & Langer, 2006; Langer, 1989). When someone has rigid mindsets, oblivious to context, and does not question, they are in a state of mindlessness (Langer, 1989). Our experiences of the world are by making categories and distinctions; when there is over reliance on these past categories or distinctions mindlessness sets in (Langer, 1989). Additionally, mindlessness is when people act automatically and/or from a single perspective. Roots of mindlessness are repetition, practice, and premature cognitive commitments (Langer, 1989). Premature cognitive commitments are the mindsets formed when a person first encounters something and then cling to that mindset with subsequent exposure to that thing (Langer, 1989). There is no questioning or thoughts of other uses or application of that thing in subsequent exposures. Context is also relevant to premature cognitive commitments. How one behaves in situations is affected by context.

Context controls behavior, and mindsets control how context is interpreted (Langer, 1989).

Negative effects of mindlessness include poor self-image, cruelty, loss of control, and reduced

potential (Langer, 1989).

The presentation of new information is critical to Langer's mindfulness theory.

Language that facilitates mindfulness should be conditional, such as "could be", rather than

prescriptive or absolute, such as "is" (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000). When there is only a single

perspective presented and it is not questioned, mindlessness occurs. Teachers who lecture

authoritatively and in absolute language continuously cause students to become bored,

unquestioning, and ultimately mindless (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000). For example, Langer

began working with students and the importance of context and language. Langer took a group

of students and introduced an object to the group as something that *could be* a dog toy (treatment

group). The control group was told the object *was* a dog toy. The treatment group was taught

conditionally and when asked for something that could erase the chalkboard, the treatment group

used the dog toy, which was in fact an eraser. The control group was told in absolute terms that

the eraser was a dog toy and did not use it as an eraser, which is mindless thinking (Langer,

1989). Langer (1993) notes that teaching students utilizing conditional language fosters

creativity. Additionally, premature cognitive commitments (rigid mindless mindsets) are

reinforced when students accept information mindlessly and without consideration of alternatives

(Langer, 1993). Langer (1993) suggests that learning should be fun and not delivered in tight

closed packages which discourages creativity and thinking of alternatives.

Of particular interest to nursing education is the fact that "mindlessness can show up as

the direct cause of human error in complex situations, prejudice and stereotyping, and of the

sensation of alternating between anxiety and boredom that characterizes many lives" (Langer &

Moldoveanu, 2000, p. 6). Additionally, mindlessness can occur as a result of learning something and practicing it until it becomes routine or second nature (Langer, 1989). When something is repeated over and over, the individual steps blur together and out of our consciousness leaving nothing to question (Langer, 1989). Mindlessness is reinforced in nursing education as courses are often lectured and skills are taught until they become routine. Furthermore, mindlessness is apparent in the concept of learned helplessness, which will be discussed below.

Langer (1989) proposes meditation as a way to break out of the mindsets of mindlessness. Meditation includes regulating attention and energy, transforming the quality of experiences, realizing our humanity, and our relationship with others (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Langer (1989) notes that any form of meditation can lead to post-meditative mindfulness. She also suggests that meditation practices can enhance one's mindset to be open and receptive to novelty, engagement, and flexibility, which are key to her theory of mindfulness (Langer, 1989; Haigh et al., 2011). Novelty, engagement, and flexibility are also distinct learning preferences and characteristics of the Millennial generation (Jonas-Dwyer & Pospisil, 2004). These characteristics are also important to develop and foster as students in the Millennial generation are quite comfortable with multi-tasking, which has been shown to reduce concentration and overall performance (Jonas-Dwyer & Pospisil).

Positive Psychology

The field of psychology has predominantly focused on disease states that neglect the positive features of a person's life and how people thrive (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Leontopoulou, 2015). This focus has ignored nurturing the positive qualities people possess leading to a fulfilled life (Moneta, 2014). Fairly new to the field of psychology is the science of positive psychology. Martin Seligman introduced positive psychology in 1998 and describes it

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as a framework that values subjective experiences such as well-being, contentment, satisfaction, hope, optimism, flow, and happiness, applicable to the individual and group level (Moneta, 2014; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi). Different views within positive psychology trace back to hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Moneta). Hedonic well-being is characterized by emotions in the here and now and eudaimonic well-being refers to optimal functioning, meaningful life, resilience, and growth (Moneta). These concepts are influenced by mindfulness (Oberski et al., 2013).

Since the inception of positive psychology, a number of interventions have been developed in an effort to facilitate flourishing and enhance well-being (Leontopoulou, 2015). In a recent study conducted by Leontopoulou (2015), she explored the feasibility of measurement and outcomes of positive psychological interventional activities. These activities were a gratitude exercise, "best possible selves" exercise, and target setting activity (Leontopoulou). The study sample consisted of 40 emerging adults aged 18 to 30 who were students at the Department of Primary Education, University of Ioannina in Greece (Leontopoulou). The results of this study supported the interventional exercises and the researcher noted immediate increases in the participants' levels of "hope, perceptions of social support and ability to handle social stress successfully, as well as levels of three out of six key characteristic strengths, i.e. courage, humanity/love, and transcendence (Leontopoulou, 2015, p. 124-125). To increase the effectiveness of the interventions, Cohn and Fredrickson (2010) suggest loving-kindness meditation for the continued support of positive emotions. This follows the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Leotopoulou).

The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions captures the unique effects of positive emotions including joy, contentment, interest, pride, and love (Fredrickson, 2011). These

emotions share the ability to broaden a person's "momentary thought-action repertoires and build their enduring personal resources, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources (Fredrickson, 2011, p. 3). Through significant work completed by Barbra Fredrickson who developed the broaden-and-build theory, she is supporting her theory via interventional studies (Fredrickson, 2011). Fredrickson (2011) suggests that positive emotions drive individual growth and social connection. This is important related to ethnic minority students and the well-documented distress these students face on college campuses (Rigali-Oiler & Kurpius, 2013). By nurturing present positive behaviors, such as mindfulness, ethnic minority students may be able to better manage the barriers they face while attending college.

<center>**Emerging Adults**</center>

Currently, the Millennial generation accounts for a majority of students on college campuses. The Millennial generation are those born between 1980 and 2000 (Price et al., 2013). These students are emerging into adulthood and developing their sense of identity during their time on campus (Ritchie et al., 2013). Emerging adulthood is well studied in the literature, and is defined as "a life stage between adolescence and young adulthood" (Morsunbul, 2013, p. 873). College students in this stage are within a period of drastic change with increased challenges to well-being and increases in social stressors (Ritchie et al). Millennials have been found to exhibit more risk taking behaviors, lack commitment, and possess higher exploration behaviors as compared to emerging adults who are not college students (Morsunbul; Ritchie).

Emerging adults found on college campuses today have grown up during the No Child Left Behind legislation, where students are tested and retested to meet benchmarks. Instead of providing opportunities for students to problem solve, they are fed the information in order to

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pass the tests (McCarter, 2013). When teachers are doing the thinking for the students, they are

fostering behaviors of learned helplessness, which is another behavior exhibited by emerging

adults in college today (McCarter). The attribute of learned helplessness is reflected by a lack a

personal control over ones success and learning. Learned helplessness aligns with the concept of

mindlessness due to the lack of self-regulation learned helplessness fosters (Shell & Husman,

2008). Learned helplessness is also a concern regarding student retention in college, as students

who possess "helpless" behaviors expect college professors to continue to do the thinking for

them just as previous teachers had done (McCarter).

Student Retention

Retention of nursing students is critical to address the current and projected nursing

shortage, and to address factors leading to attrition. Nursing programs are challenged with

selecting successful candidates for their programs, early identification of at-risk students,

developing impactful curriculum, and preparation for smooth entry into practice (Jeffreys, 2012).

Nursing student retention refers to the continuous enrollment of a student in a nursing program

(Jeffreys, 2007). To be exact, Jeffreys (2012) defines program retention as "the continuous

enrollment in a nursing program (part or full-time) by taking the required courses sequentially

until meeting the program's graduation requirements, possibly including courses repeated for

previous withdrawal and/or failure" (p. 9). Jeffreys (2012) further delineates program retention

into ideal or interim program retention determined by completing the program within the

specified time period, or having to withdraw or repeat courses.

Opposite of retention would be attrition, such as a student dropping out of a nursing

program (Jeffreys, 2012). In 1995, Saucier discussed shrinkage in the applicant pool for nursing

programs. Saucier believed then, that schools of nursing were forced to lower admission

standards. In her research, she found that factors affecting program retention regarded academic ability, family, and financial obligations (Saucier). Although dated, Saucier's (1995) work holds merit today, as current literature notes the same issues plaguing nursing programs.

Retention of students in nursing programs is complicated by the increase of non-traditional students. Enrollment trends predict more students who are older, have family responsibilities, are ethnically diverse, attend school part time, stop courses, or drop out (Jeffreys, 2007). These barriers correspondingly affect retention of traditional nursing students (Jeffreys, 2012). Furthermore, other barriers include inadequate preparation, underdeveloped studying skills, and an unrealistic perception of nursing curriculum (Igbo et al., 2011). Saucier (1995) also acknowledges attrition factors, which include students experiencing coursework difficulty, family obligations, and financial concerns. There are many different variables that attribute to nursing student retention in addition to what Saucier notes. These variables are grouped as academic (study hours, study skills, academic advising, courses, job uncertainty, course content), and environmental (finances, employment, outside factors such as family, support) (Walker et al., 2011). Jeffreys (2012) notes that non-traditional students are more affected by environmental variables than academic.

Program factors known to affect nursing student retention involve entry characteristics, progression through the program and course grade distribution, graduation, and the licensure exam (Jeffreys, 2007). Jeffreys (2007) found that success in the first nursing course was a significant retention predictor, as well as medical/surgical course grades. Furthermore, program retention rates are affected by the stress experienced by nursing students. Nursing students have reported that the demands, time pressures, the physical and emotional tolls, motivation, relationships, and coping attempts related to their nursing programs increase burnout and stress

(Williams, 2010). Traditional students indicate they want professional integration that enhances their interaction with the social aspects of the college, which can aid in retention in a nursing program (Jeffreys, 2012). Additionally, nontraditional students identify nursing faculty advisement and helpfulness, enrichment programs, and peer tutoring as instrumental to student success (Jeffreys, 2012).

Seago, Wong, Keane, and Grumbach (2008) studied nursing student retention related to educational institutions, processes, and individual student characteristics. They tested psychometric properties of measures in examining the facets noted. This study involved N=796 first and second year nursing students attending community colleges and four-year universities. Similarly, Shelton (2012) studied nursing student retention utilizing the Model of Nursing Student Retention to isolate factors attributing to nursing student attrition. Shelton, however, worked with nontraditional associate degree nursing students (N=458), which differs slightly from Seago et al., (2008). Both found that different forms of stress, such as academic stress and external stressors play a role in students persevering in a nursing program. Both also found financial external stressors to be significant. Watson et al., (2008) also studied stress and psychological distress in nursing students (N=192) and noted impacts of psychological stress on academics. To note through their longitudinal study, Watson et al found interaction between stress, individual traits, adverse life events, and psychological stress. Future research recommendations by Shelton discuss the importance of completing a qualitative study exploring the factors that contribute to student retention.

Marianne Jeffreys (2006, 2007) has done a great deal of work with nursing program retention issues as discussed above. Her research has focused on nontraditional students and their perceptions of environmental factors being the most influential regarding the choice to stay

in a nursing program or stop out/drop out. Through her extensive work with the concept of retention, Jeffreys developed the Nursing Undergraduate Retention and Success (NURS) model (2006). This model examines factors that affect student retention and success. Using this model as a framework, she often uses the Student Perception Appraisal instrument, which has a Chronbach alpha of .82 for all 27 items on the instrument (Jeffreys, 2007). Her research focusing on nontraditional nursing students suggests nursing faculty need to be mentoring, inclusive of family, encourage realistic self-appraisal, and advocate for policy changes that address the financial and family demands of nontraditional nursing students (Jeffreys, 2007).

Shelton (2012) has also developed a model involving retention of nursing students, titled Model of Nursing Student Retention. Shelton's model assesses the interactions between background variables, internal psychological processes, and external supports as they relate to retention in a nursing program. In her study, Shelton assessed 458 nontraditional associate degree nursing students. She found significant differences between students who persisted or remained in a nursing program, versus those students who withdrew or failed academically. An important factor for student retention was perceived faculty support. Students who felt supported were more likely to persist in a program. Like Jeffreys (2006, 2007), Shelton limited her study to nontraditional students. Shelton discusses the importance of completing a qualitative study with nontraditional students to gain an understanding of student perceptions of stressors and how those stressors affect the student role.

Other concepts studied in relation to retention of students in a nursing program were self-efficacy and persistence. McLaughlin, Moutray, and Muldoon (2007) set out to understand the role of personality and self-efficacy related to selection and retention of nursing students. They highlighted the importance of the nursing shortage being affected by attrition rates of nursing

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students and new nurses. McLaughlin, Moutray, and Muldoon followed 350 nursing students from one university in the United Kingdom. Their results indicated that students with higher psychoticism were more likely to withdraw or have impaired academic performance. Additionally, those who self-reported extraverted personality traits were also at higher risk for attrition. Regarding self-efficacy, the researchers found that having a high occupational self-efficacy showed significance in predicting students' final marks, which were positive. Williams (2010) studied the concept of persistence in beginning nursing students. This study is qualitative and uncovered four main themes emerging from interviews conducted with 10 undergraduate nursing students. Those themes were: keeping up, not giving up, doing it, and connecting to the use of resources (Williams). The faculty's interactions with the students seemed to be a factor in each theme as it relates to encouraging persistence. Williams notes that future research needs to be multisite, as this study was at only one school of nursing.

A reality that nursing programs need to confront is a major proportion of racial and ethnic minority students have unequal access to higher education and are plagued by personal, environmental, and institutional barriers (Bryan, 2003; Ntiri, 2001). To date, many programs have been developed and implemented targeting increasing minorities in nursing, but despite these programs, there is still unequal representation of minorities in nursing programs and more must be done (Wong et al., 2006). Furthermore, Tinto (2006) notes that it is one thing to identify effective retention strategies; it is another thing to implement these strategies institutionally. Many good ideas and programs are implemented, but never institutionalized (Tinto, 2006).

Minority Student Retention Factors

Ntiri's (2001) research substantiates the lack of minorities in higher education can be attributed to financial, political, cultural, and psychological barriers. The interaction of these

characteristics adds to the complexity in trying to understand student retention. Schools of

nursing are in a position to influence institutional, dispositional, and situational characteristics

that could become barriers. Addressing these may help to retain students from nontraditional or

minority backgrounds (Wong et al., 2006).

Institutional Characteristics

Institutional characteristics include campus, faculty, diversity factors, and the political

climate (Wong et al., 2006). The sense of community and professional integration are included

as institutional characteristics important to nursing (Jeffreys, 2012). Students who feel part of

the academic system and their chosen profession are more likely to persist and be successful

(Shelton, 2012). Student success is enhanced by formation of interpersonal connections between

students and others on campus, including faculty, staff, or their peers (Cuseo, n.d.). Minority

students can experience a culture shock if they are inadequately prepared for non-academic

experiences such as lack of diversity issues; therefore, campus integration is important (Swail et

al., 2003).

Literature on student retention has stressed the importance of having a minority-friendly

campus environment that fosters social integration. This includes having diverse faculty with

whom students can establish mentoring relationships. Additionally, all students, not just

minorities, benefit from interaction with a diverse faculty body (Wong et al., 2006). However,

minority students are more successful in attaining their goals if they have diverse faculty who

ultimately become part of the student's support system (Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007; Swail et al.,

2003). Furthermore, professional integration factors, such as with nursing faculty, enrichment

programs, peer-mentoring, and professional organizations are identified as enhancing any

students experience in a nursing program, but more significantly impacting minority students

(Jeffreys, 2012). "Professional integration factors are at the center…because they are at the crossroads of the decision to persist, dropout, or stopout" (Jeffreys, 2012, p. 14). Research also indicates that student involvement outside the classroom with campus support services, and as mentioned professional organizations, is a strong predictor of retention (Cuseo, n.d.). Sadly, conservative politics has had an impact on student socialization. Minority students report that diverse campuses appeal to their wanting to enroll at a specific college, or college at all (Bryan, 2003). With the passage of anti-affirmative action legislation, college campuses are not representative of the diverse population.

Conservative politics has had effects on the number of minorities attending college due to the anti-affirmative action legislation. Affirmative action was designed to increase minority access to higher education institutions (Ntiri, 2001). Affirmative action programs resulted in increasing minority admissions and representation on college campuses (National Council of State Legislators [NCSL], 2014). Universities are now making decisions to eliminate race as a consideration in the admission of students (Bryan, 2003). In the state of California, where affirmative action was abolished in 1997, by 1998 minority student admissions to UCLA fell 36%. Texas mirrors California, after abolishment of affirmative action in 1996, the freshman class at Rice University had 46% fewer African Americans (NCSL, 2014). Because of this legislation, universities have to increase their efforts to increase the number of minority student admissions (Bryan). A criticism of affirmative action is that it reinforces racial discrimination and lowers the requirements for minority students to attend college (NCSL). This criticism is in the eye of the beholder, as Cross (1997) found that Black students at the same prestigious universities as White students graduated at the same rate, proving there is "little substance in the widely accepted thesis that Black students, who may be admitted under strong affirmative action

programs at these universities, are not able to meet the academic challenges at the nation's highest ranked institutions" (p. 100). This fact leads to the next section, dispositional factors, which involve the students' academic abilities. Literature supports that although cognitive factors are strong predictors of college success, noncognitive factors are also important in predicting retention and graduation (Adebayo, 2008).

Dispositional Characteristics

Dispositional characteristics refer to the student's confidence in their academic ability, including study habits, attendance, and self-efficacy (Wong et al., 2006; Jeffreys, 2012). Student profile characteristics such as academic preparation/background, age, ethnicity, race, gender, language, and enrollment status align under dispositional characteristics (Jeffreys). Leading contributing factors to a student's success include cognitive factors such as high school class rank, high school GPA, and standardized test scores (Adebayo, 2008). Non-cognitive factors such as leadership, volunteering, and ability to deal with racism are also strong predictors of success in college (Adebayo; Bryan, 2003). Although these are not barriers in and of themselves, they can classify a student as at-risk and are strong predictors of retention.

A main dispositional barrier for many minority students is academically under-preparedness for college (Bryan, 2003; Jeffreys, 2012; Ntriri, 2001). The level of academic preparedness in high school is positively related to "high school graduation rates, college entrance examination scores, predisposition toward college, college enrollment" and much more (Swail et al., 2003, p. 6). However, minority students do not typically experience these positive factors. Minority students traditionally reside in poor or lower socioeconomic status neighborhoods. School systems in high-poverty areas lack financial and academic resources. Minority students, especially African American and Hispanic students are frequently in less

rigorous coursework and have the least qualified teachers (Moore et al., 2010). Additionally, graduation rates from high school are disproportionate. Latinos have the lowest rates of high school graduation and college entry (Coffman et al., 2001). Academic unpreparedness has implications for student retention; however, there are ways to combat the differing academic preparedness of incoming students such as development of a summer bridge program, or summer sessions prepping students to be ready for the rigors of a nursing program (Cuseo, n.d.; Condon et al., 2013).

Situational Characteristics

Situational characteristics refer to life circumstances or the student's personal environment, including financial status, employment, family support, family responsibilities, living arrangements, and transportation (Wong et al., 2006; Jeffreys, 2012). Jeffreys (2012) notes that nontraditional students often have to juggle multiple roles. The roles typically include parent, financial provider, and employee in addition to student (Jeffreys). Jeffreys (2012), who is an expert in researching nursing student retention, suggests that situational factors are most likely to be barriers to retention.

A major situational deterrent for minority students to attend college is lack of financial aid (Bryan, 2003). Federal grants have now been replaced with student loans, which is a disincentive for many minority students who already face debts. The rising costs of tuition and related costs make it very difficult for nontraditional and minority students to attend college (Bryan; Jeffreys, 2012). Low retention and graduation rates are also attributed to financial difficulty (Bryan). Many students need to work and typically try to work full time while carrying a full credit load. Pitt, Powis, Levett-Jones, and Hunter (2012) identified students

working 16 hours or more per week are negatively affected academically. This typically leads

the student to dropout for financial reasons (Bryan).

Conceptual Framework

Mindfulness, mindlessness, and student retention have not been studied in relation to

each other. Therefore, the conceptual framework is based on a broad understanding of each

concept and assumptions of their relation to each other (Polit & Beck, 2012). The model

developed, the Mindfulness Pathway to Student Retention, represents these concepts (Figure 1).
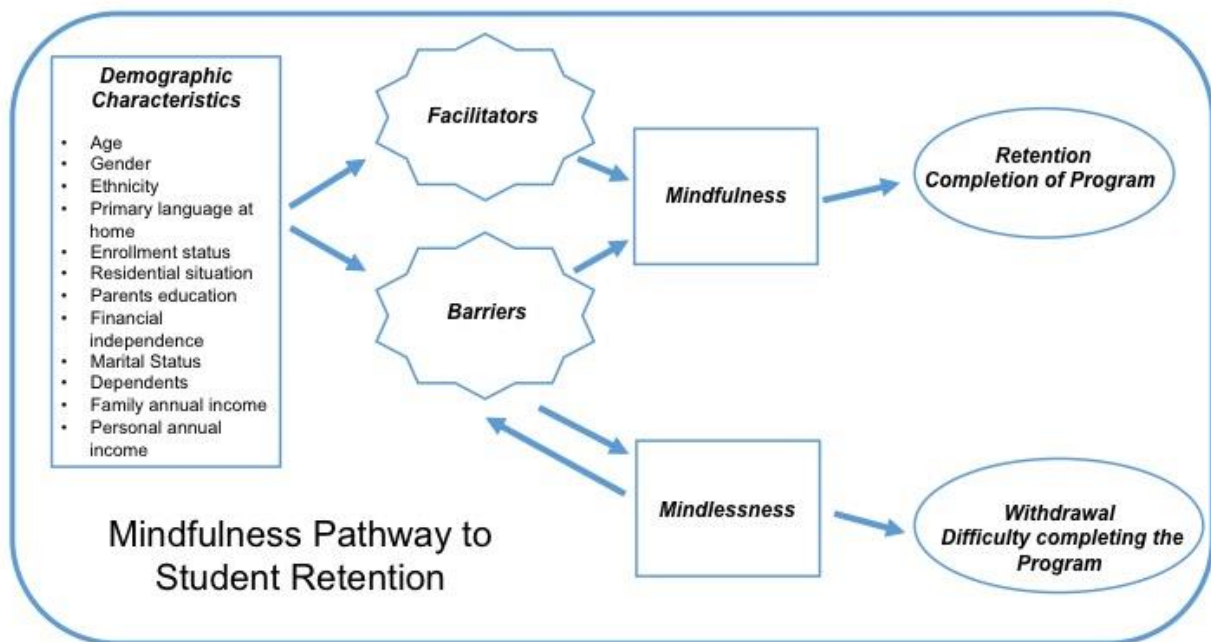
Figure 1: Pathway depicting the association between facilitators and barriers, and mindfulness and mindlessness in relation to retention or withdrawal from a nursing program.

The Mindfulness Pathway to Student Retention displays the interaction of facilitators and

barriers relative to mindfulness and mindlessness and how those factors can place students on the

pathway to retention and completion of the nursing program or withdrawal and/or difficulty

completing the nursing program. Behaviors that represent as mindful or mindless will be

important to discover and understand how they bear on each other and overall program retention.

Remaining open to what emerges from the participant's stories and how they interpret situations will be important in developing a complete understanding of the pathway depicted in Figure 1 above. Collection of demographic characteristics in addition to the interview data may uncover emerging themes between the demographic characteristics as facilitator or barrier factors.

When a student is passive in a negative environment influenced by stress and disruption, they may be stuck between the cycle of barriers and mindlessness. A student may be in a state of mindlessness if they express in their stories that they feel stuck in routines, on automatic pilot, not paying attention, low self-esteem and self-concept, and discouraged (Langer, 1989). However, if positive emotions and behaviors can be discerned from this proposed study, students can be nurtured out of the barriers/mindlessness cycle and aspire to mindfulness and fostering positive attributes leading to a more fulfilling life and success. While listening to the stories of the participants, evidence of mindfulness is supported by statements of positive self-esteem, self-awareness or self-regulation, attention, intention, being present, non-judging, self-efficacy, and well-being (Lahikainen & Soysa, 2014). Mindfulness techniques influence the experience of emotions and alter behavior (Davidson, 2010), therefore it is thought that maximizing on the positives a student possesses may influence their retention in a nursing program.

Summary

The expansive literature exploring positive implications of mindfulness and the negative repercussions of mindlessness has provided a solid foundation in which to base this study. The other main areas of the review of literature include positive psychology, emerging adults, Millennials, and minority students. This review of literature indicates that further study is necessary in order to understand the lives of ethnic minority nursing students in their nursing programs. As mentioned, the diversity of the nursing workforce does not match the diversity of

the current patient population, which is only going to grow as time passes. The dearth of

research regarding the implications of mindfulness and mindlessness with ethnic minority

nursing students supports this study filling the gaps in research.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore ethnic minority student perceptions of barriers and facilitators to successful completion of an undergraduate nursing program. Suggestions of strategies to enhance retention and completion of an undergraduate nursing program were also gathered. Additionally, a secondary aim was to develop a greater understanding of mindfulness and mindlessness within the context of ethnic minority undergraduate students' struggles and successes while in a nursing program. Utilizing qualitative in-depth interview methods allowed for explanatory and contextual exploration of the concepts by providing participants the ability to fully express their experiences and viewpoints (Tuner, 2010). Qualitative in-depth interview methods are effective in obtaining cultural or population specific information about opinions, behaviors, and social contexts (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). Understanding student retention, mindfulness, and mindlessness in this qualitative context was effective in eliciting positive factors that can be nurtured by faculty and others involved in ensuring success of ethnic minority nursing students.

Cross-sectional qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with ethnic minority undergraduate nursing students. These interviews provided ethnic minority nursing students with an opportunity to share their personal stories, portraying their own feelings and perspectives surrounding barriers or challenges they experience, facilitators that help them to succeed, and mindfulness and mindlessness. Additionally, through the use of in-depth interviews, there was the ability to probe further into their personal histories to gain deeper understandings of their challenges and successes. There are no known studies that have explored mindfulness,

mindlessness, and undergraduate nursing student retention together; therefore, this study has built foundational knowledge regarding the concepts noted.

Research Design and Rationale

In this cross-sectional qualitative study utilizing an in-depth interview approach, retention issues were explored with nursing students of ethnic minority backgrounds, with an emphasis on how mindfulness and mindlessness may influence behaviors and perspectives. Qualitative in-depth interview methods are useful when little is known about a topic, allowing participants to express themselves "in a way ordinary life rarely affords them"(Mack et al., 2005, p. 29). Participants' experiences and how they interpret their world within a nursing program were explored in much more detail than what quantitative methods allow. Additionally, in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to probe further as a means to gather more information and ensure a question was fully answered (Turner, 2010). In order to understand complex and personal situations and experiences of minority nursing students, using a more personal approach of in-depth interviews was the preferred qualitative design.

Research Setting and Context

The setting for this study was one large university based undergraduate nursing program in an urban area in the Midwestern United States. The university itself has a combined undergraduate and graduate student population of about 28,000 including 5,600 underrepresented minority students (African American, American Indian, Hispanic/Latino(a), Southeast Asian) in 2013 (Policy Analysis & Research, 2014). Additionally, the university enrolled the most diverse student body in its history in the fall of 2013 (Policy Analysis & Research) boding well to this research in that the population of interest was ethnic minority students. Furthermore, of the total student body, about 2,500 students are first-generation college students (Policy Analysis &

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Research). Participants were recruited from the accredited bachelors in the science of nursing program within this university system.

Recruitment and Sample

Recruitment

Appropriate university Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of the study was obtained prior to recruitment of any participant and implementation of the study (Appendix A: IRB#: 15.343, Approval Notice from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee IRB). Recruitment and data collection occurred at one site in order to alleviate the complexities multisite settings would produce, such as differences in the students' experiences influenced by different nursing program culture (Ritchie & Lewis, 2010). The following strategies were used in recruiting participants for the study:

1) Contact was made with the undergraduate advisors and the Director of a student support program that serves first-generation and economically disadvantaged students within the college of nursing. Explanation of the study was provided and flyers for the study were given to the advisors and Director.

2) Built rapport with undergraduate nursing students by providing a professional in-service to the students in a support program that serves first-generation and economically disadvantaged students within the college of nursing. Flyers were passed out to eligible participants after the in-service.

3) Posted recruitment flyers within the college of nursing.

4) Classroom visits were conducted at all levels of the nursing program. The researcher was able to talk to entire classes about the study and hand out flyers soliciting participation.

5) Multiple emails were sent to all undergraduate nursing students providing information regarding the study and soliciting participants.

Participants were mainly recruited through the use of flyers posted in high student traffic areas within the nursing program campus building, through word of mouth via classroom visits, and via emails. Interested participants contacted the researcher. At that time, the scope of the study, expectations of participating, and confidentiality measures were explained (Mack et al., 2005). Participants agreeable to the study measures then scheduled appointments for the in-depth interviews. Snowball sampling occurred after some of the interviews were conducted. Recruitment continued in conjunction with data collection and analysis until data saturation was reached. The initial sample goal was 40 participants, however, the sample for this study included N=20 participants with representation of freshman through senior levels.

To ensure credibility, Shenton (2004) notes that it is wise for the researcher to engage in the culture and organization where research is being completed. This was done via site visits prior to participant recruitment in order to foster relationships with the student population. Being present fosters trust between the researcher and the participants and demonstrates credibility (Polit & Beck, 2012; Shenton). These site visits began early in the study by visiting the Nurse Success System (NSS), which is a pseudonym to protect confidentiality of participants. NSS was introduced at the university's college of nursing as a response to findings of a survey of first-year college students that revealed students who were unsuccessful in their first year of college reported lack of connections with peers or campus professionals as having the greatest impact (Chamberlain, Cook, & von Bohlen, 2012). NSS specifically targets students who are first generation college students and are from underrepresented or economically disadvantaged

backgrounds (Wagner, 2010). Through visiting with these students, trust was established and lead to research participants for this study.

Sample

Participants were comprised of approximately 20 ethnic minority undergraduate nursing students who declared nursing as their pre-major or major in a BSN program. Participants were recruited from all college levels: freshman, sophomore, junior, senior and represented various ethnic minority populations: African American, African Immigrant, Asian American, and Hispanic/Latinos. The ethnicity of American Indian was not represented in this sample. Including all levels of students brought about differing levels of maturity and experience, all of which yielded insights of differing perspectives pertaining to the research goals. Students were from the Millennial generation (born after 1980), however, due to differing levels of maturity inherent in such an age span, Millennials between the ages of 18 to 26 were eligible to participate. Students less than 18 years of age and older than 26 years of age were excluded from the study. Socio-demographic information collected from the participants included: age, gender, and ethnicity, level in undergraduate nursing program, family income /socioeconomic status, work status, first generation versus second generation student, native language, prior education/degrees, and enrollment status (Appendix C). Purposive sampling did not occur as students identifying as certain ethnicities were fairly equally represented. The goal for the sample was to have as equal as possible representation from the various ethnic minority groups within each level of student. Purposive sampling offers qualitative researchers some control over their sample and the ability to find the outliers (Barbour, 2001). Furthermore, within-project verification is enhanced by "sampling to redundancy" where there is maximum variation of the

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data and concomitant analysis contains enough data to make it rich and descriptive (Morse et al., 2001, pg. 192).

Data Collection Strategies and Procedures

Participants first read and signed the informed consent document (Appendix B) and then completed the socio-demographic information form (Appendix C). Face-to-face interviews using open-ended questions were conducted with each participant at a mutually agreed upon time and place (Appendix D). Interviews were taped recorded and memos and field notes were taken at the end of each interview. Risks for this study were considered no greater than those found in everyday college life. However, participants were informed that they may stop the interview at any time. No participants stopped the interview during this study.

Participants were interviewed utilizing a semi-structured interview guide, and all interviews were recorded using two recording devices to ensure capture of the interview. The interview guide remained open-ended and flexible; therefore, emerging concepts could be further evaluated or emphasized in subsequent interviews based on data from the first interviews (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1992; Munhall, 2012). The interview guide was composed of a face sheet, the interview guide, and then space for field notes (Appendix B). Field notes collected during the interviews were expanded and shorthand notes made into sentences within 24 hours of the interview (Mack et al., 2005). Throughout the data collection process, there was initial analysis via open coding of the data in order to build the interview guide for subsequent participants and for review with the participant personally for validation of coding, which is known as member checking (Morse et al., 2001). This process ensures credibility and confirmability. Additionally, analysis of the data occurred simultaneous to conducting the interviews in order to assess for data saturation. Data collection that is analytically driven

ensures systematic questioning of the data collected and active sorting of data leading to saturation of certain categories versus others (Morse et al.). Analytic inquiry allows for directed questioning of subsequent participants so that all "thin" categories or themes become saturated (Morse et al.). A more thorough discussion of analysis techniques is included below.

Memos and field notes were collected, which aid in credibility, dependability, and transferability of the study (Appendix B). These notes were descriptive and included reflective thoughts, context notes, questions from participants, considerations of who would benefit from what the participants are saying, decision-making processes, nonverbal body language, or anything the researcher thought might be important to note (MacIntosh, 2003). Memos and field notes provide an audit trail of the research process.

Data Management and Analyses

Interviews were transcribed verbatim by a transcription service. Transcripts were de-identified and coded in a way ensuring confidentiality of participants. All information gathered is confidential. For dissemination purposes, the researcher was initially going to utilize pseudonyms in order to maintain the personal stories being told; however, in writing the findings, the participants stories were referred to by their ethnicity and level in the nursing program. This process still upheld the personal stories of the participants.

Interviews were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach that focused on the identification of ideas, concepts, and patterns (Archibald et al., 2012; Braun & Clarke, 2006). An open coding process and constant comparison took place. These processes identified common themes and concepts within and across the participants' transcripts (Glaser, 1992). Initial coding was completed by hand on paper copies of the transcripts as a personal preference of the researcher.

Coding occurred in a repetitive cycle. The first phase occurred immediately after the transcription was completed and provided the opportunity to become familiar with the data (Archibald et al., 2012; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Further coding was completed next with use of NVivo ®11.0 for Mac after initial hand coding. These analysis processes repeated for every interview immediately after transcriptions were available. Constant comparison techniques commenced at this time to identify any relevant connections of concepts, categories, or contextual conditions influencing the codes (MacIntosh, 2003). Attention was paid to participants from respective levels in their nursing program and any themes that emerged between participants with similar demographics. The development and use of thematic analysis allowed for comparison between the various ethnic groups of minority nursing students when searching for any relationships between categories and themes, and further displayed differences in opinion (Averill, 2002). The matrix analysis along with thematic analysis enhanced the reliability of the coding process (Morse et al., 2001). Memoing and writing in a reflective journal was critical during the interviewing and coding process in order to track researcher thoughts, insights, and gaps and aid in enhancing dependability of the research process and analysis (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013).

The cycle of coding continued as interviews were completed. Subsequent reading and coding began to identify broad categories. Reading and reviewing the transcripts identified themes from the broad categories identified. This step in the analytic process was repetitive to ensure nothing was missed during the interviews with participants. Additionally, new insights emerged with the subsequent reading and review of transcripts. Memoing continued to be an important process to ensure understanding of the data, but also ensure credibility, transferability, and dependability. Use of an electronic coding program, NVivo ®11, was used for organizing

and analyzing the broader categories and emerging themes. Utilizing Nvivo ®11 also aided in keeping the data organized.

Data collection and analysis continued until new categories were not identified or until data saturation was reached. The proposed sample size was 40 ethnic minority undergraduate nursing students; however, the sample was N= 20 at time of data saturation. Due to only one person interviewing and analyzing the data, confirming inter-rater reliability was difficult. To achieve trustworthiness, utilizing multiple analytic techniques (thematic analysis and matrix analysis), member checking, and use of NVivo® 11 aided in enhancing the credibility and dependability of this study (Morse et al., 2001). Additionally, the use of a researcher reflective journal aids in transparency of the research process, and provides more data for the audit trail (Whiffin, Bailey, Elllis-Hill, & Jarrett, 2014).

Final data analysis involved synthesis of the codes and categories to identify themes with the data. This phase intertwined the participant's stories and developed an "analytic story" that leads to theory development (Charmaz, 2006), which is the process of pulling the data together, essentially synthesis (Munhall, 2012). This study concluded with three broad themes, 15 sub-themes, and multiple categories under the sub-themes all of which are discussed in the Findings.

Ensuring Scientific Rigor

To deem qualitative research as "valid", one must account for trustworthiness. Trustworthiness in qualitative research pertains to how well the researcher's analysis and descriptions represent the reality of the research participants, or in quantitative terms the reliability and validity (Polit & Beck, 2012). There are several strategies used in qualitative research aimed at enhancing the trustworthiness and credibility of the data. These include: transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Polit & Beck).

Credibility is a criterion that refers to the truth of the data and if the research participants' perceptions match what the researcher has portrayed throughout the study process, or in quantitative terms, validity (Polit & Beck, 2012). The participant's experiences and context must be represented in a believable way and validating the research findings with the participants to ensure the findings are credible is an important step (Polit & Beck; Houghton et al., 2013). In order to be credible, site visits took place to build trust with the participants. After interviews were conducted, findings were validated with the participants, which is known as member checking (Houghton et al., 2013; Morse et al., 2001).

Dependability refers to how stable the data are and what one would think of reliability in a quantitative study (Houghton et al., 2013). Rigor can be achieved via a thorough audit trail that outlines decisions made throughout the research process. Additionally, the audit trail must include researcher decisions specific to the processes of data collection, analysis, and reference to the fact that all data collected are available for review by other researchers (Polit & Beck, 2012). All processes undertaken for this research have been recorded in a journal. Additionally, as noted above in the methods sections, extensive memoing occurred.

Confirmability involves assuring that the data reflects the participant's voice, not the researcher's biases or perspectives (Polit & Beck, 2012). Remaining objective and true to the voices/messages of the participants is important. Establishing confirmability often aligns with dependability where both require a thorough audit trail (Houghton et al., 2013). The use of NVivo® 11 achieved dependability and confirmability by running queries on set criteria where text and codes were reanalyzed to ensure nothing was missed or misrepresented when findings were reported (Houghton et al., 2013). Matrix analysis was another strategy that was used to

enhance the rigor and confirmability of this study. Matrix analysis does this by allowing the researcher to search for relationships between or among categories of the data (Averill, 2002).

Transferability is another step to ensure trustworthiness and refers to generalizability within a quantitative study. Although qualitative studies are not typically generalizable, they do have the ability to transcend contexts (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Polit & Beck, 2012). Richness of descriptions and the amount of detailed information pertaining to context aids readers in determining transferability of the research findings (Houghton et al., 2013). To enhance transferability, it was important to be as descriptive as possible and include appropriate quotations so that readers of the data can evaluate the applicability of the research findings to other contexts (Polit & Beck; Houghton et al., 2013).

All of the criterion surrounding trustworthiness must be at the forefront while in the research process and, importantly, while writing the findings. During the entire research process, it was imperative to keep accurate and descriptive written journal entries to address trustworthiness of the criterion.

Ethical Considerations

A detailed description of the research plan with corresponding documents was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the university where participants were recruited. The study was deemed exempt by the IRB at the university where the study was conducted (Appendix A). This study was considered minimal risk, as it did not carry any greater risk than what a participant would experience in every day life.

Questions on the interview guide related to the participants experiences being an ethnic minority nursing student. In the event a participant became uncomfortable with any question, they had the right to stop the interview. In the unlikely event a participant became

uncomfortable, a debriefing session would occur to help the participant through what was troubling them. In the event of further distress, student health services would be recommended to the participant. This was not an anticipated situation, and none of these situations occurred during the interview process. This researcher has prior nursing experience in counseling and therefore had the knowledge and skill in therapeutic interactions with individuals experiencing distress.

During the informed consent process, a discussion with research participants included the safeguards in place ensuring confidentiality and safety of their information. Collecting only the information necessary for the study and removing identifiers ensured confidentiality. Participants were informed that their signed informed consent would be kept in a locked file drawer at the researcher's personal office. No identifying information would be connected to the participant's actual interview. Additionally, in order to complete member-checking, participants would need to disclose contact information if they allow contact after the interview. This data was stored along with the informed consent forms. Data safeguards that were in place included storing the study data on a personal password protected non-networked computer and backed up on a password protected external hard-drive. Interviews were recorded without identifying the participant on recording; therefore no identifying information linking the participant to the interview was on the recording. Recordings were transcribed by a professional transcription service that offered protected data downloading. All transcripts were de-identified and reporting of the findings was also de-identified. This process aided in anonymity of data and results. Confidentiality of participants has also been protected. Recordings will be destroyed once the study is completed. Participants were reassured that their participation would not affect their education, grades, or relationship with the university.

Limitations of Research

Self-selection bias was a concern because ethnic minority nursing students volunteered to participate and it was assumed they want to participate because of an already existing interest in the study topics. Furthermore, snowball sampling occurred, which accentuated the effects of self-selection bias due to participants discussing the study with their peers who may have similar characteristics and perspectives (DeCou, Skewes, Lopez, & Skanis, 2012). A more robust design could include subsampling; however, this study sought to understand the experiences of a purposeful sample of ethnic minority nursing students and is justified.

The nature of the research questions posed limitations. It is well known that mindfulness, mindlessness, and student retention are very complex concepts to study. It was crucial to utilize a working definition of each concept for consistency and clarity when analyzing the data and the formation of themes.

Methodologically, in-depth interviews allow for thick and rich descriptions, which was a strength but also a limitation due to the amount of narrative to analyze. Turner (2010) notes that it can be difficult for the researcher to extrapolate similar themes and codes from the interviews due to the open-endedness of the interview questions. This study utilized a semi-structured interview guide to aid in alleviating this limitation.

Cross-cultural interviewing was also another limitation to this study, as it increased the chances of misunderstanding (Brayda & Boyce, 2014). In order to reduce this limitation it was important to build rapport, trust, and a general understanding of the participants. Member checking also reduced this limitation. However, a strength is that the researcher is a nursing instructor and the purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of nursing students; therefore there are some commonalities.

Generalization is a major limitation of any qualitative study (Polit & Beck, 2012). The findings of this study are qualitative insights of ethnic minority nursing student participants who volunteered to participate in an interview. These students are from a Midwestern urban university; therefore, it is possible that their experiences and perceptions may not generalize to other nursing students in other geographic locations.

Theoretically, no existing model was tested. In this study, a conceptual framework was developed based on the existing literature. This limitation is inherent in qualitative research; however, due to the nature of remaining open and flexible to the data it can be difficult to test models. In essence, this process is a limitation and a benefit, as the research findings supported assumptions regarding the relationship of mindfulness and student retention.

Strengths of Research

There is an abundance of research available regarding student retention in university settings; however, there is a dearth of qualitative research exploring student retention, mindfulness, and mindlessness together. This research explored experiences of ethnic minority nursing students and the concepts of mindfulness and mindlessness, which has been identified as a gap in current research. This qualitative study aims to fill this gap in understanding any relationship between these concepts.

A strength regarding the research is utilizing in-depth interviews as the method of data collection. In-depth interviews are optimal for collecting data on personal stories, experiences, and perspectives (Mack et al., 2005). A good qualitative in-depth interview will elicit information that is not easily discernable (Brayda & Boyce, 2014). Additionally, a semi-structured interview guide was utilized, which provided a framework for the researcher to follow, but also allowed for flexibility to probe further to elicit responses from the participants

(Brayda & Boyce, 2014). A limitation involved shy or less articulate interviewees; however, taking time and actively listening to the participant and utilizing appropriate probing aided in gathering adequate responses (Creswell, 2013).

As mentioned however, use of in-depth interviews can be a limitation due to the amount of narrative this method produces. Nonetheless, this was also a strength in that the researcher had to take time to examine the narratives during the coding process and accurately reflect on the interview responses, which thereby reduced researcher bias within the study (Turner, 2010).

Another strength to this research involved the sample, although this is also a limitation as mentioned above. The strength in utilizing in-depth interviews and the noted sample involves the fact that the researcher was able to observe subtle nuances each interviewee brings, such as body language, annoyance, or other non-verbal responses to the questions. Additionally, the purposeful sample rendered insights into a portion of the population that has been found to be a gap in current research, that population being ethnic minority nursing students.

Summary

The overall focus of this study was to develop a greater understanding of the barriers and facilitators to program completion. Additionally, positive behaviors associated with mindfulness that aid in success and negative behaviors associated with mindlessness were explored. In-depth interviews were the main mode of data collection, coupled with socio-demographic information collection, extensive field notes, memoing, and reflective journaling. Adhering to the principles of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability ensured trustworthiness of the study. The findings of this study will aid in a deeper understanding of student retention in a nursing program specifically in regards to barriers and facilitators present in the stories of ethnic minority nursing students. Additionally, there are implications of being mindful or mindless, and

through the use of in-depth interviews those concepts were found within their stories surrounding

retention in a nursing program.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the barriers and facilitators to retention of ethnic minority undergraduate nursing students. Effort was also made to gather information on strategies that would help them succeed in their nursing program. To date, much of the current literature focuses on barriers faced by ethnic minority students in completing college, thus there is a need to fill the gap in exploring both barriers and facilitators to college completion. The research questions explored in this study were 1) what are the barriers and challenges of ethnic minority undergraduate nursing students enrolled in an undergraduate nursing program?; 2) what are the facilitators or successes described by ethnic minority undergraduate nursing students enrolled in an undergraduate nursing program?; 3) how do the concepts of mindfulness and mindlessness manifest in the participants stories as they work towards completing their nursing program?; and 4) what strategies would the participants propose that would assist them in staying in college and completing their nursing program?

A conceptual model was developed using existing literature, which served as a basis for analyzing and presenting the data. Themes that emerged from the participant's stories describe barriers to college retention, which delve into mindlessness and concern for withdrawal or difficulty completing the nursing program. Participants also discussed many positive aspects of their life and other facilitators of their success and staying in the nursing program. These facilitators comprise mindfulness attributes, which aid in retaining and completing the nursing program. A profile is presented describing the participants followed by the barriers, facilitators, and strategies to retention in an undergraduate nursing program.

Description of the Participants

A total of N=20 students were interviewed for this study. The age range for the

participants was between 19 and 26 years old (Mean=20.95, SD= 1.9). Participants are

comprised of the following ethnic minority groups: 25% African/African American/Black (non-

Hispanic); 25% Asian/Asian American/ Southeast Asian; 45% Latino (a)/Hispanic; 5% Arab.

Language spoken at home was primarily English, 60%. Females accounted for 80% of the

participants and 20% identified as male. The enrollment status of all participants was full time

(12 credits or more), with participants representing the different levels: 5% freshman, 45%

sophomore, 25% junior, and 25% senior. GPA's of the participants at the time of data collection

ranged from 2.5 to 4.0 with the breakdown being: 2.5-2.99 (10%); 3.0-3.49 (60%); 3.5-4.0

(25%). One participant did not report GPA.

Forty-five percent of the participants lived off campus with their parents, with 25% living

on campus and 25% living independently off campus. One participant lives off campus in his

own home. Regarding paying tuition, participants responded: pay own tuition (15%); parents

pay tuition (10%); tuition is shared between participant and parents (10%); financial

aid/scholarships (35%); other (30%). Other means of paying tuition included a combination of

the participant and parents paying together, or a combination of the participant, parents, and

financial aid/scholarships paying for tuition. Ten percent of the participants pay tuition via the

military (GI Bill). Estimates of personal annual income ranged within intervals of: less than

$5,000 per year to $20,000-39,999. The mean income is $5,000-$19,999, with a median income

of $0-$5,000. Two participants did not indicate a response to this question. Eighty percent of

the participants worked part-time (less than 35 hours per week). One participant worked full

time (over 35 hours per week). Three participants are unemployed. One participant reported being married with one child.

Participants reported the highest level of education their mother has completed as: elementary school or less (20%); some high school (10%); high school/GED (35%); some college (25%); and college graduate (10%). Participant's father's highest level of education included: elementary school or less (15%); some high school (10%); high school/GED 40%); some college (25%); college graduate (5%); graduate degree (5%). The parental household annual income for 2014 ranged between less than $5,000 per year to $70,000 and over. The parental income data is skewed due to three participants reporting parental income of $70,000 and over. Removing these outliers, the mean and median income range is $20,000-$39,999.

Themes

This section provides a presentation of themes that emerged from the analysis. Themes that emerged from analyzed transcripts tells stories of struggles; however, their stories embody the perception students have in relation to being in college, their motivations, support systems, and how they overcome barriers.

Findings of the study are presented based on research questions asked in this study and under the broad headings of a) barriers to successful completion an undergraduate nursing program, b) facilitators to successful completion of an undergraduate nursing program, and c) strategies to assist in program completion. Subthemes are grouped under these broad headings and include exemplars to showcase participant stories (Table 1). These stories reflect the labyrinthine byways of seeking higher education and what they are doing to become successful in their nursing programs.

TABLE 1

Summary of the Broad Themes, Sub-Themes, and Categories Emerging from Interviews of Ethnic Minority Undergraduate Nursing Students

Broad Theme	Sub-themes	Categories under subthemes
Barriers to successful completion of an undergraduate nursing program	Sense of belonging	• Challenges of being first-generation to college • Societal stereotype threat and feeling judged • Unable to affirm identity within program or profession of nursing • Lack of engagement on campus
	The complications of family support	• The pull of family back home • Unfamiliarity with college demands • Cultural norms do not fit with being in college
	The independence of college	• Lack of high school preparation • Balancing financial needs • Learning from my mistakes
	The invisible standard in the nursing program	• Academic struggles. • Pressure for high performance in the nursing program • Dealing with getting into the nursing major
	Mindlessness and academic performance	• Experiencing self-doubt • Struggling to focus • Feeling like a robot • Influence of stress • Lacking time management

Table 1 continues

Table 1 continued

Broad Theme	Sub-themes	Categories under subthemes
Facilitators to successful completion of an undergraduate nursing program	Valuing college	• College presents opportunities • Setting goals • Support from family • Growing as an individual
	Accountability to others	• Becoming a role model for others • Bridging a cultural gap in healthcare • Positive pressure not to fail
	Success and mindset	• Motivation to persist in a nursing program • The good struggle • Success takes grit
	Adapting to college	• Socialization to campus • Importance of high school preparation for success in college • Availability of financial aid and scholarships
	Mindfulness and academic performance	• Staying positive in the midst of challenge • Advocating for "me time" • Do the best today; you never know what tomorrow brings • God has a purpose for me

Table 1 continues

Table 1 Continued

Broad Theme	Sub-themes	Categories under subthemes
Strategies to assist in program completion	Having a map to this foreign country called college	• Acclimation to campus • Knowing campus and college resources • Success strategies from one ethnic minority to another • Knowing what it means to be a nurse so I know what to anticipate in college
	Consulting and Connecting with Professors and Advisors	• Building relationships with professors • Knowing campus and college advisors • Having the awareness and confidence of asking for help • Being a part of the Nurse Success Program
	Never giving up	• Staying focused • Staying committed when the going gets tough • Surround self with good support system • Be proud of who you are
	Increasing diversity of students as a way to enhance retention.	• Suggestions to improve the admission process into the nursing major • Intentional student involvement in organizations or other student support groups • Engaging all students in the College of Nursing Nurse Success Program • Community outreach

Barriers to Successful Completion of an Undergraduate Nursing Program

Barriers to retention in this study emerged from participant stories revealing the personal and programmatic struggles of being in college and enrolled in a competitive nursing program. Participants shared feelings of isolation due to their ethnicity and complications of family support. Although family support was indicated as a critical factor in the life of the participant, they also revealed that their families wanted them to be home, follow cultural norms, and experienced struggles with parents not understanding the demands of college. Additional barriers included unpreparedness for college and feeling an invisible standard within the nursing program to be perfect. Aspects of mindlessness were apparent when participants described self-doubt, struggling to focus, being stuck in routines, influences of stress, and lack of self-management.

Sense of belonging.

Many participants face challenges due to being first-generation college students, felt that they have to prove themselves and work harder (stereotype threat), and are judged because they are an ethnic minority. Compounding these barriers was the lack of diversity in the nursing program and the profession. Participants shared feelings of isolation. Furthermore, because they feel like an outsider, some participants expressed not participating in campus activities and spending as little time as possible on campus.

Challenges being first-generation to college. Many participants are first-generation to college and are navigating the complexities of college life on their own. A Hispanic senior participant who is first-generation to college discussed how she did not decide to attend college until her senior year of high school. After overcoming her father's tragic death when she was 14 and researching the profession of nursing, she decided to apply to college.

College is special for me because I'm a first-generation college attendee. My mom never – my mom got her GED. My dad did – really didn't do college. It was more of like specialty, like construction-type schooling. My aunt and uncle, it's like they haven't gone. My grandma never went, like she barely finished high school. So it was really – it was a challenge because I was like really one of the first ones to go to college. So it was – it's like special, but you know, I want to prove – like you know I can do it, so like – because I've got a little sister and she goes. She actually just got accepted to [a Midwestern university], so I wanted to be able to show her like, "Yeah, we can do it," you know, when no one else in our family felt. Like we can still have that opportunity. So it was really important to me to be able to do well in college and like find something that I loved to do, to just be able to show her, and I guess prove to myself that I can do it.

A Hispanic sophomore participant discussed her experiences being a first-generation

college student. She elaborates on college being a new experience and having to grow as a

person and make her own decisions.

Okay, well, I'm a first-generation student so it means a lot. Yeah, it's totally like—it's completely a new experience, like I kind of have to make my own decisions because my parents don't—they didn't go to college and so they don't know, and so everything is like new to me for the first time, and so it means like—I guess, growing like a person, growing as an individual, it just means something new, something new and fun, I guess.

An Asian sophomore participant described his feelings of not knowing what to do when

he got to college since he is a first-generation college student.

A whole new experience, something way different from high school. You're on your own most of the time, and then coming from the first-generation I'm like, I don't know what I'm doing.

Societal stereotype threat and feeling judged. Being an ethnic minority within a program

in which a majority of the students are White posses challenges to adjusting to college life. In

this sample, many participants described stereotype threat in their stories. A sophomore

explained her experiences being Hispanic and how she feels as though she is judged and has to

work harder than others.

I think sometimes I feel like, because I am Hispanic, like I'm looked at differently and things like that, or like when I'm taking certain classes I feel like I'm not getting the materials as quick enough as I should be getting it, and sometimes that makes me think

maybe it's because I wasn't born here, and like I have a completely different like—I don't know, way of thinking and things like that.

A Hispanic male sophomore participant also discussed feeling isolated ever since switching to a predominantly White high school and now being in a program that is not diverse. He also hints at experiencing stereotype threat.

> It's been really pretty good. I like it. I love the classes, the advisors and everybody here is really great. Also, but then with it's—as well, like when I go into a class, I see that I'm the only Hispanic there, but that's also—and it's, oh, like a little flashback from high school, but that's what I've been noticing in mostly all of my classes. The Hispanic rate is really, really low. So it's like, even for like participating in class, I'm a little shy. I sit in the back, or asking my classmates questions I feel really like awkward to be able to ask them something, when it shouldn't be that way, but it's just that natural feeling that like I can't ask.

A Hispanic freshman discussed working hard in high school to prove herself to others. She hinted at always feeling judged due to her ethnicity and how she grew up with family struggles.

> Uh, sometimes I'm afraid, I guess, that—like in high school I always had this fear like, "Oh, I have to do better than them. I have to get the 4.0," and so like—I guess it's like this competitiveness in me that like—because in high school, I thought—like if I was the best of the best, then I'd get college for free, or something like that. Uhm, or like—you know, like something like that. So like in my academics—like sometimes I feel like, "Oh, I have to do better," because it's like—I don't know, for some reason, I feel like I have to prove to myself that I can do it, but yeah.

An African-American sophomore participant added to how she often feels like she has to work harder to prove herself because she is Black.

> Like it's not as easy for me because I am Black. There's no way around it. I can't help that, but I just know that I have to work a little harder than other people, which is kind of frustrating too. It's like, "How can they just breeze on by," and I'm struggling, but—uh, I guess I've got to do what I've got to do. And for those that are struggling, it gets better in time. It always gets better. It does, so that's all I have to say.

Unable to affirm identity with program or profession of nursing. Some participants discussed feeling isolated and felt the effects of being in a predominantly White college. An

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Asian senior participant acknowledged the lack of diversity in the nursing program, which

differed from her high school experience. This was a trend discussed amongst many participants

and reflects the systemic issue regarding lack of diversity in nursing.

> I've been seeing it ever since my freshman year. I look around the room and there are not
> that many minorities, but when I went to high school, it was a very heavily minority-
> populated high school because I went to a City Public High School.

Another African-American sophomore participant discussed her struggles to articulate

her feelings, indicating that she has not been happy being a minority student within the nursing

program and the university as a whole. At the time of the study she was contemplating

transferring to another university where she would have more people like herself to associate

with.

> Yeah, and then like—in my—class, it's only like five of us, and three of us sit together,
> and so it's like—we just—it's not like—I've been in classes and I've been the only one,
> and you get the stares of—well, I'm not saying—you get stares. They'll just be looking at
> you. It's like, "I belong here too!" Like, I don't know.

> Yes, I don't know. If I—I don't know. If I could do it all over again, I would still go to
> college, but here, uh-uhn [negative].

> Uh, I don't know, I think—I don't know. Well, I would just be around—not—I can relate
> to it, but I don't know, it's just like I'd be around people that I can relate to more, like—
> yeah, I'm sorry to say that, but.

When an Asian male sophomore participant was asked about any cultural/racial

implications he has in his life he discussed the fact that he is both male and a minority, which at

times frustrates him.

> Yeah, like I can speak toward that. Uhm, just being that—hmm, I don't know, it's just
> different. I feel like I am the outsider, but just to know that I hope it changes as the years
> go on, because I know I am that one—I am like "that one Asian kid," that male in that—
> full of girls.

Lack of engagement on campus. Not engaging on campus emerged within some of the

participant's stories. An African-American sophomore participant mentioned lack of

engagement as being a barrier to her success. It was apparent in her story that she has more of a fixed mindset, which holds her back.

> I think so, like if I'm not—if I'm not engaged I'm just not engaged, and I won't—I think that's just the way my personality is. Like, if I don't like it, I don't like it. Then if I like it, then I'll be engaged and I'll really be into it. I think that's a fault on me because in life I'm going be having things that I don't like, and it's all going to come down to how I handle it. So I can't be like this forever.

An Asian sophomore participant who is still contemplating other professions besides nursing provides another negative perspective regarding the engagement gap. She described not wanting to be at school or be involved.

> I just feel like I just have to get through it, for now. I find that I don't really like to be on campus a lot. Like I just want to be here when I'm supposed to be here and hurry and get out of here. And so I guess my look on things is that I just want to hurry up, get my degree and get out.

The complications of family support.

Many of the participants are first-generation to college or have parents that are generally unfamiliar with the demands of college. Participants described feeling pressure from their families to be home and continue roles of support for the family unit. For some, being away at college complicates adherence to cultural norms such as taking care of parents or elders within the family. Additionally, other participants discussed traditional roles within the culture and being in college does not adhere to those traditional roles.

The pull of family back home. Many participants experienced family desires for the participant to be home. A Hispanic freshman participant expressed concern over leaving home to go to college because she played a financial role in her family dynamic. This is something that has been weighing heavily on this participant.

> Uhm, the cling from home, like the fact that I was the—you know, I was a provider, and not the sole provider, but I helped my mom with rent and stuff, and I gave her part of my checks, and like the idea that she's struggling again, that kind of worries me because—

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like I said, we were homeless in middle school, and so I don't want her to go through that again, and she's getting older now, but yeah.

A Hispanic junior participant relayed personal insight into reasons why one of her friends left the program. Her experience with her friend provides an inner perspective to the pull of family back home, a cultural factor some of these participants face.

> One of my friends, an African American female, she kind of had that situation where her family wasn't really supportive of her going to school, and like being independent, and so she had to go back home and I think that is a huge cultural thing because a lot of cultures, they don't understand.

She elaborates on the pull of her own family back home.

> I'm lucky that my parents are so supportive of it, but I even have little cousins – or like cousins who are like in their teens, about to go to college, and they're like – like my aunts and uncles are like, "You have to stay home and work," and you know, and so things like that are crazy to me because – I think I'm very thankful – like I was lucky that my parents wanted me to do this, whereas some – like people, even in my family, like it's literally like begging their parents so that they can go to college, just because their parents feel like you should be working and supporting the family. Yeah, I see that a lot.

Unfamiliarity with college demands. Although many participants indicate family support is instrumental to their success, they also expressed the negative aspects of parents not understanding the demands of the program. An Asian senior pre-nursing participant discussed the support of his brother who has attended college, surpassing the support of his parents because they were unable to understand the demands of college.

> So I would say, you know, it's more so him than my parents, because my parents don't really understand the aspect of college. They do, but they don't understand like all the work that we've got to put in.

> So they definitely understand what I'm pursuing, but I think it's hard for them to keep me motivated because they don't know, or they haven't done it, or they don't understand all the fine details. They understand the broad strokes, but the fine details it's really kind of hard to understand.

One African-American sophomore participant discussed how college could help someone become whatever they want to become if they set their mind to it. In this particular situation the

participant knows and values what a college education entails; however, it became evident during her interview that although her family supports her, she is first-generation to college and family do not fully understand the work and dedication college demands. She elaborated about how stressful it can be.

> Stressful, because like—my mom will be like—I'll be frustrated about stuff, and then she'll be like, "You got it. It's easy." No it's not and you can't tell me it's easy because you don't—you've never been to college, and like you don't know nothing, and so like it's kind of frustrating, but—I mean, she wanted me to go to college, so I don't know.

A Hispanic junior participant described his relationship with family and how neither parents went to college and have not supported him. He adds that friends are also part of the network of people surrounding the student that may not understand the demands of college.

> I would say like, for my family – my mom never went to college, neither did my dad and I never got any support from them to go to college, so that's a discouragement. Uhm, they don't really know, like, the intensity of the classes. They don't understand I'm always busy. So I would say family from my mom's side helps, family like my wife or something like that. Another thing would be like, just friends. They don't understand that you go to school and there are times you got to study and sometimes, that pushes friends away.

Cultural norms do not fit with being in college. For many participants, their cultural background weighs on them as they try to be successful in college. Participants discussed family pressure to get a job versus attending college, and how that impacts perseverance. Additionally, for some participants, college is the first time they have lived independently, which at times is against cultural norms.

A Hispanic sophomore described her father not supporting her decision to attend college and pressuring her to get a job. This appeared to be a motivating factor for the participant, but also proved to be a stressor.

> Like whenever I'm told that I can't do it, it just makes me want to do it even more, and I don't know. It's always really hard, like in high school when I was volunteering and committing all those hours into volunteer work and my parents would be like, "Well, why

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don't you get a job instead and it will help you more." It's just so hard to explain to them that I need the volunteer hours to build up my resume, and like they don't understand that, and so it's always like I kind of keep doing it, though, just because like I also have younger siblings, and I want to make sure that they know that they can still do it too.

A Hispanic senior participant who divulged aspects of her life experiences conversed

about the importance of her culture and how it has helped her but has also held her back. During

her sophomore year she struggled with depression, then junior year with anxiety. She hesitated

to ask for help because of her cultural upbringing.

I think it's a cultural thing. Honestly, the like Mexican side, like we – you know, we try to be stronger than we really are. Like we don't want anyone to let in – like, you know, to let them know that we're – you know, and my dad was like that too, being really macho. You know, he didn't want to go to the doctor and never let anyone know that there was anything wrong. Like we could always solve our problems ourselves. You know, so I think that was definitely – I think it's a cultural thing because like my aunts and my grandma are the same way, you know, so.

An African-Immigrant pre-nursing junior participant discussed being new to the country

and that college was her first time living on her own, an action that violates her faith and culture.

Yeah, change is something that I'm not so into. That was why my first week, and that thing was kind of challenging. It was my first time moving out and staying on my own. It's not something that is, let's say, so allowed in my culture. Because I'm a woman. Only if I was a guy, maybe I'll be allowed to move out or something. But ladies don't move out until you're married.

A Hispanic junior participant discussed how her family wanted her to come home

repeatedly after she started college. She describes that in her culture, the norm is for women to

be home, not working or be in college.

I mean, at first it was hard for them because they were like, "Oh, you're not going to come home … come back all the time," and that is like the Hispanic thing like you should be home all the time. And I was like, no, I'm sorry. I live over an hour away too and so it's hard to drive back and forth all the time. But overall, yeah, they're pretty supportive with everything and understanding of things and some of my family members – like aunts and uncles, they like just sound so shocked when I tell them, like – like, "No, I have to go to work …" and they're like, "Why do you work so much," and like why don't I stay home more, and I'm like I can't, and I'm sorry, and but – but like it's the cultural thing too. Like the woman don't really – like they work, but it's not like the fulltime.

An Asian junior pre-nursing student explored aspects relating to culture more than race. Although she faces challenges because of her culture, she is proud to be the first nurse in her family. However, she still has to contend with the cultural norms of her family dynamics. Later in the interview, she discusses having to drive her parents to appointments and the grocery store.

> Uhm, in terms of my family, it's like something successful because—uhm, like in the Hmong community, not many students are able to go to college because of the barriers, the language barrier and how like—especially when you live—like multiple generations in the one household. So it's kind of hard. We have the elders living with—you know, the mother, and then the grandchildren, and so it's hard because you have to find people to kind of help raise the children, and then look after the elders.

The independence of college.

Participants described how, starting in high school, they began feeling pressure to be independent and responsible for themselves. These feelings of independence are amplified in college.

Lack of high school preparation for college. Some of the participants conversed about inadequate preparation for college while in high school. They explained that this was a tremendous barrier to overcome. A Hispanic junior participant described her experiences from high school and lack of preparation for college and the college admission process. She is a first-generation college student and her parents were unable to help.

> That would be – that's actually a funny one because I always say that in high school – my high school was not good at preparing us for college, at all. I would ask my teachers to help me with the applications and my parents didn't know anything. We were all clueless. I had no idea how to even start the process. Financially, I didn't know what was going on. So then I would go ask my teachers and they barely knew how to do it. So it was tough when I was trying to figure out where I even wanted to go…the ACTs, or – but yeah once I figured it out, though, it was obviously good. So a little tough but all right.

An Asian sophomore participant described her experience attending a charter school and feeling that school did not prepare her for the realities and demands of college.

I think it got a little difficult for me because I think I feel like I didn't get proper
preparation in my high school because I felt like my—I came from a charter school. So
we had a lot of like—uhm, like it was kind of like technology based, like they gave out—
my senior year, they gave out iPads. So we did all of our stuff online, like we had online
courses, and we would access our homework and stuff online. So, uhm, I kind of—I
mean, I can kind of see where it matches up here, but we didn't really do a lot of stuff,
but it's like—it was like a toy, like we had iPads to do just whatever we wanted. So, and
we didn't get homework often, or the stuff wasn't as challenging as like other high—like
other high schools were doing, and so I felt like I was maybe a little unprepared. Like I
have really bad study habits. So I feel a little unprepared my first year but I think now I
have the hang of it, and so I know what I'm doing.

For some participants, knowing when and how to pick a college was not reinforced in

high school. A Hispanic junior participant expressed that she had no idea how to select a college

to attend.

I had no idea how to pick out colleges when I started. And I was one of those students
that didn't end up filing an application by the deadline in high school until I got an email
from the college, and they had the nursing program. So I basically just went in. "Oh, I'm
going to pick this one because they sent me something online." And I haven't applied for
anything, so that was basically how I chose –

Balancing financial needs. Another barrier that many participants described as

negatively impacting their performance was the need to balance financial needs. Many

participants support themselves while in college and feel a responsibility to be financially

accountable for themselves. An Asian senior participant conversed about the impact of having to

work. She began working two jobs freshman year and by junior year had to quit one job and

work part time due to the stresses and demands of being in the nursing major.

Barriers, though. Uhm, definitely just the stress of everything that's going on with my
family. Uhm, and sometimes I feel like money is a problem, because I feel like—if I had
like an endless amount of money, then I would have a car. Then I wouldn't have to take
the bus here and then I would have more time. Then I would have more time to study,
and then—uhm, and then I wouldn't have to work and so I'd have time to study. And
then I could have a printer, and I could print off all of my notes, stuff like that.

An Asian senior pre-nursing participant described the negative impact of the financial

necessity of working while enrolled in the nursing program.

I would say that the only thing that's making it more difficult is like work. You know, I work—working 20-25 hours a week may not seem like a lot but with the amount of classes I'm taking, the science courses, it requires more work and I think it would be great if I didn't have to work.

An African-American sophomore participant who lives at home discussed her monetary

independence and desire to not depend on her parents for financial support.

Yeah, but I would have loved to have had more time for homework, because I see—like, but I know I'm not that well off. My parents don't have a lot of money, but they can support me, and that's why I try not to ask them for anything, because I know that they're just working on Disability. That's it, and Disability only gets you so far, and once the bills are paid, and stuff, it's like I don't want to be hassling them for money. That's why I have a job, so that I can just provide the things that I need on my own without having them stress out about other stuff.

Learning from my mistakes. Some participants described having to learn from their

mistakes. This is compounded by the fact that many of the participants are first-generation to

college and navigating college on their own. An African-Immigrant junior pre-nursing

participant described her experiences learning from her mistakes.

It's pretty hectic, because I don't have nobody to watch my back. Or, you know, people who have grown up in that society. They know that, okay, I have to do this to do that. I have to do this to do that. But basically I have to learn from my mistakes to know what I've got to do next. But the good thing is I did learn from it, and now I'm really ready to improve on it. Because I did not have nobody to tell me this and that. And I did not do high school here; I came here three years ago. I came here and I went straight to college.

An Asian sophomore described having to learn from her mistakes.

I think it makes me want to be better because, like when we're young we obviously make a lot of stupid mistakes and we do a lot of stupid stuff. So I think when I think back on it, I think—you know, "Don't do this anymore. Don't do this every again," and like this is how you should take care of this situation if it ever occurs to you in the future.

The invisible standard in the nursing program.

A number of participants described lacking adequate skills within the classroom and

struggling academically. Struggles emerged regarding note-taking, study skills, and effectively

communicating. Additionally, academic struggles were apparent when participants discussed

challenging coursework.

Academic Struggles. Participants described many challenges they face academically.

Continuing a dialogue regarding barriers, participants typically struggled with the science-based

courses such as chemistry and anatomy. One African-American sophomore participant

described her inability to take notes in class.

> I don't like missing details, and I'm not really good at pointing out the major points. So
> when I do take notes, I take like the whole slide and I write everything down, and I miss
> what the professor is talking about.

A Hispanic freshman participant elaborates on her struggles with communication when

she is nervous and her desire to be more comfortable conversing with others.

> Yeah, definitely, like—because like when I try to make a point. Like I say it a lot when
> I'm really nervous. So at work when I'm trying to make a point, or like in class or with
> my friends, and I get really nervous about—like how stupid I'll sound, or something, and
> I'll say sorry like a billion times.

A Hispanic senior participant who leads study sessions indicated that the anatomy course

is the "weeder out" course.

> I think the big – honestly, the big weeder out of people, at least for nursing, like just
> nursing in general is Anatomy. Yeah, and like I tutor Anatomy and I see it. These
> students come to me and they're just freaking out. They're like, "I can't do anatomy.
> How am I going to be a nurse," and I'm like, "You have a million other classes you have
> to get to, to do Anatomy," like before and after Anatomy. But I think like some people
> come in and they're like, "Yeah, I want to do nursing," and then they find out that's not
> what they want to do. I had one girl switch her major. We had some people who just
> don't think that they're cut out for it, and there were other people who didn't, who fell
> below the academic requirements, or they weren't meeting the other requirements, and
> stuff, and so it was just – yeah, I think it's like it's a combination of all of that stuff.

An Asian junior pre-nursing participant supports the previous participant's statements

regarding student difficulty with the anatomy course.

> Oh, yeah, now—I'm struggling a little bit with anatomy. It's like very dense and packed
> in there, and so I have to keep up, or else I'm going to be way behind.

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Participants expressed struggling with other courses. A Hispanic freshman participant

has struggled with psychology, while many sophomore participants describe struggles with

chemistry. An African-American junior pre-nursing participant described her experience with

Chemistry.

> I guess the struggle—the only thing that I've struggled with is, uhm, Chem 103, which is like organic chem. Oh, my god. That class, like that is the only thing. Like, that's the class that kind of made me doubt myself, that actually I have to like, retake it in the spring because I have to withdraw, because I just—I totally was—yeah, I was not getting it and I'm just like, I don't know how normally, I get it. Like once, I'm good. But with that class, that was like my hardest class so far. That's like the only one that's kind of like, defeated me a little bit but not all the way because I'm going back and I'm going to kick its butt this time.

Pressure for perfect performance in the nursing program. Some participants described

feeling an intense pressure for perfection in the nursing program. This causes the participants

undue stress and mental health issues. Pressure within the nursing program also was exposed

when participants discussed the competiveness within the program. A Hispanic senior

participant who tutors other nursing students discussed her experiences. She pin-points the

invisible standard students feel.

> You talk to nurses and they're professors now, or you know like Dr. Q, she's our undergrad program coordinator, or whatever, and she's come in and she's like – you know that was like a big thing that we talked about to her because she was like, "What can we do to help you be successful," and one student brought it up. She was like, "We're just scared to fail." That's the thing, and she was like, "I had to retake like three classes," and I think it's like just – you know, they put such a huge stigma on us, like you have to be perfect, you can't fail any classes, and like this, this and this, and then it's like it makes us – it just like drives us insane, honestly, because we're just so focused on grades, and I see that when I'm tutoring.

She elaborates on the impact of the invisible standard.

> Like it's really nice to hear –like when nurses are – like you know when professors are like, "Yeah, I didn't do well in math … I didn't do well in pharm … I almost failed pharm," and I'm like that's good to know. It's nice to know that it's like –at least for faculty, like here at – you know, like I feel like they should step away from expecting us

to be perfect constantly because it causes problems with us, and it would cause – I feel like it causes huge mental health issues, and I know, I've had them myself because I'm constantly trying to live up to this invisible standard that I think that there is, and then it's like when you talk to the faculty, like the undergrad advisers, and like – you know, the level coordinators, and they're like, "It isn't really there," it's like you make it seem that it's there, and so I feel like all of us are trying to uphold ourselves to this huge invisible standard and it's not really there.

An African-American sophomore participant described her experience of the unanticipated competitiveness of the program.

Yeah, I didn't know that nursing school was so competitive, which caught me off guard, really big too, because since I started getting into the curriculum, it's like wow. I see other people—like before I got here, and it was like, "Okay, nursing school can't be that bad."

Dealing with getting into nursing major. The university where this study took place admits students into the nursing major after sophomore year. Some participants had success with their first application into the nursing major. For others, they applied and at the time of the study were not admitted into the nursing major. No matter the situation, many participants described the application process as being stressful. A Hispanic junior participant about to enter her senior year explores the process and the change she felt when she was admitted to the nursing major.

Right, so I think that was definitely a big change too. Prenursing, you obviously have tough courses and stuff, but in the major it's just – you know, like you're with the same group of people, and then the classes are ten times more intense, and then – because you have like Patho, Pharm, and then all of these other classes, and then the grading scale was crazy. So it was just that was hard. Last year, yeah, it was tough, but just making time to do everything. You just really have to be determined and that's for sure, like I realized that right away. It was hard to transition to it, but I think it worked.

An Asian senior provided insight regarding the process she went through for admission to the major. Although this excerpt is long, it shares her thoughts and experiences of what students struggle with getting into the nursing major. She describes feelings of fatigue with the pre-nursing portion of the program and wanted to take time off before submitting her application for the nursing major. Her story is not un-similar to others and it reinforces layers of barriers

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students face preparing and applying to the major. The pace and demands of the program take a

toll.

> I was really struggling with school, and I was just really overwhelmed, and I was like, "Mom, I think I need to take time for myself," and I really just wanted to take a semester off. She was completely supportive of it. She was like, "You've been working really hard. If you just want to take some time off, and then apply, that's perfectly fine. You're still going to graduate when you're really young." But then I was like, "Well, I should just apply to see if I get in," and so I actually wrote my application the day before it was due. So it was relatively procrastinated, but I still had such a good resume and everything that I got accepted. Uhm, but during those two years in the pre-nursing program, I was building up a really good resume because, as soon as I got in here—I just had always heard, like these rumors from people, and like, "Oh, it's impossible to get into the nursing program." And I was like, "Well, what's going on," and so I actually went into like the Student Success Center, and I talked to—I don't know, some advisor of some sort, and I was like, "What do I need to do to make my resume stand out so that I actually get accepted," and she was like, "Well, what's your Plan B?" And I was like, "Well, what do you mean," and she's like, "What are you going to do if you don't get accepted?" I said, "There's nothing else that I want to do, and that's why I'm talking to you. So what do I need to do to get accepted?" She kept pushing me like, "What else do you want to do?" I'm like, "No, this is what I want to do," and then so she finally gets around to it, and she's like, "Well, you need to be able to have volunteering experience, and you should be involved in as much as you can." So I was like, "Okay," and that's exactly what I did. I started volunteering at Columbia St. Mary's, every Friday from 7 a.m. to noon.

An African-American sophomore participant who recently applied to the major at the

time of study elaborated her experiences.

> If I get in, I mean, I'm going to be happy. I mean, it's—this college has a competitive nursing program. I mean, I'm just going to feel better about myself because I kind of like—I always think negatively. So, like about—I don't know. I just feel like I'm never good enough and so I just—so I'm going to feel good. I might shed some tears, like I just know that I'm actually going to be something in life, because once I get in, there ain't no, "I'm failing," and no dropping out and coming back, and so it's just—I don't know, new, new leap in life, so.

An African-Immigrant junior pre-nursing participant discussed her unsuccessful first

application process into the nursing major. It was a time in her life where she wanted to give up.

> Well, the first thing that just made me go, "I can't do it." Getting the letter. What else was hard? I think at the university it was just basically the letter. It's hard to give up if you, like – especially if you put all your strength, your work – like, you put everything

together for three years, just for this particular thing. And you lost. You're like, "No, that's it." It's just like, okay; it's okay that I failed. But I think I have to do better.

Mindlessness and academic performance.

Mindlessness was found within the stories of the participants. It manifests in their stories when they describe the influence of stress, low self-esteem, self-doubt, feeling like a robot, inability to focus, and overall lack of self-awareness.

Experiencing Self-Doubt. Many participants struggle with a lack of self- confidence. This was revealed in their stories when they discussed self-doubt. An African-American sophomore participant explained her inner turmoil regarding enrollment in the program.

> It's, a lot—stressful. It's just, I don't know, because you—I don't know, you're always like doubting yourself. Like you could talk to another—like another nursing student and they'd tell you like—I don't know, I'm always like comparing myself to other people and that's a problem. Like the program is so competitive and so I'm always like, "Oh, dang, she got this. She got this on her exam? Why didn't I get that?" It's like, I don't know, I'm just, it's always—it just comparing myself to other people. That's what it is.

An Arab sophomore participant who recently transferred into the nursing program struggled to describe anything positive about herself and lacked confidence. She discussed the possibility of failing her anatomy class.

> So, like honestly, I'm like, "Well, I'm getting myself ready to fail the class then!" So, I don't know, and if I fail that class then I can kiss my-I'm not going to get into nursing school, and I'll go to- I don't know, maybe I'll end up changing my major again.

An Asian junior pre-nursing participant discussed her feelings of self-doubt and how it negatively impacts her.

> And I know that I know the material, but sometimes I just doubt myself a lot. So when I doubt myself, I get the wrong answer. So if I study, and just concentrate on it, in general I think I'll pass everything.

A Hispanic junior participant about to enter her senior year questioned if nursing was what she really wanted as a career.

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Like what I want to do with nursing, where I want to go with nursing, is nursing actually what I really want to do? Because that has crossed my mind a lot. Especially when you don't see results of the effort you're putting into things. Sometimes you just question, "Is this really what I want to do? Is this really what I'm meant to do? Maybe it's not what I want." But it is what I want. You just have to clear the air and focus.

Struggle to focus. Struggling to focus was a common theme emerging from transcripts. Lacking focus and being easily distracted align within the domain of mindlessness. Technology was a common thread leading to distraction. An African-American sophomore participant discussed how technology causes her to easily lose focus.

I can lose focus really easy, especially with all the technology there is. Like I found myself trying to isolate myself which is what I'd need to do, and trying to put everything over to the side, because I know—like I have my phone right here, and I know I'm going to be tempted to just look at it, and then once I start looking at it, I've noticed that like 15-20 minutes are going to pass.

An Arab sophomore participant described how technology distracts her. She also enjoys reading, which often causes her to lose focus on studying.

I'm always distracted, having a cell phone that I love to use. Uhm, texting, a book….I love reading books, and so it's just like, "okay, wait, let me finish this chapter. No wait, let me finish this chapter," or I'm almost done with the book, "so let me finish the book".

In the story of an African-American sophomore participant, she epitomizes mindlessness in one sentence. During her interview she increasingly became a concern due to her mindless nature. She struggles to be present-moment and cannot quiet her mind. She often finds herself unable to focus.

That I'm always thinking about something. Never—it's never like nothing going on up in here. I'm always thinking about something, always. That's the problem.

Feeling like a robot. When participants described being stuck in routines and feeling as though they were a robot, these fit within the domain of mindlessness. A Hispanic junior participant about to enter her senior year at the time of the study mentioned stress causing her feel like a robot.

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That's usually when I'm stressed. And when I figure out that I need to relax and step away, I just, "Okay, I need to do something different with my life; go do something different this day to relax, and not feel like a robot.

An Asian senior pre-nursing participant found himself in daily routines. He has mixed feelings about his routines. He discussed how having a routine helps him feel less stress, but he also alluded to knowing he is not living life fully since he is always following his routine. The rigid structure of his life aligns within the domain of mindlessness.

You know, for me, I like following that plan, but it's also that I'm also aware of the fact that I am very auto—like automatic where I'm like robotic, where I do things in sequence, like all—like it's from day-to-day, if I'm—if I record myself, it's the same things over and over, and does it get kind of boring or does it kind of like—you know, upset me sometimes?

And of course, you know, the future is not always guaranteed. You know, that's cliché, but I'm always thinking ahead and I can't really enjoy the moment. I always say the past two years I haven't really enjoyed the moment. I've always been kind of like, "Okay, this is what needs to get done," and then once I'm there, I can kind of soak in all the joys of, "Hey, I finally made it."

A Hispanic senior described how routines can cause her to operate on automatic pilot.

Sometimes in the mornings when I'm driving to clinicals and I'm like, "I don't really remember the drive here," that kind of thing. It happens sometimes, you know, being in routines.

Influence of stress. Stress lurks in the lives of many of the participants. The influence of stress emerged within their stories. Much of the time stress had a negative connotation. Participants experienced feeling overwhelmed with the demands of college. An Asian junior pre-nursing participant described how stress impacts her and relates it to poor concentration and staying motivated. The behaviors exposed align with mindlessness in that she passively copes with stress and lacks constant motivation.

I guess, uhm, the concentration, and motivation. Yeah, because sometimes I lose motivation a lot and so like sometimes if I have like a bad test grade, I'll just want—I'll lose all the motivation in the world, and then I just want to give up, and so I always have

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to keep finding my motivation over and over again, in order to concentrate. So I guess that's the hardest part for me.

A Hispanic junior participant struggled with the stresses of reviewing materials and self-

teaching. She reveals:

Very chaotic at points. Ups and downs. Like sometimes I get something, sometimes I don't get something. Sometimes I have to self-teach; which I found you do that a lot. We do that a lot. It's very stressful. Stressful, and especially eye opening when you think you know so many things.

An African-American sophomore participant discussed experiencing stress comparing

herself to others, and becoming physically sick.

It was like they breezed through it, like they just do it, but then you get there and it's like, "This is a lot." Like this is really overwhelming, and I caught myself stressing a lot. Like I was coming down with a lot of illnesses because I was so stressed and I didn't know how to deal with it.

A Hispanic junior participant described feeling overwhelmed within the nursing major

component of the program.

It would be like exams, too many assignments, just feeling like you're overwhelmed.

Lack of time management. Some participants struggled with time management. They

referred to lack of time management skills as a barrier to their success. In conjunction with time

management, participants also mentioned procrastination. An African-American sophomore

participant described how quickly things can fall apart.

So time management. It can make it harder because if you're not keeping track then everything goes downhill from there, and I've been in that position, and I do not want to go back, because like when everything is falling apart, and you can't do anything about it, it's like the worst.

A Hispanic junior participant shared how procrastination has caused her stress reinforcing the

barrier of poor time management.

I'm a big procrastinator. That's bad, but I am a procrastinator. And keeping on top of things is important in nursing. Because you have to do it, otherwise things can go wrong.

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And sometimes it could be very bad. But I'm still learning to do that yet. I'm still in that process. So I do worry a lot. Especially for exams and papers. Especially papers; I hate writing.

Facilitators to Successful Completion of an Undergraduate Nursing Program

A major factor in the lives of the participants involves deciding to go to college and if that is even an option. Many of the participants (60%) are first generation college students who describe experiences of isolation, fear, unknowing, yet voice that college is an opportunity and a way to better oneself and future. Facilitators or successes aiding in retention and completion of a nursing program emerged from the participant's stories when they discussed the value of college, the impact they will have on others by obtaining a college degree, motivations and mindset, and having an awareness of what college is about. Mindfulness was also apparent in their stories when they described having a positive outlook, advocating for self, being adaptable and flexible, having self-awareness, and spirituality.

> **Valuing college.**

College means success and achieving goals. Participants also acknowledged that they are in college and setting an example for siblings that they too can achieve the dream. This acknowledges the importance of a supportive family and how college is viewed as something bigger than oneself.

College presents opportunities. Many of the participants used the word "opportunity" to describe what college means to them. They acknowledge the importance of obtaining a college education and many also discussed the impact on younger family members. A Hispanic freshman participant acknowledged how attending college is a "huge deal" since her parents came from Mexico and were homeless. She explains her family as being a big support and motivation.

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Hmm, I would say my family mostly. I mean, like yeah, they kind of—my dad kind of pushed me away, but at the same time he was like, "Study, study, study, get those grades," and my mom is always like—every time she talks, she's like, "I'm so proud of you," and it was always her dream for like one of her daughters to be successful, and she's like, "I know you're going to be the successful one."

A Hispanic participant completing her junior year discussed how proud she was once admitted to the nursing program. She expressed setting an example for her siblings.

Especially because being that first generation, you kind of have to set the bar for your siblings. That's also a big influence too, my siblings. I want to set an example, since I'm the oldest. I want them to continue their education too.

Everything's going to pay off. Because at the end, you're going to finish and you're going to be so proud. I'm going to be so proud when I'm done. Even if I don't get those As, I'm going to be so proud that I finished nursing. Because everybody emphasizes how hard of a career – especially during your education – it is; how stressful. But at the end you're just going to be like, "Yes. I made it through. I am a nurse. And I should be proud." And I am proud.

Another junior participant, who is from Africa and is first-generation to college, talked about struggles she encountered attending college and that ultimately she is in college to set an example for her sister.

To keep me here is something that I know that I'm first generation and I want to make a perfect example for my sister. Even though she's smarter than me, I still just try.

An Asian senior participant who is in nursing as a second degree talked about not wanting to fail since he is getting older. He revealed the nursing program is an opportunity for a better future.

Yeah, I have been thinking more long-term now like family and future. So that definitely does come into play because I definitely don't want to fail. I would say that is probably my biggest part. It's that I don't like to lose or fail because then I let myself down and I also let others down, like my brother, or my family.

Not all participants are first generation to college. Some participants have had family attend college contributing to a less intense college-going process. An Arab sophomore

participant had both parents and four siblings attend college; going to college was not a question for her but yet she still considers attending college to be challenging.

> True, yeah. I mean, I –I feel like I've had it better than others because- you know, others-like so many others-uhm, classmates, are the oldest in the family. Some, their parents didn't go to college, so like- I fell like I'm lucky compared to them but, nonetheless, it still takes me forever to learn something. It's just-it's tough.

A Hispanic sophomore participant has an older brother who is completing his doctoral degree. This participant still describes college as something very important and an opportunity because he is Hispanic and struggled growing up.

> In elementary school, I went to a bilingual school and so I was surrounded with all kids that spoke Spanish and have like the same—we lived in the same neighborhood and then just the people that—like all the people that I went to elementary school with didn't even make to past high school, that I see now, and so seeing that made me feel like—made me feel good because I was able to accomplish more, but my mom saw like how going to that school would affect my education a little bit, and so she enrolled me in a private high school which was—I was really the only Hispanic there, basically, and that was also a big shock for me because it was like I was—in every class I had, there were one or two Hispanics.

He elaborates:

> Everybody else was White or a different culture and it was hard for me at first because I went from an all—uhm, Latino school to a primarily White school, but I saw how it helped me be motivated, even more motivated to want to go on to college. So the experiences in elementary was like—my mind in elementary was like, "Well, I'm not going to…like I don't care about school. It's not even important. I went to high school and I was like, "No, I have to…school is important and I want to be able to accomplish even more," so that's it.

Setting goals. Setting goals was another strategy to ensure success that emerged from participant's stories. Participants discussed setting goals and obtaining a nursing degree was one substantial goal out of many that they set for themselves in life. A Hispanic senior participant acknowledged the importance of having goals that push her past obstacles.

> Just realizing – just setting goals and knowing where I want to be, and I just don't want to give up. I can't, so that always pushes me to work hard and get my assignments in.

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An African-Immigrant junior pre-nursing participant discussed her goals and how she focuses on a single goal at a time.

> For me college means having a successful future, and not having to depend on anybody else in the future, achieving my goals. My goal is to be a successful nurse, right now that is my goal. And then once I do that, then I can move forward.

A Hispanic sophomore participant started setting goals in high school. As he achieved his goals, he felt empowered and the reality of going to college set in. He continues to set goals for himself in order to be successful.

> The big success that I had in high school was—when I started, my GPA was always lower than a 3.0. So that was always a struggle for me, getting—being able to get a 3.0 or higher. Uhm, my first year I struggled a lot and so I never got a 3.0 or higher. Junior and senior year, I tried harder. I set goals for myself. If I—like I was really like motivated to be able to get a 3.0 or higher. That was just like my main goal in high school, and I was able to accomplish a 3.8 and then a 3.7 for both years. So then just seeing how I had accomplished that, that made me realize like I'm going to get into college. So that was my next goal and then I accomplished that, so just as the years go by, I try accomplishing my goals. Like when I accomplish them, it makes me feel more motivated and better about myself.

Support from family. Participants illuminated the impact of family support as paramount to their success. Although some participants experience a pull of family back home and not wanting to let anyone down, knowing their family is supportive provides motivation. A Hispanic junior participant mentions her family as being a large support of her attending college and aids in her success.

> My biggest success, or biggest influence, was the support of my family. Because I feel like without their support I wouldn't be here. It's very draining just to come to college. And it's nothing compared to high school.

An African-American sophomore participant tells about her mother reinforcing the value of obtaining an education, and continues to be the participant's biggest support in college. She begins to hint towards adversity she faces being African American. This particular participant

views her race as something that provides strength and she wants to be successful to set an

example for others.

> So she [Mom] wants me to go full force for what I want and what I believe in, and she
> wants me to basically be the best that I can be and prove to everyone that I can be the best
> that I can be because I feel like, yeah, I have to work a lot harder because—well, I'm
> Black, so to keep it point-blank, period. So, yeah.

An African-American junior participant who is still pre-nursing chooses to surround

herself with positivity and others who posses a drive to succeed. She mentions family being

supportive and influence to her to succeed. The participant revealed goals and dedication in

obtaining her nursing degree.

> I guess like, my family. My family is like my huge—sources for me. They always give
> me motivation when I feel like I can't move forward. Uhm, I guess that and also I have
> this drive to just like, be the difference because I'm like a first – generation college
> student. So I just want to be able to take care of my family, let them know all the hard
> work and all the—everything they put into me is going to like, pay off and I'm going to
> like, return the favor to them.

A Hispanic junior participant explored the impact of her family, and highlights her

stepmother as being her biggest support.

> I would think my parents are a big one. Just because my stepmom – she's like my mom,
> too, but she always tells me, "I'm so proud of you … you're doing all this great stuff,"
> and I'm one not to give myself enough credit for anything, and I'm just like, oh, it's like
> whatever, and she's like, "You're doing all of these things, and I'm so happy for you,"
> and like that's – you know, you don't want to disappoint your parents, or yourself, when
> you know that you're capable of doing so much, and so that helps me to get through a lot
> of it too.

A Hispanic senior participant communicated she owes a great deal to the support of her

mother and sister, and how her mother has an uncanny ability to know when the participant is

experiencing a stressful time.

> Probably my mom. She's got this uncanny ability to tell like whenever I'm like upset or
> something, like it's always right when I'm at my breaking point and she'll call and she'll
> be like, "How are you doing," and I'm like, "Mom!" So I think my mom just because like
> she's been nothing but a hundred-percent supportive of every decision and move I've

made up here, and you know she's been there for me a hundred percent, and it's just – you know, I don't think I'd be able to do it without her and my sister too. You know, it was really hard being away from her, just because we had gotten really, really close after my dad passed. So it was tough being away from her, but both of them have been super supportive, and I don't think I would have been able to make it through without them, you know, pushing me along and just giving me that extra oomph.

Growing as an individual. Attending college is an opportunity to grow as an individual.

Participants discussed growing up and having responsibility for oneself. An African-American

sophomore participant relayed:

Yeah, it's the growing up part that got me. It's like, "Oh, my gosh, I couldn't wait until I was grown up," and now it's like all these responsibilities and all of these things are coming to me that I do not know what they're talking about.
It's like I get papers and they're talking about all this stuff, and they're talking about, "What?" I'm only like 19, and it's like, "What are you guys talking about?" But it's all about growing up. Yeah, and I just try to take it one day at a time.

An Asian senior pre-nursing participant described maturing as he progresses through

college.

So, I think in a deeper way, it means that I'm able to make friends, network with people, and also grow as an individual. I think that's the most important part, and being less dependent on your parents for everything. It really teaches you how to, I guess, become your own leader and learn how to plan and structure your day around school versus just kind of goofing around.

Accountability to others.

Because the study participants are all ethnic minority, they discussed positive pressures

regarding representing their ethnicity and diversifying the nursing workforce. Many discussed

wanting to be a role model for others, how they can bridge gaps in healthcare, and the pressure of

not wanting to fail.

Becoming a role model for others. Participants described wanting to be a role model for

their siblings, other students, and in the future a role model as an ethnic minority nurse. An

African-American sophomore participant described what attending college means to her.

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Although she discusses aspects of stereotype threat, the reward of becoming a nurse motivates

her beyond those barriers.

> Well, it means a lot, because I know that everyone is looking at me, and looking at me to finish and to succeed and like—I don't know, being a young African American girl, you know, people—young girls, they get pregnant and like they can't finish school, or like they go through situations that won't allow them to finish school, but I know that I worked hard to get here, and I know I have to continue working hard to get to where else I want to be.

> She proceeds to elaborate:

> And that's what motivates me because I'll always see myself like, "This is going to be you." I see nurses in the hospitals and stuff and like, "This is going to be you one day," and then like just to be a Black nurse is even better because they see you—because going into the hospital, you don't see a lot of Black nurses at all, and I've always noticed that.

> An Asian sophomore participant is the oldest out of three siblings. He described being a

role model for his brother who is following in his footsteps in a nearby city.

> Definitely my parents, and then my brothers too, but I feel like I have to lead them on because I'm the oldest one and then they're following me. Yeah, and then my second one is a—he just got into Madison and so he's a freshman this year, and so I'm trying to be a role model for him, and he's like following my road too.

> *Bridging a cultural gap in healthcare.* Relating more to the fact that these participants

are future nurses, a junior participant who is Hispanic and speaks Spanish understands the impact

he will have with his patients.

> Yes. I even see that now, like where I work at now. So before they get into the operating room, some of the patients get surgical procedures and they can't even speak English, like they don't even know if they're going to be okay. They have no idea; they just know they're going in. So just getting to talk to them and seeing their reaction like, hey, you know what? They're – this is awesome. I can speak Spanish. It's definitely huge. I didn't think it was going to be that big. In the military, I never got a chance to speak Spanish because all your patients are basically military or, you know, if you're in another country, they're not going to speak – they're not Spanish-speaking countries. But here, I've seen that it does make a big change just seeing the way the patients react and even them giving you compliments like keep it up and all that. So I wasn't expecting that whatsoever.

A Hispanic senior participant who works as a Certified Nursing Assistant discussed her

perspectives regarding being Hispanic and the unique connection she has with her patients.

Even at work. I feel like when I'm assigned patients, even if they're not Hispanic, even if they're any other culture, I feel like they open up more to me and are more willing to talk to me and share feelings with me.

A Hispanic sophomore participant showed enthusiasm as he described his volunteer role

at a local Hispanic clinic.

Yes, actually, like now I volunteer at a nonprofit clinic down by my house. It's called City Clinic, and it's a clinic for people who don't have insurance and the majority that go there are Hispanic. So, I mean I do basic like reminder calls or like the front desk, like just helping around, and when I see patients come in, they see me, and they're like, "Oh, my god…" Like they're just happy. They feel way more comfortable and I—everybody has told me, "Oh, it's great that you're doing this," or they ask me like, "What do you do here," and I'm like, "I'm a volunteer, but I go to school and I'm going to do nursing," and they just like—they just like keep me motivated. There like, "Oh, like…go to school, please continue. That's great," and that's also—that's my goal to be able to get my career and to be able to work in an environment like that to be able to work with patients like that and to be able to like make them feel comfortable going to the doctor and I see how excited they get when they see a Hispanic in that career, and they just feel way more comfortable.

The positive pressure not to fail. Although having pressure not to fail may seem as

though it is a barrier, for many participants the pressure to not fail serves as a motivator to

succeed. An Asian junior pre-nursing participant expressed unconditional support from her

family.

I guess like to bring my grades up and thinking about—like I want to be a future nurse, and so I have to keep going, and then I always talk to me—like all of my stress with my parents. So they always tell me to not worry, and even if it takes me more than four years, I'll be fine as long as I do my best and don't give up.

An Asian senior pre-nursing participant described his experience with not wanting to fail.

Correct, because I don't want to tell them that I failed, or I'm backing out of the nursing program when they're in and I feel as though I'm just as smart as them. So it definitely keeps us competitive, and it keeps us on track.

A Hispanic freshman participant described motivation to be successful to prove to her

parents she is capable of attending college.

> It's kind of different because it's like—I mean, my family supports me, but my dad was kind of the one that was like, "I think you'd be happier at home…you're going to get homesick…it's too expensive," and everything, but I just kind of had to find out how I'm going to like prove—not prove, but like how I'm going to let them—make them see that this is what I want and this is where I belong, but yeah—

Success depends on mindset.

In analyzing the transcripts, all participants have motivation indubitably, but what was

interesting was hearing about perceptions regarding overcoming challenges depending on their

different motivations and overcoming struggles. Possessing grit was evident in their stories

when they discussed persevering in the nursing program.

Motivation to persist in a nursing program. Many participants conversed about different

motivations in their life aiding in success in the nursing program. A Hispanic senior participant

explained being self-motivated.

> I think my drive, honestly, because I'm so hard on myself, and so I push myself to do the best that I can. And I think it's just – like if a teacher doesn't think that it was the best work, or something, it's like I know that I did the best that I could possibly be. So I think – I don't know – it's really, I'm really good at motivating myself when it comes to that. So I think the drive, like my drive, honestly. It's like my own personal, like not even my drive to get my degree, but for other people it's like -- you know, I want my degree because I want to be a nurse.

A Hispanic junior participant discussed her perceptions of having to stay motivated in

order to be successful.

> Well, it seems like when I get presented with any type of difficulty I just keep telling myself that there's going to be something at the end that's just going to be so rewarding that I can't imagine not being a nurse. I just keep telling myself to keep going no matter what. Stress – a lot of things may happen on the way. Just keep going, because everything's going to resolve. Everything has a solution, even if I didn't pass a course before. But my solution was just take it again, and you're going to pass this course. You're going to pass it because you have to. And because you're a good student; you're

just good at it. You're just going to do it. And after you get to that mindset, you do it; you just put the effort into doing things. You kind of have to self-motivate a lot.

A Hispanic junior participant talked about motivation and related it to pride.

I think motivation. I'm a very motivated person. Also – how do you say it in English? Pride. Yes. Pride. It's a bad thing to have pride, but I think it's what gets me through a lot of things; my pride. Not wanting to fail in things, and wanting to be the best. That's why I guess I get stressed a lot. Because you think a lot about, "I want to be the best." But sometimes you just can't be everything.

An Asian senior pre-nursing participant described his process of maintaining motivation.

I'm like, you know, finding motivation or—you know, sticking it through the hard times. It sounds cliché, but we've been watching YouTube videos of people who are successful, talking about—you know, success, or what made them get to where they are and I just try to follow them and try to mimic what they do, in my life, so that I'm successful as well.

An Asian senior participant discussed being motivated to demonstrate competence interacting with patients.

You know, so that kind of keeps me motivated to keep learning and to kind of get those things in place so that I don't look all jacked up in the hospital and not knowing what they're talking about. And also just—I think just maintaining good grades and being able to prove to myself that I did learn that and I'll be able to pass that class with a fairly decent grade.

The good struggle. A few participants relayed struggles, but it's their perception of those struggles that matters. Many embodied a positive outlook on struggles they encountered in the nursing program. A Hispanic junior participant indicated goals to succeed and not wanting to let her mother down since she never had an opportunity to attend college.

It's been a good struggle, for sure. Because I just want to attain my goal. I really wanted to go to college, and make myself proud, and make my mom proud. Because she could not do it, and she's just like, "At least if I can't, let me just have a daughter who can do it."

An African-American sophomore participant humbly mentioned, "make lemonade out of lemons". She discussed not always being happy but was candid regarding possessing a positive perspective.

I always say, "Make lemonade out of lemons," and so you take something bad and you flip it into something good, like try to find the good in everything, and so that's what I've been trying to do. Like, even though I hate my classes, at least I'm here and like I can pay for it, and like—I don't know, even though I hate my job, at least I have a job. And like they hired me and I'm employed, and so I just try to find the best out of everything, like even when I'm having a bad day.

It's because I don't like to give up easy. Even though I may face a challenge, like I always like—I want to always look back and be like, "Okay, I got through that."

Success takes grit. Many participants indicated having patience and perseverance in order to be successful in college. This fits within the domain of possessing grit. An African-American sophomore participant described her mindset, which aligns with having grit. She views challenges and knows in order to reach her goals she must have patience.

Patience. So I'll have to be patient and then know that when it gets hard it's going to be worth it in the end, and so I take my time with it and then I—I guess if I see it like a wall, I'll slowly climb up it, get over it, and then just go on to the next challenge.

An African-Immigrant junior participant who recently applied to the nursing major and subsequently not accepted reflected on the difficulty of that situation. At the time she wanted to quit, but has redirected to persevere in the nursing program.

It's hard to give up if you, like – especially if you put all your strength, your work – like, you put everything together for three years, just for this particular thing. And you lost. You're like, "No, that's it." It's just like, okay; it's okay that I failed. But I think I have to do better.

A Hispanic junior participant reflected on failing a class and how she overcame, did not give up, and has been successful.

Because at first I was like in the denial stage. I was like, "No, I can't. It's not – I don't believe – I'm going to pass this class." But no, it's not happening. But yeah, it was hard at first. I think what got me through it was just thinking the second time, I'm going to know this material better. I'm going to be a better nurse because I'm retaking this course. And even if I did fail it the first time, it doesn't prove anything; it just proves that I'm going to be a better nurse.

The same participant elaborates on her self-talk and what helped provide motivation. This quote sums up many of the participants stories of perseverance past obstacles.

> Well, it seems like when I get presented with any type of difficulty I just keep telling myself that here's going to be something at the end that's just going to be so rewarding that I can't imagine not being a nurse. I just keep telling myself to keep going no matter what. Stress – a lot of things may happen on the way. Just keep going, because everything's going to resolve. Everything has a solution, even if I didn't pass a course before. But my solution was just take it again, and you're going to pass this course. You're going to pass it because you have to. And because you're a good student; you're just good at it. You're just going to do it. And after you get to that mindset, you do it; you just put the effort into doing things. You kind of have to self-motivate a lot.

Adapting to college.

Some participants have had family members attend college and therefore the transition was not as foreign as it was for the first-generation college student participants. A few participants indicated their transition to college was easier than others and were aware of different university processes such as navigating the financial aid application.

Socialization to campus. Being engaged on campus emerged within the participant's stories. A Hispanic senior participant aspiring to attend graduate school has been involved in all that she can while being an undergraduate student. She indicated the importance of socialization to campus.

> Yeah. I'm part of lots of things. I'm part of a sorority. I'm part of an honor society. I am part of the black and gold committee. I volunteer. I feel like I'm forgetting something, but, I don't know. I like being busy, I guess, but it works out. I'm good at time management.

A Hispanic sophomore participant who recently became a Resident Assistant discussed being busy "all the time; however, having her time occupied reinforces staying on task. She does not have time to "mess around".

> Well, the decision now it's so time consuming, like my schedule is all planned out for like the whole week and then I have to still like incorporate community hours and things like that, and I'm taking 18 credits, and so like it's so stressful. But, like at the same time,

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I like being like—being able to say, "I don't have time," like I have something to do, and things like that.

An Asian sophomore participant explained his increased level of engagement beginning in high school with various organizations. He continued to be engaged in college by joining a fraternity, the Vietnamese student group, and is part of a dance club. He declared that school is always the priority however.

I can always go to my parents for support, but joining a lot of organizations that put me as a leader has helped. So I was in a multicultural club. I did track and so I taught myself to be a student athlete and so there's more responsibilities but then just not being a student, and just going to school and going home. So I had priorities. I had to organize my time, and so now it's like I'm in college, and I'm in—I'm part of like a lot of things. Like you can go out and party and do whatever you want, but you've got to be organized and know that school is always first.

An African-American junior pre-nursing participant expressed the involvement of her role as a Resident Assistant, which has helped her to more fully engage with others on campus.

I guess, it's just—I don't know, there's just so much to do. It's so diverse and there's like, so many opportunities for me here at University, like—I don't know, I guess it's just a fit, you know? Because I feel like, like coming in my freshman year, I had the [nursing support program] but also like, got involved with different things because I like to volunteer and stuff like that. So like, I started tutoring, also doing time slips. So I got really involved.

Yeah, I think so, especially like becoming an RA, it has really made me like, really outgoing because like, you have to be outgoing to be working—I mean, like very social. So yeah, I'm up to do anything, like—I'm not like, I guess I used to be really shy but now I'm like, an open book. Like—just like, I can talk to anyone. You can talk to me. I guess I'm like—I don't know, some people say I'm very like, you know, confident or something like that.

Importance of high school preparation for success in college. Prior to attending college, participants discussed working hard, being engaged, volunteering, and having strong relationships with faculty in their high school. A Hispanic sophomore participant elaborated on how all of the volunteering she did in high school lead to numerous recommendation letters for

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admission to college. Her parents told her to get a job; however, she understood the importance

of volunteering.

> It's just so hard to explain to them that I need the volunteer hours to build up my resume, and like they don't understand that, and so it's always like I kind of keep doing it, though, just because like I also have younger siblings, and I want to make sure that they know that they can still do it too.

> I got a lot of recommendation letters because of all the time I spent and things like that, and then I was able to be like, "This is what volunteering does to you," like to my parents and stuff like that. So, like when my younger siblings go and like they decide to volunteer instead of working, they'll understand that it's not for nothing.

A Hispanic freshman that was homeless growing up always knew she wanted to go to

college and worked hard to make sure she reached her goal. Her hard work in high school paid

off.

> Well, I came into college with 23 credits from high school, taking the AP credits, and so I took a CAP class. So the fact that—and then I talked with my academic advisor and she said that I'd be sophomore status next semester, and so just that and in the back of my mind it's like, "You had it rough all your life, but you're still really, really…" Like, "You're doing really well academically," and uhm so that really makes it easy to like keep going, like, "Oh, you worked so hard in high school for this, why are you just going to…"

An African-American sophomore participant discussed how impactful her high school

was on her life.

> Like in high school, they motivate me because I felt they were a really good school and they had some really good teachers who really cared about their students and want to see them move on and succeed. And there were teachers there that pushed me like, really cared, and made sure that I did what I had to do. I graduated. I graduated on time, like I didn't just get by. Like I really earned my grades and doing what I needed to do, and so my high school was a big motivation because they instilled a lot in me. They instilled me to take my academics as important, and they instilled in me to reach out to the community, to go out there and help others, and that's when I first started volunteering.

Availability of financial aid and scholarships. Financial aid and scholarships are tangible

factors that have aided in academic success of participants. Many participants expressed the

importance of financial aid, scholarships, and/or grants to their ability to attend college. An

African-American sophomore participant discussed a desire to be responsible with education

funding.

> So I know that I have to take advantage of the opportunities that I'm giving, which I'm trying—well, I am, I'm taking advantage of them. I have all my scholarships and grants. Like I think about that, and I use that as a motivation because—like you don't want to waste money.

A Hispanic senior participant about to graduate spoke about the importance of

scholarships in her opportunity to enroll in college.

> Scholarships. If I didn't get any grants or scholarships, I probably wasn't going to go because with my sisters and like everyone in my family has to be taken care of, and they take care of my grandma, and so I know I wouldn't have gotten any help. So I was planning on just working for a year or two, off the bat, and then joining – like going to college, but I applied for a lot of scholarships, and I actually got one. It was like a leadership one, and it was like okay I'm going to college!

A Hispanic senior participant who is motivated to go beyond her bachelor's degree said

the following.

> Helpful things, I came here based on scholarship, which was really helpful. I've basically worked my whole educational career to get here. I want to go to graduate school too. That's really helpful.

Mindfulness and academic performance.

Exploring the positive aspects within the lives of the participants has aided in

understanding what assists in retention within a nursing program. Many participants described

positives including staying optimistic while overcoming challenges, having self-awareness,

being adaptable and flexible while doing their best, and finding strength from spirituality.

Staying positive in the midst of challenges. Many participants explained being optimistic

when faced with challenges. An African-Immigrant junior pre-nursing participant acknowledged

her mindfulness attributes through discussing her attitude helping her to overcome obstacles.

> I just like to be focused on what I'm doing right now. And then I'll worry about the next thing later. That's just kind of how I am.

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A Hispanic junior participant discussed her openness to change.

> Yeah, I mean, you can't change it. Yeah, I mean, I always feel like you can't change it, like you shouldn't be miserable about it. It's like "go with the flow," I guess, so.

An Asian sophomore participant described how she can get emotional when faced with

challenges, but tries to see what the cause of her problems are and how to find help to overcome

her challenges. She does not let her challenges weigh on her.

> It's much better when you let it out somehow, and then—uhm, and then I'll think, like after I'm done being emotional about it, and then I'll think about why I'm having difficulties and what I need to do, and—uhm, and usually that'll figure it out for me, like if I'm having difficulties and then I figure out why I'm having them, or what I don't understand, and where I can get the help if I need it.

A Hispanic freshman participant who overcame significant struggles in her life described

trying to stay positive and optimistic about the possibilities of the future.

> I don't know. I just because if I look in the past and it's like—I don't know, it's like— because in my past there's like a bad stuff, obviously, you know with my nephews and stuff, but in the future it's like there's the possibility for good stuff. You know, the future we obviously don't know what's going to happen, but just the idea that there is the possibility for me to be who I want to be, and even though it might not work out. I don't know that yet. I could still believe that something good is going to happen.

An African-American junior pre-nursing participant discussed her perspectives regarding

the power of being positive.

> I just like—in my—if you can't change it, why be negative about it? You know, I think we need more positivity because like, nowadays, people are very negative and like, it doesn't really do anything but bring down the mood. So—and I feel that positivity can do so much, so it's just like my whole outlook of it. I just—I don't know, I'm just like, so blessed in life, so I'm just like, why would I be negative when I'm so blessed? You know?

Advocating for "me time". Participants had different ways of positively dealing with

stress. An African-American junior pre-nursing participant acknowledged she manages her

stress with "me time".

I feel like I have a balance because I don't know, I'm like a huge advocate for like, having me time. So I just go and just do whatever I want to do. So I feel like, that's what like, keeps me humble and keeps me up just great because I have me time, like I recommend that to everyone. Like you need some me time, don't let everything like, stress you out. Because I try not to let anything stress me out so with me time, I'm able to just calm down, breathe lightly, everything.

An Asian sophomore participant described her stress management technique as writing what is bothering her since she feels as though she cannot always talk to her parents. Her parents are Hmong and she voiced they do not always understand the amount of work involved in attending college.

Because I feel like I bottled it up, I think it just makes it worse, and so I have to talk, and if I don't talk to them, then I just write it out. Yeah, I write it out and then I just— whenever I'm happy, I reflect back, and then I just rip away and throw it away.

A Hispanic junior participant shared how she has incorporated social time into her schedule to help manage the stresses of nursing school.

If you know how to manage your time, you can add those little fun things once in a while. Go out with your friends, have some family time. There's always room for everything. I know when people always say, "There's no time for anything." There is time for everything; you just have to learn how to manage your time. Especially to control stress in nursing, when you're attending nursing school, you have to have those free times for yourself. Because otherwise you're going to go crazy.

Do the best today; you never know what tomorrow brings. Participants were asked about their level of flexibility. Participants ranged in their responses; however, a common thread of positive perspectives regarding being adaptable emerged in many participant comments. An African-American sophomore participant reflected on being in the present moment, a mindset that aligns with mindfulness. She strives to learn from the present to improve herself for future experiences, and try not to worry causing unnecessary stress.

Yeah, you can't go into the future. You can't go into tomorrow because you never know what tomorrow brings, and so you might as well just deal with today, and then tomorrow where is it? So that's what I do.

I really, really just try to focus on the day, but I know I'm always in the future, and I'm always in the present because I look at the present like, "Okay, what didn't I do well that I need to do now," and that's going to help me improve in the future, like that's how I think about it.

A Hispanic participant who was finishing her junior year at the time of data collection also talked about having to be flexible in order to be successful in college. She also hints at the complexity of being in college where she has to manage herself and also family.

A lot of things have happened since I started college that have allowed me to be an adaptable person. Not only nursing school, but I think nursing school was a big part. Also, family things that you go through that just teach you that you have to be able to accommodate for everything.

An African-Immigrant shared her perspectives regarding being flexible and adapting to change.

I just – I'm such a free spirit. I don't really care about change. If something changes in my life, then I'll get used to it. And then if something else changes, then I'll get used to that.

God has a purpose for me. A final element to mindfulness involves the participant's involvement with spirituality. A few participants discussed the importance of their religion and praying over the course of the day. They voiced strength and peace of mind from praying and focusing on God. Praying is a form of meditation, which aids in developing a person's mindfulness.

An Arab sophomore participant discussed her religion during the interview and how it supports her and how her family supports her. The participant puts her fate in the hands of God and trusts what is happening is happening for a reason.

I would say that it's [support] my family, friends, and also God. I really have-like strongly agree that actually God has a huge input in where I am right now. You know, getting good grades, helping me get through tough times. It's really, really God and my family.

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Uhm, we pray five times a day. So that's five times, and I mean- I always pray to God, even when I'm not praying I'm always still doing-like pray to God to get me through this, to like pass my classes, and I've done it.

This participant was asked if she prays when she is feeling stressed and if she thinks praying helps her manage her stress and be able to better focus.

Yeah, sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't, but- I mean-, I believe that everything happens for a reason, and it's like-if God didn't- you know, plan this for me, then I'm sure there's a reason behind it. I don't know what it is, but I'm sure there's a reason behind it.

An Asian sophomore participant mentioned how he prays often during the day. He was asked if he viewed this as a form of meditation. He replied that he did not think of it that way, but as we talked about it, he realized that praying was his form of centering during the day.

Yeah, that's (praying) when I'm in the moment. That's when I know that I'm at this location and I'm here, and I'm just here to gather all my thoughts and pray to that one god, or that one person, yeah.

He was asked if he prays before tests and here was his response:

Uh-huh, and then that's when I can just focus. I guess, I'm praying toward my test, but yes.

An African-American sophomore participant expressed her belief in God and how she believes everything will fall into place if she trusts God.

And then I will also probably say—I don't know, like my grandmother. Even though she isn't here today, like she helped me a lot. Like she was very spiritual and she always taught me to keep God first and then everything else will fall into place.

An African-Immigrant junior pre-nursing participant described the role of spirituality in her life and how it's incorporated into her college life.

A lot of studying. And pray. Because I'm Muslim, too. You pray a lot. Like, "Okay, maybe Allah will make it better if you pray and then study hard." Because you don't only pray and just leave the books. You've got to do both of them together.

Strategies to Assist in Program Completion

Many participants acknowledged the importance of acclimating to college and campus life, knowing when to ask for help and knowing whom to ask. In this study, participants reported a variety of strategies that facilitate their success and completion of a nursing program.

Having a map to this foreign country called college.

Entering college is analogous to traveling to a foreign country. Participants described positives and negatives regarding acclimating to campus and understanding their campus and college resources. Additionally, participants offered personal suggestions based on their experiences to help succeed in college.

Acclimation to campus and knowing resources. Participant's prior knowledge of college emerged within their stories when talking about coming to college and understanding what to expect. Many of the participants are first-generation to college and experienced unexpected challenges acclimating to campus. Awareness of campus and college resources emerged as a common thread within the participant's stories. Several participants were aware of the resources available to them, while many participants were lost. An Asian senior participant described being completely lost when she first started college. She mentioned that if she was lost, so were her parents. As a result, the participant felt forced to navigate the university system on her own to seek help.

> Basically, when I'm lost, I just have to act like I'm lost and get help. Like, now I know—
> like if I need help with financial aid, then I have to go to the financial aid office. Or, just
> pretty much ask anyone, and if—you can figure it out eventually. You know, it might
> take three people but you'll get the answer.

She goes on to relay:

> Yeah, I feel like I'm most alone on it. Like when I had to do the FAFSA (Free
> Application for Federal Student Aid) the first time, I kind of turned it in really late
> because I really didn't understand what FAFSA was. I didn't understand all of the things
> that you had to fill out. I thought that you just filled out FAFSA and then that was it.

An African-Immigrant junior pre-nursing participant described her experience coming to

the university and the overwhelming experience.

> When I went to [this college], I would say it's probably the biggest school I've gone to so far. That was my first time moving, so I don't really know a lot of people down there. I just moved in with my friend. I get a little bit antisocial; especially if I don't know people.

An African-American junior pre-nursing participant talked about the importance of using

all of the resources available.

> I would tell them to use all the resources they can; because that would help them a lot. Because there is a lot of tutoring and all these other things they could do. So take advantage of all those.

Success strategies from one ethnic minority to another. Participants were asked to

provide suggestions they would give to others to ensure success in a nursing program. A variety

of topics were presented, that ranged from managing ones time, studying a little bit every day to

keep up, and having awareness of what courses will be difficult. Additionally, some participants

discussed the importance of volunteering.

An Asian sophomore participant that is active with student organizations suggests to

others to have fun with college, but to remember how important the opportunity to be in college

is and that school must remain a priority.

> Tell them that your family did come here for a reason, just to—so please focus on—I hope you're focused on school, and then to also know that college is only four years, and so have fun with it, because I feel like success, it's not just about that degree. I feel like there are so many other things that you can do in college, like the organizations which I'm joining and then to have fun with it. You've only got four years, and so—or maybe more than that, depending on what you're doing, but yeah, just to make sure that everything you're doing is because you want to be happy with what you're doing.

A Hispanic senior participant mentions many pieces of advice that she would pass on,

such as how to enhance organization, time management and also to take care of oneself.

It's going to be okay. I'd tell them to cut back on work if it's really stressful, but if you need it, you obviously need it, but then prioritize your time management. I advise everyone to color code things. Class 328 is purple, so then in your calendar, put everything down from the syllabus in purple that pertains to that class. What else do I do? Definitely take time for yourself, like if you enjoy doing yoga, go do yoga, and then incorporate in to your routine, so you're not always like, oh, I got to go do this now.

A Hispanic junior participant also stressed the importance of time management aiding in success. Her advice to others is:

Don't put things off. Don't procrastinate. Try to make – especially a calendar or schedule. Set schedule. Because that's going to be very helpful in keeping everything on track. My first semester, I didn't do any of those things. My first semester in the nursing program I didn't do any of those things. By the time I was at the end, I was going crazy. Because you have so many dates that you need to remember; so many things that are due. And your professors, they're not going to be responsible for reminding you every single day of what you need to do. So I think keeping a calendar, agenda, whatever you want; just keep it with the dates that are important for your classes, your exams, everything. Even if you want to add your work schedule, go right ahead. And also, don't think because it's so stressful and you need to focus so much on nursing that you can't have an outside life.

She goes on to share how she has incorporated social time into her schedule to help manage the stresses of nursing school.

If you know how to manage your time, you can add those little fun things once in a while. Go out with your friends, have some family time. There's always room for everything. I know when people always say, "There's no time for anything." There is time for everything; you just have to learn how to manage your time. Especially to control stress in nursing, when you're attending nursing school, you have to have those free times for yourself. Because otherwise you're going to go crazy.

Knowing what it means to be a nurse so you know what to anticipate in college. Some of the participants acknowledged the importance of understanding what a nurse does and the reality of the profession. A junior pre-nursing participant has found it helpful to become a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) as that provides insight into what nursing will be like.

Well, the first thing I would tell them is to do really good in their major science classes. Nursing – well, classes are also good. But we should think about the profession itself. It's about caring. I would – I know that some people work in health care or whatnot, but I recommend that you do this maybe even if you're not a CNA. Or do some type of

volunteering to relate it. That way, you will have at least some introduction or taste on what you're really going to be doing as a nurse.

A Hispanic junior participant who has had military experience seconds the impact of understanding the importance of what nursing actually entails to know if nursing is ones career path. He also credits his military experience with helping him to form his own identity and path in life, which he see's younger people still being lost in the process of growing up and not knowing what they want in life.

> I think just – a lot of people come in for jobs because of the money and they don't realize, like, what the job brings or what you have to do, the long shifts. I would just recommend for them to at least do some shadowing just to see what nurses really do and not what the TV shows do, or even just see the diversity in nursing. It's not always healthcare-related, it's just so diverse. But I feel like if they were to join the military, I would definitely be pro- towards that because they would get so much knowledge, so much exposure and that can really see if they want to do it. A lot of people come here from high school, they're not really sure what they want. And, uhm, it might affect their retention.

> He goes on to relay other suggestions.

> I'd tell them one of the – pick a mentor and like, just pick. And when you pick a mentor, pick somebody who's actually going to help you, somebody you, you know, want to be like and you know, meet with them and see ways they can give you advice. Uh, I feel like many positions you go out there and you want – there are certain goals you have to reach. They're not just going to come at you and a mentor is going to make that – they're just going to show you what you need to do and what you should practice on.

Consulting and connecting with professors and advisors.

Participants provided their perspectives of conversations with professors and building mentoring relationships. They also discussed utilizing campus advisors for help. Additionally, participants conversed about the importance of seeking help early and often.

Building relationships with professors. Many participants suggest the importance of talking with professors early and often. The positive role professors play in shaping the lives of students and the mentoring relationships that form were evident in participant stories. An

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African-Immigrant junior pre-nursing participant described the impact one professor has had on

her academic experience.

> Yeah. Some of them I started talking about, okay, maybe the test, exams, the quizzes, my grades; this and that. But then with some professors, as time goes on, you guys get so close to each other. And then you can – because my professor did help me choose a right path in healthcare. Because I don't know the different options I have to explore in healthcare. I knew that I want to do something in healthcare, but I really do not know what exactly. So I kept on changing my mind. Okay, maybe a pharmacist. This sounds good. Maybe that. Just, take your time and just choose what exactly you want to do. And he was an amazing professor. Let's just put it that way.

An African-American sophomore participant shared her insight regarding talking with

professors. She shared her value of these interactions, but not all professors are as approachable

as others.

> It's trial and error, but now I know like, yes, meet with your professors more and gain a relationship with them, and do what you have to do to move on. And getting in those relationships with your professors is really important because you never know; you may run into them again in your future, and how they could help you.

She goes on to say:

> Some professors—not every professor cares. Like I've approached a few, and they're there to do what they need to do and they'll leave, and like those professors that actually love their students, that actually want to see them move on, see them learn, and enjoy seeing them learn, like that makes me happy.

Many participants discussed initial reluctance to talk with professors due to fear or

intimidation. Over time, participants began to realize the importance of talking with professors

for help or advice. One Hispanic senior participant mentioned:

> It's not the struggle that's hard, it's the whole, like, I have to go and introduce myself, like I do every semester, because it's progressively getting easier, very slowly. I think it's really important, because they're there to help you. I usually in the beginning of the semester go in and introduce myself, just let them know, like hi, this is what I do. No, I think it's fairly easy talking to them if I have trouble, because they usually give you advice and things.

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Another Hispanic senior discussed how she felt intimidated to talk with professors and was unsure of what to say to them. She also described the atmosphere of the professor's office impacting how the conversation will go.

> I don't know, I think just – you know, like there are some professors that I'm scared of. Like I was intimidated to go and talk to them, like definitely, but you know I feel like if they just create a really relaxing – like chill environment like you know like making an environment that's okay to feel, make an environment that it's okay for us to come to you with questions or concerns, and like – you know, not being told that "no, that's wrong." You're not going to be told, "No, that's a dumb question," or something like that, because I feel like a lot of us are scared to ask those questions and I definitely have been. I'm not going to ask this question because I don't want to seem dumb. So it's – I don't know, like they say that they're supportive of us, but it's like they could be supportive in better ways. Like saying, "Oh, we've got office hours, you can come talk to me whenever," where it's more of like a – want you to be like supportive in class, in front of everyone, and not just like –

A Hispanic junior participant discussed his comfort talking with professors and how he seeks their advice when he needs suggestions for improvement or help in the courses.

> Just talking to those professors and just feeling comfortable with them, like I – any of my professors, I can talk to them during their office hours, find out their office hours and just talk to them, and see where they can help you.

Knowing campus and college advisors. Some participants shared stories about their struggles and not knowing where to go for help. All students are assigned an advisor outside the nursing program as well as an additional advisor within the nursing program. Knowing these advisors are there has helped participants receive advice to be successful. An Asian sophomore participant discussed the importance of speaking with her advisor and receiving help.

> And I think last semester I needed tutoring help, and I didn't know how to do it, and so I actually went to go see him (Advisor) and he did everything for me. He took me to the PASS office and he helped me to sign up with the SI reader, and all of that, and he was very helpful to me.

A Hispanic senior participant shared how she has really appreciated the help of her nursing advisor.

Yeah, yeah, I've only got one semester left. I can't throw in the towel now, and I've actually – I might be moving home – back home next semester if I find someone to sublease my apartment, but I talked to – and like the advisors here, people are really awesome. I love being in this College of Nursing because everyone here has been a nurse, or they've had at least some experience with nurses. So they understand what we're going through, and life happens. So my advisor was really awesome when I came to her a couple of weeks ago, and I was like, "My mom really can't afford the bills any more," and I was like – I need to go home so I can use my rent money to pay for – help her pay the mortgage and stuff. My advisor was like totally understanding. She was like, "We'll get you a spot so that you're close to home," and it was really awesome working – you know, the fact that I was like able to still – like I had that option to move home if I needed to, especially for next semester because I have that freedom and now I have that opportunity to do a preceptorship. So now I have the option to go wherever, and I don't have to stay in the city.

Other helpful suggestions brought up by the participants involve being intentional about mentoring. Some participants discuss how important finding a mentor is, but for a majority, this process is foreign. All students are given a mentor through the university, but for many they do not know how to go about reaping the benefits of this mentoring relationship. A senior participant discussed her experience with mentoring through the university program.

Hm-hmm, well, they already have this program, but it's at the Student Success Center, outreach from their mentors to really help them with the things that I struggled with. Like financial aid, and just kind of getting, uhm, accustomed to college because it is scary. Like, uhm, kind of knowing that you're kind of like the underdog, but—because when I came here, my roommates, they were all from the suburbs. None of them had jobs. Their parents paid for everything, and I've just always kept going through college like that, like looking around at the people and just seeing that they don't have to work, and that I have more barriers than they do.

Having the awareness and confidence of asking for help. Many participants discussed hesitations asking for help due to various factors. Some noted having the awareness and confidence to ask for help would aid in their success. A Hispanic junior participant mentioned how she wished she was better at asking for help from professors and her advice to others is to seek out professors early since she never did.

Asking for help is a good one, because I'm one to do everything by myself, like with school. Like if I didn't understand something, like I would do it myself and I would

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never ask professors for help. So I wish I was better at that. I feel like that would have made it so much easier for a lot of things, like just going to the professor and I didn't for a lot of my classes.

An Asian sophomore participant describes how she likes to try and figure things out first for herself before she asks for help. She is still hesitant to go to the level of the professor to get help.

> Yeah, it takes me a while because I think I'm the kind of person that doesn't like to admit that I don't get it, because I like to try to get it by myself first. I'll try really, really hard, and I'll try like a couple of times to try my hardest to try and understand it. I'll even like look online and see, "Oh, how…like what does this mean," and if I can't understand it, then I will resort to the SI leader, and if the SI leader doesn't help me, sometimes I'll go to the professor, just sometimes.

Being a part of the Nurse Success Program. Thirty percent of study participants are members of a student support program available at the college of nursing where the study was conducted. For the purpose of this study and to protect confidentiality, this program will be called the Nurse Support System (NSS). All participants admitted into this program expressed how vital it has been to their success as a student. Many explained that they would have left college if this program did not exist. The NSS program is for students who identify as first-generation to college and exhibit financial need; therefore, not all of the current study participants are eligible for this program.

An African-American sophomore participant shared how important NSS has been for her and how she appreciates that someone believes in her and supports her.

> NSS. They only choose so many people. They only choose 12 students, and so I was one of the students that they chose, and that's really one of the reasons that I came to this university, because it's like they saw something in me and they chose me, and they wanted me to be a part of this, which is what I realized too.

> Like this is a great, great opportunity, and like it's something that I can't look over. Like, if I was looking over it, I wouldn't be smart. Like that's stupid, and so like every time I feel like giving up, it's like there are other people who would kill to have my position and kill to have my spot, but I made it and so I want to make the best out of it.

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An Asian sophomore participant heard about NSS through someone at his church. He

talks about how NSS has helped him to navigate college since he is first-generation.

> A whole new experience, something way different from high school. You're on your own
> most of the time, and then coming from the first-generation I'm like, I don't know what
> I'm doing. Yeah, and so my parents never experienced a university. So, for me, it's really
> different. Everything was new, and then NSS really helped out, like because I was lost
> coming in.

An African-American junior pre-nursing participant discusses the different ways NSS has

been a resource for her and aiding in her success.

> NSS, like—NSS is like a huge support system. Like, all of the different strategies, like
> they have taught us like, you know, like meeting with your professor, go to SI (study
> group), go to tutoring, go to study halls. Like, I feel like they have really like, built me
> and trained me so I can really succeed in college.

Never giving up

Never give up was a common thread that emerged from the participant stories. Many

participants provided their insight and suggestions regarding succeeding in a nursing program.

They acknowledged the need to stay focused, stay committed, surround themselves with a good

support system, and be proud of their ethnicity/culture.

Stay focused. Some of the participants discussed having to stay focused in order to be

successful. A Hispanic sophomore participant shared his perspectives on staying focused and

how being involved in organizations and campus activities helps him to stay focused.

> I know it can be hard to just easily pull something like, "I'm not going to study for that,"
> or whatever, but just kind of stay focused and motivated and I feel like what helps with
> that is being involved on campus because you feel like—if like last sem—last year, I
> didn't—I wasn't involved at all.

A Hispanic freshman participant described struggles staying focused. She acknowledges

there should be a balance between social and academic activities while in college, but the focus

should remain on getting into the nursing major.

Stay focused, but—uhm, because especially in the beginning of the semester, like there's a bunch of opportunities to like go out and do stuff. But like definitely go out and do stuff. I have to work on that myself, but like definitely—especially if you want to get into the major, you have to like focus on your studies and stuff too.

Staying committed when the going gets tough. Personal suggestions mentioned by a

positive African-American junior pre-nursing participant. She has a great outlook on life and

being in college and shared her perspectives.

What advice would I give them? I would say like, never give up on yourself because obviously you're here for a reason? So never doubt yourself. Because then if you don't believe in yourself, who's going to believe in you? So I guess never give up on yourself. Push yourself because like, college. It is challenging but you can do it because there's people who have come before you and they've had challenges probably greater than yourself and they did it, so what's stopping you from doing it?

She goes on to say:

I guess I would just say like, I feel like people should just like, settle. They should like—one bad thing would determine how they look at life and their whole world because they've gone through ups and downs. You just can't let that determine what you're going to do. You should like, remake that your motivating factor to do better.

A Hispanic junior participant expressed her personal insights as suggestions for success

to others. She reinforces the dedication it takes to be successful and to never give up.

I would say just definitely know it's not an easy ride and like some people can give up really easily. I've seen so many people – you know, I'm sure you have too. Like your friends who drop out because it's so hard for them. So just make sure, like it's something you really want to do, you're really determined to do it, because it's not easy, but it's really rewarding. I learned so much that I never thought I would even know about. And just with clinicals and stuff, like just having patients say, "Oh, you're going to be a great nurse," like stuff like that, like – you change people's lives and you make a difference, and you are the number one person that patients are with, and you see them in their most vulnerable state ever. It's not for everyone. So I think definitely make sure that this is something you want to do. Because I'm sure you've seen like bad nurses out there, and you don't want to be one of those, or like unsure about what your career path is. So, yeah, it's tough but everyone – if I can do it, anyone can do it.

Surround self with good support system. Many participants discussed surrounding

themselves with good support systems to ensure success. This includes having a mentor. An

African-American sophomore participant discussed getting rid of negative people.

> I would say to have a good support system, to get rid of all negative people, because t
> hat's extra stress. I don't know, I just feel like you've got to be well prepared. I don't
> know. And I guess, I would—even though I'm not always thinking positive, it's to stay positive.
> I don't know. I feel like good things happen to positive people, so that's it.

An Asian senior pre-nursing participant shared his insight into having a good support

system and staying committed.

> I would say, you know, find a good support system and really ask yourself why you're
> doing it and find strong enough reasons for you to commit to it when the going gets
> tough.

An African-American junior pre-nursing participant discussed her perspectives on having

positive people around her.

> Yeah, I—no, I'm like—I'm not a negative person because I'm like, what's going to get
> done with me being negative? So no, I strive to stay positive and I surround myself with
> positive people, and if someone's negative, I try my best to bring them out of it because
> I'm like, "That's not going to help you."

A Hispanic junior participant who is part of the NSS program spoke generally about the

importance of having a mentor and suggests nursing upperclassmen mentor the nursing

underclassmen. She also alludes to the impact being in NSS has had on her success.

> I think just – I feel like a lot of guidance and help, maybe even do like a mentor program
> or something, like have senior students mentor the pre-nursing students, just have like a
> shoulder to talk to – to communicate with – something. Just because, if I came in this
> like not being anything, like just straight off the bat, like – I probably – that would have
> been so hard for me. I think would have fell off. But I had a lot of support from NSS in
> nursing, the college of nursing, and that helped me so much, and just regarding a lot of
> support for students. Yeah, I think that would help a lot.

Be proud of who you are. Participants were eager to share regarding ones cultural

background and the impact it can have in the nursing program and in the future as a nurse. A

Hispanic senior participant mentions:

> Definitely incorporate your cultural competence in whatever, however many cultures you
> have in your family in to the nursing program, so when you're taking care of things, try
> to think from different perspectives. It's really helpful. What else? If you're like me, keep
> speaking Spanish, even if no one talks back.

She goes on to share how important it is for ethnic minority students to push forward with

a nursing career because there is a lack of diversity in nursing.

> Yes, for minority students, just in general, I would just say that they should realize that
> they should kind of make this their mission because there is not that much diversity in the
> nursing field in a lot of areas. And so if they could just push themselves to get there, they
> would really be doing a service to their patients, because— You know, I definitely think
> that patients can benefit from seeing a diverse healthcare team.

An additional perception regarding ones culture was from a Hispanic junior participant.

Her perspective is more towards feeling that she is treated differently because she is an ethnic

minority.

> I think for students that are ethnic minorities, I think they should just – my advice; my
> extra advice, or how I feel when I entered the nursing program – is that don't feel like
> you're getting a priority. How do I explain it? There's a lot of things that people say.
> Like, "Oh, because we're ethnic minorities we just get into the nursing program because
> of that background that we have." But no, don't think that. Because you really are, as a
> nursing student, you're in the nursing program because somebody saw a potential in you.
> And anybody can be a nurse; as long as you have that wanting to learn and that oomph;
> that extra oomph. You're going to be a good nurse. Anybody can be a nurse; you just
> have to show them that you want to be one.

Increasing diversity of students as a way to enhance retention.

Participants emphasized that there is more to them than just what is shown on an

application. The process of applying to the nursing major is a hurdle to overcome for some of

the participants. They shared how this process could be improved. Other suggestions

participants communicated involved intentionally developing support groups, incorporating the

student support program, NSS, for all nursing students, not just first-generation and ethnic minority students. The suggestions participants mentioned are based on their personal insight gained from struggles and successes. Their feedback is instrumental to progress and increase ethnic minority student enrollment in a nursing program.

Suggestions to improve the admission process into the nursing major. The admission process for the nursing program where the study was conducted occurs between sophomore and junior year, which is a stressful time for participants. Participants shared how this process stokes anxiety due to the competitive nature of the program. Participants unsuccessful in their first attempt applying to the nursing major discuss how the process could be enhanced. An African-Immigrant junior pre-nursing participant described her experience of not achieving admission on her first attempt. She also shares her insight into how the application process could be improved.

> But perhaps it's not only the grades, or maybe the letter or whatnot. But some people who don't make it in, it doesn't mean that they don't deserve it. It's frustrating and very, very heartbreaking to work for three years or whatnot and not get in. It's challenging. Or maybe – well, I know that they did open more spots. And that's really good. But what else can I say? Grades, and what else can help these students? Well, I do know that the reflective papers do help. Those essays are so hard. Not everybody is a writer; especially people that English is not their native language. Writing can be very, very challenging for people like that. Maybe they should consider stuff like that when they're reading their essays too.

> She goes on to say:

> Or get to know them in person, besides the letter and the grades. You know? The letter. What is it called? The application essays? Because I think some schools do that. They do some interviews. Yeah, maybe if they do that – because in my essay I wrote how we came here, and we had to go through all this struggle. But, like, they're just reading it on paper. They don't see me. So it's hard for them to connect with me. You know?

> *Intentional student involvement in organizations or other student support groups.*

Participants offered suggestions regarding strategies to build a stronger community of nursing students. Participants expressed interest in intentional development of student support groups

and reinforcing the student-led and professional organizations students can participate in. A Hispanic sophomore participant discussed how she would benefit from a support group of students similar to herself.

> I would benefit a lot from having a group within the nursing program that focuses on helping ethnic minorities. Or even just – not like financially or anything; just a group where you can talk to each other. And I know we all have something in common that we stress about. It could be a language barrier. It could be – what else could it be? For me, it is a language barrier for me sometimes. Because sometimes I don't… I've been speaking English since second grade. That's when I learned English; second grade. I've been in the ELL programs up until high school. So it's still a little – I can say that I speak English perfectly; I understand it. But sometimes there's some things that I don't understand. I think we would benefit a lot from having a group like that.

A Hispanic junior participant who is shy expressed how important joining student organizations has been for her and developing confidence. Administration could be more intentional about pushing students to join organizations.

> Yes, join things in college. Put yourself out there and especially – you know, I'm a shy person – so like it's rewarding. Even joining like a sorority or something, just something. Do something.

A Hispanic senior participant who recently joined the National Association of Hispanic Nurses discusses how this organization had a huge impact on her at a time when she was experiencing self-doubt. She never would have known about this organization had it not been for a professor reaching out.

> Uhm, well, actually last semester I joined the National Association of Hispanic Nurses as like a student, and I was like really doubting myself, and then I went to this meeting. I got an email [from a professor]. I didn't even know that was a thing, and Dr. M always reaches out to us. So I actually kind of got a group of students from our school, and we carpooled over there, went to the meeting and they actually focused their meeting on us as students on the first day, and so it was like very welcoming and we talked about ways to get through school because we can succeed, and so even like making trips there, and then we'll go out to dinner after, and so it's just like getting that little support group together, and like they gave us their business cards. Like if we ever have any questions, or things like that, and so that really like kind of perked me back up in a way to finish.

She goes on to discuss how she found out about this organization.

Well, if she [professor] wouldn't have emailed it to me, like if she didn't even like remember my email, or having class with me, I don't think – I think she kind of just saw me in the hallway and said, "Hey, I think this could benefit you," but if – like if I wouldn't have seen her that day I would never have known about it. So it would be nice to have someone reach out to students because that even follows into when we graduate, and then they'll have more people in the organization.

Engaging all students in the College of Nursing Nurse Support System Program.

Participants who are members of the NSS program discussed the impact the program has had on their success. They expressed that the NSS program should serve as a model for other university programs that offer support to students. An African-American junior pre-nursing participant discussed her insights regarding implementation of the NSS program within the college of nursing. In addition, she shared insights about what her life would be like without NSS support that aided in her academic success. Her experience speaks to the impact the NSS program has had on students and how it could benefit other student if increased in size.

I would definitely advocate for NSS because that is such a great program and I feel like it really is helpful. I feel like, if like, they made—if everybody had to do the same requirements as NSS, like, much more people would stay within the program and actually finish.

I feel like I probably still would do like, tutoring and stuff like that but I don't know if I probably would have been like—me like—I don't know, meeting my professors as much as I would, or as much as I do. So I don't know, maybe—then also like, working on like, a resume and my portfolio, stuff like that. So like, without NSS I don't think I probably would have done that because like, for my nursing application, I basically have it done because at NSS, we had to do like, something exactly like it. So like, all I have to do is just like, go through, edit it, add some more stuff and make it better. So I don't know, I guess—hmm. Where would I be without NSS? I don't know, I probably wouldn't be where I am now, like more secure with myself. I guess NSS really has played a huge part in me being like, secure with myself because I know what to expect.

Other participants who are part of the NSS program express how impactful this program has been on their success and how this program should be available for every nursing student to ensure success. An Asian sophomore participant provided his perspective.

Yeah, I feel like the whole campus should run like the NSS program. Yeah, to reach out to students and give them each that advisor, like give them a person who tells them—like send daily emails, like oh—you need—there's actually tutoring, there's actually SI, because if I didn't have that, I would not know about anything. I wouldn't know that there's a Nelson Health Center, because we get to tour that personally with NSS. Yeah, so I feel like the campus should run like that, just to give students—like there are so many resources out there that can help you, and that you're not alone on this campus.

A Hispanic junior participant who had some struggles sophomore year discussed why she would advocate for expansion of the NSS program and mentoring across the levels of the nursing program.

No, right, I was lucky to get into it, and if I didn't, like I feel like I wouldn't have succeeded like I did. Like when I did fall off for a while, like the head of the NSS program was there, and she was like what are you doing, and I needed that, because it's – you know, like your parents are there to support you, but they don't really understand, like my parents don't really understand college, or like what I'm going through, the things that I need to do. And so yeah just like support from the staff or even having senior students talk to the pre-nursing students, and like have them come in the nursing classes and just talking about their experiences, and just to help them out, or to answer questions because we hear – like I remember pre-nursing hearing so much from the faculty aspect, but not a lot from the student aspect, at all. Like I think I only heard from students when I got into the major, like senior students to help, you know what I mean. I think just connecting a little more because it's two totally different – I think that would help people.

A Hispanic sophomore participant who is not eligible for the NSS program said he was aware of the program and feels like all students should have some form of support program.

My brother told me that there was a program here for minority students in nursing. I definitely feel like that's a really big thing for students, like they feel like they can go there and ask for anything and feel like, "Yeah, I can also do this," because there's a program for it.

Another suggestion made by a Hispanic junior participant, who is part of the NSS program, is to consider having parental programs since many parents do not understand what being in a nursing program entails. Additionally, she discusses how more support for first-generation college students is important since the process is foreign to students and parents.

Yeah. Just to have them understand – I remember through my college orientation, they have like the parents go off and do their thing, and then like us, and like that was

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probably helpful for them because like they – you know, like what we're going to be going through – a huge time in our lives, and so I think that would help them too.

So being first generation, obviously that's a lot harder because – yeah, your family doesn't really know anything, and you don't really know anything. So just trying to find like support and everything, and showing – you know, people like me, like there is help for you out there and joining clubs and stuff is important, and I feel like – as long as you seek the help you need, I think you can do fine, and you know, yeah.

Community outreach. Some of the participants provided insight into what they have experienced regarding increasing diversity within the college and nursing profession. An Asian senior participant discussed her insight regarding increasing diversity in the nursing program. She see's importance in reaching out to the local schools. She also provides an inside perspective as to why she thinks few minorities think college is an option.

> Well, there definitely should be people scouting out. Well, specifically, the City Public Schools because there are a lot of hard-working students in there, but there isn't always that guidance, and in the city area, there are a lot of people that could be led astray by the drugs, the crime and just kind of those things. But, uhm, there's a lot of minority students in the City Public School system and sometimes they're deterred from going to college because their parents didn't go to college, and because their family doesn't have a lot of money, and because their family doesn't exactly have the culture to push them into college. But people should definitely be going out there and telling them, you know? Like, "You could get a scholarship." There are lots of students in the schools that have good grades, but then again it's a really terrible education system. We're like one of the least funded. And even my high school, it's so sad, because we are like this really famous high school, but when I was going there, from freshman to senior year, every single year the budget was being cut, and my class sizes just kept getting bigger and bigger, and the teacher kept getting more overwhelmed and it was really sad. And so I think it's things like that which I think is really deterring minorities from getting into college.

This senior participant goes on to provide more insight to increase minorities in the program.

> Definitely just the outreach in high schools because I feel like the nursing field, there's going to be such a terrible shortage, and it's just going to keep getting worse, and you really need more minorities, and just more people in general to be able to do it, but I think the minorities have less of a support system than— They typically have a lower economic status, too, and so I definitely think that in high school people should be outreaching, and not just encouraging them to go into the nursing field, but connecting them to resources

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and, "Hey, these are scholarships, fill them out. Here you go." Because I've tried looking up scholarships on my own and it's really confusing. Like you just kind of Google scholarships, or nursing scholarships, and then you look up all of these papers, and everything, and you're like, "Is this even a real thing?"

Summary

A myriad of barriers and facilitators were identified in this study. Major barriers included being first generation to college. Another challenge to overcome was not wanting to fail and become a self-fulfilling prophecy. This speaks to the stereotype threat that many participants identified within their stories of trying to overcome the stresses and challenges of attending college. Participants experience challenges regarding the complications of family support and the independence that college presents. Within the domain of mindlessness are participant descriptions of the influence of stress, inability to focus, and lacking self-concept and self-awareness. Furthermore, participants identified feeling an invisible standard where they must be perfect and not have struggles while attending a nursing program.

Major facilitators included valuing college and knowing the positive impact they will have on others and within healthcare to bridge gaps. Participants reported that their success depended on mindset, acclimating to college, and elements of mindfulness. Participants discussed the importance of having positive motivation and being successful in the nursing program. The elements of mindfulness that emerged within their stories were factors such as staying positive, advocating for self, being adaptable and flexible, staying present, and the role of spirituality.

Major strategies to assist in program completion included having a map to this foreign country called college, consulting and connecting with professors and advisors, never giving up on oneself, and providing strategies to increase diversity. The participants provided their own personal insight of strategies for success in college. Participants suggested that having a

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standardized support system in place, like the NSS program, would aid in success of all

undergraduate nursing students. They also suggested formalized mentoring of all students by

upper classmen nursing students. These strategies were mentioned to help students understand

the demands of the nursing program and navigate the university more efficiently aiding in

success.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Introduction

Reputable health organizations have stressed that in order to provide better quality care to the diverse population of the United States the nursing workforce must mirror the ethnic and racial background of their patients (RWJF, 2016). Currently, the nursing profession is overwhelmingly White, with approximately one quarter (25%) of registered nurses identifying as ethnic minority (RWJF). Increasing diversity within the nursing profession requires appropriate training and retention of undergraduate nursing students from diverse, ethnic minority backgrounds. Ethnic minority students are purported to face an array of challenges that may affect their performance in their studies and thus, their abilities to complete their nursing programs (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013; Condon et al., 2013). The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of barriers and facilitators to successful completion of an undergraduate nursing program among a sample of ethnic minority undergraduate nursing students. Additionally, suggestions of strategies to enhance retention and completion of an undergraduate nursing program were gathered from the participants. While there are many factors related to undergraduate nursing student retention, a secondary aim of this study was to explore mindfulness and mindlessness within the context of ethnic minority nursing students' struggles and successes while enrolled in a nursing program.

Although there is a cadre of initiatives nationwide aimed at increasing recruitment and retention of ethnic minority students in nursing programs, there remains a gap between the number of ethnic minority nurses in the nursing workforce and the population they serve (American Association of Colleges, 2015). Findings of this study highlight the experiences of

ethnic minority nursing students and provide insights for future initiatives and policy actions to increase diversity within the profession.

Data collection for this study utilized a cross-sectional in-depth qualitative approach interviewing participants who self-identified as ethnic minority (n=20). Conclusions from this study address the following: 1) what are the barriers and challenges of ethnic minority undergraduate nursing students enrolled in an undergraduate nursing program?; 2) what are the facilitators or successes described by ethnic minority undergraduate nursing students enrolled in an undergraduate nursing program?; 3) how do the concepts of mindfulness and mindlessness manifest in the participants stories as they work towards completing their program?; and 4) what strategies would the participants propose that would assist them in staying in college and completing their nursing program?

Participants shared perspectives regarding a myriad of barriers or challenges they have experienced within their undergraduate nursing program. Many participants described struggles encountered during their undergraduate nursing program being similar to entering a foreign country without a map. As they try to navigate this new landscape, they are faced with a multitude of challenges from experiencing isolation, feeling a pull of their family back home, and experiencing stresses related to finding their own independence. Participants described stressors associated with being enrolled in a competitive undergraduate nursing program. Additionally, participants spoke about being passive in their journey in higher education, being stuck in routines, and not able to focus, which align with the domain of mindlessness, a concept explored in this study.

Participants spoke of many common and some unique factors that facilitated their success in a nursing program. Many participants expressed selflessness about attending college and

becoming a nurse. They discussed the hard work and perseverance required to continue to be successful in the nursing program. Participants described factors driving self-motivation that include having goals they want to accomplish and the desire to have a better life. Participants also discussed external supportive factors that are critical to their survival in college, such as financial aid and scholarships. The pressure to be successful was apparent in their stories. Many participants described not wanting to let anyone down, especially their families, and to prove to others they are capable of attaining higher education. This study also sought to explore mindfulness, which appeared in their stories when they discussed self-awareness, motivations, being adaptable, and persevering though challenges.

A final element to this study uncovered the feelings of isolation participants encountered joining a profession that lacks ethnic minority representation. In order to increase diversity within the profession, universities must put forth more effort at the pre-college and college level to increase awareness and support for diversity.

The university where this study was conducted is a large public university that offers a variety of resources to help students succeed; including a student success center, academic support services, and a multicultural center. The university's college of nursing has its own academic enrichment center open to all pre-nursing and nursing major students, and a college support program for first-generation to college students who are ethnic minority and/or economically disadvantaged. The college support program is competitive and students must apply and be accepted. Thirty percent of the study participants were part of this college support program at the time the study was conducted. Additionally, the university and college of nursing have multiple academic advisors to help guide students with issues such as registration, course

selection, and various other academic matters. Course professors and nursing professional

organizations are other resources participants found helpful.

Having analyzed the data presented in Chapter IV, Chapter V presents a summary and

discussion of the findings organized by the research questions of the study. Next, strengths and

limitations of the study will be discussed, followed by critical examination of the implications

for future research, education, and policy. Finally, concluding statements and reflection will be

discussed.

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Summary of Findings

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The findings of this study may allow Colleges of Nursing to more appropriately allocate

resources to provide support for ethnic minority students ensuring their success and transition

into the profession of nursing.

**Research Question 1: What are the barriers and challenges of ethnic minority
undergraduate nursing students enrolled in an undergraduate nursing program?**

The findings from this study indicated several barriers that were commonly described by

the participants as challenges to their success in the nursing program. The barriers discussed by

the participants are well documented in existing literature; however, this qualitative study

allowed the participants to tell their stories and provide first hand insight to understanding

common barriers faced by ethnic minority students.

Regardless of being first-generation college or continuing-generation college students,

participants struggled with the "college-going" process and felt generally lost upon entering

college. Consistent with current literature, participants described lacking cultural capital, which

refers to not being familiar with norms necessary to be successful in college and therefore

lacking self-confidence and self-efficacy in the college going process (Mehta, Newbold,

O'Rourke, 2011). Furthermore, transitioning to college is an intense period in the lives of the participants and can lead to potent surprises regarding the challenges presented by attending college (Grabau, 2009).

Many participants reported experiencing feelings of not belonging in college, not belonging on campus, and not belonging within the profession of nursing. Although not a quantitative study, age may have been a factor. Mean age of participants was approximately 20 years, which is a time of transitioning into adulthood, a time of exploration and asking oneself, "who am I", "what will I be?" (Tatum, 2000). When participants shared their stories, some of them questioned many aspects about their life and attending college. Researchers suggest that emerging adulthood is a time of identity development and not being able to make rational decisions (Ritchie et al., 2013). Additionally, in a study by Torregosa, Ynalves, and Morin (2016), they found that a student's age could influence success, where younger students may have less emotional engagement and commitment to their studies. Some participants appeared to lack self-confidence and discussed questioning which college profession would be a good fit for them, as they were not confident in becoming a nurse. One participant indicated she wanted to be a dentist but that might be too difficult, so she "just picked something" and enrolled in the nursing program. Other participants described wanting to be a physician's assistant or a pediatrician.

Being an ethnic minority complicated this journey for participants because of stereotype threat, feeling as though they are being judged and need to work harder than their White counterparts. Stereotype threat is a type of social identity threat and refers to being at risk of confirming negative perceptions of ones group or ethnicity/race (Thoman, Smith, Brown, Chase, & Lee, 2013). One participant alluded to stereotype threat when she described being a young

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African-American girl, describing that other girls like her are "getting pregnant and not finishing school". She discussed that she has to persevere to achieve her goals and get past the negative stereotypes. All ethnicities represented in this study made reference to feeling judged by others; however, African-American and African-Immigrant participants appeared to describe more intense experiences as compared to Hispanic, Asian, and Arab participants. This finding is generally compatible with existing literature regarding stereotype threat; however, a study by Johnson-Ahorulu (2013) suggests her focus groups of diverse students only had African-American students stating they experienced stereotype threat. In this dissertation study, a few Hispanic and Asian participants shared not wanting to ask questions during lectures due to fear of judgment.

Beyond feelings of stereotype threat, participants elaborated on an inability to affirm their identity within the university where the study was conducted. Participants voiced feeling isolated in lecture halls. An African-American participant bluntly acknowledged she feels isolated as she looks around the college of nursing and campus stating, "there's not enough color". High attrition rates amongst ethnic minority college students have been associated in part by lack of ethnic minority role models (Murray, 2015). Consistent with the literature, participants alluded to the lack of diversity within the profession of nursing and the scarcity of ethnic minority faculty and nurses in whom to find inspiration (Murray). Tatum (2000) suggests that all students should be able to see reflections of themselves in other students, faculty, or within the university. Per responses from the participants, there is acknowledgement that the nursing program where the study was conducted lacks diversity, which seems to have negatively impacted their sense of belonging, ultimately impacting their academic persistence (Matthews, Lauremann, & Banerjee, 2014).

Some participants decided not to engage in campus activities, organizations, or other social aspects of campus life. These stories were coded as a lack of sense of belonging. While some participants have been successful at engaging on campus with different organizations and groups, other participants described feeling isolated, "just not being engaged", and preferring to only be on campus when attending classes. Participants in the latter category do not live on campus and did not divulge details regarding their lack engagement. One participant simply stated she only comes to campus when she has to and prefers to leave campus afterward. It is possible that the university environment facilitates a lack of comfort for ethnic minority students; it is also plausible that the participants lack relationships and a sense of community (Matthews et al., 2014; Morrow & Ackerman, 2012). Research supports that decreased time spent on campus has a negative impact on academic persistence (Torres, Gross, & Dadashova, 2011). Students that engage on campus by utilizing campus resources and student support services perform better and have increased retention in college (Mehta et al., 2011).

Although participants identified family support as invaluable to their success, they also recognized difficulties and challenges while attending college that were related to family support and adhering to family/cultural norms. Consistent with existing literature, participants described how family members do not understand the complexities of college, do not understand the amount of time that must be invested for success, and that family members can interfere with their academic achievement (Mehta et al., 2011; Petty, 2014). As a result, participants felt uncomfortable and that they may not fit in attending college (Petty). This finding gives credence to those of Grebau (2009), who found that in particular, first-generation college students may be vulnerable to the family expectations that home life remains unchanged while the student is attending college.

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Trying to adhere to cultural norms while attending college was equally distressing for the participants and further contributed to complications of family support. Participants shared overcoming family members' persistence for getting a job versus going to college. Furthermore, some participants shared the stresses of having to live in two worlds; the culture of home, and the culture of being in college. Functioning in two worlds is consistent with the literature stating ethnic minority students, in particular first-generation students, are forced to adopt multiple roles while in college, which negatively impacts academic persistence (Petty, 2014).

Participants, regardless of first-generation college status, described challenges they faced with their newfound independence upon entering college. Consistent with existing literature, participants described difficulty adjusting to college life where they have to balance a variety of responsibilities such as managing their time, worrying about their financial matters, and learning by overcoming obstacles on their own without parental help (D'Lima, Winsler, & Kitsantas, 2014; Petty, 2014). Some participants described their jobs as a barrier, although to a lesser extent than other barriers. The independent decision-making regarding working a job and time management was cited as a struggle. A study by Torres, Gross, and Dadoshova (2011) suggests that younger students (less than 21 years old) make choices to work that may threaten academic success. The role of financial aid and scholarships emerged as an important factor helping to alleviate financial burden, which will be discussed later within Research Question two discussion.

Beyond the struggles of being a first-generation or college-going student, participants discussed academic preparation as a barrier to their success transitioning from high school to college. Some participants attribute their struggles to a lack of teacher and counselor guidance in the college-going process and lack of rigor in high school. Others discovered that once in

college their note taking, studying, and communication skills were not adequate to meet the exigencies and pace of the nursing program. Such frustrations are not uncommon, Murray (2015) found that students from ethnic minority backgrounds have an increased likelihood of being unprepared for the rigors of a nursing program and struggle academically. Participants acknowledged the need to improve in their study skills and time management. These acknowledgements are consistent with existing literature and often cited as enrichment services that should be offered to students to increase success (Murray).

Challenging coursework and admission into the nursing major were other barriers discussed by participants. Across the interviews, participants discussed specific instances of challenging courses and general struggles throughout the nursing program's curriculum. The sciences, such as chemistry, pathophysiology, and anatomy and physiology, were specific courses participants mentioned as being the most challenging. Existing literature is saturated with studies suggesting difficulties in the sciences as a predictor of academic success in nursing programs (Wolkowitz & Kelley, 2010). Tucker and Winsor (2013) suggest that chemistry is a "gate-keeper" course, which negatively impacts minority students, particular impacting Black students at a higher rate than their non-Black peers. A participant that tutors other students perceived anatomy and physiology as the "weeder-out" course for nursing students. However, participants voiced struggling most often with chemistry.

Admission into the nursing major complicated the challenges of coursework. Participants voiced extreme stress associated with the years preceding application to the nursing major, and the continued stress related to the demands of courses and clinical within the nursing major. In addition to dealing with challenging coursework, participants seemed to struggle with the competitiveness of the nursing program which appears to align with a study completed by

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Childs, Jones, Nugent, and Cook (2004). When one sophomore participant was asked how she likes the nursing program thus far, her reply was, "I had no idea it was this competitive". Childs et al., suggest first-generation college students in particular, are unprepared for the culture of competitiveness within higher education. Goff (2011) also acknowledged the competitive nature of nursing programs in her study regarding stressors, academic performance, and learned resourcefulness.

Participants described feeling pressure to be perfect and not make mistakes. One participant termed these feelings as the "invisible standard" faculty project on students. Participants described immense stress associated with the pressures and demands of the nursing program and feeling as though they must always be perfect, negatively impacting their psyche. Participants felt demands of faculty and the nursing program were unrealistic and discounted the hard work they were doing. These findings are in line with those of Morgan and Georges (2015) who described the impact of faculty who are distorted by The Perfectibility Model, which proposes that if a professional is properly trained they will not make a mistake, which is an unrealistic expectation.

Research Question 2: What are the Facilitators or Successes Identified by Ethnic Minority Undergraduate Nursing Students Enrolled in an Undergraduate Nursing Program?

Understanding the ways in which participants succeed in the face of challenges may allow faculty and administrators to capitalize on those strategies for current and future students. The most frequently cited factor participants attributed to their success was valuing the opportunity college presents and how attending college has always been a goal. Participants commonly described college as facilitating a better future for them and how college is helping them grow as an individual. Participants emphasized the importance of having goals to increase

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motivation. These motivating goals likely assist in academic persistence (Morrow & Ackermann, 2012). The findings regarding participants setting goals supports work done by Blackwell and Pinder (2014) who studied ethnic minority college students and found that goal-oriented behaviors drive internal motivation. Participants suggested their goals were to graduate from college and become a nurse for a better, more stable future for themselves and their families.

Although many participants in this study cited family disconnect and culture as barriers, participants specifically acknowledged the critical role family support played in their success attending college, and positive pressure they felt from family to persist through challenges. A strong connection with family, despite cultural barriers, emerged from some of the Hispanic participants. D'Lima, Winsler, and Kitsantas (2014) describe Hispanic students expressing family support contributing to academic persistence. D'Lima et al, also compared the factor of family support with African-American and Asian students, finding that African-American students felt more pressure to conform to negative stereotypes associated with their ethnic group and Asian students performed for the sake of pleasing elders. In this dissertation study many participants remarked on the importance of family support aiding their success; Amaro et al. (2006) suggest that families can provide emotional and motivational support.

Regardless of ethnicity, participants who are first-generation college students felt as though they were the "barrier breaker"; breaking down barriers in attaining higher education and achieving their goals (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014). The element of pride participants alluded to seems to invoke a drive in academic persistence because they are achieving their goals. It appears as though the element of pride could stem from positive ethnic-racial affect, which encompasses affirmation and pride contributing to academic persistence (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). Furthermore, a study including Hispanic participants suggests culturally, there is

motivation to remain committed to doing well in school and having a sense of purpose (Violand-Sanchez & Hainer-Violand, 2006).

Many participants described underrepresentation of minorities within the university and profession as a barrier; however, they also suggested that their ethnicity may be a strength that supports their success. Some of the participants described finding strength in their ethnic identity, which can lead to feeling a sense of belonging within one's own ethnic group and increased resilience to overcome racial barriers (Romero, Edwards, Fryberg, & Orduna, 2014; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). Participants acknowledged how they are becoming role models for others within their ethnicity groups. Much of the current literature acknowledges the lack of role models within nursing programs and the profession of nursing; however, some participants alluded to their impact as being role models to others filling this gap. These participants have a positive self-awareness of their role and the larger impact they have on other students and their future as a registered nurse (Murray, 2015). Many participants also described their role bridging a cultural gap in healthcare and their ability to establish trust with culturally diverse patients. The research suggests that healthcare providers who match the diversity of the population they serve are better able to build trust and provide care to their patients due to the ability to overcome language and cultural barriers (Murray; RWJF, 2016; Tucker & Winsor, 2013).

Participants also emphasized the positive aspects of successfully adapting to college. Beginning in high school, some participants experienced support from faculty and counselors that propelled them to attain higher education. In the literature, this early support is attributed to academic self-efficacy and aligns with a study completed by Grabau (2009) who sought to understand academic motivation and student development while transitioning to college. Participants who voiced support in high school described and reported their transition into

college as less challenging. Valuing the impact of volunteering was also acknowledged as being helpful during admission to college, adapting while in college, and admission into the nursing major. These findings build on existing literature focusing on school belonging and social interconnectedness and their role as positive predictors of academic persistence (Matthews et al., 2014; Tucker & Winsor, 2013).

Participants discussed possessing motivation and the importance of having a positive mindset to achieve their goals. This finding was overwhelming as many participant comments had threads of motivation embedded in their descriptions of persistence related to degree completion. Participants described being motivated personally (intrinsically) and by a desire to achieve their goal of becoming a nurse (extrinsically). The mindset of participants in relation to coping with stressors was also an interesting finding. Those that viewed stressors as a challenge versus a threat voiced being persistent, "getting past" their challenges, and not letting their areas of weakness define them. This finding appears to align with Goff's (2011) research regarding stressors and academic performance. Goff notes that when students perceive stressors as a threat their motivation and academic persistence are negatively affected, whereas students who perceive stressors as a challenge are better able to cope and have increased self-confidence and academic persistence. Furthermore, this finding aligns with a trait called grit, which is the capacity to persist through challenges in order to fulfill ones goals (Headden & McKay, 2015). Interestingly, participants drew strength from their goals, which tended to bolster their resolve to complete their nursing degree. For instance, one participant described grit when she mentioned:

> "Patience. So I'll have to be patient and then know that when it gets hard it's going to be worth it in the end….if. I see it like a wall, I'll slowly climb up it, get over it, and then just on to the next challenge."

Research Question 3: How do the Concepts of Mindfulness and Mindlessness Manifest in the Participants Stories as they Work Towards Completing their Program?

The findings regarding mindfulness and mindlessness contribute to the literature regarding successful ethnic minority nursing students attending competitive nursing programs, as there is a gap in current literature in this area. Mindlessness behaviors pose the risk of becoming barriers that participants may or may not overcome, whereas mindfulness behaviors encompass positive strategies that align with academic persistence (Langer, 1989; McCloskey, 2015).

A study by McCloskey (2015) suggests that mindfulness enhances openness and conscientiousness, which can help students cope with stress and overwhelming situations. Furthermore, McCloskey describes the relation of mindfulness to motivation, self-regulation, self-efficacy, and academic persistence. Motivation and mindfulness were apparent in the stories of the participants in this study, characterized by their determination to succeed and overcome challenges, possessing self-awareness and believing in themselves. The type of motivation that appears to align with mindfulness is autonomous motivation, which is comprised of a balance of internal and external motivation (Deci and Ryan, 2008). Deci and Ryan noted that having a mindfulness approach is associated with positive psychological outcomes and enhancing motivation. Participants also described other attributes of mindfulness. When faced with challenges, some participants discussed staying optimistic and focused in the present moment to work past the challenge. Goff (2011) described the unique stresses nursing students experience; however, academic persistence can be enhanced by positively dealing with stressors. Participants suggested using stress management techniques and taking care of their well-being. They described understanding the balance between factors they have control over and not letting worry take over their lives regarding factors they do not have control over. These findings generally

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align with literature on mindfulness as outlined in published studies by McCloskey (2015) who suggests practicing mindfulness can improve academic functioning, and Docksai (2013) who determined students who practice mindfulness score higher on standard testing, such as the Graduate Records Examination (GRE).

The type of motivation that appears to align with mindlessness is controlled motivation, which consists of external and introjected regulation, or more extrinsic forms of motivation (Deci &8 Ryan, 2008). Mindlessness emanated in their experiences when they described lacking confidence in their abilities (self-doubt), the inability to stay focused in class and while studying, and internalizing stress to the point of physical sickness. Aligning with controlled motivation, some participants described only being motivated by getting a good grade versus determination to achieve good grades. A few participants became concerned about the overwhelming force of external motivation and lack of an internal drive for success. One participant that exhibited mindlessness attributes and external motivation was asked if she ever gives herself credit for her accomplishments and believes in herself. She replied just her grades motivate her. Her story was difficult to discern. There is a general paucity of research pertaining to the concept of mindlessness and nursing student retention or attrition (Gaynor, Gallasch, Yorkston, & Turner, 2007). Shelton (2012) notes the impact of stress relating to attrition of nursing students. Grabau (2009) discussed academic motivation, which includes self-efficacy, attributions/autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and goal orientation. This study was not quantitative; therefore these concepts were not measured. Rather, elements from their stories were coded as mindlessness.

Research Question 4: What Strategies Would the Participants Propose that Would Assist them in Staying In and Completing their Nursing Program?

Participants suggested several strategies for successful retention in their nursing program. Among these strategies, a recurring theme emerged regarding success being dependent on motivation and persistence, the ability to use resources, and asking for help when necessary. Participants discussed the positive impact acclimating to campus had on their success in knowing and utilizing a variety of advisors and study resources. Other participants criticized their lack of acclimation to campus and the negative impact it had on their success because they were not aware of the various campus resources available to them. Lacking information regarding resources and lack of academic integration is purported to lead to a decrease in academic persistence; therefore, the participant's suggestions that all students participate in a structured orientation to all campus and college resources is in harmony with existing literature (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014; Petty, 2014).

Other strategies promoted by the participants revolved around the level of academic preparedness, or lack thereof, in many of the participant's stories. Participants suggested current and future ethnic minority students should have some sort of introduction to the rigors of college and be provided enrichment sessions geared towards enhancing note-taking and test-taking skills, managing time in a rigorous nursing program, and navigating relationships with advisors and professors, which aligns with a study by Murray (2015). A group of participants discussed how talking to professors was easy (these participants seemed to possess self-awareness), while others discussed difficulty with talking to professors due to various reasons such as intimidation, time constraints, or just not wanting to take the time to talk with professors. A study by Williams (2010) found that interactions with faculty were paramount in promoting minority nursing

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student's academic persistence. Additionally, there were social undertones when participants described developing relationships with professors, which seem to align with a sense of belonging and knowing they are cared about, which increases self-esteem and motivation to persist (Petty, 2014; Tucker & Winsor, 2013). This is slightly more complicated with ethnic minority students. As the literature supports, ethnic minority students generally look to someone who looks like them for support; however, in many colleges of nursing, there may be limited numbers of ethnic minority nursing faculty (Childs et al., 2004).

Other strategies that emerged from this study revolved around academic persistence associated with participants having a self-awareness in relation to their own needs and supports necessary for success. Participants described staying committed when the "going gets tough", which seems to align with the concept of perseverance or grit. The research suggests that academic persistence is enhanced when students value effort, which aligns with growth mindset (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015; Duckworth 2007). Participants also suggested students surround themselves with a positive support system to facilitate academic success. These findings align with research conducted by Williams (2010) who explored factors supporting students to feel like they belong, can persist, and flourish. Themes from Williams study included faculty interaction and support, keeping up, and never giving up.

Strategies to assist in program completion also included assessing and possibly making the admission process seamless into the nursing major. Participants acknowledge the extreme stress associated with the timeframe preceding applying for the nursing major and the application process itself. To alleviate the negative tone of applying to the nursing major, participants suggested including an admission interview rather than a metric-based process that is currently in place. Participants shared stories of struggles and successes leading up to the application process

for the nursing major, which cannot be summarized into an admission essay. This finding aligns with current literature exploring holistic admissions processes for nursing programs, where group interviews and inclusion of non-cognitive factors are considered in the admission process (Glazer et al., 2015). The University of Illinois at Chicago College of Nursing implemented the use of holistic admissions in 2013 to increase diversity within their nursing program. Since implementing holistic admissions they increased the percentage of students from diverse backgrounds admitted to the program from 36.8% to 42.5% within one year (Scott & Zerwic, 2015).

The study findings indicate that support resources are perceived as a major strategy ensuring success as suggested by participants. Participants suggested that faculty and administration be more intentional about encouraging students to join organizations or other student groups. One participant suggested developing ethnicity-based support groups. This finding aligns with research completed by Murray (2015), which supports inclusivity and intentional relationship building. Interestingly, thirty percent of the study participants are part of a college of nursing support program for first-generation and/or economically disadvantaged students. These particular participants spoke of the critical role the program has played in their academic success and persistence. Some described the possibility of withdrawing from the nursing program if it were not for the support they received from this program. Consistent with existing literature, support programs for ethnic minority students enhances academic persistence due to increasing the students sense of belonging, motivation to persist though challenges, having structured support to navigate the intricacies of college and the nursing program, and forced mentoring and relationship building with professors (Murray, 2015; Amaro, Abriam-Yago, & Yoder, 2006; Morrow & Ackermann, 2012). All of these factors were mentioned by

participants who were not involved with this particular support program within the college of

nursing, and therefore warrant attention as they are supported by literature as strategies to

enhance academic persistence and completion of a nursing program.

Discussion

Recapping, the study findings are analogous to traveling to a foreign country unprepared.

Participants shared stories of feeling isolated and lost, and had difficulties navigating the

'country' of college with only a faulty compass to guide them. Many participants had some

awareness of what to expect when they arrived on campus to attend college; however, others

described being caught off-guard by rigorous demands of the nursing program. Participants

described experiencing barriers regarding academic preparedness and social adjustment.

Although all students irrespective of ethnicity face challenges when attending college, ethnically

diverse students present with different needs (Amaro et al., 2006); having a map to navigate the

intricacies of higher education could alleviate many of the barriers indicated by the participants.

Influencing the experience of the student appears to be a map to success. In addition to

students being given a map to navigate the new country of college, faculty and administration

should also have a map of how to understand the subtle nuances involved in the life of an ethnic

minority student. This map could take the form of the Mindfulness Pathway to Student

Retention (Chapter II, p 29 Figure 1), the conceptual model developed for this study.

The first component of the Mindfulness Pathway to Student Retention is demographics,

which for ethnic minority students are important to consider. The family environment, financial

independence, residential situation, and status as first-generation to attend college appeared to be

factors participants described affecting their success attending college. Traditionally, ethnic

minority students, in particular first-generation college students, encounter significantly more

barriers in relation to their demographics (Mehta et al., 2011; Blackwell & Pinder, 2014).

Participants in this study indicated personal needs regarding financial resources, time constraints

due to work and/or cultural implications (having to care for elders or do chores at home) that are

important to acknowledge. These are consistent with findings of a study by Amaro, Abriam-

Yago, and Yoder (2006), who also suggest the success of ethnic minority students is impacted by

nursing faculty acknowledging differing home life and cultural considerations.

The next categories of the Mindfulness Pathway to Student Retention involve facilitators

and barriers. Participants acknowledged many aspects of personal and institutional factors that

assisted or impeded their academic persistence, leading to the next category of the model, which

incorporates mindfulness and mindlessness. This area of the model is paramount in

understanding how to monitor and support ethnic minority students to complete their nursing

program. Mindfulness involves the ability to be aware and attend to what is occurring in the

present moment (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Awareness, attention, well-being, and self-regulation

are all aspects of mindfulness (Seear & Vella-Brodrick, 2013). Mindfulness has also been

associated with increasing motivation, which many participants described the importance of

motivation to their success. Having a mindfulness perspective, or enhancing students

mindfulness capacity could support academic buoyancy, their ability to overcome academic

setbacks and challenges of everyday college life (Goff, 2011; Grabau, 2009). Mindfulness also

appears to have the capacity to overcome barriers and mindlessness traits that participants

described. Mindlessness emerged within participant's stories when they described automatic

behaviors, low self-esteem, and self-doubt.

Findings of this study align with the Mindfulness Pathway to Student Retention. Faculty

and administration can better support ethnic minority students and increase their sense of

belonging and intention to persist in a challenging nursing program by being open to and understanding the life of an ethnic minority student and what facilitates and challenges their capacity to succeed,

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

This study explored experiences of 20 undergraduate nursing students that identify as ethnic minority. The researcher of this study is a White female but was able to develop rapport and interact with the participants. Participants freely shared their stories of struggle and success and there was obvious trust. Some participants were not as open as others, which could suggest the researcher being a different ethnicity from the research participants could be a limitation to this study.

Another strength of this study involves the platform in which the results and findings will be shared. Many participants questioned the rationale for the study and what would transpire from the study results. Participants were told that their stories would be shared with a greater audience and their voice will be heard via presentations, publications, and through educational forums.

There are some limitations to this study that should be considered. This study was conducted at one public, urban, Midwestern university; therefore, results may not be generalizable to other settings. Selection of one site was intentional and per the guidance of the dissertation committee to alleviate potential challenges in data collection. Furthermore, this study is cross-sectional, with one-time interviews. A more robust design would recruit participants in their freshman year and follow them until college completion.

Methodologically, the age criterion became a limitation to recruitment for participation in the study. This study sought to understand experiences of traditional college students. The age

range inclusion criterion was between 18 and 26 years old. Participant inclusion was limited, as there were students who were interested in participating but were above the age of 26. The decision to stay true to the study-proposed age range was maintained because as age increases, factors including life experience, dependents, and maturity level could impact and possibly skew data analysis (Torregosa et al., 2016; Jeffreys, 2012). An opportunity to explore the influence of age quantitatively as it relates to the study aims would enhance the study design.

This study focused only on the perspectives of ethnic minority undergraduate nursing students. It does not address the perceptions of non-minority students, or faculty or administrative perspectives. Furthermore, by only including ethnic minority students, the study could convey an impression of marginalization and that ethnic minority students are the only students who struggle to persist in a nursing program. The researcher has maintained the basis for exploring the experiences of ethnic minority students is due to a lack of ethnic minority representation in nursing programs, and the need to understand how to increase diversity within the profession in order to improve healthcare for a diversifying population. A vigorous and extensive design would include perspectives of faculty and administration and undergraduate nursing students who identify as ethnic minority and White.

Implications

Nurses account for the majority of health care professionals and are paramount to the quality and safety of the United States health care system (Green, Kishi, & Esperat, 2011). There are many challenges associated with preparing a nursing workforce that provides quality care that is safe. These challenges involve projections that 500,000 new nurses will be needed by 2025, the increasing complexity of the health care needs of an aging and diversifying population, and the implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA).

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Currently, the nursing workforce does not match the diversity found within the United States (Knight et al., 2011). This lack of diversity reinforces health care disparities experienced by minority populations (Coffman, Rosenoff, & Grumbach, 2001). The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2015) acknowledge that schools of nursing are making strides in recruitment of nursing students, in particular minority nursing students. However, more must be done to meet the growing needs of a diverse patient population. The following implications are based on the findings of this study and provide suggestions on ways to assist ethnic minority nursing students to successfully complete a nursing program.

Implications for Future Research

This study adds to the literature regarding the experiences of ethnic minority students in undergraduate nursing programs. Conducting this study at multiple universities and including a mixed methods approach would have provided additional insights into the experiences of ethnic minority nursing students in a bachelors degree program. Qualitative in-depth interviews combined with quantitative instruments assessing sense of belonging on campus, isolation, self-efficacy, and also mindfulness would strengthen results.

Future research should also explore faculty perspectives. Without research into faculty perspectives regarding what they perceive their role to be with ethnic minority students, retention of ethnic minority students will continue to negatively impact nursing programs. The literature suggests faculty support has an impact on ethnic minority students and their persistence in a nursing program (Murray, 2015; Torregosa et al., 2016; Amaro et al., 2006). Amaro et al., (2006) reported that faculty had a stronger effect on ethnic minority student success than their families. Exploring manifestations of deficit thinking and academic expectations may provide insight regarding cultural competence of nursing faculty and guide faculty development

opportunities to build a more supportive and inclusive environment within colleges of nursing (Henfield & Washington, 2012).

Exploring the perspectives of ethnic minority nursing students from the moment of their college admission through to employment as a registered nurse would add to our understanding of what ethnic minority students experience in their higher education journey and how best to help them be successful at different phases of an undergraduate nursing program. The findings of a longitudinal study would not only add to existing literature regarding our understanding of ensuring student success, but could have the potential to support development or continuation of support programs on campus or within nursing programs. Furthermore, a longitudinal design could allow tracking of unsuccessful students and explore what contributed to not completing a nursing program.

The concept of academic buoyancy appeared in the literature regarding academic motivation (Goff, 2011; Grabau, 2009). Academic buoyancy refers to a student's ability to successfully deal with academic challenges typically experienced while in college (Goff; Grabau). The first step for further exploration of this concept would be completing a concept analysis within nursing education. Next steps for future research to build on increasing ethnic minorities in nursing programs could include exploration of academic buoyancy and how it relates to academic persistence. It would also be interesting to analyze the role of mindfulness and academic buoyancy, as there is a dearth of literature exploring these concepts together.

The concept of mindfulness and the role of positive psychology with ethnic minority nursing students need further exploration. Next steps regarding future research in this area must include a mixed methods or purely quantitative approach studying implementation of a mindfulness intervention with ethnic minority nursing students. The Mindfulness Based Stress

Reduction (MBSR) program has been implemented with nursing students with positive outcomes regarding stress reduction (Beddoe & Murphy, 2004). A new perspective would include assessing the effects of MBSR on the academic persistence of ethnic minority nursing students.

Based on the findings of this study, further exploration of the positive strategies ethnic minorities contribute to their academic persistence and success would add to the body of knowledge regarding positive psychology. Research completed by Murray (2015), Amaro et al (2006), Wolkowitz and Kelley (2010) provides evidence regarding barriers ethnic minority nursing students face in their quest for degree attainment, but there are few studies outlining positive factors. An in-depth exploration isolating the positive strategies and attributes of successful ethnic minority nursing students could aid in developing different strategies to increase retention in nursing programs.

Implications for Education

Major findings of this study indicate that a student that feels supported can overcome educational barriers. Participants acknowledged the significance of different types of support ranging from personal, family, and institutional support. Efforts to enhance intentional formation of ethnic-minority support and study groups were suggested by participants. Engaging students in study groups with students that are of like ethnicities could facilitate positive feelings of belonging, and affirmation of identity within the nursing program. Nursing programs collaborating with professional organizations to introduce more activities geared towards certain ethnic minorities could also enhance increasing inclusive feelings (Amaro et al., 2006). Participants discussed how they want to have groups with like people to study with, and they perceived mentoring from upperclassmen of the same ethnicity would contribute to their success. Some participants also attributed their academic persistence to the support they gained from

joining a nursing organization that aligned with their ethnicity. In general however, many participants described being unaware of special study groups that could offer social and emotional support from like people. Many were also unaware of professional nursing organizations they could join for support. Therefore formation of these groups must be an intentional strategy coming from faculty and administration to address cultural needs, academic needs (tutoring, studying), and enhancing a sense of belonging within the nursing program for ethnic minority students.

Participants of this study faced certain vulnerabilities attending college and voiced the transition to college from high school can be particularly traumatizing due to academic unpreparedness. Implementing specialized, mandatory orientation programs could alleviate the pressures participants described transitioning to college and feeling unprepared. Furthermore, this mandatory orientation program could span the entire first year of college and address positive coping strategies and other factors known to promote academic persistence, and introduce students to nursing administration and faculty. Positive and continuous interaction with administration and faculty are related to academic persistence (Morrow & Ackermann, 2012). Also, by having a yearlong experience, students would have an intentional social network of their peers to gain strength from (Mehta et al., 2011). Having a sense of community increases a student's perception that they belong and matter to others, which increases intention to persist in college (Morrow & Ackermann). Extending supportive programming throughout the course of the undergraduate experience could further enhance retention strategies for ethnic minority nursing students.

Implications for Policy

The study findings appear to support the argument for a change in the admissions process into the nursing major. Participants described the immense stress associated with the application process, and how the current process does not include an interview. Participants voiced the admission process "doesn't see all of me". In order to continue diversifying the healthcare workforce, holistic admission processes are gaining momentum within health professions. Holistic reviews assess the student's unique experiences alongside academic metrics such as grade point average (RWJF, 2016; Urban Universities for Health, 2014). A recent study commissioned by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) reported holistic admission processes have been adopted in 93% of dentistry schools, 91% of medical schools, 82% of public health schools, 78% of pharmacy schools, and only 47% of nursing schools (Urban Universities for Health). The findings of this dissertation study offers suggestive evidence supporting the inclusion of a more holistic process that considers academic readiness, potential, and overall contributes to assembling a more diverse student body (Urban Universities for Health). Glazer, Clark, and Bankston (2015) implore nursing programs to modernize their admissions processes to include a holistic approach in order to increase diversity within the profession.

In times of budget uncertainty in higher education, a priority should be made to shield student support services from budget cuts. A study conducted by Webber and Ehrenberg (2010) found high correlation between graduation rates and spending on student services than between graduation rates and instructional or research spending. As more ethnic minority students are entering the university, support programs need to be in place to retain these students and aid in their persistence and graduation (Grabau, 2009; Petty, 2014; Amaro et al., 2006).

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Findings of this study offer information indicating the importance of student support services. The college of nursing where this study was conducted has a support program, which is has been referred to as the Nurse Support System (NSS) in this study for confidentiality reasons. This program specifically targets first-generation to college students and from underrepresented or economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Participants of this study who are part of the NSS shared how critically valuable this program has been on their academic persistence in the nursing program and how the entire nursing program should "be run like NSS". As indicated, this program is only for students who are first-generation to college and therefore not available to all students. The participants who are not first-generation to college still described experiencing the same barriers that those participants in the NSS program did. Ethnic minority students experience challenges regarding accessibility, financial aspects, and lack of support (Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007; Chamberlain, Cook, & von Bohlen, 2012). Based on known barriers ethnic minorities face attaining higher education, this program should be made available to support all ethnic minority nursing students regardless of first-generation college status. Therefore, the benefit of extending inclusion criteria to include ethnic minority status is a recommended policy change.

Additional funding to support broadening the scope of students served by the NSS program could come from government initiatives stemming from the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). Public Law No: 111-148 of the PPACA addresses enhancing the nursing workforce through nursing education and practice provisions (American Association of College of Nursing [AACN], 2015). A significant accomplishment of this law is the reauthorization of Title VIII: Nursing Workforce Development Programs. Title VIII programs are the largest source of federal funding for all levels of nursing education in the form of grants,

loans, and loan repayment programs (AACN, 2015). Additionally, the PPACA and Title VIII

includes the Nurse Education, Practice, Quality, and Retention (NEPQR) program. This

program is administered through Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and

impacts the nursing workforce by addressing key priority areas of education, practice, and

retention (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011).

Conclusion

The goal of the proposed research was to describe qualitatively the unique experiences of

ethnic minority undergraduate nursing students relative to barriers and facilitators to retention in

a nursing program. The lack of diversity in the nursing workforce requires an increase in

understanding how to recruit and retain future nurses. Strategies were solicited from participants

regarding factors that have contributed to success and academic persistence.

Within colleges of nursing, there continues to be a need for development of retention

strategies regarding ethnic minority students in order to increase diversity within the profession

of nursing (RWJF, 2016). Using qualitative in-depth interview methods, participants were able

to share their unique experiences providing another dimension in understanding the impact of

barriers and facilitators to successful retention in a nursing program. Participant's stories

illustrated their struggles with a sense of belonging, complications of family support, gaining

independence, academic unpreparedness, and the inherent stresses associated with competitive

nursing programs. Participants also elaborated on the factors they felt contributed to their

success in a nursing program which included valuing college, feeling accountable to others,

possessing motivation, and the importance of adapting to college.

Ethnic minority students are vulnerable during their transition into and while attending

college. Participants described wanting better guidance and support navigating campus and the

college of nursing. They suggested mentoring from upperclassmen of like ethnicities may increase their sense of belonging and intent to persist in the nursing program. Implications for universities and college of nursing are consistent with the literature; the participant's descriptions of overcoming challenges can be taken into account to support the important role student support services play in ensuring student success (Morrow & Ackermann, 2012; Murray, 2015). Universities must protect student services in the midst of budget cuts, as student support services positively correlate to graduation rates (Weber & Ehrenberg, 2009).

Implications for future research are far reaching, as this study was foundational in exploring participant's experiences of barriers and facilitators to success in a nursing program. Additionally, elements of mindfulness and mindlessness were explored. Next steps for future research should continue to explore and develop a mindfulness intervention in which to utilize with ethnic minority students to increase factors ensuring success such as adaptability, well-being, and self-efficacy. Furthermore, the concept of academic buoyancy appeared in the literature, which should be explored further as it relates specifically to ethnic minority nursing students and academic persistence. Existing literature acknowledges barriers regarding retention of ethnic minority students in nursing programs more research must be done focusing on the facilitators and positive strategies enhancing academic persistence and completion of nursing programs.

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Appendix A:

IRB# 15.343: Approval Notice from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee IRB

UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN

UWMILWAUKEE

Department of University Safety & Assurances

Jessica Rice
IRB Administrator
Institutional Review Board
Engelmann 270
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New Study - Notice of IRB Exempt Status

Date: May 11, 2015

To: Aaron Buseh, PhD
Dept: College of Nursing

Cc: Amber Young- Brice

IRB#:   15.343
Title: Barriers and Facilitators to Completion of an Undergraduate Nursing Program: Exploration of Mindfulness, Mindlessness, and Retention Among Ethnic Minority Students

After review of your research protocol by the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee Institutional Review Board, your protocol has been granted Exempt Status under Category 2 as governed by 45 CFR 46.101(b).

On May 11, 2015, this protocol was approved as exempt for a period of three years. IRB approval will expire on May 10, 2018. If you plan to continue any research related activities (e.g., enrollment of subjects, study interventions, data analysis, etc.) past the expiration date, please respond to the IRB's status request that will be sent by email approximately two weeks before the expiration date. If the study is closed or completed before the IRB expiration date, you may notify the IRB by sending an email to irbinfo@uwm.edu with the study number and the status so we can keep our study records accurate.

Any proposed changes to the protocol must be reviewed by the IRB before implementation, unless the change is specifically necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. The principal investigator is responsible for adhering to the policies and guidelines set forth by the UWM IRB, maintaining proper documentation of study records and promptly reporting to the IRB any adverse events which require reporting. The principal investigator is also responsible for ensuring that all study staff receive appropriate training in the ethical guidelines of conducting human subjects research.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to adhere to UWM and UW System Policies, and any applicable state and federal laws governing activities which are independent of IRB review/approval (e.g., FERPA, Radiation Safety, UWM Data Security, UW System policy on Prizes, Awards and Gifts, state gambling laws, etc.). When conducting research at institutions outside of UWM, be sure to obtain permission and/or approval as required by their policies.

Contact the IRB office if you have any further questions. Thank you for your cooperation and best wishes for a successful project

Respectfully,

Jessica P. Rice
IRB Administrator

Study Title: Barriers and Facilitators to Completion of an Undergraduate Nursing Program: Exploration of Mindfulness, Mindlessness and Retention.

Person Responsible for Research: Aaron Buseh, PhD, Major Professor
Amber Young-Brice, MSN RN, Doctoral student

Study Description: The purpose of this study is to explore mindfulness and mindlessness within the context of undergraduate students' struggles and success while attending a nursing program. Approximately 40 subjects will participate in this study. Participants will be interviewed to understand experiences relative to barriers and facilitators to retention in a nursing program. Private, individual, face-to-face interviews will be conducted. The interviews will be audio-recorded. This will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes of your time.

Risks / Benefits: This study is considered minimal risk, as it does not include any more risk than what you would experience during daily life. If you become uncomfortable at any time due to the questions you can pass on a question or stop the interview without penalty. All information collected will be confidential and de-identified to assure anonymity of the data results. The benefits for participating include enhancing understanding of the experiences of ethnic minority nursing students and how mindfulness and mindlessness may be factors in retention in a nursing program. There is no monetary benefit to participation.

Confidentiality: Identifying information such as your name and verification of being a UWM student will be collected for research purposes and follow-up after the interview. Your responses will be treated as confidential and all reasonable efforts will be made so that no individual participant will be identified with his/her answers. The interview will be audio-recorded and downloaded onto a password protected device. No identifying information will be on the audio-recording. The researcher will remove your identifying information during analysis of the data and all study results will be reported without identifying information so that no one viewing the results will ever be able to match you with your responses. Data from this study will be saved on the researchers personal non-networked, password protected computer and password protected external hard drive for the duration of this study. Only the researcher will have access to your information. However, the Institutional Review Board at UW-Milwaukee or appropriate federal agencies like the Office for Human Research Protections may review this study's records.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part in this study, or if you decide to take part, you can change your mind later and withdraw from the study. You are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time. Your decision will not change any present or future relationships with the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. There are no known alternatives available to participating in this research study other than not taking part.

Who do I contact for questions about the study: For more information about the study or study procedures, contact Amber Young-Brice at young49@uwm.edu or 920-562-0476.

Who do I contact for questions about my rights or complaints towards my treatment as a research subject? Contact the UWM IRB at 414-229-3173 or irbinfo@uwm.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must be 18 years of age or older. By signing the consent form, you are giving your consent to voluntarily participate in this research project.

_____
Printed Name of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative

_____   _____
Signature of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative   Date

Appendix C:
Participant Demographic Information

Q1. What is your current enrollment status?

    a. Enrolled full time (12 credit semester hours)
    b. Enrolled Part time (less than 12 credit semester hours)

Q2. What is your current academic level at UWM?

    a. Freshman
    b. Sophomore
    c. Junior
    d. Senior

Q3. What is your current GPA?

    a. 3.5- 4.0
    b. 3.0-3.49
    c. 2.5-2.99
    d. 2.0-2.49
    e. Below 2.0

Q4. Where do you live?

    a. On campus/Residence hall
    b. Off campus renting a room or apartment
    c. Off campus-Home with parents
    d. Other:_____

Q5. What is the highest level of education your Mother has completed?

    a. Elementary school or less
    b. Some high school
    c. High school/GED
    d. Some college
    e. College graduate
    f. Graduate degree

Q6. What is the highest level of education your father has completed?

    a. Elementary school or less
    b. Some high school
    c. High school/GED
    d. Some college
    e. College graduate
    f. Graduate degree

Q7. Who is responsible for paying your tuition?

    a. I pay my own tuition
    b. My parents pay my tuition
    c. My tuition is shared between my parents and myself
    d. Financial aid/Scholarship/Grants
    e. Loans
    f. Other:_____

Q8. What is your current marital status?

    a. Single
    b. Married/partnered
    c. Divorced/separated
    d. Other:_____

Q9. Do you have children?
    a. Yes, I have _____ children.
    b. No

Q10. What is your best estimate of your yearly income in 2014?

    a. Less than $5,000
    b. $5,000-$19,999
    c. $20,000-$39,999
    d. $40,000-$59,999
    e. $60,000-$69,999
    f. $70,000 or over

Q11. What was your parent's approximate total household annual income in 2014?

    a. Less than $5,000
    b. $5,000-$19,999
    c. $20,000-$39,999
    d. $40,000-$59,999
    e. $60,000-$69,999
    f. $70,000 or over

Q12. What is your employment status?

    a. Employed full-time >35 hours /week
    b. Employed part time < 35 hours/week
    c. Unemployed
    d. Full time student and not working

Q13. What is your age? Write in: _____

Q14. What is your gender?

    a. Male
    b. Female
    c. Transgender
    d. Other: _____

Q15. What is your race/ethnicity?

    a. African/African American/Black (non-Hispanic)
    b. Asian/ Asian American/ Southeast Asian
    c. Latino(a)/Hispanic
    d. Native American Indian
    e. Other:_____

Q16. What is the primary language spoken at home?

    a. English
    b. Spanish
    c. Portuguese
    d. An Asian or Pacific Island language
    e. Other: _____

Appendix D:

Interview Guide

Barriers and Facilitators to Completion of an Undergraduate Nursing Program:

Exploration of Mindfulness, Mindlessness, and Retention of Ethnic Minority Students

Participant Pseudonym:

Site:

Date:

Start:

End:

Interview Guide:

Thank you for taking time to participate in my study. This study is being conducted to explore ethnic minority undergraduate students' stories of struggles and successes while attending a nursing program. For instance, what are those factors that would help you in completing the nursing program? How do you handle all your struggles in an attempt to succeed in your program? There is a huge need to make the nursing workforce more diverse to meet the needs of our ever more diverse population. Learning more about these issues from the stories of ethnic minority undergraduate nursing students may lead to new insight regarding how to capitalize on developing positive attitudes and behaviors to better retain students in nursing programs and grow the nursing workforce.

Let's get started. This interview will take about 60-90 minutes to complete and will be audio-recorded. Remember you do not have to answer any questions and can stop the interview at any time.

1. Tell me a little bit about what college means for you?

2. How have your experiences in life influenced or not influenced your decision to go to college?

3. What does being here at UWM mean to you?

4. Tell me a little bit about what has helped you get to college?

5. It's great that you are here and a college student, tell me about what sort of things you did to get you to this point? (Success in getting this far.)

6. What has it been like to be an undergraduate nursing student?

7. What in your life makes it easier for you to do well in school?

8. Who helps you to be successful? For instance, who supports you?

9. Tell me about things in your life that makes it harder to do well in school?

10. (If participant works, otherwise skip to Q11) How do you feel about working as a nursing student? How do you make it work with your courses and clinicals? Are there any factors, if any, that affect your performance in school? (Then can keep probing further if things come up.)

11. Describe for me how your studies, courses, or clinicals have been for you. (Remember that not all students will be this far.)

12. What do you do when you face challenges that make it difficult to succeed in nursing school?

13. When you feel pressure or stress related to school, what do you do? Can you give me some recent examples? How have you coped with the stress and pressure?

14. What do you tell yourself when you are under a lot of stress because of nursing school?

15. How do you keep going?

16. How would you characterize yourself in stressful or pressured situations? Are you somebody who-

   a. Thinks ahead to the future a lot?

   b. Worries a lot about what you have to do next?

   c. Think about how things used to be?

   d. Is ready for anything?

   e. Can live in the moment and appreciate everything that is happening?

   f. Doesn't mind change?

   g. Falls into routines and is almost on automatic pilot?

      Notes of Examples:

17. Moving forward in the nursing program, are there things about yourself you wish you were better at? Like what? How? Why?

18. If I asked you about your most important qualities regarding success in school, what goes through your mind?

19. What about negative qualities that hold you back?

20. Has there ever been a time when you wished you had better focus on what you were doing? When? What happened?

21. If you could give advice to other students on how to be successful in a nursing program, what would you tell them?

22. As we near the end of the interview I have one last question. One reason for this study is to explore retention in college, if you had a chance to speak with the Dean or other authorities in the program, what sorts of things would you tell them to help young people like you stay in college and be successful?

Thank you very much for your time today. This concludes our interview.

Thank you again. I appreciate your participation in this study.

Field Notes

Site Details and Considerations:

Interview Comments and Reflections:

Curriculum Vitae
Amber Young-Brice

EDUCATION

2016   University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, College of Nursing, Milwaukee, WI
                      Ph.D.

2010   Bellin College of Nursing, Green Bay, WI
                      Masters of Science-Nursing Education

2006   Bellin College of Nursing, Green Bay, WI
                      Bachelors of Science in Nursing

LICENSURE AND CERTIFICATIONS

                      Registered Nurse (Wisconsin)
                      Team STEPPS Master Trainer
                      Contemplative Pedagogies

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2012-   Clinical Instructor, Marquette University College of Nursing

2010 to 2012   Instructor, Bellin College of Nursing

2009 to 2010   Adjunct Instructor, Bellin College of Nursing

2008 to 2010   Adjunct Instructor, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2015-   Education Consultant, Center for Teaching and Learning, Marquette
                      University.

2013 to 2014   VA Nursing Academic Partnership Program Director for Marquette
                      University, College of Nursing.

2006 to 2010   Emergency Department Staff RN. St. Mary's Hospital, Green Bay, WI.

2005 to 2006   Nurse Technician, Surgical Short Stay and Psychiatric Center, Bellin
                      Hospital, Green Bay, WI.

RESEARCH SUPPORT
Submitted Grants (not funded)
Building Bridges to Research Based Nursing Practice   Submitted February, 2015
Doctoral Student in Nursing Grant
Young-Brice, A.
Barriers and Facilitators to Completion of an Undergraduate Nursing Program:
Exploration of Mindfulness, Mindlessness, and Retention among Ethnic Minorities.
Doctoral Dissertation.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH EXPERIENCE
2012 to 2014   Research Assistant.
                      Exploration of Potential Barriers and Enablers to Participation of
                      Black African Immigrants in Medical Genetics Research and
                      Biobanking.
                      Principal Investigator Dr. Aaron Buseh, PhD, MPH, MSN
                      University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. College of Nursing.

Fall 2011   Research Assistant, Exploring the development of pain knowledge and
                      clinical decision-making skills in BSN undergraduate students.
                      Principle Investigator: Dr. Lori Kulju, PhD, RN
                      Bellin College of Nursing, Green Bay, WI.

PRESENTATIONS & POSTER SESSIONS:
Office of Academic Affiliations/VA Nursing Academic Partnerships Conference, April 5, 2016.
  Young-Brice, A.
  Development of Veteran-Centric Content of Current BSN Curriculum

American Assembly for Men in Nursing Annual Conference, September 26, 2015
  Manigold, R., **Young-Brice, A.**
  Team Strategies and Tools to Enhance Performance and Patient Safety.

Building Bridges to Research Based Nursing Practice, Annual Southeastern Wisconsin Nursing
Research Conference, May 8, 2015.
  Manigold, R., **Young-Brice, A.**
  Team STEPPS Interactive Workshop Presentation.

HONORS & AWARDS
2014   WLN Wellpoint Foundation Scholarship. $2000.00

2009 to 2010   Advanced Nursing Education Traineeship Appointment, Bellin College. $1400.00

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES
Marquette University: (present)
        Undergraduate Course Coordinators group, College of Nursing
        Undergraduate Program Curriculum Committee, College of Nursing

Diversity and Inclusion Committee, College of Nursing
University Committee on Academic Technology
UCCS Core Revision Group G

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS
Professional and Organizational Development in Higher Education (PODs)
Professional Development Committee
Midwest Nursing Research Society
The Association for Contemplative Minds in Higher Education
Wisconsin League for Nursing
National League for Nursing
Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Society: Delta Gamma.
Bellin College Alumni Association